

**SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY 30 OCTOBER 2008 AT 10.30 HRS
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL**

Present: Phyllis Tweedale
John Short
Peter Bland
Charles Howarth
Don Brookes
Dorothy Dixon
Joan Chadwick
Su Marriott
Sherralyn Clement
Win Sayers (Vice Chairman)
Robin Martakies

Officers in attendance: Suzy Duffy – Community Participation Co-ordinator, SLH
John Stirling – Tenant Participation Officer, SLH

Attending part of the meeting: Peter Thomas – Chief Executive, SLH
Alison Kinnon – Housing Manager, SLH
Helen Smith – Head of Finance, SLDC
Joyce Sedgwick – Housing and Regeneration Accountant, SLDC
Ian Elleray – Community and Housing Manager, SLDC

Apologies: Ron Pritchard
Margaret Pritchard
Brenda Gray – Portfolio Holder SLDC
Lisa Chant – Customer Development Manager, Bramall Construction
David Stubbs – Director of Operations, SLH

Circulation: As above

Copy to: P Thomas

Circulation of documents: The following documents were circulated prior to the meeting
Briefing notes referring to
(a) The Housing and Regeneration Act (under separate cover)
(b) Energy Performance Certificates (under separate cover)
(c) The 'Right to Manage' training opportunities at Trafford Hall

Subject

Action

Win Sayers in the Chair

Win opened the meeting by paying tribute to Brian Lloyd, a member of Tenants Committee from 2001 to 2008, who had passed away on 25 October. A card conveying the sympathies of the Committee was signed by all members present to be forwarded to Mrs Brenda Lloyd.

425 Minutes of previous meeting (11 September 2008)

426 Matters arising

None/

427 Decorating/Handyman Service

In response to a written request from Robin Martakies, Alison Kinnon circulated a breakdown of the number of decorating vouchers issued and used, (split between voids and DHP work), the average value of the vouchers and the total cost of vouchers redeemed to date. Alison went on to say that as a result of suggestions received by the Repairs Service Improvement Group and the Allocations Service Improvement Group, a recommendation was due to be considered by the Board at their meeting on 6 November (agenda item 17). If agreed, the new policy offered specific assistance with redecorating to elderly or disabled households following repair or void works. Robin thanked Alison for the update, but believed that the new policy was too complicated.

Don Brookes asked if the decoration service provided by the Handyman could be available to all tenants not included in the new policy proposals, upon payment of an appropriate charge. Alternatively, could a list of approved private contractors willing to take on small jobs could be provided. Dorothy Dixon said that leaseholders would benefit from such a service as well as well. Alison said that both suggestions would be looked at.

428 SLH Board Minutes 18 September 2008

The Committee congratulated John Short upon his appointment as Vice Chairman of the Board.

429 SLH Board Agenda 6 November 2008

John Short said those agenda items 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 should be fully discussed by the Committee and if necessary a comment made to the Board. Don Brookes said that the Board should delay any decision on the above items until Tenants Committee had fully discussed them.

Peter Thomas said that the business of the Board could not be delayed, but nothing went to the Board unless it had been through Tenants Committee first, particularly if the issues were important or controversial when a comment or formal report could be made.

Don Brookes said that further clarification was often needed on some issues.

Joan Chadwick said that the Tenants Committee meeting 1 week prior to the Board meeting was the opportunity for tenants to have their input into Board business.

Phyllis Tweedale said that Tenants Committee did not get an opportunity to question the authors of papers to be considered by the Board.

Robin Martakies referred to agenda item 12 (Decent Homes Programme – Estate Improvement Works) and questioned which residents had suggested grasscrete works and relocating the play area at Kirkfield, as he was not aware of any support for these developments. Joan Chadwick said that she was a member of the Community Investment Group, and these suggestions had been fully discussed by them. Suzy Duffy would arrange for Fiona Harrison to liaise directly with Robin on this matter.

Robin Martakies drew attention to agenda item 13 (Tenant Involvement Update) and said that the performance indicator covering the number of people attending Area Discussion Groups should not include SLH staff, or invitees from other agencies. Both John Short and Phyllis Tweedale said that the figures should show the number of tenants and residents attending. Suzy Duffy said that she would report back on this matter.

430 Treasurers Report

John Short circulated his written report and drawing attention to a bank error of 2p that was not worth pursuing. He commented that expenditure was within budget, and a request for further funding in the current year was unlikely. An increase may be needed for next year. The Committee noted the report and thanked John for his work.

GR

Agenda item 9 (Quarter 2 Performance Figures) was deferred, as it linked with agenda item 11.

431 Housing Revenue Account update

Helen Smith opened her presentation saying that there was a published timetable of consultation with Tenants and other interested parties and she would report again to Tenants Committee on 8 January once the first draft of the 2009-10 SLDC budget was available. It was estimated that there would be a £60,000 underspend by the Housing Revenue Account at the end of the current financial year, leading to a working balance of £610,000. Recently received government draft figures showed that there was no planned increase in the allowances for major repairs and maintenance, and the allowance for the management fee would decrease. Should the draft figures be confirmed, the negative subsidy would increase by £110 to £1356 per house. The Decent Homes Programme needed a total borrowing of £21,000,000 of which £18,000,000 had been borrowed to date, however the cost of borrowing was fully reimbursed. Government had recently changed rent restructuring plans, with increases estimated to be capped at 6.2%. Meetings had already been planned between SLDC and SLH to examine these emerging issues and to plan for the future.

Joan Chadwick urged Helen to circulate her first draft as soon as possible and asked what plans were in place to address the projected reduction in the management fee paid to SLH by SLDC.

Peter Thomas said that there were two important issues. First, would future budgets be enough to do what tenants want, and second, is the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) sustainable as a long-term business model. If SLH could not meet core services what would we not do in the future, and what are the best options for the future delivery of housing services by the Council.

Don Brookes said that the repairs budget would no doubt increase after the Decent Homes works were complete.

Helen Smith said that work was currently in progress to identify the long-term trends in repairs expenditure following Decency works.

Phyllis Tweedale asked Helen to explain 2 recent delays of 9 days and 6 days respectively for SLDC to take direct debits from her account.

Helen apologised for the delay and said it was due to a combination of staff and technology issues. Measures had now been put in place to minimise any future problems.

John Short said that in his experience, the delay between paying rent by telephone and records being updated had been resolved.

432 Quarter 2 Performance Figures

Phyllis Tweedale asked that the estates shown in the Decent Homes Programme had their local town also listed as this would assist members who were unfamiliar with the area.

John Short said that the percentage of non-decent council homes stood at around 20%, and this figure provided evidence that the management fee should not be reduced.

Peter Bland said that the monitoring group had discussed the factors leading to a drop in satisfaction with gas servicing where he represented the interests of tenants.

433 SLDC/SLH Monitoring Arrangements

Ian Elleray said that at his most recent report to Cabinet in September 2008, it was agreed that the monitoring of SLH would be streamlined, and merged into one of 10 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be considered. However, SLH would be required to provide a comprehensive annual report to Cabinet, including how it had contributed towards the priorities of SLDC. SLH was also to provide a visual display in the public reception area of South Lakeland House. Tenants Committee formed an important partnership with SLDC, and in light of the new arrangements Tenants Committee should reconsider if the current practice of the Community and Housing Manager attending Tenants Committee to discuss performance issues was still adequate, or were alternative arrangements more appropriate.

Don Brookes proposed that the current arrangements remain, with the addition of the SLDC Portfolio holder specifically attending Tenants Committee on the dates that quarterly performance was discussed. There was no dissent.

Peter Bland asked for clarification about legacy income for Sheltered Schemes. Peter Thomas said the possibility of the communal areas within Sheltered Schemes benefiting from legacies was being looked at.

434 Future Options Update

Ian Elleray reported on an initial meeting with Paul Schofield from Government Office North West (GONW) between SLH/SLDC, when Tenant Committee members were present. Paul Schofield had praised all parties for taking a strategic view, and for making plans before funding became critical. Helen Smith was now progressing work identified at the meeting. A SLDC/SLH steering group was being established and two places would be reserved for Tenants Committee. No dates had been set, but the meetings would dovetail with the schedule of meetings referred to by Helen Smith at minute 431.

Don Brookes, Phyllis Tweedale, Win Sayers and John Short all registered an interest to be nominated to the group, but members who were not present would also be canvassed.

Don Brookes asked if the Tenant Committee members would be free to report fully to the remainder of the Committee, and Ian said that the briefing notes would be circulated widely. An independent advisor to the Committee would be appointed at an appropriate time, in accordance with the procurement rules of the Council.

Peter Thomas said that independent financial advice would be available to the Tenants Committee members of the steering group to assist in their negotiations with SLDC over the setting of the management fee for 2009-10, and in addition Suzy Duffy would arrange for Graham Martin to provide a 'setting the scene' presentation for all Tenants Committee.

435 Aids and Adaptations working group

John Stirling said that a working group was being established to look at our current aids and adaptations policy, to consider any changes needed to take account of current circumstances and to make any recommendations for change. Any proposed changes in policy would come back to the Committee through the usual channels. It was agreed that Su Marriott is nominated, with Robin Martakies and Peter Bland as reserves should Su be unable to attend any meetings.

436 Decent Homes Report

The written report supplied by Lisa Chant was noted.
Phyllis Tweedale asked for a breakdown of costs incurred by SLH in attending to faults arising from Decent Homes work.

437 Members Reports

Robin Martakies.

Circulated 3 written reports detailing his attendance on 'The Policing Green Paper' on 25 September, 'Writing for Newsletters' on 2 October and 'Not in my Neighbourhood' on 17 October.

Peter Bland.

Gas Servicing. Cyclical maintenance was now completed for year the with 95% access. The 5% non-access was due mainly to illness of tenant. Engineers were now in possession of SLH hand held work scheduling devices, that reporting back directly to SLH.

Voids. 2 inspections.

Grant Approval Panel. He had been appointed Chairman and terms of reference had now been agreed. The suggestion list was to be resubmitted with prices. Tree work had been removed from list and was now being picked up under DHP smaller works budgets.

Don Brookes Asked who had stopped works agreed under previous Area Panel arrangements. Peter would consult with Fiona Harrison and report back to the next meeting.

John Short.

Sheltered Housing Service improvement Group (SIG), had considered the revised Sheltered Housing Agreement. The revised draft would be out for consultation shortly.

Sherralyn Clement.

Had attended the Cumbria Tenants Forum event on 29 October and learned about the work Impact Housing do in bringing together their young and elderly tenants.

Joan Chadwick.

Decent Homes. The last contract was now in place (Staveley), the mop up programme would then be commenced.

438 Any Other business

- (a) Annual Xmas Reception to be held on Monday 15 December from 1530 hrs. Usual invitations to elected members, and staff from SLH, SLDC and Bramall

Construction.

- (b) Private Xmas lunch to be held outside Tenants Committee terms of reference was not supported.
- (c) On behalf of Gordon Aitken, John Stirling asked for nominations to sit on a working group to review Support Plans for Sheltered Housing residents. Phyllis Tweedale, Peter Bland and Sherralyn Clement were nominated.

424 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 11 December 2008

Apologies received in advance from Robin Martakies