

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES

10:30am Thursday 12th January 17 held in the
Windermere Suite, Bridge Mills, Kendal

- Present: Charles Howarth (Chair)
John Short
Margaret Akrigg
Paul Athersmith
Wendy Orr
Mavis Nelson
Robin Martakies
Dorothy Dixon
- Guests Linda Joy – Observing tenants committee meeting as expressed an interest on Annual Report Survey.
- Officers in attendance: John Mansergh- Assistant Director of Business Improvement
Lyn Richardson- Community Engagement Officer- Minutes
- Apologies: Trevor Newby, Sue Layfield, Jim Layfield, Stephen Bolton, Loraine Birchall, Kenny Mayo
- Circulation: As above

ACTION

1. Minutes of previous meeting (1st December 2016)

1.1 Agreed as a true record.

2. Matters arising

5.1 Robin Martakies explained that a section of information was missing from the minutes under 5.1 Cost Sharing Vehicle. Robin said that he had received reassurance from the Director of Assets & Investments that the CSV is separate from SLH but he was concerned about what would happen in the event of financial failure on both SLH and tenants. John advised that he would get a formal response which is inserted below;

The CSV has been set up as a limited company, which limits the liability of shareholders to the value of their shares. Technically, SLH owns 85% of the shares but they are valued at a nominal value of only £1 each so the limit of our liability is effectively £85. However, if SLH employs more operatives, there is a risk of the cost of redundancies if it fails. Clearly the damage to our reputation for it failing would have a greater impact.

11.1 - 19th May Tenants' Committee meeting date should read the 18th May 2017.

7.1 There is a typo error and the word 'for' is replaced with 'or'. Correct sentence written below.

A decorating pilot project had been carried out where tenants have the choice to either receive a voucher for between £35 and £50 or an SLH decorator to do it.

Robin Martakies would like further clarification of what is involved in the £600 as this seems like a high cost and why 2 days. Charles Howarth explained that 1 day may be

Lyn R

prep and 1 day is the actual painting job. Lyn Richardson to chase up with Lisa Maguire.

8.2 Typo error the word good to be replaced with reasonable. Correct sentence written below.

*Members felt that the survey result was **reasonable** but in part was a reflection on the changes in sheltered housing and other welfare pressures.*

3.2 There are 2 vacancies on the Board. One due to Sara Brown stepping down and Jonathon Brook who has stood down as there is a conflict of interest with his role as Housing Portfolio holder for South Lakeland District Council. In keeping with the agreement made with Tenants' Committee at the last meeting, the two vacancies will be advertised openly and to take place in February following the agreement from the new Remuneration & Governance Committee.

John Mansergh also asked for Tenants' Committee permission to support asking Sara Brown to be involved in the Scrutiny reviews. All agreed that it would be beneficial to have her involvement. Charles Howarth suggested that those involved in the scrutiny reviews could contribute by writing in and not necessarily by coming to a specific meeting. All agreed that this would be appropriate and would enable those tenants unable to attend meetings to do the review in their own time.

3. Offer Document Promises Report – Quarter 2 Progress Report

John Mansergh presented updates of the offer document under each promise number. There are 5 promises still to complete before March 17

Promise 8- £55m (inclusive of VAT + fees) has been spent over the last 5 years as opposed to the promise of £38m.

Promise 13- The overall target will be met. John explained that when the original promises document was produced SLH only had detailed knowledge of 20% of its stock but now it was at 96%. Only elements (e.g. electrical upgrades) failing the decent homes standard are being 'improved' where required so numbers will vary. SLH has outperformed the promises e.g. number of bathrooms.

Charles Howarth mentioned that 'periodic electrical inspections' have now changed from 5 years to 10 years. He also gave examples of when work has not been recorded properly in the past and in some cases there is no record of when work has been done. JM explained that performance has certainly improved since transfer with a better asset management strategy and a new system for recording servicing data.

Dorothy Dixon asked if a new bathroom is put in and then a tenant leaves and it has been ruined would the tenant then be charged for the replacement. JM confirmed that they would be recharged.

Promise 14 – There will be a small underspend due to the timing of the Waterside estate development/regeneration. This will be utilised in 17/18 rather than to just use the money to meet a promise. All agreed that this is a better use of money.

Several tenants raised the issue regarding communication from SLH staff to tenants and not responding to enquiries. Many issues related to staff not returning phone calls or letting tenants know progress of how their enquiry was going.

John Mansergh explained that there is a new system in place to record communications (via a CRM system) and that there is a meeting this afternoon with senior managers to address some of these issues. He explained that more complex

enquires such as the income issue example given would be dealt with specifically by the relevant person and not by customer service team.

Promise 15,17,34 and 35 are all on target with promise 34 and 35 'completed'.

John Short commented that he is very happy with the terms of reference for the Gap funding Promise 35.

4. Complaints Panel

John Mansergh presented notes from complaints panel meeting which Paul Athersmith and Stephen Bolton attended. He explained that they are still working through Data protection and setting out ground rules.

12 complaints had been received. Due to the low caseload it is envisaged that there is the potential for the panel to look at other areas of dissatisfaction.

Dorothy Dixon mentioned that as 22% of the complaints are from leaseholders perhaps it would be a good idea to get a representative from this group.

Linda Joy asked for clarity on the process for the how a complaint is dealt with and what happens if there is a conflict of interest. John Mansergh explained the process that a complaint follows through the SLH procedure. The complaint would then only come to the complaints panel if the complainant chose to and the board had rejected the complaint.

The panel is seen as a step before going to the Ombudsman which can be a very lengthy process. It also meets the Localism Act by trying to resolve an issue at a local level.

John Short suggested that there needed to be a minimum of 5 on the panel to take into account any illness or conflicts of interest.

Next Meeting scheduled for Thursday 2nd February.

5. Tenant Involvement Policy, Scrutiny Reviews and 2017 Engagement Programme

The tenant Involvement Policy was agreed at the last board meeting in December.

Robin Martakies mentioned that the word 'panel' needs to be removed from the policy and replaced with 'committee' as this was agreed at the December meeting.

Robin Martakies was concerned regarding the consultation of tenants under the section 'change of landlord, or significant management change'. He felt that seeking opinion through a newsletter was not an appropriate way of gaining tenants views and he favoured a ballot or vote. John Mansergh explained that there are no similar rules in place for 'mergers' so a formal ballot was not required. He did commit to meaningful engagement with tenants and advised that the Board would determine consultation requirements at the appropriate time depending on the circumstances and business case. This is a theoretical discussion at the moment but there was every reason to expect tenants to be both informed of the detail and provided with opportunities to make their voice heard ahead of any major decision. He explained that the Board were considering the opportunities of merger which many landlords are doing in part to address concerns of unit costs/value for money.

Dorothy Dixon expressed concerned that SLH is going to be sold out. This is not what was said in 2012 at stock transfer time. John advised that the Board was considering future strategy and how best to deliver new build numbers, better services and

reductions in units costs. He advised that the regulator expects Board's to have a strategy on both merger and partnerships and the CSV was one way by which SLH is addressing this challenge. He mentioned similar mergers involved with stock transfers which took place at the same time as SLH, several of which are designed to achieve better economies and additional development numbers.

Robin Martakies is concerned about 'empire building' and gave an example of where this had gone wrong for the Co-op. He does however feel happy that the Board does have the skills and competencies to prove itself but asked that the Board consults and listen to tenant's opinion.

The Tenants Committee viewed the Tenant Engagement Plan for 2017 and approved it. They also agreed that things can be moved around as and when required depending on needs at the time.

John Mansergh presented a document on Service reviews in particular highlighting section 2.4 which explains the process. The service area reviews will have input directly from management teams and outcomes will be presented to the board. This will require a cultural change by SLH but it is hoped that managers will see the benefits of this type of review. It also fits in with managers who have been tasked with reviewing their area. The scrutiny review process was agreed.

6. Board Minutes

No specific comments were raised other than the item previously discussed in relation to 'mergers'.

7. Members Reports

No specific reports.

8. Any other business

Dorothy Dixon explained that when using the website she is unable to view her rent account. John Mansergh explained that tenants can pay rent online but not view their account. The latter required further development of the new Civica Cx system which should be available in the system release planned for April 2017 – John mentioned that this would require sufficient testing and was reluctant to place a date on the online message to tenants. He will keep Tenants' Committee informed about the results of the system testing and reported back nearer the time on a delivery date.

9 Date of next meeting

9th March 2017 – 10.30am Windermere Suite

The meeting closed at 12:30hrs.