

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES

13:00pm 11th June 2020 via Go-To-Meeting

Present: Stephen Bolton (Chair)
Charles Howarth
Sue Layfield
Jim Layfield
Lorraine Birchall

Guests N/A

Staff in attendance: John Mansergh – Director of Business Assurance
James Nevett – Health & Safety Manager
Lyn Richardson – Tenant Engagement Officer
Alison Kinnon – Director of Customers (Part)
Emma Wilson – Governance Support Assistant (minutes)

Apologies: Dorothy Dixon
John Withers
John Short
Paul Athersmith
June Peckston
Win Sayers

Circulation: As above

ACTION

1. Minutes of previous meetings- matters arising

1.1 The minutes were accepted as a true record following minor amendments detailed below.

3.6 – “Door excluders” should read “draught excluders”

4.6 – “Wall tiles” should be “wall ties”

EW

6.6 – The meeting with Jo-Anne Freeman has not been possible to hold due to the outbreak of Covid 19.

8.3 – Tenants’ Committee member John Short requested Board member attendance at a future meeting to open dialogue and enable decision making going forward. JM to invite Ian Munro to a future meeting. He also mentioned the review of the name of the Committee which JM advised could be discussed at the AGM.

JM

2. Covid-19 Impact & Remobilisation Plan

2.1 John thanked Tenants’ Committee members for attending the remote meeting and provided a brief overview of the Covid 19 impact and the remobilisation plan. Many employees have been affected personally by the virus losing family members, while others have had Covid symptoms and had to self-isolate. Tenants have also been affected with job losses and there is a risk of

the ending of the Government furlough scheme, particularly for the hospitality and tourism sectors. There are 28 new Universal credit cases, previously these were tenants that would be paying full rent. Six out of the twelve sheltered schemes appear to have had the virus. Communal areas have been closed where possible and signage/calls to advise not to use them. SLH has been making welfare calls to those classed as vulnerable. John explained there has been difficulty in keeping on top of the health and safety requirements e.g. gas servicing due to being unable to access tenant homes due to shielding. Appointments have now been rescheduled but these may need to be changed depending on the Government guidance. John added in terms of finance this is looking ok at present with the loan covenants being met. Rent modelling has taken place and currently not as bad as initially feared but rent arrears is higher than normal. There may be a greater impact when the Government furlough scheme comes to an end. All development schemes were suspended and there is a slow return to getting sites back up and running, with social distancing measures in place. John explained only a third of the normal level of repairs have been reported and there is a backlog of around 600 in the system. This mirrors the picture nationally. Repairs are now starting to get back up and running. Some external work has been happening for a while whereas other work requires further thought to comply with new risk assessments and ensure it is done safely. SLH operational team is currently working through the back log of repairs.

2.2 John Short wished to thank continental landscapes and two of the tenants for the work at West Ing the gardens now look they best they have in years.

2.3 James shared information around how office spaces and other SLH locations have been made Covid-19 secure in line with current health and safety legislation and government guidelines. John added all SLH risk assessments are on the website.

2.4 Jim asked that the SLH website information be reviewed as some of it is over 9 weeks old. John agreed with Jim and explained the website will be reviewed to check that only the most up to date versions and information is on the website.

EW

3. **Customer engagement during the pandemic – welfare calls, progress with digital engagement and customer insight**

3.1 Lyn explained It has been busy over the last few weeks, welfare calls started soon after lockdown began. Lyn shared figures of those initially contacted this has now reduced as people began to feel more comfortable with their current situation. Some welfare calls in the beginning were sign posting and getting people food, this is now around mental health and anxiety and not being able to get out. Calls are still very much needed and appreciated to support the most vulnerable and isolated tenants.

3.2 Charles asked how people were categorised as vulnerable, initially this was split into the over 70's and under 70's mental health or other physical or learning disabilities. John highlighted there is a lack of quality data held around tenants. There needs to be a balance between GDPR and holding information that supports delivery of services. Hopefully the work around digital engagement will support capturing better data.

3.3 Lyn explained digital engagement has been moving forward with the facebook page up and running. There are currently 180 members as of this week, there have been specific campaigns around repairs and how best to communicate with tenants. There have been various posts on the page from tenants for example asking when repairs will start, when choice-based lettings will be up and running and about mutual exchanges. It is proving to be a real platform to engage with tenants. Lyn added Mailchimp has been used to do surveys and polls to engage and ask people to provide input with policies etc. Mailchimp uses email so it isn't anything new to many people. Lyn is currently working with managers to think about how they would like to contact tenants and what information they wish to gather.

3.4 Lyn shared the customer insight survey that will start in a few weeks, this will initially be emailed out we can gather insight into how tenants wish to be contacted in the future. There will be a coordinated approach to enable staff to contact tenants via the phone. Any additional information or updated information will then be added to CX. Lyn asked Tenants' Committee members how they would like the information to be feedback. Committee members agreed email seemed the best option.

4. Internal Audit of Customer Satisfaction & Complaints week commencing 22nd June

4.1 John shared information of the up and coming Internal Audit which will review complaints and customer satisfaction and will involve tenant scrutiny reports. Auditors would like to speak with Tenants' Committee members to support the process. John asked for volunteers. Both Charles and Jim agreed to speak with the auditors. John will be in touch to confirm a date W/C 22nd June it will unlikely be Monday or Friday.

JM

5. Tenant Annual Report

5.1 John asked Committee members if anyone had an interest in supporting with the production of the Annual Report. Stephen, Charles and possibly June would like to help. John added this is not an urgent piece of work and is due to be completed by September. Information to be emailed out.

JM

6. Any other Business

6.1 Alison shared the news that the Ulverston Business Centre which comprises of two office spaces is to be closed. Due to the pandemic, the office has now been closed for three months. Alison added we have had to adapt very quickly to provide services to customers in the Ulverston area. The service is now 24/7 enabling our customers to do things as and when they chose. The lease is up in May, therefore EMT have decided to close the office. There has been careful consideration but there are factors that led to the decision to close, low footfall, the building is closed 3 days a week and there is no lift access to the floor which SLH rent. Alison reiterated that SLH is still fully committed to the Ulverston area, this will not affect the sheltered schemes, and although the decision has been made to provide a full range of services on line we would always speak with customers face to face should they wish to book an appointment. Committee members were asked for their opinions.

- 6.2 A discussion took place around how Paul A would engage with SLH staff to support resolving resident matters that may arise in the Ulverston area. Alison responded by explaining Paul can contact the tenancy team. The Committee unanimously agreed to close it.
- 6.3 Alison added that the redevelopment of Ulverston Town Hall is due to be completed and will be advertised for rent she is aware that at the last meeting some Committee members wished to see the properties however due to Covid this is now unlikely to happen.
- 6.4 John thanked Committee members for their patience in getting the meetings back up and running following Covid. It is unlikely there will be a return to normal, Bridge Mills will not be open to the public or other members for some time. Small numbers of staff may return to work in the office by management of a booking system and operating within a Covid secure environment. He added that it was safer for Tenants' Committee to continue to meet digitally for the time being.

7. Date of Next Meeting

7th July 2020 – To be scheduled for 1pm.

EW