



STIRLING TENANTS ASSEMBLY
MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 10TH APRIL 2012
IN FALLIN COMMUNITY CENTRE
AT 10.30AM

1. Present: Michael Griffiths, Moira Robertson, Hugh McClung, Philomena McClung, Alec Lamb, Maureen Johnston and Fiona Grant Housing Officer Allocations Team

Apologies: Mary Rainey, Richard Waddell, Thomas Brown, James Quinn, Sarah Fraser, Cathy Traynor, Duncan Faithney, Emma Meldrum STP

2. Speakers: Maureen Johnston and Fiona Grant, Housing Officers, Allocations Team

2.1 Maureen and Fiona preferred to answer any questions, comments or queries from the STA.

2.2 Two members of the STA, Philomena and Moira were part of the allocations working group.

2.3 How does the homeless/mainstream ration of 2:1 work in practice?

In the first instance the Housing Officer [HO] will look at the property to see what type it is – if it is a wheelchair friendly or ground floor, then the HO will see if someone on the homeless list is waiting for such a property; there are not many people on the homeless list who do. So if no-one from the homeless list is in need of such a house, the HO will look at the mainstream list – this is so that SC gets the best use of stock.

If there is someone on the mainstream list who has a recommendation for that type of property, even though they are not at the top of the list for points, they will get the house.

For a standard property, the HO will look at the homeless list first to see who is next on the list. If there is no-one on the homeless list that fills the criteria for that particular house, then the HO will look at the mainstream list. This is the best use of stock, because you will not get, for example, a single homeless person being allocated a 3-bedroomed house.

2.4 Hugh said that SC are planning to revert to a ratio of 1:1 for homeless/mainstream but this will not come into force until after the Council Elections.

2.5 It is good to see that changes in the allocation policy have led to not so many people in homeless accommodation.

2.6 Some tenants felt that there should have been a buffer between the old and new policy with regard to the loss of waiting time points.

2.7 It is being said that some applicants are jumping up the waiting list by working the system using family connections etc. Have you come across any of this and, if so, did it influence how you did your job?

When a property becomes vacant, the HO has to check how many points an applicants has got and if they are correct; then if this makes them the top of the list, arrange a visit to ensure the applicant is staying where he says in the application form. The HO can do this in a variety of ways such as checking correspondence and the number of rooms.

Family connections doesn't mean that you need to care for whoever you are claiming family connection points unless you are claiming the points through the support section; you just need to have a close relative or for social connections, employment in the area. For carer, family connections or employment, all get 40 points.

Medical points have changed; in the old policy you got the points only if your situation was affected by the house [upstairs bathroom etc.] in the new policy if you need to care for someone with a medical condition, you can get medical points.

2.8 You've had a year of the new policy; do you think it is working?

Neither Maureen nor Fiona was employed in the allocation section using the old policy, so it is difficult to judge.

Applicants can now tick 'all areas' without giving it much thought and this makes a lot of work for the HO and means properties are void for longer.

Philomena thought that having a choice of 3 areas was good.

Moira said that applicants should be counselled on application, but Maureen said that in reality the HO was not able to do this because the applicant just filled in the form and posted it back to SC.

People knock back the less desirable areas. They also knock back rural areas; recently it was the 13th applicant who accepted a house in a rural area. This allocation involved the HO checking the points, writing to the applicant, awaiting a reply 13 times!!!

2.9 We've seen pressure on the allocation system; it has been helped by homeless ratio, new build etc. but this will not resolve the ills of the waiting list. Do you see, in your role as HO, how we can address the imbalance of property size and applicants? Perhaps young people could share? We don't think sharing would be the answer; it would be a minefield. There is no way that we could put people together.

2.10 Should we have more single person units? Trinity house is only for the homeless but is there scope for more for the general population?

If you put lots of young people together it can create problems, but maybe some kind of accommodation where SC could help to prepare young people for a tenancy.

2.11 Michael has been bringing up the heating problems at Wellgreen in Repair meetings. He has heard that SC is putting gas in next year.

2.12 Maybe SC should have more hostel accommodation for people who cannot sustain a tenancy due to drug and alcohol problem. These people are likely to be circular applicants.

2.13 How are background checks done?

For a carer it is usually a letter from the GP.

There is a very fine line between asking for proof and making people jump through hoops, but the HO has to be confident that the applicant is entitled to all the points that he has been allocated.

2.13 At the HAG meeting, the panel that investigated housing recommended that rural homelessness, which is often hidden, should be allocation on a ratio 1:1 for homeless/mainstream.

2.14 Michael is very concerned about the change in policy, that if someone, say a young woman with a child, leaves the homeless accommodation to return to her parental home, she would now

lose her homeless status and overcrowding points will not be allocated. This is especially hard for rural homeless who want the help and support of their family and friends and do not want to live in homeless accommodation in Stirling. When did this change?

Maureen and Fiona do not deal with homeless but thought that this must be only for the homeless; in these circumstances on mainstream she would still get insecurity of tenure points of 40 points and if the accommodation was overcrowded she would get the points.

People 'sofa jumping' gets no fixed abode points of 40. Those with insecurity of tenure with notice to quit get 60 points.

2.15 Females seem to have lost priority points for vulnerability

Every case must be judged on the individual, there are plenty of vulnerable men in society.

Hugh thanked Maureen and Fiona for coming along; they left the meeting.

3 Approval of minutes [13.3.12] and matters arising.

Amendment to minutes *Hugh has purchased key rings and pens for marketing.* Delete pens and insert fridge magnets.

Proposed Michael Griffiths, Seconded Alan Lamb

Matters arising:

3.4 HAG/Winter Shelter; 18 people were referred to the Salvation Army winter shelter.

4.1 Philomena proposed that we reaffirm that Moira is the minute taker for all STA meetings and sub meetings. The Repair meeting should be chaired by Emma, but Moira takes the minutes. Hugh will convey this to Carol and Emma. **Action Hugh.**

4. TPAS AGM Conference and Membership

4.1 A letter from TPAS thanked us for our continued work and support and asked us to renew our membership at a cost of £26. Proposed Michael Griffiths seconded Philomena McClung. Agreed. We do not need an invoice, but we do need a receipt. **Action Hugh.**

4.2 The TPAS Annual Conference is being held at the Crieff Hydro from October 26th to 28th. Hugh had suggested in his budget proposals that we limit the delegates to 4 because last year the STA paid for a COP delegate out of our budget and he wanted SC to pay for other RTO delegates. At the budget meeting with Carol Hamilton, we were told that SC will no longer pay for any delegates from other RTOs, all delegates coming from STA. SC will not fund places for 2 specific members of the STA.

Michael, Mary, Moira, Cathy and Hugh wish to attend. Hugh will contact Maria to see if she would like to go. Philomena would like to be at the Conference, but not at the workshops etc. so will contact Elaine Scoular to see about paying her own way for this. Michael proposed and Philomena seconded that Hugh book 4 singles and 1 double, maybe increasing to 5 singles after contacting Maria. Singles are £605 each and doubles are £495 each. **Action Hugh**

4.3 Hugh received notification of the TIS Conference costing £345; no-one wanted to go.

5 Reports

Chair Hugh's report

Nothing

Treasurer Moira's Report

5.1 There is just over £4000 left at the end of the year.

6 AOCB

6.1 It was proposed by Philomena McClung and seconded by Michael Griffiths that the STA ask Brenda Griffiths to audit the accounts and was agreed. **Action Moira and Mary**

6.2 It was proposed by Hugh McClung and seconded by Michael Griffiths that an ex-gratia payment of £20 is made to Claire Griffiths for doing our printing do to Mary being incapacitated, and was agreed.

6.3 It was proposed by Hugh McClung and seconded by Michael Griffiths that an ex-gratia payment be made to Moira to cover half the cost of the repairs to her computer and was agreed.

6.4 The Central Regional Network [CRN] is holding its AGM at the West Lothian Civic Centre, Livingstone on Saturday 12th May.

There is a vacant place on the committee for Stirling; Alec, Hugh and Moira are members but it was agreed not to put anyone forward because places are open to all RTOs.

Moira has given apologies for the AGM. Alec and Hugh are going; Michael will also go. Hugh will email Danny. **Action Hugh**

6.5 The SC Open Day is on Saturday 14th April. All present at this meeting are going as well as Mary.

Michael said that he thought Emma was preparing a questionnaire to gather contact information, especially email, but this was incorrect, so Hugh will see if he has anything suitable on his computer.

Hugh has produced a newsletter which includes information on welfare reforms and also a flyer about our next meeting at Cornton on 8th May, when an Income Max Officer will be present.

6.6 Budget report; Hugh, Moira and Mary, met with Carol Hamilton and Emma on 29th March to discuss a budget for the STA for 2012/2013.

Hugh presented his proposal to Carol, which was discussed in depth. See Moira's minutes appended.

Marketing is a new category for STA and a proposal for £2500 was made; Carol thought that a marketing template programme could be obtained through SC, but if not, then SC would fund this separately.

The budget proposal was	£17300
Less marketing	£ 2500
Equals	£14800
Balance in bank	£ 4000
Equals	£10800

But it was agreed not to take into account £1000 of the balance, so STA will received £11,800 this year in 2 instalments; £6000 immediately and £5200 in November.

6.7 The TPAS support worker's contract is up in about 6 months. The STA need to contact Carol to ensure we are involved from the start with any review/advertising of the contract. **Action Hugh**

6.8 Michael is going to Lochearnhead with Emma to the open day for heating for tenants in the rural area.

6.9 If we hold the AGM at Old Viewforth, we need to use in-house catering. Hugh read out what was available and the cost;

Teas and coffees, £8.50 for 6 people,

£4.65 for 3 mini rolls,
£3.50 filled wraps,
Salad £4.05,
Soup £1.80
Crisps £1.05,
Entrees, £2.95 for a selection,
Cakes 60p to £1.95.
Water £3.50

Moira suggested we give out a Freebie bag containing water, juice and papers for the AGM. It would work out at about £10 per person for Soup, entrees and rustic mini rolls, Teas and coffees x 2 for 30 people And including 10% extra for out of hours, but not including water or juice. We will see if we can book another venue, Michael suggested a church hall.

6.10 Michael will get a card for Mary from us all, hoping she gets better soon.

Date, time and place of next meeting.

8th May in Cornton Community Centre, at 10.30am. Speaker, Income Maximisation Officer.

Appendix

Budget meeting 29th March 2012

Held in Carol Hamilton's room Viewforth at 2pm.

Present: Hugh McClung, Mary Rainey, Moira Robertson, Carol Hamilton, Emma Meldrum.

Hugh had emailed in advance his Budget Report and proposed budget to all.

Discussions were as follows:-

[1] With the cost of postage going up, STA will need to look at cheaper options.

Papers for committee meetings could be emailed to members that have email; hard copies could be provided at the meetings and would be sent to those committee members without email.

Email could be used to send information to people on Emma's various lists that have given their permission to receive correspondence from the STA.

The Copy Centre could be used for mailshots – Emma will find out the cost.

[2] The STA plans to get information out to more tenants by being more proactive.

[3] Welfare Reforms is a hot topic this year and STA will play its part in getting the information out to tenants.

COP is hosting a workshop on Welfare Reforms. Hugh is meeting Gerry McLaughlin, Chairman of COP.

Stirling Council has set up a small working group to see which tenants are likely to be affected by the Welfare Reforms.

Stirling Council has an Action Plan which includes Open Door, Roadshows and Surgeries. The STA could be in attendance at the Roadshows.

[4] It was noted that the cost of the STA Conference/STA was almost doubled due to the cost of Lesley Baird as a speaker [cost £500].

The STA plans to have a speaker on Welfare Reforms and appointments with an Income Maximisation Officer, representatives on energy saving and from the DWP.

Stirling Council will help us promote the conference in a big style and agree to the budget proposal of £1500.

The STA will produce a mailshot and Emma will help to publicise the AGM using her contacts. If the STA uses Old Viewforth then we will probably have to use Stirling Council catering. This year we must ensure that we do not cater for way too many people and must book the catering with an option to confirm numbers close to the day.

[5] Stirling Council will no longer subsidise other RTOs to send delegates to the TPAS Conference. Carol said the STA can send as many delegates as it wants and initially see how many can go for the proposed figure of £4000. It cannot include 2 specific members. The TPAS Conference is being held at Crieff Hydro this year, which has lodges in the grounds, which may be cheaper as just as acceptable for delegates. Emma will find out the cost of the lodges and how many they sleep. All hotel facilities will be available to delegates if housed in the lodges.

[6] Service Level Agreement; the sub-group is to look at this and then take their proposals back to the STA.

In any event the STA will in future produce an Annual Report – this will be separate to the Chair report produced for the STA AGM.

[7] There have been problems hiring a minibus due to insurance not being available to us, and Dial-a-Journey wanting drivers to have undertaken specific driver training. The STA has to decide if it is worthwhile undertaking the training depending on the cost. Also to decide whether it is worthwhile hiring a minibus when committee members put their name down and do not turn up, meaning the journey could have been undertaken using cars.

[8] Marketing; it was agreed to remove this from the budget proposal. Emma will see if there are any free design packages available through Stirling Council; if not and we need to purchase one, then Carol will fund this directly.

[9] The budget proposal was	£17300
Less marketing	£ 2500
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Carol thinks that in the present financial climate it does not look good for the STA to have a substantial balance at the end of the financial year.

It will be necessary to have at least £1000 in the account at the end of March in case it takes a while for the grant to be deposited.

It was agreed that the STA would receive a grant of £11,800 paid in 2 instalments;

The first in April of £6000

The second in October of £5800.

Abbreviations

AGM Annual General Meeting
ASB Anti-Social Behaviour
CC Community Council
CRN Central Regional Network
FV Forth Valley
HAG Housing Advisory Group
HRA Housing Revenue Account
LA Local authority
LAs Local authorities
LG Local Government
RN Regional Networks
RTO Registered Tenants Organisation
SC Stirling Council
SHG Strathfillan Housing Group
SHQS Scottish Housing Quality Standard
SG Scottish Government
STA Stirling Tenants Assembly
TLI Tenant Led Inspection
TP Tenant Participation

TPAS Tenant Participation Advisory Service