

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2010
2010 AT 10.30 HRS
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL

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

Officers in attendance: John Mansergh- Business Improvement Manager- SLH
Suzy Duffy- Community Participation Coordinator- SLH
John Stirling- Tenant Participation Officer- SLH

Guests John Sykes- Stock Options Study Project Manager- SLDC (part)

Apologies: Sherralyn Clement

Circulation: As above

Action

591 Minutes of previous meeting (14 January 2010)

Agreed as a true record. Proposed by Robin Martakies, seconded by Charles Howarth.

592 Matters arising

Minute 589 (frost precautions)- John Short asked if Sherralyn Clement had been provided with an answer. John Stirling said that the situation had been explained to the affected tenant.

Minute 581 (Grounds Maintenance)- Robin Martakies asked about tenant involvement in the new Grounds Maintenance contract, as the report to be discussed by the Board of SLH on 4 March appeared to contradict earlier assurances, and that tenants would now not be involved in the process to select a contractor. Robin said that although a tenant may be excluded from the selection process for the reason given, it was unreasonable to exclude a tenant Board member from the process and he asked for clarification on this point. Robin said that by not advising the Tenants' Committee of the changes, SLDC was being discourteous to the Committee. John Mansergh said that he would investigate and report back

JM

Minute 574 + Board minute 827 (Family Fun Days)- John Short said that at the Tenants Committee meeting of 3 December it had been agreed that the Board be recommended to hold Area Discussion Groups in addition to Family Fun Days. The recommendation subsequently served on the Board referred to Area Panels, not Area

Discussion Groups and for that reason John had asked for it to be withdrawn before discussion. The item did not subsequently appear on future agendas of either Tenants Committee or the Board. At no time was either the principle of stopping Area Discussion Groups or introducing Family Fun Days discussed at either tenants Committee or the Board. In addition in July 2009 the Committee had asked who had taken the decision to approve Family Fun Days at the expense of Area Discussion Groups? (minute 526 refers) and to date no detailed answer had been provided on those two specific points. The District-Wide Tenant Participation Agreement specifically mentioned Area Discussion Groups and Tenants Committee had an overall responsibility to monitor the published standards of both SLH and SLDC.

Action

The Committee agreed to ask the Chief Executive to their next meeting to answer the above questions. Suzy Duffy said that if David Stubbs were invited he would be able to agree arrangements for the Housing Team, who staff these community based meetings and events.

PT/DS

Robin Martakies suggested that it was timely to have a structured review of Family Fun Days and Area Discussion Groups. The Committee agreed to discuss it at their next meeting.

J St

Peter Bland said that the Grant Approval Panel was now administering the estate improvement budget and this was an improvement on the previous arrangements.

593 SLH Board Minutes 21 January 2010

Noted

594 SLH Board Agenda 4 March 2010

Delivery Plan (item 5.2)- It was felt that the delivery plan and performance indicators contained sufficient detail for Tenants' Committee purposes. Peter Bland asked that he be identified as the Board Champion for Sheltered Housing.

JSt/CAT

Analysis of MP Enquiries (item 5.3) Ron Pritchard said that the introduction of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) may reduce the number of future MP enquiries.

Grounds Maintenance (item 6.3) Already covered under Matters Arising.

Choice Based Lettings (item 6.4) The Committee appreciated the amount of work needed by the 14 partner organisations to enable a working agreement to be reached.

Review of Corporate Governance (item 7.1) Robin Martakies said that members of Tenants' Committee other than Board Directors should be encouraged to attend the Board, in order to gain experience of their meetings and procedure. The shadowing of Board members should also be considered. New members of Tenants Committee were also needed in order to provide Tenant Board Directors. It was confirmed that the facility to shadow Board members was already there and Suzy reminded members that SLH would provide training to prepare tenants for joining the Board. Margaret Akrigg said it was difficult for younger people with work and family commitments to attend Tenants' Committee.

595 Treasurers Report

John Short reported that he had received funds to the value of £3000 from SLH, but with the increased number of projected meetings connected with the Stock Options Study, it was unlikely that this sum would be adequate for the whole of 2010-11. The Committee thanked John for his work.

SD

596 Tenant Scrutiny in SLH

Action

John Mansergh made a presentation to the Committee about proposals for additional tenant scrutiny in the management of the stock and services. He gave an introduction to the new roles of the Business Improvement Managers and described the key parts of the company which will need to be improved. He provided an update on the emergence of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) standards and timetable of how SLH would comply with the new regulations. Tenants' Committee agreed that consultation on service standards was required and that a Tenants Conference would be a good way of agreeing the new standards. The plan was to review the standards and consult with tenants between April and July 2010 before gaining Tenants' Committee approval to send a self assessment report to the TSA in October 2010. The Committee acknowledged the intention to explore further scrutiny of service improvement but that proposals to establish a Customer Improvement Board were not necessarily the best way of attracting tenants given the long established Tenants' Committee and recently revised SIG processes. It was agreed to use the tenants' Conference as a way of encouraging engagement. A training date on how to scrutinise officers was proposed but no interest was received for this session.

Resolved- That a Tenants Conference be held to review service standards.

JM

597 Review of District wide Agreement

Deferred to next meeting.

J St

598 Stock Options Study Update

John Sykes said that 4 suitably qualified residential property surveyors had tendered for the work, and Savills had been subsequently appointed. They would survey 20% of the housing stock and data from their report would be available by the end of May. Tenders had been received from two Stock Options Appraisal Consultants and an appointment would be made on 5 March. At this stage one of the possible options was self financing based on the review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). To date, final government proposals had not been received but informal enquiries had revealed a willingness to have final figures published by early March. The process for procuring an Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) and public relations consultants was progressing according to plan.

The Senior Officers Steering Group had considered the public perception of the Project Board constitution, and there was a view that an imbalance existed between the ratio of tenants to staff, and Tenants Committee should consider if they wished to make formal comment on the proposed numbers. John Sykes said that any request could be considered by the Project Board at their first meeting.

John Short asked when and how Tenants' Committee would be involved in the selection of the ITA. John Sykes said that it was a matter for the Committee alone to determine and he would ensure that comprehensive information about all candidates would be available well before any selection process.

Robin Martakies suggested that tenants did not partake in any working group until the ITA was appointed. That way tenants could be independently advised before taking their places.

Resolved- Due to the imbalance of tenants and staff on the project Board, the Committee ask the Project Board to increase tenant representation from 2 to 4 at their first meeting.

599 Appointment of Seats on Working Groups

Members had returned their preferences and the following appointments from

Tenants' Committee were confirmed.

Action

Project Board- Ron Pritchard and John Short
Communications- Win Sayers and Peter Bland
Tenant and Leaseholder Steering Group- Margaret Akrigg, Margaret Pritchard, Joan Chadwick, Charles Howarth and Phyllis Tweedale.

600 Tenants' Committee Away Day

Either 15 or 22 March, with a preference for the Castle Street Centre, subject to availability. John Short to make the necessary arrangements.

601 Members Reports

Ron Pritchard- together with Margaret Pritchard had attended the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Tenant Panel meeting on 20 January when the consultation process with all tenants and prospective tenants was discussed. He and Margaret had also attended the Tenants and Residents Organisations of England (TAROE) conference in Carlisle on 28 January, with presentations and workshops from the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and National Tenant Voice (NTV).

Charles Howarth- the SLDC Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee had observed a meeting of their counterparts in South Ribble Council on 9 February.

Peter Bland- the gas servicing contract had been awarded to Rogersons as from 1 March 2010.

Phyllis Tweedale- the Housing Provision Advisory Group had considered the local needs survey. The papers would be circulated to Tenants' Committee under separate cover. Grounds Maintenance- she had met with Tony Naylor (SLDC Parks and Contracts Officer) and confirmed that Tenants Committee would have the facility to question the performance of selected contractor.

SD/SR
to note

Joan Chadwick- wished to stand down from the Leaseholder Service Improvement Group. Margaret Pritchard volunteered to replace her.

602 Any other business

Phyllis Tweedale circulated her notes regarding the repair of a light in the car park at Yewbarrow Lodge. The repair had taken some time and a number of visits to rectify, and she was concerned about costs and value for money. Ron Pritchard agreed to raise the matter at the Repairs Service Improvement Group.

RP

Margaret Akrigg- asked that Ron also raise the matter of a permanently lit streetlamp at Castle walk.

RP

Robin Martakies- asked that Ron raise the issue of feedback to the reporting tenant when repairs to communal facilities are involved.

RP

Ron Pritchard- the Cumbria Tenants Forum had fixed the dates of 27 May and 23 September for their 2010 Awareness Days.

603 Date of next meeting

Thursday 8 April 2009