

**SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY 26 JUNE 2008 AT 10.40 HRS
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL**

Present: Phyllis Tweedale Ulverston
 Dorothy Dixon Leaseholder
 John Short Lakes
 Win Sayers Ulverston
 Don Brookes Lakes
 Robin Martakies Lakes
 Joan Chadwick Kendal
 Margaret Akrigg Kendal
 Ron Pritchard Ulverston
 Su Marriott Ulverston
 Margaret Pritchard Chairman Ulverston
 Charles Howarth

Apologies: Peter Bland
 Sue Boulton Business Support Manager SLH
 Sherralyn Clement arrived part way through the meeting

Officers in Suzy Duffy Community Participation Co-ordinator SLH
attendance: John Stirling Tenant Participation Officer SLH
 Ian Elleray Community and Housing Manager SLDC
 Lisa Chant arrived part way through the meeting

Circulation: As above

Copy to: P Thomas
Subject

Action

388 Minutes of previous meeting (15 May 2008)

Minute 384 Phyllis Tweedale was on the Customer Focus task team, not Joan Chadwick. Subject to that amendment the minutes were accepted as a true record.

389 Matters arising

a. Decoration Vouchers.

John Stirling reported on behalf of Trevor Woodward that negotiations with an outlet in Barrow had not been successful. Enquiries were continuing and would be reported in due course. Robin Martakies said that decorating vouchers were of little use to vulnerable tenants who were unable to access shops or unable to decorate. Trevor Woodward to be asked to attend the next meeting and give a verbal update on the possibility of providing decorating services in the future.

JS/TW

b. Broadband at Sheltered Schemes

Sue Boulton had circulated a paper in her absence outlining the current situation. Don Brookes asked that Sue attend the next meeting to give a more comprehensive verbal update. Suzy Duffy said that South Lakes Housing might look at the possibility of a communication allowance for Tenants' Committee similar to that currently paid to Board members. This could form part of the Agreement review.

Sue B/
JS/SD

c. Stock location familiarisation visits.

John Stirling said that having looked at the logistics of the exercise, it was not possible to achieve the visits in 1 day, and would have to be a rolling programme over a number of months. John Short said that Roadshows and Walkabouts were the best way for members to visit the district. Joan Chadwick and Margaret Akrigg said that it was often impossible for the Community Fund Group to deal with applications fairly without a familiarisation visit. It was agreed that plans for familiarisation visits continue to be made, and Committee members to contact John Stirling if they wanted to attend a particular Roadshow or Walkabout or needed transport.

390 SLH Board Minutes (22 May 2008)

Noted

391 SLH Board Agenda (3 July 2008)

Agenda item 7, Phyllis Tweedale commented that there appeared to be little advance notice of the need to look at alternative office accommodation options. Suzy suggested that the Committee consider nominating a member to sit on the sub committee, should the Board agree to the course of action proposed in the paper. **It was agreed that Margaret Pritchard represent tenants should the Board set up the sub committee.**

Board to
note

Agenda item 9, Don Brookes noted the report from the Audit Commission and was delighted with the end result. He said that thanks were due to all staff at SLH for their hard work, and Tenants' Committee.

Joan Chadwick referred to a recent article in Inside Housing, stating that the Audit Commission were changing their style of inspection, and passed it around for people to read.

Agenda item 6, Suzy Duffy drew attention to the proposed Financial Inclusion Strategy, which might include tenants organising their own information services about these delicate issues.

392 Committee Finance

John Short presented his written report, commenting verbally that the use of the Cumbria County Council community minibus represented great value for money when used for training and development events.

GR to note

393 Tenant Participation Strategy

The final version of the strategy was circulated. The Committee agreed to **formally recommend that the Board accept the document.**

SD/Board

394 Review of Rent Free Weeks

Ian Elleray said that as a result of the Housing Quality Network mock inspection in 2007, the Council had decided to review their policy relating to rent free weeks. Research to date had shown that the current arrangements were popular with tenants, and it also gave specific opportunities for SLH staff to concentrate on arrears at specific times of year. Win Sayers said that tenants found the two rent free weeks at Christmas helpful at a time of increased expenditure for many families. Don Brookes said that he had never spoken to a tenant who was not in favour of the current arrangements. **It was resolved to support the current arrangements.**

SD/Board

395 Strategic Options for the Housing Service

Ian Elleray acknowledged that tenants had an important role to play in this process and gave an undertaking to keep them informed at every opportunity. He said that the Council had to acknowledge that their housing service was well financed till 2010, but projections showed that from 2011 to 2014 the Housing Revenue Account would fall into deficit. This situation was not unique to South Lakeland, and the Council had held an initial meeting with a Director of Housing Quality Network to scope out the work required to carry out the Options review. As a first step a briefing had been organised for Cabinet, the Shadow Cabinet and Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees. It was clear at this very early stage that 'no change' was unlikely to be a viable option.

Whilst the final decision lay with SLDC, it was vital that tenants and SLH were involved from the earliest stages. The involvement of SLH had to be carefully managed as it could be suggested that they had an interest in the final outcome, and because of that constraint it was important the tenants had access to independent advice at all stages of the process.

The Committee agreed to hold a preliminary scene setting session with their independent advisor Graham Martin, to catch up on the current national trends in the future of ALMOs.

SD/JS

396 Decent Homes reports

Lisa Chant presented her report, noting that overall satisfaction remained high, but the recent Ulverston South contract had shown up some irregularities which may lead to a downturn in the figures. This situation had arisen when kitchen fitters had arrived at some properties to find that the tenant had removed an internal wall between kitchen design and fit stages. It was not cost effective to stop work on the property but there was an inevitable delay in handing the property back. Whilst SLH were aware of these instances it was outwith the remit of Bramall Construction to take matters further, but an article in the next newsletter may be helpful.

LC/SD

Following some comments from Robin Martakies, Lisa Chant has asked the

Committee to note:

- Floor coverings and decorations for bathrooms have never been included in the contract
- Contractors had been reminded to carry their I.D.

Margaret Pritchard thanked Lisa for her report.

397 Members Reports

Don Brookes. Housing Provision Advisory Group has not provided list for all development but Don will report back next time. All future new build must include 50% affordable homes.

John Short. John had attended Housing Income Service Improvement Group which had many staff in attendance and asked for a review of the Service Improvement Groups as he believed they may not be cost effective. Some groups had tenants chairing them, others did not.

Robin Martakies. Robin commented that the Resident Involvement Service Improvement Group had gone well and members had done some really useful work in looking at how ADGs should be run, for example.

Robin had also attended the Harrogate Conference along with other members, and found it most interesting. Robin had written a piece for the newsletter.

Ron Pritchard. Ron and Su Marriott are on the Repairs Service Improvement Group and they too feel the Group has looked at lots of useful items, with an emphasis on tenant input.

John Stirling circulated a report from Peter Bland who had attended a Gas Servicing Contract Meeting. Target figures were being achieved. Garry Bolton from the contractors was moving to a new post and it was important that a person of similar experience filled his place.

398 Any Other Business

a. Ron Pritchard drew attention to the Audit Commission report regarding the Committee and Tenant Board members not being representative of tenants in general. He felt that there was a wealth of experience within the Committee and they were well placed to express the views of tenants. John Stirling said that the purpose of the Tenant Involvement Club was to widen the base of tenants who were interested in the future of the business, but found it impossible to attend formal meetings. Suzy Duffy commented that South Lakes Housing would be continuing to try to involve everyone, and that the report had specifically mentioned tenants in rural areas, and young people. Suzy had had to prepare figures for the Inspection for all involvement processes, showing gender etc of those involved. This work would be continuing.

b. John Short asked that in future the Editorial Team met before the newsletter had been drafted by the printer. In addition, John felt that the decision to include an article about no smoking was wrong and recommended that the

SD

Editorial Team have another look at their terms of reference. Suzy Duffy commented that South Lakes Housing will always have to approve any newsletter or articles.

- c. John Stirling circulated a draft letter and supporting papers which would be mailed out shortly to all tenants, giving them an opportunity to comment on the revised tenancy agreement.

399 Date of Next Meeting

7 August 2008

400 Closure

The meeting closed at 14.00 hrs