

**SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2009 AT 10.30 HRS
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL**

Present: Margaret Pritchard (Chair)
Wyn Sayers
Ron Pritchard
Margaret Akrigg
Dorothy Dixon
Robin Martakies
John Short
Phyllis Tweedale
Peter Bland
Su Marriott
Sherralyn Clement
Charles Howarth
Joan Chadwick

Officers in attendance: Peter Thomas, Chief Executive, SLH
Suzy Duffy – Community Participation Co-ordinator, SLH
John Stirling – Tenant Participation Officer, SLH
Lucy Reynolds – Senior Strategy Officer, South Lakeland District Council

Guests Brenda Gray – Portfolio Holder, South Lakeland District Council
Lisa Chant - Customer Development Manager – Bramall Construction

Apologies: Liz Easton

Circulation: As above

Copy to:

Subject

Action

Margaret Pritchard opened the meeting paying tribute to Don Brookes who had resigned from the Committee on 18 January. Don had been a founder member of the Committee and had served it well particularly during the time South Lakes Housing was being established as an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO). In recognition of his contribution it was agreed that a suitable presentation piece to the value of £25 would be presented by the Chairman at a suitable time and venue.

469 Minutes of previous meeting (15 January 2009)

John Short- said that Cllr Alan Baverstock should be listed as an observer. He also observed that from item 459 onwards there were numerous references to Suzy Duffy. Margaret Pritchard asked John what action he wanted to be taken with his observation. John said he wished them to be noted.

Minute 457 - John Short said that the word should be replaced by the word could.

Subject to the above amendments the minutes were accepted as a true record.

470 Matters arising

Minute 456 - Phyllis Tweedale asked about the relocation of the Yewbarrow Lodge office computer to the communal lounge. John Short said that this was an 'as and

when' basis.

471 SLH Board Minutes (21 January 2009)

Minute 711 - Ron Pritchard was concerned about SLDC selling off parcels of land on their estates to Housing Associations. He felt that the sale or transfer of suitably identified land should be retained for SLDC/SLH new build. The Committee concurred with the views of Ron, and Margaret Pritchard asked the Board members to relay the views of the Committee to the Board at their meeting on 5 March.

472 SLH Board Agenda (5 March 2009)

Item 5 - School Knott Sheltered Scheme. Peter Bland said that the paper showed that briefings were being provided for the Committee, but to date nothing had happened. Peter Thomas said that School Knott tenants had been consulted first before any formal proposals had been drawn up and the paper before the Board was the first step along the way. Brenda Gray said that it was important that School Knott tenants were included from the outset. Sherralyn Clement asked if the Committee could offer support to School Knott tenants if necessary. Peter Thomas said that Age Concern had acted as an advocate in initial discussions. Phyllis Tweedale asked about the current use of the staff accommodation at the Scheme, Peter Thomas said that it was currently being occupied by non sheltered tenants.

Item 12 - Sheltered Housing Survey. Ron Pritchard drew attention to the suggestion of better sound proofing to flats at Cross Lane, and was concerned about the potential cost. John Short said that many of the items on the suggestion list had already been delivered via the Service Improvement Groups (SIGs).

Phyllis Tweedale said that she still believed that decisions taken by the SIGs should be ratified by Tenants Committee. Suzy Duffy reminded Phyllis that the minutes of the SIGs were available to all Committee members, either electronically or on paper.

Items 10, 11 and 13 - John Short said that all 3 items made reference to Tenants Committee discussing them. It was agreed that in future the Board agenda discussion would consider all items. Suzy Duffy noted that item 13 was been covered under Committee agenda items 9 and 11.

473 Update on options for the ALMO

Lucy Reynolds said that a Project Initiation Document (PID) was being prepared and would be discussed by Cabinet on 8 April. The document would not be in fine detail, but would outline timescales and targets etc. A verbal report on Cabinet discussions would be provided to the Committee at their next meeting on 9 April. It was unlikely that the paper would form part of the closed agenda (part 2), enabling it to be shared with the Committee before the Cabinet meeting on 8 April. Brenda Gray said that following full consultation with tenants a 'preferred option' and other options would be put to tenants. John Short said that it appeared that tenants would not be involved from the beginning of the process. Peter Thomas said that the PID was the start of the process and the yet to meet steering group has tenant representation. Tenants would have access to independent advice and the pre ballot stage would look at all options with an open mind. Brenda Gray said that to date only 1 meeting had been held (1 October 2008) and that all Tenants Committee members had been invited to attend. Robin Martakies said that whilst SLDC could propose options, tenants were the final arbiters.

Peter Thomas suggested that the Committee visit Golden Gates ALMO in Warrington, as their situation was almost identical to that of SLDC/SLH, but they were some months ahead in the process.

474 Treasurer's Report

John Short circulated his written report and commented verbally that the period covered by the accounts had seen exceptional expenditure because of Committee meetings with their Independent Advisor (Graham Martin) together with his fee. John predicted that the remaining budget was sufficient to the year end.

The report was accepted and John was thanked for his work.

475 Tenant Audits, Mystery Shops and Void Inspections

Suzy Duff presented her report detailing the involvement of tenants in the current programme of mystery shops, void inspections and audits. The void inspections were almost complete, the estate inspections were scheduled for completion in March 2009 however the target for telephone mystery shops was proving challenging. Peter Bland said that he was disappointed with the figures showing that staff were not routinely asking callers if there was anything else they could assist with before terminating a call. Peter Thomas said that the reason for the mystery shops was to highlight failings in the service and he would be raising the matter at his next staff briefing.

476 District Wide Agreement Action Plan 2009-10

(This item was taken out of order as it linked to the previous item.) Suzy Duffy said that the action plan for 2009-10 would pick up on issues identified by the Audit Commission during their recent inspection. Members of the Committee were invited to pass their own ideas to Suzy for inclusion.

477 Draft Enquiry and Diversity Policy for Tenants Committee and Residents Associations.

John Stirling said that following the session held on 14 August 2008 with Committee members, representatives of Residents Associations and Pradeep Passi an Independent Equalities Advisor, the notes from the day had been condensed and the a draft of the revised policy produced. The draft had been shared with Pradeep Passi and he would report his views back to John. Any amendments from members of the Committee should also be fed back to John. The draft policy containing amendments from both Pradeep Passi and Committee members would be brought to the next meeting for further discussion or ratification.

478 Roadshow and Walkabout Schedule 2009-10

John Stirling presented the draft programme which was agreed in principle, subject to any conflicts contained within the Options PID referred to at minute 473.

Subsequent items were taken out of order as Lisa Chant had been delayed.

479 Nomination to Housing Provision Advisory Group

John Stirling said that the resignation of Don Brookes had created a vacancy on the Housing Provision Advisory Group (HPAG) a group comprising representatives from Lake District National Park, Yorkshire Dales National Park, SLDC and their tenants. Their role was to advise the portfolio holder on housing provision matters. Sherralyn Clement and Phyllis Tweedale both expressed an interest. Brenda Gray invited them both to join the Group.

480 Members Reports

Ron Pritchard - Cumbria and North Lancashire Tenants and Residents Forum were

hosting an Awareness Day in Barrow on 25 March looking at safety for public events. The Forum had also received a presentation yesterday delivered by Eden Housing Association on Choice Based Lettings.

Peter Bland - had recently chaired the Grant Applications Panel and the minutes would be circulated shortly.

Robin Martakies - and other members had attended a Chairing Meetings training session hosted by Eden Housing Association on 19 February 2009. He tabled a report which would be circulated with the minutes. As an individual and not representing the Committee, he had attended a Defend Council Housing parliamentary lobby on 25 February 2009.

Su Marriott - had attended a repairs and maintenance meeting where good levels of satisfaction were reported, and the costs of introducing new technology were starting to be recouped through better use of resources.

481 Decent Homes Reports

Lisa Chant presented her previously circulated report and verbally updated the Committee with current progress. The mop-up programme and budget had been agreed, consisting of 110 properties and due to start on 6 March. Many of the properties housed vulnerable tenants so progress may be slower than normal, with the possibility of some tenants changing their minds before work commenced. The Resident Liaison Officers had made special arrangements to assist with packing and cleaning etc, with the provision of a warm drink and lunch at a nearby sheltered scheme if necessary. The Ulverston Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) would be ready in 1 week, and other environmental improvements would commence in August 2009.

482 Any Other Business

John Short - Reminded the Committee of their teambuilding session at the Castle Street Centre on 30 March 2009.

Margaret Pritchard - Reminded the Committee that where nominations to other bodies or sub committees was called for, a decision would usually be taken by the Committee at a formal meeting following a vote if necessary. On occasions when deadlines did not allow for Committee discussion, the Chairman would make a nomination.

483 Date of next meeting

Thursday 9 April 2009

484 Tenant Services Authority DVD and Questionnaire

The Committee viewed a short DVD presentation by the Tenant Services Authority and completed their questionnaire.

485 Closure

The meeting closed at 1.00 p.m.

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