

**SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER 2009 AT 10.30 HRS
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL**

Present: Margaret Pritchard (Chairman)
Phyllis Tweedale
John Short
Peter Bland
Dorothy Dixon
Charles Howarth
Joan Chadwick
Margaret Akrigg
Ron Pritchard
Robin Martakies (arrived later)
Sherralyn Clement
Win Sayers

Officers in attendance: Suzy Duffy, Community Participation Coordinator, SLH
Peter Thomas, Chief Executive, SLH
Angela Tunnicliffe, Chief Executive's Secretary, SLH

Apologies: Brenda Gray, Portfolio Holder, SLDC

Guests: Ian Elleray, Community and Housing Manager, SLDC
Michael Wheatley (Debt Rescue and Money advice)

Circulation: As above

Copy to:

Handouts: Board Report from May 09 from Business Support Manager on SLH annual complaints analysis 2008/09
Slide Handout – home contents insurance
Assortment of leaflets – home contents insurance

Action

551 Welcome

Margaret Pritchard opened the meeting welcoming Ian Elleray, Community and Housing Manager, SLDC, and Michael Wheatley of DRAMA (Debt Rescue & Money Advice).

552 Strategic Options Update

Ian Elleray apologised for not attending the last couple of Tenants' Committee meetings and reported that at this time the main priority is to appoint a Project Manager for the Strategic Options Review. Progress had been made with regard to the position of Project Manager which was not now being advertised as this would delay matters further. Four names had been gathered and Lawrence Conway had agreed that quotations would be sought from them and the selection process would involve David Sykes, Assistant Director (Community Investment & Development) and Peter Thomas.

The new Project Manager would be in post by January 2010 and the first step would

be for a project plan to be drawn up.

Action

Ian Elleray then referred to the Consultation paper 'Reform of Council Housing Finance', and said a big debate was still ongoing as to the principle of redistributing debt to all councils. Legislation for this could be in place by 2012/13. Even though there was potential change of government it was important that the newly appointed Project Manager and the Lead Consultant understood the changing scene. The Independent Tenant Adviser (ITA) was a fundamental part of the whole exercise and Tenants' Committee would be involved in the selection of that consultant from the beginning of the process.

Margaret Akrigg asked for a copy of the Consultation document. Suzy will arrange for copies to be circulated.

SD/JS

Joan Chadwick asked when the crisis point for SLH would be. Peter Thomas replied that next year would be a crucial year as enough work was being carried out to bring stock up to the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 but by 2011 a number of homes would be non decent. As to how much the shortfall would be was part of the stock options review.

Ron Pritchard expressed his concern that since the first stock option meeting took place in December 2008 there had been very little progress. Ron Pritchard had met with the Chairman of the Tenant Services Authority who acknowledged that the funding had changed. The Chairman added that once the stock condition survey had taken place, SLH would have a better idea of the situation.

Sherralyn Clement suggested that maybe Tenants' Committee should lobby the local MP to address tenants' concerns. Peter Thomas commented that ultimately tenants would have the right to choose what option they prefer and there was a lot of pressure too from the North West ALMOs lobbying for investment. It was clear from the current debates amongst ALMO tenants that, even if stock transfer was contemplated to meet the funding gap, certain features of ALMOs must be retained. That is, power should remain in the hands of tenants, the organisations should be community based and should work very closely alongside the local authority.

Robin Martakies entered the meeting.

John Short asked for reassurance that the Project Manager would involve Tenants' Committee from the outset and that Tenants' Committee would be involved with the selection of the Independent Tenant Adviser. Ian Elleray confirmed that this was the case and it was a three way project involving SLDC, Tenants' Committee and SLH.

The Chairman thanked Ian Elleray for this information and asked to keep Tenants' Committee involved.

553 DRAMA (Debt Rescue and Money Advice)

Michael Wheatley outlined the purpose of DRAMA which was to raise the profile of taking out home insurance in areas where people were financially excluded, for example those unable to participate in day to day money activities. DRAMA was not selling insurance but was selling the concept or idea of having contents insurance. There are many tenants who did not have home contents insurance for various reasons but the Department of Work and Pensions was raising the profile of affordable Home Contents insurance. Michael reported that he had met with Alison Kinnon to decide the best way to encourage tenants to take out home contents insurance and after meeting with Gordon Aitken will visit all sheltered schemes and then pursue other ways to get this message across to all other tenants. Michael's view is that the ideal time to contact a new tenant is 2- 3 weeks after they had moved in.

Credit Unions were another option and these Unions were able to give loans up to 10% for those people who did not live in the area. Peter Thomas commented that Credit Unions may be a good opportunity for South Lakes Housing to examine as there were many tenants with low income dispersed over rural areas.

Robin Martakies thought the contents insurance that SLH promoted was expensive and that other companies such as Saga and Age Concern seemed more reasonable. Peter Bland added that although the SLH policy was more expensive there was the option to pay weekly which a lot of schemes did not offer. Dorothy Dixon confirmed that the scheme had been offered to leaseholders and that she had found the scheme to be suited to her needs.

The Chairman thanked Michael for his presentation.

554 Minutes of previous meeting (17 September 2009)

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

555 Matters arising

Minute 522- John Short reported that further information had now been provided regarding complaints and the report on Complaints Analysis 2008/09 had been provided and was available at the meeting.

Minute 544: Suzy Duffy apologised that a report on the Family Fun Days had not been provided at this meeting but would be available at the December meeting

Minute 549: Ron Pritchard asked the Committee if they had any ideas for the Cumbria Tenants And Residents Forum. Sherralyn Clement suggested that any success stories could be promoted through this.

556 SLH Board Agenda 29th October 2009

John Short reported that all items deferred from the August Board were on the October Agenda and added he was pleased to see that amendments to the Board Recruitment Policy had now been added.

557 Treasurers Report

John Short informed the Committee that he had ordered a cheque book earlier than usual due to possible postal strikes and the bank had contacted him to say there were 18 unaccounted for cheques so was pleased the bank had been in touch to confirm that they were still outstanding.

The Chairman thanked John on behalf of the Tenants' Committee for his continued hard work.

558 Donation from Bramall Community Fund

A discussion of the 4 options took place as to how best spend the £400 donation from the Bramall Community Fund.

3 options were dismissed and Suzy Duffy informed the committee that Bev Townley was seeking further funding to arrange a Christmas community event in the Town Hall on 10 December.

Resolved:- That the £400 donation be given to this Christmas community event with idea of promoting free transport to the event and being advertised in the next newsletter.

Bev Townley would be asked to give an update on this event at the next Tenants' Committee meeting.

Action
SD/BAT

559 Review of Service Improvement Groups

Following concerns from Tenants' Committee with regard to the Service Improvement Group a review had been carried out and proposals had been put forward with regard to terms of reference and style. Peter Thomas suggested that all Tenant Involvement Club members be written to including dates for future meetings, informing members what the groups are about and refresh the membership of the SIG groups. All next year's dates for future SIG meetings would then be published in the newsletter and on the calendar.

Resolved:- The Tenants' Committee recommend to the Board that the SIG review group proposals be accepted.

Suzy Duffy to draw up report to be presented at the Board on 29th October.

SD

560 Decent Homes performance monitoring

Ron Pritchard commented on the low level of satisfaction right at the start of the Decent Homes contract and the Committee commented on the increasing and very high level of satisfaction as the contract comes to an end. Peter Thomas said that Bramalls regarded SLH as an exemplar contract.

561 Members Reports

Ron Pritchard informed the Committee that he had attended the CBL meeting and two members of Cumbria Tenants and Residents Forum had joined their Board.

Dorothy Dixon said she had attended the Leaseholder event held on 29th September where 2 members of staff from LEASE were available to answer any general queries. (LEASE, the Leasehold Advisory Service, is funded by Government to provide free advice on the law affecting leaseholders. They also offer a mediation service.) The event had been well attended, and consultation with residents regarding the new security doors at Waterside proved a popular draw.

Margaret Akrigg reported that she had attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and had thoroughly enjoyed it and found it interesting.

John Short said that he was member of the Task Force Group with the Resources Overview Committee which discussed how SLDC recharged costs to different sections of Council. He had also asked for training on 'Council speak' which was supported by the other members of the Group. Peter Thomas added that it was very important for Councillors and tenants to understand how the recharges were calculated especially as the HRA was 'ring fenced'.

562 Any Other Business

Peter Bland said that the Mayor of Kendal, John Bateson had invited Tenants' Committee to look round the Mayors Parlour. 9 Tenants Committee members showed their interest in attending.

PB/JS

Phyllis Tweedale commented that the recent rent reduction letters were confusing and that an explanation should be sought to be published in the newsletter. Suzy Duffy said that a Senior Housing Officer would be invited to the lunch following the meeting to answer any questions.

Margaret Akrigg asked why the Sheltered SIG minutes had taken so long to be

distributed. John Short said there had been some confusion over this matter. Suzy Duffy apologised on behalf of SLH.

Action

563 Date of next meeting

Thursday 3rd December 2009
Win Sayers sends her apologies

The Chairman thanked Angela Tunnicliffe for taking Tenants' Committee minutes in John's absence.

Meeting concluded 12:25 pm