

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

10:30am Thursday 22nd November 18 held in the  
Windermere Suite, Bridge Mills, Kendal

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

Guests N/A

Staff in attendance: Lyn Richardson - Community Engagement Officer- Minutes  
John Mansergh – Assistant Director (Quality & Performance)  
Ian Munro- Chair SLH Board  
Cath Purdy- Chief Executive  
Elaine Glennon- Asset Manager (part)  
Lisa Maguire- Business Analyst (part)

Apologies: Wendy Orr, Mavis Nelson

Circulation: As above

### **ACTION**

- 1. Minutes of previous Meeting (13<sup>th</sup> September 18)**  
Agreed as a true record.

- 2. Matters arising**

Amendment to Minutes 'Let Go service' run by Impact Housing but is now run by Women Aid should read, 'Let Go Service' previously run by Impact Housing is now run by Victim Support and organised by Women Aid.

Lyn R

- 3. Ian Munro- Chair of SLH Board**

Ian retired in March from a large Housing Association in Manchester which under his leadership went from 14,000 homes to 20,000. He decided to retire at the point of merger.

Ian had previously held the position Director of Housing when working for the council which went through a similar journey to SLH in terms of going through a stock transfer.

Ian is interested in SLH in terms of its geographical area and how it operates but also in terms of how our estates look and how we can make them better quality (look/feel).

Ian was appointed in September 2017 to the SLH Board and subsequently in May 2018 was chosen by his peers to Chair the Board.

The Regulator will be doing an In-depth Assessment (IDA) on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan and Ian feels that SLH is already well positioned for this. In terms of Regulation Ian feels that previous governments have moved away from Consumer Standards but with the Housing Green Paper there is feeling that this will become more important again.

#### **4. Organisation and Governance**

Cath explained that it is important that the Board has the right skills and this is something that the Regulator will be focusing on.

Having sought independent advice on remuneration it is evident that SLH is outdated compared to many other Associations. The type of remuneration would be low, starting at £2,000-£3,000 and being slightly higher for Chair. The Board approved the principle of remuneration which will come into effect from April 19. It is hoped that this will ensure that SLH attracts and also retains the right calibre of Board member.

On the subject of shareholding there are 20 shareholders not on the Board who have very little dialogue with SLH. SLH would like to review its shareholder policy and has formally agreed that there will be no new shareholders who are not Board members until this has been done. It has been discussed that board directors become shareholders of SLH which would result in more meaningful engagement.

Charles disagreed with the approach as the Board will no longer be held to account by other shareholders. Cath acknowledged that particular view, but explained that the Board desired a more transparent and meaningful engagement earlier on rather than at the final AGM stage. John M advised that the Financial Report is already available online which is often the document which shareholders valued.

SLH is currently looking at a loan facility with SLDC and it will be going to Cabinet next week. The loans will start at £6 million but the hope is that once performance has been shown this will move to £15 million.

Cath also mentioned that SLH is having conversations with Eden Housing Association around how each Association works and whether there could be any collaboration. Cath is clear that this is not a merger and currently just looking at how each Association operates. There may be benefits of merging but equally it may be more appropriate for each to stay independent.

Cath also welcomed Stephen onto the Board.

Jim suggested that a paper be presented so that TC can look at it properly at how the new Shareholding Policy might look.

#### **5. Draft Energy Efficiency Strategy**

Elaine Glennon introduced the draft Energy Efficiency Strategy which is a starting point for achieving our goals of Band E by 2020, Band D by 2025, B and C by 2030 as a minimum. Our average is currently Band D (67.8) but we only have 50% of properties surveyed. We have 9 properties in bands F and G which need to be improved as a priority. We will target works to these properties and extrapolate data to identify the lowest performing stock for survey first. We will aim to have 100% survey by 2025 (5 years) whilst targeting the lowest performing stock at the same time. We will stipulate the use of energy efficient components in the Home Standard and seek Grant Funding for larger measures such as Photovoltaic panels (PVs) and Air source heat pumps (ASHP). Funding under ECO 3 is due to be announced. We will also start to incorporate fuel poverty assessments into income assessments at sign up and during client contact and at sign ups.

Elaine asked the committee *'Some tenants refuse measures (such as gas boilers) should we mark these as tenant refusals and discount them from the stock's average score?'*

The general agreement was that SLH should push as hard as it can regarding tenants who refuse energy improvements to their home. If they still refuse then they should be taken out of the true average. Loraine felt that if the energy efficiency was due to a safety concern or maybe someone's mental health capacity then it should just be done.

Some stock (traditional built) cannot be improved in line with the Government targets. Elaine asked *'What are Tenants Committee's feelings of these properties, should we dispose of them or retain them and accept they have high fuel running costs?'*

The Committee felt that these should be disposed of but replaced with another property in that locality (if possible). Dorothy asked that if this happened how you would get people to move? Elaine explained that they could use the dispersal option appraisal policy. John Short commented that School Knott was once sheltered and that this was changed to be more appropriate for tenants. This took over 2 years but has resulted in a lovely development.

## **6. Home Standard**

Elaine sought the Committee's views on revising the SLH Home Standard. This forms part of the Asset Management Strategy and sets out the standards that tenants can expect for major improvements (such as roofs). It is in line with the Decent Homes Standard and sets out lifecycles which were largely agreed at stock transfer. The standard is supported by the 5-year Investment Plan which is currently under review. We would like to look at moving the kitchen lifespan from 15 years to 20 years in line with industry standards. This will provide a budget saving of 9m over 30 years which could be invested in other areas such as our estates. All our kitchens are currently surveyed before they are replaced using 15 years as a trigger. If they are in good condition they are marked for re-survey in a year or two. Many kitchens are already exceeding 15 years and repair costs are fairly low (12k per annum) for 201 repairs.

The Tenant scrutiny panel for Improvements met in March 18 and endorsed a review of kitchen lifecycles. Elaine asked the group their thoughts on the lifecycle of kitchens and should we be investing in our estates, through work such as render painting/wrapping and increasing our standards in this area instead.

Charles suggested that coloured render such be used instead of painting the render every few years as this would last a lot longer although the initial cost would be higher. The money saved could be used to put solar panels on all south facing roofs.

Loraine commented that Castles and Coasts have a longer 30 years kitchen and bathroom replacement cycle. This seems quite a significant leap and worth investigating as to if this is currently what they are doing.

Lyn R

## **7. Service Standard Monitoring**

Lisa took the Committee through the latest monitoring document and noted that there has been good improvement across the board. The anti-social behaviour target is currently off target but there are plans in place to improve this.

Charles raised under 5.7 he mentioned that the asbestos letter that is sent out is quite frightening and insistent. Charles has been asked to bring in the letter to Lisa M to review. Lisa explained that there have been a lot of problems with tenants not letting people in and the asbestos report has to be done before the works can start.

Lisa M

Under point 7.3 Charles raised that tenants had previously been involved in the assessment of the Grounds Maintenance contract. It was explained that this still takes place with sheltered housing but was not done with general needs due to lack of volunteers and it not being productive. Lyn R explained that this has been reviewed at the Tenant Scrutiny group and would be included in the Scrutiny Report for Estate Management.

5.10 (Minor and Major Adaptions) is under review at the moment as there have been problems with contractors so more stringent controls are now being put into place. E.g can you do the work specified in the time that we require.

## **8. STAR Survey update**

John updated the Committee on the results of the latest independent customer satisfaction survey. The last survey in 2016 was conducted when there had been a lot of changes within sheltered scheme service which had led to lower satisfaction. The current survey results show a 3% improvement with over 800 tenants completing the survey. The result 71% views listened and acted upon shows that there is still a way to go and room for improvement. All 7 major areas reviewed have improved from between 1%-8%.

It was agreed to bring the detailed report to the January meeting.

John M

There was widespread comment that Gordon and his team had turned around the perception of changes to sheltered housing and that this service was now thriving. This is down to him and his team's effort turning this around as for a few years it was very negative and seen as not going to work. Lyn agreed to pass the compliment on to Gordon and the team.

Lyn R

Dorothy asked about the change to a 52 week rent year instead of 48 and how that had been received by tenants. John advised that Steve (Head of Housing) has previously reported on this and it has been positively accepted. There are a couple of tenants who are still on the 48 week following their feedback to the consultation.

## **9. Mental Health Training**

In light of the recent Complaints Panel review of complaints trends, there is an increased awareness that many tenants have mental health problems. Due to this Lisa is going to look into Mental Health Awareness Training for tenants to help them when making decisions.

It was agreed by all the Committee that this type of training would benefit all those on Tenants Committee and not just those represented on the Complaints Panel. Tenants would prefer either a morning or afternoon session on a Thursday.

Lisa M

## **10. A summary of September Board meeting**

John confirmed that the Board summary is always available on the SLH website for tenants to view.

John explained that the Chair of SLH had attended a Housing Summit in which the Prime Minister shared her appreciation for the work that Housing Associations do.

The Board has approved the latest round of developments with plans for over 300+ homes in the next 4 years. This includes the Ulverston Town Hall, High Sparrowmire Lane, Boon Town, Parkside Road together with S106 schemes.

There was also a discussion around remuneration as previously mentioned in Cath's update (section 4).

The Board also reviewed a range of reports including Shareholder Policy, Strategy and Policy Framework, Disposal and stock option Appraisal Policy, Assets and Liabilities Register, Stock Condition report, CH&PS update.

## 11. Estate Management Scrutiny update

Lyn explained that the last scrutiny meeting which involved interviewing managers had gone really well.

The next meeting is planned for the 20<sup>th</sup> Dec and will focus on the report that will be presented to the Board in February 19.

## 12. Members Reports

*Cumbria and North Lancashire Forum* – There has been an Awareness Day on Scrutiny Training which was well attended from Lancaster City Council, Eden and South Lakes Housing. Tenants felt that they got a lot out of the day and something useful that they could take back to their Scrutiny Panels.

*Housing Green Paper* – Charles attended the Green Paper Networking conference at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. There was a summary of the Housing Green Paper before tenants moved into smaller groups to look specifically at one of the following areas; Effective Complaints Resolution, ensuring Homes are Safe and Decent and Empowering Residents.

Charles also attended the *Effective Complaints Resolution* which asked questions around opportunities for landlords and residents to resolve disputes locally. Also looking at reducing the 8 week waiting time to take the complainant to the Ombudsman or the role of the designated persons (Tenant Panel, MP or Councillor) altogether?

Cath asked if there was any mention of League tables as this is currently being talked about. There was nothing specifically mentioned but Tenants' Committee members commented that it would not be fair for SLH to be compared to large Inner City Housing Associations.

It was agreed that when all the evaluations forms for the conference have been sent back the results will be shared with Tenants' Committee.

Lyn R

Charles also commented that enforcement powers of the regulator should be applicable for registered and unregistered providers.

Win explained that she had been to the previous Green Paper Consultation but was unable to get all her points across to the Housing Minister so she wrote to him afterwards. He did reply addressing the points that she raised about 'Buy to Rent' and the effect that this has on rural communities such as Cumbria.

*Complaints Panel* – The Panel fed in views to the Placeshapers' group of Housing Associations and their response to the Green Paper. There has been some criticism of the Ombudsman to deal with complaints and it has been suggested that they should prioritise complaints specifically around Health and Safety and say that they will deal with them over 6 weeks. There still seems to be a stigma regarding making a

complaint with older people feeling they will receive a reduced service if they do and younger people have unrealistic expectations and are more likely to use different channels e.g. social media.

**13. AOB**

Lorraine B commented that she would like to thank the staff that attended the 'Meet and Greet event' with staff last Thursday. It was a great opportunity for both staff and Board to meet each other.

Lyn asked that if any future events arose regarding the Green Paper who would be interested, June Peckston, Charles Howarth and Lorraine Birchall are all interested.

The meeting closed at 12:15hrs.