

**SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

13:30pm Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 held via Go-To Conferencing.

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

Guests N/A

Staff in attendance: John Mansergh – Director of Business Assurance  
Emily Graveson – Communications Officer  
Emma Wilson – Governance Support Assistant  
Lyn Richardson – Community Engagement Officer

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

Circulation: As above

**ACTION**

**1. Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting (12<sup>th</sup> September 19)**

1.1 Minutes from the previous meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019 agreed as a true record and accurate record.

**2. Matters arising**

2.1 Win Sayers resigned from the Tenants' Committee due to ill health - she had sent a lovely letter wishing SLH and Committee members all the best. Lyn to arrange a thank you card and gift for her commitment and service over the years.

**LR**

**3. Annual Engagement Plan**

3.1 Lyn Shared the Annual Engagement Plan - the Chair commented that the nominations for next year will require amending as it should be 'Vice Chair'. All Committee members were happy with the plan. Lyn is currently in the process of setting up meetings for the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Scrutiny group. This will then be added to the Annual Plan in 2021. The Chair highlighted that this will require 3 members - both Jim and Sue Layfield have accepted the invites. Lyn made Committee members aware that managers are now starting to get much more involved and contributing to the plan.

**LR**

3.2 John added the Social Housing White Paper is expected to be published later this year, Lyn to add this to the plan for Jan 2021 and Committee members will need to review the paper.

**LR**

#### **4. Resources for Engagement**

- 4.1 John presented the paper and added that there are enough resources for what needs to be achieved in the coming year. John highlighted the additional staffing resources to support with individual and community engagement. We now have Emily to produce more information that can be shared with the community in house rather than paying others to do that.

#### **5. Election of officers and representatives**

The Committee felt that it was sensible to retain the current list of Forum and Panel members due to the Covid situation. John added that this is what SLDC had done with their nominations.

##### **a) Tenants' Committee Chair**

Stephen Bolton wishes to continue as Chair for the following year. There were no other nominations.

The Committee approved Stephen Bolton as Chair for a further two years.

##### **b) Cumbria & North Lancashire Tenant Forum**

Tenants Committee Members agreed to keep members the same as previous year. Dorothy Dixon, Margaret Akrigg and Paul Athersmith will remain on the panel. Lyn has been unable to meet with Dorothy and Margaret who were due to step down this year due to Covid 19. Lyn suggested this be revisited in November to review where the forum is going.

##### **c) Grant Applications Panel (GAP)**

John Short, Jim Layfield, Charles Howarth and Sue Layfield wished to continue. There were no other nominations.

The Committee approved the nominations.

##### **Tenant Complaint Panel (TCP)**

d)

Dorothy Dixon, Charles Howarth, Paul Athersmith, and John Short to remain on the panel.

The Committee approved the nominations.

#### **6. Any Other Business**

- 6.1 The Chair made Committee members aware that it had been proposed to change the name of 'Tenants Committee' to 'Tenants Forum' or 'Tenants Panel'. Charles asked that other Committee members be consulted with before a decision is made. It was agreed to bring back to the November meeting for a final decision. The Chair asked that any other suggestions also be brought to the next meeting. **Chair  
Lyn**

- 6.2 Lyn will consult with the Chair regarding dates for next year's meetings, Emma to book. **EW / LR**

- 6.3 John asked if Committee members are happy to continue with virtual meetings for the next few months particularly with new government advice stating that no more than 6

people can meet. Stephen asked if the smaller panel groups could still meet physically as there is lots of space in the Windermere room. The Chair asked for the risk assessments to be followed but where possible meet physically. Committee members agreed to continue with virtual meetings and try physical meetings with smaller panel meetings.

*Meeting closed at 2.10pm*

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

2.30pm 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 via Go-To-Meeting

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

Guests N/A

Staff in attendance: John Mansergh – Director of Business Assurance  
Lyn Richardson – Tenant Engagement Officer  
Emma Wilson – Governance Support Assistant (minutes)  
Emily Graveson – Communication Officer

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

Circulation: As above

### **ACTION**

1. **Minutes of previous meeting – (9<sup>th</sup> July 2020) – including Internal Audit Report on Customer Satisfaction & Complaints**
- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record.
- 1.2 John provided a verbal update on progress with the virus. He said that the remobilisation plan put in place was working well and all services are now back up and running. SLH are now fully compliant with gas servicing and there are no outstanding repairs which is a good outcome- nationally the repairs backlog is unlikely to be cleared until next March. Electrical condition surveys are running slightly over the 5-year inspection period although the statutory requirement is 10 years, therefore SLH are still compliant. Rent arrears are at 97% we would usually be performing at 99% but this is still better than initially

predicted at the height of the first wave. Lots of tenants have moved from being self-payers to claiming Universal Credit and as furlough ends this is likely to add to additional pressures on tenants and for SLH in terms of collecting income. The South Lakeland area is one of the areas with the highest portion of furloughed people with jobs within the tourism and hospitality sectors likely to be at most risk. Void turnaround times are higher due to the fact that we could not let properties in lockdown. The resultant rent loss around £100k to date (£120k for the whole of last year) so this is a concern. Finance expenditure is currently below budget due to not being able to carry out major repairs. SLH have benefitted from furlough cash, around £90k.

1.3 Sue added that she is aware of a neighbour that is waiting on her bathroom floor to be fixed. John responded that he was unable to comment on the individual case and asked for the details to be passed onto Lyn or Emma so this can be investigated internally, and a response given.

1.4 Charles added that he is aware of a resident who is waiting for a receipt for a payment made for work completed. This is needed to assist his claim from DWP. The Chair asked for this to be escalated to the appropriate person. Charles wishes to raise as a complaint.

1.5 Jim feels that more feedback in terms of delays regarding repairs would prevent tenants becoming frustrated and fed up. John asked Jim to summarise what is happening at the scheme so this can be taken to the repairs manager and a response sought.

#### 1.10 **Internal Audit Report**

John shared the internal Audit report and asked if there were any questions. Charles asked what 'moderate' means in terms of the audit report. John responded that the auditors provide an overall audit opinion using a 4-point scale – the first two are positive (either a 'substantial' or 'moderate' opinion) and two negative statements (either 'limited' or 'no'). This shows SLH are doing well but there are areas that require improvement. Customer Satisfaction is an area where we need to make improvements, we will be centralising the data collection and putting in a Customer Feedback Group to review lessons learnt and to make improvements.

## 2. **Draft Annual Report**

2.1 Emily shared the draft Annual Report - both the Chair and Charles met with Emily previously to review the document. Emily made Tenants' Committee members aware that they will receive a hard copy. The online version will provide direct links to support groups and SLH Facebook page.

2.2 Sue asked if the report had any information regarding how people can get involved on the panels and with Tenants' Committee. Emily suggested a 'get involved' page and will add additional contacts and signposting. The Chair informed Tenants' Committee members that there will be no calendar with this year's report.

2.3 Loraine asked about the PDF version for the website and how will this be accessible for all particularly for those who have sight impairments. There

needs to be a toggle to plug in so that there are various options for people to use and access. Emily thanked Committee members for their comments and said she would investigate the information Loraine shared.

2.4 The report is due to be uploaded to the SLH website in September and sent out in October. Stephen thanked Emily for her work.

2.5 Hard copies will not be put into the sheltered schemes due to the risk of Covid transmission. Emily is happy to print more copies for anyone who would like a hard copy.

### **3. Resident Engagement Strategy**

3.1 Lyn shared the Resident Engagement Strategy - the aim is to change how we engage with tenants. We would like to engage with communities as well as individuals. SLH would like a more visible approach and to reach out to communities. SLH wish to encourage and identify community champions so we can link and work together. The scrutiny process will be taking place over 3 meetings as has happened previously but SLH would like to gather opinions from a wider range of people. The framework sets out the scrutiny panels and what the process is. John added that the aim is to keep the good stuff that is working well but we also recognise that we need to get other tenants involved so we need to get out into the community and actively involve them.

3.2 Loraine highlighted the font in certain parts is tricky to read and the contrast of colour will cause difficulties for people with dyslexia to read.

3.3 Jim highlighted that the Strategy refers to Tenants' Panel but we need to decide what we will be called and then edit the Strategy.

3.4 The Chair highlighted that SLH staff don't always introduce themselves when working at properties within the community, if people are open and start up conversations this will enable people to engage better.

### **4. Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code**

4.1 John explained that the Ombudsman had produced a Complaint Handling Code which all landlords need to follow. He shared the self-assessment and asked for the Committee's opinions on what needed to change to the SLH Complaints Policy. The Committee agreed to retain the option of the Tenant Complaint Panel and to remove the Board stage from the existing process to help comply with the Ombudsman's aim to reduce the number of complaint stages. The Committee felt that this was in keeping with the Resident Engagement Strategy. The self-assessment will be taken to the November Board meeting and the Committee endorsed the changes. The Policy will come back to the Committee.

### **5. Any Other Business**

5.1 John referred to the SLH Annual General Meeting being held virtually on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September. He highlighted that SLDC had requested that John Holmes' tenure as a Board Member be extended by a further twelve months in line with all of SLDC's nominations to Committee's due to Covid-19. The Board had agreed this and will explain the special circumstances in next year's accounts,

as this will mean that John will serve a 10<sup>th</sup> year. The Committee felt that this was a good approach to take in the current circumstances.

**6. Date of Next Meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 13:30 Go To Meetings**

Meeting closed at 15:15