



STIRLING TENANTS ASSEMBLY
MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 20th NOVEMBER 2012
IN HILLVIEW CENTRE
AT 10.30AM

1. Present: Michael Griffiths, Mary Rainey, Moira Robertson, Hugh McClung, Richard Waddell, Thomas Brown, Philomena McClung, Cathy Traynor, Dolly Gemmell, Cathy Brown, Peter Pelgrave, Margaret Campbell, Meg Amasi, Delia Waddell, Shirley Hyman, Emma Meldrum STP

Apologies: Maria Balfour, Alec Lamb, Sarah Fraser, June Higgins, George Keenan, Anna Johnston

Michael chaired the meeting because Hugh had a hospital appointment.

2. HRA – Community Projects, Disposal of Assets/Sale of Assets, Procedures to be adopted

2.1 Hugh passed round a paper on Housing Revenue Account [HRA] Disposal of Assets. The HRA is monies collected from rent, plus rent of land, buildings etc.

2.2 In the past SC has transferred land and buildings from HRA to others departments for a nominal amount, and the money received has not gone into the HRA but the General Fund which pays for general things like roads etc. In 2010 tenants across Scotland through the CRN presented a paper to the Minister for Housing and new guidance says that all receipts have to now go to the HRA.

2.3 Ministers now have to give consent to any proposals to sell or lease HRA land or buildings. Since October 2012 they want to see the proposals and insist that tenants have been consulted.

2.4 SC has raised 3 applications in St. Ninians, Crianlarich and Braehead with Ministers. With the first 2 applications, Hugh has no objections; in both cases the land has lain derelict for several years and the council has done nothing with it. Both communities have worked hard to consult with local people to try to use the land constructively for their areas.

2.5 Braehead is different for 2 reasons, the land is contaminated by railway use and the CC want to grow vegetables in raised beds and the CC did not contact many tenants to ask their views so cannot be classed as a community project.

2.6 Hugh is not getting at community groups and trying to stop projects; SC has to maintain the site and communities want to use the land.

2.7 Hugh asked the STA to consider the applications and give our opinions, which will go before HAG on Friday 30th November.

2.8 Consultation should, in future start at an earlier stage, when the project is put to SC, and long before it is sent to the Ministers.

2.9 Hugh asked the STA to consider the proposed rent increase. It is important to remember how this is calculated, namely CPI in September plus 1%, which works out at 2.2% + 1%. Increases will average £2.40 to £2.60, but if the Capital Programme can be implemented, Hugh would like a zero increase this year due to the economic climate. It may be that new-build will have to be stopped in order to accomplish this.

2.10 Hugh has studied the HAG report on the housing budget and savings have been made over the past few years resulting in a substantial HRA balance. All tenants will be facing difficult times and many will find it hard to fund a rent increase.

2.11 Richard asked about cross departmental charges; at a HAG meeting, Hugh had put this point to Tony Cain who is confident there are no excess charges.

Hugh left the meeting and was hoping to return before the end.

2.12 Thomas told the committee about all the consultation carried out by COP for the project on the land under consideration by the Ministers.

2.13 Peter asked if Scot's Law giving land to someone who has used it for 10 years would mean that the lease was irrelevant and that SC would lose the lands to the communities. It was agreed to ask SC to check this and to also put a caveat into the lease to prevent this happening.

2.14 There was discussion about making the lease for a shorter time, but this was probably the minimum time that would allow the communities to get funding to enable them to develop the land, which has to comply with the local plan.

2.15 Hugh's proposal which was seconded by Michael and agreed by all.

We accept that the communities of COP and Crianlarich are leased the land providing there is a caveat to say that after 10 years, if Stirling Council requires the land back it is given up without argument.

We do not accept that Braehead are leased the land on the grounds that it is seriously contaminated so not desirable for growing food and that not enough consultation has been done with the community. We recommend that it is taken back to the community.

In future consultation must be made prior to any application being made to the Ministers for their consent.

This will go to HAG.

3. Rent Consultation Maureen Whitelaw Co-ordinator, Housing Services

3.1 Maureen explained that her main role is dealing with complaints but she also assists Emma in TP. She has seen a lot of changes in the last few years.

3.2 The 2001 Housing Scotland Act requires LAs to consult with tenants for any major changes.

3.3 Maureen passed round copies of the questionnaire on the rent increase proposals and the current rents for comparison.

3.4 From 2006 to 2010 the annual rent increase was RPI + 1% but last year was altered to CPI + 1%

3.5 The Housing dept. also needed to address the implications of universal credit and welfare reform. The revised rents will provide for investment etc.

3.6 So far 53 questionnaires have been returned by the Tenants Panel and the votes for and against are about equal.

3.7 Question 1 refers to all those waiting on investment to bring their homes up to SHQS and this round of investment should complete this.

Michael asked if this included Wellgreen Place; owner occupiers have gas central heating whereas tenants have electric storage heating. Are the tenants going to be offered gas? Moira will bring this up at the Repairs meeting.

3.8 Question 2 refers to increasing the housing stock, which all agreed was a good idea but not if it cost the tenant too much. Philomena said that the word 'affordable' needs to be looked at – it is the wrong word,

How can you afford to build with all the cut backs and the expected arrears due to welfare reform?

14% more for under-occupancy is much more than the difference in the rents for a 1 bedroom and a 2 bedroomed house.

Some people may have to transfer and there is a cost involved in moving. People may have lived in the family home for years and not want to move.

Discretionary payments could be made but this is only a short term solution.

There are 857 tenants of working age who are under-occupying and on HB, so will be affected. The housing stock has been affected by demolition as have allocations. There are not enough smaller properties for all those who may wish to transfer, but the allocations policy has given them extra points. SC has acquired 120 properties and sold 18.

Welfare reforms will expect applicants to apply on-line. Many people will need help with this. Thomas said that Hillview has got 6 new laptops for tenant to use, but many tenants will need assistance. Young people are more computer literate.

SC is trying to move people onto DD, or tell them about ScotCentral credit union, which has 'jam-jar' accounts.

3.9 Question 3 refers to a proposal to employ 2 additional Housing Assistants to support Housing Officers to prepare for the implementation of Welfare Reform.

Employing them next April is too late; they should be in place now.

SC actually has 2 people going out now to visit tenants and they are doing good work.

A second lot of under-occupancy letters has gone out and the tenants are now being telephoned and visited by HO and money advice people.

3.10 Question 4 refers to the proposed development of an on-line service delivery.

3.11 Question 5 asks if tenants think they get value for money.

3.12 The majority agreed that in the present economic climate, SC should have a rent freeze; maybe stopping new-build would allow them to carry out the capital programme.

3.13 The Rent Forum is on Saturday and all should attend if possible.

3.14 All terraced houses including single-storeyed should be designated as such and not as a bungalow.

3.15 Emma was asked how those who answer 'don't know' are viewed. Emma phones to find out the reason and all comments are followed up.

3 Approval of minutes [11.10.12] and matters arising.

Proposed Dolly Gemmell, Seconded Meg Amasi.

Matters arising:

None

4 Reports

Chair Hugh's report

Michael read out Hugh's report.

4.1 Since our last meeting we have changed the way we operate and each bi-month there is a business meeting and on subsequent months there is a speaker covering a topical debate to allow more of the public [particularly tenants] to attend. Since then we have covered dampness, allocations, capital investment projects, income maximisations, welfare reform, private sector factoring and the local housing strategy.

The AGM in October was a huge success in terms of numbers, 35 in all and thanks goes to the efforts of committee members and Emma. We now have 19 on the Management Committee, which is more than ever before.

Through more public involvement, business meetings are becoming more intense and it may well be that some business may have to be decided by the Executive committee and ratified at the next business meeting. This has not happened yet but may well arise.

The business side continues to be dominated by National events and we have been discussing issues of the SHR, Right to Buy, Affordability and in response to a report from our member in Kippen, we produced a report on 'Cost of Day Care for the Elderly' and presented it to the Director of Social Care, the Portfolio Holder and Chief Executive. In the coming months we will be looking at affordability, ASB, welfare reform, rents as well as issues that arise on a regular

basis. In particular welfare reform is going to be the main aspect of business until the changes come into force next April; the STA is committed to informing tenants.

2013 is our 10th Anniversary and I would like to plan for a small booklet highlighting our achievements, our aims and showing some photos of major events. Perhaps SC would do a short foreword/appraisal. This could be produced with little cost, but printing may be costly. It could be issued with the Spring edition of Open Door.

4.2 Philomena said that this had been discussed at the budget meeting between the Executive Committee, Carol Hamilton and Emma. The STA were told that SC would help with the costs for the celebration.

A sub-committee of Philomena, Mary, Hughie, Michael supported by Emma will plan the event.

4.3 The Director of Social Work was suspended shortly after our report was submitted, and we agreed to ask Bob Jack what our next step should be. **Richard to take this forward.**

Secretary

4.4 Philomena said that all committee members must let her know by the Friday before a meeting if they are going to attend; this is for catering purposes and if you do not then you will not be catered for. Also please let her know any dietary requirements.

4.5 If for any reason, you are unable to print the papers for the meeting, please let Phil know and she will bring extra copies to the meeting

Treasurer

4.6 Copies of the latest accounts were passed round. There were no questions.

4.7 Philomena reported on the budget meeting; there were no queries on the 2011/2012 accounts. Emma will arrange for payment of the second part of the grant from SC into our account in the next few weeks.

With the change in the AGM date next year to May, Emma will find out if it could be arranged for a flat rate £6000 payment to be made in April and for a second payment after the budget meeting following the approval of the 2012/2013 accounts.

HAG

4.8 Tony Cain gave a presentation on mid-market rented properties, and they looked good.

TLI

4.9 The final report has been completed and presented to HAG. A sub-group of Phil, Cathy and Meg to discuss the recommendations has been set up. Emma will chase up. **Action Emma.**

4.10 The next project is on Capital Investment and will start next February.

TPAS Conference

4.11 Reports from Michael, Mary and Hugh were available to look at.

AOCB

None

Date, time and place of next meeting.

11am Raploch Campus on Thursday 13th December.

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