

**SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER 2008 AT 10.30 HRS
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL**

Present: Phyllis Tweedale
Dorothy Dixon
John Short
Charles Howarth
Don Brookes
Robin Martakies
Margaret Akrigg
Ron Pritchard
Margaret Pritchard (Chairman)

Officers in attendance: Lucy Reynolds Senior Strategy Officer – SLDC
Suzy Duffy Community Participation Co-ordinator – SLH
John Stirling Tenant Participation Officer - SLH

Attending part of the meeting Garry Ronson (part) Director of Finance - SLH
Gordon Aitken (part) Supported Housing Manager - SLH
Lisa Chant (part) Customer Development Manager –
Bramall Construction

Apologies: Su Marriott
Joan Chadwick
Peter Bland
Sherralyn Clement
Win Sayers
Brenda Gray Portfolio Holder - SLDC

Circulation: As above

Copy to: P Thomas

Subject

Action

440 Minutes of previous meeting (30 October 2008)

Margaret Akrigg had tendered apologies.
Minute 427 delete 'as well' where it was duplicated.
The minutes were accepted as a true record, subject to the above amendments.

441 Matters arising

- (a) Future Options Steering Group. (minute 434)
Margaret Pritchard confirmed that she had nominated John Short and Ron Pritchard to represent Tenants' Committee on the group.
- (b) Cost to SLH of Decent Homes repairs. (minute 436)
Ron Pritchard reported that whilst at another meeting he had spoken to Tom Lynch the

Repairs Operations Manager, who confirmed that all costs incurred by SLH in attending to faults arising from contractors delivering Decent Homes work, was reimbursed in full.

Phyllis Tweedale referred to minute 429 and stressed that Tenants' Committee must be given adequate time to discuss matters before the Board came to a decision.

Robin Martakies referred to minute 427 (decorating/handyman service), and asked the Tenant Directors raise the matter further with the Board.

Suzy Duffy referred to minute 429 and said that she had asked the Senior Housing Officers to record the number of residents and officers separately at their Area Discussion Groups.

442 SLH Board Minutes (6 November 2008)

Ron Pritchard queried Board minute 689 (VAT fuel receipts), and asked if there was any knock on effect to members of Tenants' Committee. John Short said that claims for travelling by Directors were treated differently to claims from members of Tenants Committee, and no action was needed.

Robin Martakies asked Garry Ronson if SLH held a list of approved decorating contractors that could be shared with tenants to assist them in selecting somebody suitable. Garry said that details held by SLH were for large contracts and not suitable for individual needs.

Don Brookes asked if Alison Kinnon was in a position yet to report any progress on the engagement upon payment of the SLH Handyman by tenants and leaseholders.

AK

Margaret Akrigg said that Age Concern produced a list of suitable tradespeople.

John Short referred to Board minute 679 and said that the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee of SLDC was currently examining the provision of IT facilities to their elected members, and the results may benefit members of Tenants' Committee.

Don Brookes asked if there were any developments in allowing sheltered tenants access to broadband, now that the Sheltered Housing Schemes were connected. Garry Ronson said that a new server had been purchased and following commissioning in early 2009 the matter could be looked at again.

SAB

443 SLH Board Agenda (18 December 2008)

Garry Ronson said that in their recent inspection, one of the recommendations of the Audit Commission was that SLH and SLDC look again at the unpooling of service charges. The issue was complicated, controversial and would need significant staff time to see it through. Currently the whole rent figure did not identify any service charges such as the cost of electricity to communal areas of flats, the cleaning of communal areas of flats, or the benefits to individual properties of grounds maintenance work. Findings to date had uncovered inconsistencies with electricity charges for communal lighting to almost identical blocks of flats, and the benefits received by individual properties from the grounds maintenance contract. Further work was needed on both these issues, and the decision by SLDC to delay the tendering of a

new grounds maintenance contract by 12 months presented SLH with an opportunity to thoroughly review the current arrangements. The Audit Commission recommended that the review into pooling issues be completed in 2009-10, however initial scoping showed that a decision by 2010-11 was more realistic. **Action**

Don Brookes asked if SLH could opt out of the current joint grounds maintenance arrangements with SLDC. Garry Ronson said that this was an option, but further information was needed before any conclusion could be reached.

Robin Martakies said that there was a fundamental unfairness with the current system, as an element of their rent included a service charge for the grounds maintenance contract. Tenants also paid Council Tax, which included a similar element, therefore tenants were paying twice for the same service.

Dorothy Dixon welcomed the discussion, as leaseholders believed that they were also paying twice for grounds maintenance.

The Committee supported the principles at the 'recommendations' and 'next steps' parts of the report. **GR**

John Short welcomed the open discussion on this important aspect of rent and service charge setting.

The remainder of the agenda was noted.

444 Treasurers Report

John Short presented his report, which was noted.

445 Revised Sheltered Housing Agreement

Gordon Aitken said that the draft revised agreement was the result of work undertaken by a Service Improvement Group, which included feedback from the annual Sheltered Housing survey. The revised document had been kept to a minimum, as many issues applicable to Sheltered Housing were covered by other policies. Once agreed, one copy of the Agreement would be made available on the notice board at each Scheme, and individual copies available on request.

The Committee supported the format and content of the new document.

446 Future Options update

Lucy Reynolds said that a meeting had been arranged for 19 December and she would ensure that John Short and Ron Pritchard were aware of the arrangements.

Don Brookes asked if Brenda Gray would be attending as she was not attending meetings of Tenants' Committee and he was keen that she was aware of the views of Tenants' Committee.

447 Review of District-Wide Tenant Participation Agreement

Suzu had prepared a schedule detailing consultation arrangements with stakeholders to

ascertain if any changes were necessary to the current agreement. The Committee agreed the draft programme and agreed to make their views known during a short afternoon session following the meeting on 15 Jan 2009.

448 Review of Newsletter

Ron Pritchard said that the most recent edition of the newsletter was an improvement on previous editions. Peter Thomas would meet the Editorial Team on 6 or 7 January 2009, in the meantime Suzy Duffy would obtain some samples of various alternative styles of publication.

449 Continental Landscapes

Already dealt with under previous items.

450 Decent Homes Report

Lisa Chant updated the Committee saying that the Ambleside contract was complete and Staveley was on target to be completed by Xmas. Windermere was scheduled to be complete by February 2009, however it may be delayed as recent weather conditions had prevented some roofing work. The mop up contract would be started in 2009 and Resident Liaison Officers had already made contact with tenants of properties where upgrades had been refused. Due to the scattered location of these properties and some uncertainty as to the amount of work required, no cost could be put forward yet.

451 Members Reports

In the absence of Peter Bland, John Stirling circulated a report written by Peter regarding questions raised about the Grant Applications Panel at the last meeting (minute 437). John Short added that the contract for lighting at Drummermire was out, and expenditure had been approved for white lining to steps at West Ing and lighting at Little Moss. The report was noted.

John Short gave a brief review of the work currently being undertaken by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee of SLDC.

452 Any Other business

Margaret Pritchard asked if members were happy to continue to receive minutes of all Service Improvement Groups, or if having experienced the new arrangements did members wish to change anything. The Committee agreed to remain with current practice.

453 Date of Next Meeting

8 January 2009 for a special Housing Revenue Account session.

15 January 2009 for next ordinary meeting, to include short afternoon session to discuss any proposed changes to the District Wide Tenant Participation Agreement.