

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES

10:30am Thursday 9th November 17 held in the
Windermere Suite, Bridge Mills, Kendal

Present: Stephen Bolton (Chair)
Charles Howarth
John Short
Paul Athersmith
Sue Layfield
Jim Layfield
Dorothy Dixon
Lorraine Birchall (Part)
June Peckston
Win Sayers

Guests N/A

Staff in attendance: Lyn Richardson - Community Engagement Officer- Minutes
John Mansergh – Assistant Director (Quality & Performance)
James Nevett - Health and Safety Manager
Cath Purdy – Chief Executive (part)
Gordon Sisson – Sheltered Housing Manager (Part)
Jamie Chacko -Team Leader (Independent Living Team) (Part- to observe)

Apologies: Mavis Nelson, Wendy Orr, Kenny Mayo

Circulation: As above

ACTION

1. Minutes of previous meeting (14th September 2017)

1.1 Agreed as a true record.

2. Matters arising

No matters arising

3. Chief Executive update

Cath Purdy informed the group that over the last few months there have been a number of developments and changes within Government Policy which in the main have been positive for Housing Associations. Significantly after 2020 Housing Association's will be able to put up rents which is currently not the case. The Government are going back to the previous national formula for Housing Associations rent setting which is calculated as the rent, plus an inflation element, plus 1%.

South Lakes Housing still has 2 years to continue with the 1% per year rent cut and this will mean that in 2020 rents will still be much lower than they could have been.

The removal of the proposed Local Housing Allowance Cap for sheltered residents has now been abolished. In certain circumstances if the Rent Cap had gone ahead then some tenants' benefits would not have covered their rent and service charges. This would mean that the tenancy would be unsustainable.

Due to the Rent Cap being put into place many Housing Associations put on hold or stopped their building programmes for sheltered schemes which was not expected by the Government. The removal of the Rent Cap will allow Housing Associations to now go ahead and build as there is less uncertainty.

Driven by Grenfell Tower Independent Government enquiry, there is now an ongoing root and branch review of Social Housing. The Housing Minister is currently touring the country speaking to tenant representatives and Housing Providers. Looking at what works well and what policies are effective. Stephen and Loraine will be representing SLH tenants at an event this afternoon in Preston

Cath reiterated that South Lakes Housing always needs Tenant Committee support and help in decision making.

Win asked why 5 properties are empty at Yewbarrow Lodge? Is it because of the proposal of the Benefit Cap? John Short commented that there were none advertised on the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) service. Cath explained to keep an open mind as sheltered needs and services are changing and will continue to change and develop. Also if properties have been on CBL for a while they can be taken off and then put back on to be made look more appealing. Charles Howarth explained that a lot of people do not want 1 bedroom properties as they may be a single parent and still want somewhere for their children to stay.

Cath explained that there are new developments in the pipeline which the Committee have previously endorsed as a priority. This ties in with the loss of housing stock through Right to Buy and reducing the higher costs associated with reducing Housing stock.

4. Health and Safety in the stock

James Nevett did a presentation on Health and Safety with the main focus around the Legal requirements of a landlord. These fall into 5 specific areas; Gas Safety Certificate, Legionella Risk Assessment, Fire/Carbon monoxide detection, Energy Performance Certificate and Asbestos Register.

The Gas safety certificate checks are carried out every 10 months as there is a 12-month window to complete them. This gives a cushion of 2 months to make sure that it is done as it can sometimes be difficult to access a tenant's property. An independent Auditor is sent a 10% sample of the certificates of which 5% are physically visited and checked for compliance. To date SLH has 100% compliance rate.

To minimise the risk of Legionella a number of surveys have taken place on all areas of risk. This is mainly communal areas in Cat 1 and Cat 2 schemes which had random taps or open pipes, these have now been removed or capped. John S reported that the Legionella checks are regularly carried out every 3 months with flushing of water systems taking place. James also commented that the ILO do weekly checks such as flushing all water systems in guest rooms or communal kitchen areas.

Currently under Fire detection, notices in communal areas are being replaced. In light of the Grenfell Tower incident SLH is embarking on Fire drills in sheltered schemes between now and Feb.

James explained that guidance from the Health and Safety Executive shows that Asbestos can be managed in place. However, if the asbestos is in poor condition or disturbed and cannot be encapsulated then it must be removed. There is only a legal obligation to commercial areas regarding asbestos but SLH has taken the stance to be stringent in all areas of its stock.

James reinforced that this is why it is important for tenants to ask for permission for works in their home, so that we can advise whether there may be issues around asbestos and offer further guidance so that it helps keep the tenant safe.

James also explained that there are a number of implied requirements; Electrical Inspection Condition Report, Solid Fuel Appliance Report, Estate Tree Survey Register, Asbestos Management Surveys and Severe Event Management. These requirements although not prescribed are identified as the best practice to achieve stated outcomes.

Under Electrical Inspection Condition report, we had 29 homes that were outstanding but due to a change in the inspection period reducing to 5 years there is now a backlog of 500 properties.

Under Estate tree surveys SLH has been catching up with a lack of maintenance in this area by completing a number of surveys by an Arboriculturalist. As these surveys are taking place any immediate work is dealt with as soon as practicable. Any recommendations from the surveys are carried out and if possible, work is grouped together to reduce cost. Jim L asked if we work in partnership with the Local Authority regarding trees. James explained that this often happens and with other organisations. He gave the example of working with Network Rail as some trees were starting to overhang the railway and potentially affect the electrical wires.

Severe weather events are now planned for in a much detailed and co-ordinated way. Response plans can now be issued to all relevant staff depending on the severity of the event. Amber plans have been issued already this year.

The Committee thanked James for his informative presentation.

5. Storage and charging of mobility vehicles and Sheltered Guest Room Policy

Gordon Sisson presented 2 policies as there have been no solid policies in these two areas for a number of years.

There has been a huge growth in the number of motorised vehicles used with 70% being used as a lifestyle choice rather than actually having a disability. A Fire Risk Assessment has been undertaken by Savills and SLH have developed a fair and equitable policy.

Charles asked about what he would do if hypothetically he wanted one. Gordon explained that the policy is based on Communal arrears such as sheltered and general needs for example Helm Close. Savills identified that motorised vehicles were left in stairwells and also cables going through letter boxes to multiple sockets. Cat 2 schemes have isolated electricity points to an outside source. Also the charge points are only available from 8am to 7pm so that they cannot be overcharged. This process cannot be changed as the controls are kept in a locked cupboard.

In the future anyone with a motorised vehicle who is allocated a space will be charged and for their power use.

John S referred to the document expressed that tenants must be insured. A cat 3 vehicle must be registered with DVLA and they will sent out free a type of tax disc which must be displayed.

Gordon added that although he has not shared this at the meeting there is a formal process to follow which includes an Application form which can be approved, denied or compliance. This will be checked annually.

Dorothy queried 2.5 around 'Assistance with improvements' and the difficulty to implement this. Gordon was in agreement with this.

The policy is going to be imposed retrospectively so there will be help for those that currently have a motorised vehicle.

There has been a complete review of the Sheltered Guest Room Policy as it needs to be fit for purpose. It was set up originally to allow families to visit relatives and the room was charged at £10 per night. Due to the misuse of room with people leaving and not paying, or using it as holiday accommodation it has been necessary to update the policy.

The policy now presents a fair and correct usage with the cost still £10 per person per night but there is an additional fee of £36 for professional cleaners. This is a significant change as cleaning and tidying the room was always the hirer's responsibility. There are now 2 changes of bedding, with this laundered to a high standard and a room booking calendar so that there is not duplication of reservations. There is a maximum of 5 night's stay but this can be longer at the discretion of the Independent Living Officers.

John S felt that this was a good and necessary policy and asked if 6.10 regarding pets not being allowed could be out in bold to reinforce the message.

The Committee endorsed their support for both policies and thanked Gordon and Jamie for their attendance.

6. 2nd Quarter Performance Report

John M reported to the Committee on the latest performance report.

The tenant portal has now undergone a cyber security check and has shown that there are a number of recommendations that need to take place before the system goes live to tenants. A further cyber test will take place as it cannot be assumed that because the actions to rectify the recommendations have been completed that this removes the risk. It needs independently testing again. A small group of tenants will be selected to use the portal prior to it going live to all tenants. It is essential that it is working effectively so that it does not breach tenant security. The likely date for completion is early 2018.

There is some work to do around short-term staff sickness and this is being reviewed and monitored through performance meetings with managers.

Following best practice, legal, insurance and board advice, SLH will now pay for the supply and fit of all the fire doors to 38 Leasehold properties that are not currently fitted with satisfactory fire related rated doors. This decision follows consultation and advice from insurer and the Board. This policy is to protect the health and safety of tenants, it will enhance 'stay put' evacuation procedures and will hopefully provide reassurance for all residents in the block.

There has been a recent customer satisfactory survey carried out which shows that SLH is higher (79.9) than the UK Customer Satisfaction Index (78.2). This is much higher than the Housing Association average (70.7). Points to note are that General needs tenants are now more satisfied than Sheltered Housing housing tenants which traditionally has not been the case. The changes to sheltered housing continues to percolate through other satisfaction surveys. There were several key issues identified to improve customer service including; empathy of staff, dealing quickly with problems/complaints and being kept informed of decisions or progress. This will be reflected in a revised action plan and new staff training which is being commissioned.

7. Service standard monitoring

As the offer document has now been signed off it has been agreed that services still need to be monitored. This has resulted in the Service Standard Monitoring report which has been developed from the Tenant Scrutiny Group and endorsed by Tenants Committee. The work that has been undertaken on this has been welcomed and has been endorsed by the Board at their meeting in October. Within the document there are a lot of further actions to be done and some of the promises require additional processes to be developed to enable better reporting.

Charles drew attention to the Rent Standard (1) and asked why this is coloured amber when rent statements have not been sent to tenants and the portal is not available to tenants either. John M gave some background as to why they had not been sent which included the new system double counting some balances so a decision was taken not to publish them. This has now been rectified. This relates mainly to those tenants that transferred from a starter tenancy to an assured tenancy. It was agreed that this needs to be changed to 'red' until a statement is sent out after Christmas. John agreed to discuss the matter with the management team later in the day and it was confirmed that rent statements will be sent out in January 2018. JM

John S asked that when these statements are sent out could the service charges be broken down for tenants. AK

Dorothy D commented that on Leaseholder statements this is already clearly identified and broken down.

Referring to pg. 11, John S is pleased to see the request for succession procedure is being reviewed in 2018.

This document will be presented at every meeting to review and monitor.

8. Improvement work scrutiny groups

The next scrutiny group will be looking at Improvement works and will focus on elements such as; How often do we change kitchens, how often do we paint, how customers are informed and communicated etc.

The initial meeting will look at the scope and who to invite. The next meeting will look at the data and speak to relevant managers. The last meeting will approve the report. In total, this should be around 6 hours work.

June Peckston, Paul Athersmith, Charles Howarth, Sue and Jim Layfield agreed that they would like to be involved.

The proposed dates do not currently work for this group so new dates, preferably on a Thursday will be issued to this group. Lyn will sort the diary dates out.

9. October board minutes

John M outlined the discussions held at the October Board meeting. He advised that the Board had considered the latest progress on CH&PS and received an update on the regulator's latest sector risk report. He highlighted that the regulator is reminding Boards of their responsibilities under health and safety and highlighted emergence and emphasis on quality of home and engaging with residents. The Committee welcomed this new approach.

John highlighted that the CH&PS progress report would be presented again in December with further financial detail which has been requested by the Board. John mentioned that whilst performance and customer satisfaction KPIs look good, there

was a concern about productivity as the volume of work was not as expected. John will provide further details at the next meeting.

JM

Charles asked about the shareholder membership review. John advised that shareholder membership is going to be reviewed following the outcomes of the last Board AGM. He recalled that there are examples of shareholders who have never attended an AGM so that was the sort of thing likely to be covered in the review. With this in mind a review of this process will take place in early 2018, led by the Board. If changes were to take place these would have to be agreed at the next AGM in September 2018.

Stephen Bolton was confirmed as a new shareholder at the October Board meeting.

11. Members' Reports

Dorothy D reported on the last meeting of the Cumbria and North Lancashire Tenants and Residents Participation Forum held an awareness day on Sheltered services at Mill Gardens in Kirkby Stephen. The presentation by Gill Walton (Eden Housing Association) explained a number of services available to tenants and how Extra Care schemes work. It was well attended and tenants got a lot of information from the day.

Dorothy advised that it was agreed at the last meeting of the group that a clearer agenda is required with specific 'awareness days' identified. Dorothy explained that a group of SLH tenants had met with Lyn R to discuss an action plan for the group for 2018. This will be presented at the November meeting.

Stephen informed the Committee about the work of the latest Complaints Panel which went well. The group is now ready to become an official group and registered with the Housing Ombudsman. This is because the group have been working through a retracted complaint and their investigative questions and decisions have mirrored what has happened with the live case so confidence is there. John advised that there will still some procedural elements to address at the next meeting first before formal registration took place.

12 Any other Business

Lyn R presented the statistics and comments from the Annual Report 2018.

39 completed surveys

35 tenants Enjoyed reading the report 4 people did not

30 Would like to receive one in the post next year 9 would not like to receive one

16 tenants would like to get more involved

A brief discussion followed around how to attract younger tenants to the Tenants Committee.

Stephen Bolton and Loraine Birchall are due to attend the Ministerial visit at Preston North End later today. They will provide feedback to John M.

SB and
LB

13 Proposed dates of the 2018 TC Meetings

The dates below were agreed by committee and to be published on the SLH website.

18th January, 8th March, 10th May, 12th July, 13th Sept AGM, 22nd November

The meeting closed at 12.40pm.