

## **SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES**

10:30am Thursday 10th May 18 held in the  
Windermere Suite, Bridge Mills, Kendal

Present: Stephen Bolton (Chair)  
Charles Howarth (part)  
Wendy Orr  
Paul Athersmith  
Dorothy Dixon  
John Short  
Lorraine Birchall  
Mavis Nelson

Guests N/A

Staff in attendance: Lyn Richardson - Community Engagement Officer- Minutes  
John Mansergh – Assistant Director (Quality & Performance)  
Cath Purdy- Chief Executive (part)  
Fiona Harrison – Customer Services Manager

Apologies: Sue and Jim Layfield, Win Sayers, Kenny Mayo, June Peckston

As above

### **ACTION**

#### **1. Minutes of previous meeting (8th March 2018)**

Agreed as a true record.

#### **2. Matters arising**

No matters arising

#### **3. Business priorities and governance update**

Cath reported that 2017/18 had been a positive year and SLH finances are in good health due to the refinancing deal. Cath is due to report to shareholders through the Annual Report that SLH is in a strong financial position at year end. This is due to meeting loan payments and staying within the lending covenants. This has resulted in some head room in financial plans to build more homes which is in line with Tenants' Committee recommendation.

24 homes were built in 2017/18 and it is hoped that there will be 100 homes completed within the subsequent years to follow. This figure will always change due to weather conditions, planning permission and many other factors. In line with building new homes there will be bigger expenditure which will be paid for over a 30-year period through rents.

Although SLH is embarking on an ambitious building programme it will still continue day to day functions and is committed to investing c£4m pa in maintaining existing homes.

The main priority for the year ahead is responding to the fall in customer satisfaction. The need has been reinforced but the feedback we have received from staff and failure to meet the Gold standard Investors in People award. This is going to require a change in culture and the development of managers and team leaders to improve their people skills and improve communication both internally and with customers. This should then cascade through to customers so that staff are more responsive and empathetic to customer needs.

Stephen asked where the new development sites are located? Cath responded that a number of sites are being looked at by talking to private landowners, councillors and private developers. The sites are spread throughout South Lakes and SLH is also looking at sites in North Lancashire.

SLH has signed up to the 'Rural Pledge' which is campaign run by the National Housing Federation which commits to building housing in rural areas even if the costs associated with this are higher.

John Holmes' position as Chair has come to an end on 1<sup>st</sup> May. The Board were not inundated with applications for Chair and through feedback Cath believes this is due to lack of remuneration for the position.

The Board approved Ian Munro as the new Chair. He has previously been the Chief Executive of New Charter Housing and has a wealth of experience in the sector.

Lyn

Ian Munro is invited to the next Tenants' Committee meeting and John S confirmed that any SLH chair is welcome to attend any meeting and does not require a specific invite.

There is also a vacancy on the Board which will be advertised in the next few weeks. The Board is hoping to recruit someone with a finance or treasury background as SLH is borrowing £40m and needs to be reassured that this is being monitored correctly.

Hilda Kaponda is going to be replacing Lindsay's position as an interim on 4<sup>th</sup> June. She will be with the organisation for at least 6 months which will give time for a review of current structure as there are many elements to it.

Cath apologised that she has not yet completed the review of the Shareholder Policy.

John Holmes currently remains on the Board as a representative of SLDC. The Council are due to meet in a couple of weeks to agree their nominations to SLH Board.

Dorothy asked why Housing Officers do not have patches anymore and why this is the case as it is confusing for tenants. Cath explained that staff now worked under specialisms whether this is Allocations, Financial Inclusion or Tenancy Management. If tenants ring the Customer Services team then they will answer the enquiry or if necessary refer it to the relevant person.

There were a few comments about the lowering of customer satisfaction due to the changes of the sheltered service and not having a dedicated scheme manager. Cath confirmed that it would not revert back to the old approach as this was not affordable by residents and would make the service unviable. It was suggested that some staff were equally unhappy with the arrangements, Cath said that this was not what staff were telling her as they had been extremely positive about the new set up.

#### **4. Decant Policy**

Fiona explained that the new policy applies to general, leaseholder and sheltered tenants. It falls into two parts, one as a temporary decant where you return to your home and as a permanent decant where you are moved to a different property from your original home. In these cases the tenant and other household members are supported through the process and necessary provisions made.

There is an option for compensation which could include redirecting post, hiring removal vehicles, disconnection and reconnection of a gas or electrical cooker and other similar costs.

There is also a Home Loss Payment where the move is permanent and they are an assured tenant and have occupied the property as their sole or main residence for a period of one year or more prior to the date of displacement. It is paid per household not per individual.

There were several questions around the support for tenants who are temporarily decanted. How does SLH support tenants when the property is being repaired due to the tenant's negligence in not allowing access or reporting repairs? Fiona explained that to try and prevent this happening again they access the relevant agencies to support the tenant and enter into an acceptable behaviour contract.

There other questions related to the insurance and Fiona clarified that Susan Gardner who is our specialist in this area was happy with its content.

#### **5. Estate walkabouts**

Fiona explained that estate walkabouts are going to be relaunched and that none had taken place in 2017 due to lots of staff changes and the retirement of the previous coordinator.

Previously the estate walkabouts have been problematic in that tenants had high expectations of what we could achieve when the reality was often that many of the issues raised were not in our remit. So moving forward SLH need to look at a better way to engage with our communities so that it benefits everyone. This will involve a more focused approach and linking with the new Asset Management Strategy. The walkabouts will focus on paths, walls, trees, fencing, lighting and garage sites. At the moment the following areas have been identified as looking more tired and in need of attention; Helm Close, Owlet Ash Fields, Ryleyfield, Ullswater Close and Hall Park.

Lorraine explained that maybe this needed to be linked up as the Parish Councils already do estate walkabouts and there may be an opportunity for partnership working.

Dorothy commented that on Waterside there are 3 or 4 properties that are affecting the whole area. SLH has stepped in but then once they have resolved the issue then the tenant goes back to the old ways e.g. untidy gardens. Neighbourhood Officers have now been trained in ASB Action so could therefore enforce a gardening injunction where appropriate.

Several questions followed around Grounds Maintenance and the contract with Continental Landscapes. Tenants Committee asked for some clarity around how grounds maintenance is monitored as previously there have been monitors and surveys in place to rate the work done.

The Committee approved the general approach to estate walkabouts and getting maximum value for money from the resources that SLH can allocate to them.

Lyn

## 6. **Draft Scrutiny Report 'Improvement Works'**

John explained that one of the key aspects of the scrutiny reviews was to provide the Board with assurance over compliance with the national regulatory standards. The latest scrutiny group considered the standards around 'Improvement works'. The scrutiny panel went well with some good and relevant discussions resulting in a number of questions for managers.

All 7 recommendations have been accepted by SLH and John M will be presenting this report to the June Board meeting. John reiterated that any member from the scrutiny panel can present to the Board or attend if they would like to.

Charles asked about annual gas boilers and the identified kitchens that were not up to current standards in relation to cooker spaces. John M advised that this did not mean that the property was not compliant with gas safety but that the standards had been raised since the installation. He would ask Lisa to report to the next meeting.

Lisa M

The Committee thanked June, Paul, Jim and Sue Layfield for their excellent scrutiny work.

## 7. **Data Privacy Policy and Presentation**

John gave a presentation on SLH Data Protection and Data Privacy Policy covering data protection principles, what information we collect and why, the lawful basis for processing personal data, the risks of losing data, your rights and the Information Commissioners Office Enforcement Powers.

John gave several examples of data breaches in particular and the requirements to report to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). John advised that more detail is available within the Privacy page at the bottom of the SLH website.

John asked the Committee if they are happy for minutes to be put on the SLH website as they are named. All voted in favour for this to continue and agreed that there was no need to complete individual consents.

## 8. **Privacy Impact Assessment ' My Account'**

A Privacy Impact Assessment screening has been used on 'My Account', which is the new online portal for tenants and leaseholders, enabling them to access information about themselves and their household.

The Privacy Risk Assessment is rated 'high' as the service is available over the web for customers to access. This represents a cyber security risk and password setting and control issues.

Through the testing stage there were a few recommendations to address; weak email and security question change functionality, no account lock out and missing capture code. These issues have now been resolved.

There was some discussion amongst the group around their experiences of logging on to 'My Account'. Loraine queried how long data is kept on 'My Account' at the end of a tenancy? Further questions around the speed of logging on, how to report repairs, how to look at rent statements were addressed.

Paul

John Short commented on how effective accessing his rent statement had been on 'My Account' which only took 3 minutes from logging on to printing off.

Charles asked about where 'My Account' can be accessed such as Morrisons WiFi, is it secure or not? Where should I open 'my Account' needs to be explained to tenants and leaseholders when it is launched.

Paul

The Committee approved that PIA and recommended that the portal will be launched to new tenants and available to all current tenants as soon as the initial speed issues had been resolved. It will not be widely publicised at first so that any issues can be resolved before a thorough launch. Tenants will be told about 'My Account' through the next rent statements.

## **9. Summary of April Board meeting**

To clarify, Tenants Committee will no longer be getting Board minutes as they include a lot of commercially sensitive information and if this was taken out it would make the minutes less than meaningful.

John gave an update of the previous Board meeting when they approved the appointment of a new Chair, following an extensive recruitment process. Ian Munro who is already an existing Board member Director will take up the post on the 1<sup>st</sup> May.

The Board approved

- The appointment of John Mansergh as Company Secretary.
- A Risk Appetite Statement and new Strategic Risk Reporting template.
- A Revised Financial Plan which was very robust, able to deliver the Board's development ambition and subject to rigorous stress testing.
- A Treasury Management Strategy.
- An updated Asset Management Strategy.

The following reports were noted

- February Finance Report.
- Draft Audit & Risk Committee minutes from March 2018.

The Board summary notes are available on the SLH website.

## **10. Rethinking social housing feedback**

John reported that the consultation 'Rethinking Social Housing' was now complete and that contributions from Tenants Committee, staff and the Board were very helpful. Each group had a different take on the questions and how they were interpreted.

SLH was the first to complete the consultation from Cumbria and send back into the Chartered Institute of Housing.

## **11. Members Reports**

*Tenants Scrutiny Repairs* - The panel are due to meet after this meeting and will be reporting to the next Committee meeting. This has included a review of the aids and adaptations process.

*Cumbria and North Lancashire Forum* - There is an awareness day around Universal Credit on 20<sup>th</sup> June at Kendal Rugby Club. Dorothy explained that the Forum is proactive and that further awareness days are planned this year.

*Complaints Panel* - Stephen reported that the group met on the 19<sup>th</sup> April and looked at 2 redacted cases one being around appointments and the other around a roof repair. The next meeting is planned for the 5<sup>th</sup> July. The group are still trying to register with the Ombudsman which has been ongoing since Dec17.

*Dowkers Lane Development* - Dorothy explained that the opening had gone well and that all are now fully occupied. She felt that they were very spacious and well designed. She also felt that the contractors had been really good.

Dorothy's only criticism was that the event was marginalised by SLDC and that SLH did not get the full credit. John explained that SLDC had put £1million into the scheme which was half the cost so it was right for them to be there. A Board member had also mentioned that it would be nice to see others launching it e.g. local school group.

Lindsay Simons will be leaving SLH at the end of May and was presented with flowers from Tenants Committee.

**13 Next Meeting- 12<sup>th</sup> July 10.30am-12.30pm Windermere Suite**

The meeting closed at 12:55pm