

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE

10:30am Thursday 9th May 19 held in the
Windermere Suite, Bridge Mills, Kendal

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

Guests N/A

Staff in attendance: Lyn Richardson - Community Engagement Officer- Minutes
John Mansergh - Assistant Director (Quality & Performance)
Fiona Harrison- Tenancy Manager

Apologies: Win Sayers

Circulation: As above

ACTION

1. Minutes of previous Meeting (7th March 19)

Agreed as a true record.

Minutes to go on the SLH website.

JM

2. Matters arising

Jim raised an issue around the wording for commitment 7 of the Together with Tenants document. John explained that the SLH wording was submitted on the online questionnaire and hopefully this will be considered by the NHF. There may be other opportunities to influence it later.

3. Estate walkabout

Last year SLH undertook an estate survey of all the housing stock across the district. This included looking at the property but also other factors such as litter on the street, street lighting, and general look and feel of the area. The information has now been reported to the Board who will now look at what areas to prioritise.

Fiona explained that the Tenancy Management Team will be conducting some estate walkabouts in the summer and detailed which areas they hope to cover. Each Tenancy officer has selected two areas and will be inviting SLDC, Town and Parish Councillors, Tenants and Residents Association Representatives, Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers and PCSO's. By getting other agencies involved it is hoped that other issues such as fly tipping or areas of concern for PCSOs can also be addressed.

It is expected that all visits will be completed will be completed by the end of Q2.

Stephen Bolton commented that the Honeypot area of Ulverston seems to get a lot of attention in terms of new roofs, kitchens and feels that other areas such as Urswick, Little Urswick, Swarthmoor, Park Avenue and Croftlands get overlooked.

Jim also asked about Thornfield Road as this area has just recently undergone a lot of work.

After a brief discussion it has been decided that the Honeypot will be taken off the programme and Urswick, Little Urswick, Park Avenue and Swarthmoor will be added alongside Thornfield Road and Yewbarrow Estate.

FH

Charles asked why Sedbergh was not included on the list and Fiona explained that there is a lot of work going on regarding estate improvements so it would be counterproductive.

This will be a rolling programme and other areas will be considered for next year.

4. Safeguarding Children's and Vulnerable Adults Policy

There has been a recommendation from a policy consultant to join the Children's and Adults Policy into one.

The aim of joining the Policy together is to make it more straightforward for understanding the content but also to make it easier when the guidance is needed.

There are 4 safeguarding leads Fiona Harrison (Tenancy Manager), Gordon Sisson (Sheltered Manager), James Nevett (Health and Safety Manager) and Sue Boulton (Human Resources Manager).

In light of the Policy the whole organisation has undergone basic training including trade staff. The aim was to make staff feel comfortable to approach their manager and talk about any issues that are of concern to them. This includes not only what people see when they are out of the office but also in the workplace too.

There had been some concern from trade staff that a tenant might be able to work out that they were the person reporting an incident if they were the last person in the house. However, they have been reassured through the training that it is a duty to report if you suspect an incident and that the support from your manager will be there.

There is currently a system being developed on the Housing Management System that means it can be reported and then monitored. This would also help in terms of informing the person who made the referral

Charles commented that it the Policy was very good.

Dorothy asked under What is Abuse 'be deliberate or unintentional or result from lack of knowledge' how SLH could deal with this. Fiona explained that they would be guided by Children's Services or use the Children's services website which has lots of information.

Jim asked if there was any additional funding available from the National Housing Federation for staff as more time is being spent on Health and well-being and safeguarding issues. It was confirmed that this is not something that the Federation provides.

Fiona explained that her team are involved with a number of agencies including Cumbria County Council and Social Services taking on a multi-agency approach.

5. Governance Update

In Depth Assessment

SLH has maintained its Governance (G1) and Viability (V1) following the In-depth Assessment. The assessment considered how SLH manages risks; concentrating on financial risk, health and safety standards and the capacity to react and withstand economic and other impacts such as Brexit and flooding. If the scores are unchanged as in SLH case then there is no formal public report but the grading will be published.

Since the assessment the Board Chair and Chief Executive have met with the Regulator who expressed no areas of concern but noted that SLH has the capacity to build more homes so would be expected to do more in this area (which is a SLH Business Objective). John thanked all on Tenants' Committee for helping SLH to be in this position of strength.

Charles asked when they will next review SLH and John expects this to be around 4 years' time. However, the Regulator conducts an annual stability check (based upon information and financial returns provided by SLH) and if there is a major issue or change in the Business Strategy, which may lead to more risk, then they come back sooner.

Eden

SLH and Eden had formed a small working party to look at a merger together would look like. However the Board at a recent away day decided not to go ahead. Some of the drivers were still strong, especially around achieving greater resilience and as 'protection' against being 'swallowed up' by one of the larger housing providers in the future. There was limited financial gains and were concerned that this would hamper plans over the next few years particularly around development, becoming more efficient and investing in current homes and neighbourhoods. The Board recognise that there are similarities between Eden and SLH in what we are trying to achieve, and hope that links that have been developed through this process can be maintained.

Dorothy commented that as part of the transfer agreement tenants had been reassured that there would not be a merger.

John Short commented that the Institute of Housing has many articles currently that discuss 'bigger is not always better'.

Performance

In Quarter 4 Performance, there has been a significant increase in the number of tenants using digital services from 12% to 40%.

There has been an increase in rent arrears (a £89,000 increase with £66,000 down to Universal Credit) and void rent loss. We have 240 who are currently on Universal Credit. There is an expectation that rent arrears will continue to rise to a spike and then reduce.

The void rent loss has increased due to more works being carried out in void properties. John explained that this is due to complaints about standards when moving in, so SLH has not quite got the balance right. Further work is needed to improve repair completion times including tighter van stock management.

SLH is investing more on Fire Risk Assessment following Grenfell Tower to meet compliance regulations. SLH is achieving compliance in gas, fire, asbestos, legionella, lifts electrical and radon regulations.

Lorraine Birchall commented on the recent training offered to Board on phishing and sphere phishing (cyber-attacks) and Charles commented on some free 'get safe on line' courses organised by SLDC.

At this moment in time it looks likely that the Independent Living Service is not going to continue but this will be a Board decision.

6. 'Together with Tenants': Self-Assessment

John explained that we can use the 'Together with Tenants' initiative to look at how we involve tenants.

John went through the 8 commitments and asked how we rate against each. Relating to commitment 1, to meet this there could be a Tenant survey, assessment of complaints and the website could be used to promote this. Need to review what surveys Lisa Maguire sends out and what the surveys look like.

Agreed to keep this on the agenda for future Tenants Committee meetings.

LR

Commitment 2 requires further action that more information needs to be added to the SLH website and the Annual Report could be used as evidence.

Commitment 3, further evidence in meeting this standard could be estate walkabouts, do promotional work through our website.
John Short will check the website.

There will also be an opportunity when it is the Tenant Involvement review in the Autumn, where all Tenants Committee will be involved.

7. Tenant Scrutiny Review Consolidated Actions: Progress Tracker

The Progress Tracker consolidates all the Scrutiny Panels to date in one useable format. The recommendations have cost, timescale, resources and outcomes identified and a RAG rating (Red, Amber, Green).

The Committee reviewed the recommendations and some were highlighted that are red. These areas have yet to have a reply from managers or have not yet commenced so will be monitored over the next few months.

It was agreed that it would be good if the document could be taken to EMT and reviewed 6 monthly.

LR

8. Members Reports/Meeting Update

Cumbria and North Lancashire Forum – Dorothy reported that all members had now paid their annual membership fees. The Forum will be running a mental Health Awareness day on Wednesday 19th June at the Coronation Hall, all tenants and residents are invited.

Complaints Panel – The panel had its 1st panel with a tenant and their complaint. Unfortunately, due to the tenant bringing in recording equipment, the panel members did not want to proceed unless the device was switched off. The tenant did not wish to proceed but the meeting continued and a report was sent. The complaint was not

upheld but recommendations were made which the management team have accepted.

Tenancy Standard Scrutiny Panel- Dorothy, June and Paul met to review documents relating to the standard and came up with a set of questions that they would like to address with managers. The next meeting is 16th May. Charles was unable to attend the 1st meeting but would like to be included in the next one.

9. AOB

No other business

The meeting closed at 12:40hrs