



STIRLING TENANTS ASSEMBLY
MEETING HELD ON
THURSDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER 2012
IN MAYFIELD CENTRE
AT 10.30AM

1. Present: Michael Griffiths, Moira Robertson, Hugh McClung, Alec Lamb, Richard Waddell, Philomena McClung, Maria Balfour, Thomas Brown, Meg Amasi, Emma Meldrum STP Corale Brown, Trainee HO

Apologies: Mary Rainey, James Quinn, Cathy Traynor

Guest Speaker

Steve Mason Local Housing Strategy Officer, Gavin Kennedy, Strategy and Development Officer The Local Housing Strategy [LHS] goes to committee in December so this is the last opportunity to comment. We'd like you to assess whether we've got the actions right because the strategy lasts for the next 5 years.

If you think of something later, please get in touch with Steve.

The proposal is:-

Stirling's Local Housing Strategy 2012: Consultation Draft

Outcomes and Proposed Actions

1. The Need & Demand for Housing

Outcome 1: Access and affordability - An improved supply of houses of all types and tenures that are affordable, particularly to households on low and middle incomes, and meet the needs and aspirations of households and communities across Stirling

Key Actions: The Council will work with its partners to:-

- 1.1 Explore all means of procuring affordable housing, including social rented, shared equity, mid-market rents and co-operative models of house building, and increase the supply
- 1.2 Provide choices in tenure types with a range from social rent to private ownership
- 1.3 Develop housing need & demand data for the National Park, as part of the Park's LDP process, in order to ensure that local people have access to houses they can afford
- 1.4 Meet the housing supply targets for affordable and private housing
- 1.5 Review and develop the affordable housing planning policy

- 1.6 Make best use of the existing housing stock by, for example, bringing empty houses back into use and encouraging the conversion of larger homes.
- 1.7 Meet housing needs in a way which ensures environmental sustainability

2. House Condition, Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

Outcome 2: Quality and condition - Improvements in the condition and energy efficiency of the whole housing stock, and reductions in carbon emissions and fuel poverty

Key Actions: The Council and its partners will:-

- 2.1 Meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 and to continue to meet it after 2015
- 2.2 Keep the Scheme of Assistance under review and develop a Housing Renewal Areas policy
- 2.3 Maximise the uptake of grants which assist the improvement of energy efficiency
- 2.4 Develop packages of financial advice and assistance for home owners wanting to repair and improve their properties
- 2.5 Address disrepair in the private sector by working with owners and landlords
- 2.6 Develop a training and advice programme for private landlords
- 2.7 Support benefits and home energy advice to increase the take up of benefits and grants
- 2.8 Increase the use of sustainable and renewable technology in new houses
- 2.9 Help people out of fuel poverty by improved energy efficiency, income maximisation and advice on tariffs
- 2.10 Through Care and Repair, target households vulnerable to fuel poverty for advice & assistance

3. Viable and Sustainable Communities

Outcome 3: Strengthened communities - Communities that are safe, strong, sustainable and actively involved

Key Actions: The Council and its partners will:-

- 3.1 Work with local communities to improve their areas
- 3.2 Address anti-social behavior and the incidence of crime
- 3.3 Maximise incomes, tackle debt problems and address fuel poverty.
- 3.4 Reinforce the role of the Housing Advisory Group and explore delegating powers to a democratically elected body of tenants
- 3.5 Review the Council's allocations policy, develop a common housing register, take direct action in sustaining tenancies and improve the quality of life in communities
- 3.6 Work closely with representatives of the private rented sector to improve standards

3.7 Direct new housing development to sustainable locations

4 Homelessness

Outcome 4: Homelessness - Homelessness is minimised and those that are homeless or threatened with homelessness are treated with dignity and are actively involved in resolving their housing problems

Key Actions: The Council and its partners will:-

- 4.1 Continue to meet Scottish Government's 2012 target
- 4.2 Work together to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place
- 4.3 Ensure that services are accessible to all
- 4.4 Enable customers to seek information, advice and support easily and to get appropriate help in a crisis.
- 4.5 Ensure the provision of comprehensive, person-centred housing options advice that allows customers to make planned and informed decisions about where they live.
- 4.6 Ensure that appropriate temporary accommodation is available when required, and allows customers to prepare for settled and sustainable housing.
- 4.7 Ensure the provision of sustainable solutions to housing need that make homelessness an isolated occurrence, not a way of life.

5. Particular Housing Needs

Outcome 5: Particular housing needs - Older people and those with particular housing needs are able to live as independently as possible in their own home

Key Actions: The Council and its partners will:-

- 5.1 Improve the availability across all sectors of housing and support, which is appropriate to people with particular needs
- 5.2 Improve the range of choices and the quality of advice and information services available to people with particular needs
- 5.3 Ensure an integrated and well-funded approach to securing adaptations
- 5.4 Develop initiatives for trips and falls and assistance when moving house
- 5.5 Ensure that discharges delayed due to unsuitable housing are minimised.
- 5.6 Improve communications with bodies representing those with particular needs
- 5.7 Develop a project to demonstrate how the private sector could meet older persons' needs
- 5.8 Evaluate the developments for people with learning disabilities at Torbrex & Raploch and the accommodation for people with poor mental health at St Ninians
- 5.9 Seek to provide more temporary accommodation for people subject to domestic violence.

5.10 Plan the re-provisioning of the Bridge project

5.11 Ensure that young people up to 25 who have been in care will not be considered as homeless.

The above document was discussed; the main points being:-

The aim of the strategy is to try to get more affordable housing, Scottish Government [SG] funding has reduced from £5-6m a year and is now under £1m/year, so Stirling Council [SC] has to look for different way to get more affordable housing. SC has been building council houses whilst Housing Associations [HA] have cut back due to reduced funding; mid-market properties meet the needs on other people than those whose need is for a council house.

People on Housing Benefit [HB] will still be able to apply for mid-market rent properties, but remember that the changes to Welfare Benefits means there will be a ceiling on the amount they are able to claim, so the applicant will have to be able to afford the difference. SC already has some mid-market rents in King Street and Riverside, but SC is being selective and allocating them to people who can afford the rent, but are unable to afford to buy their own house. It is proposed that another 150 mid-market rent properties are to be built.

Has any consideration been given to First Minister Alec Salmon proposal regarding ex-servicemen and the possibility that servicemen will flood into Scotland to get a house? There are 1700 serving Armed Forces from the Stirling area at moment. There are no ex-service personnel approaching SC with homelessness at the moment.

When we talk about affordability it is not just rent it is lifestyle and community; the STA would like to think that SC would include in 'affordability' maintaining communities so that enhancement is always the option. UK Government is proposing a waiver of developers having to include a specific proportion of affordable housing. At the moment in Scotland it is 25% but SC could not raise funding to build that proportion of houses, so instead of giving land, the developer can give money to SC to build council houses. Affordable housing definition now includes mid-market rent, shared ownership, and shared equity. SC is in a strong position because developers want to build here. There is a let-out clause that if they can prove the development would not be viable, then the agreement can be adjusted.

2.2 House Condition, Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty, Keep the Scheme of Assistance under review and develop a Housing Renewal Areas policy covers private sector grants; these have all gone now except for help for the disabled, [it used to be that owners could get help from SC for repairs, improvements etc.]. There are now Housing Renewal Area which gives powers for the LA to focus all its services in that area.

2.6 House Condition, Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty, Develop a training and advice programme for private landlords This aim is to set up training for landlords locally, [most landlords have 1 property] and the training is to get them to register and inform them the criteria necessary to be good landlord. The rental market in Stirling district is now 14% private landlord which is double from 10 years ago.

The student market is exploited and there needs to be research to examine the standards of rent for students. SC has no power to set rents because it is a free market; prices have come down with HB changes. SG has brought more regulation in recently, and given LA more powers, but SC has only 3 staff to deal with 3000 landlords.

We all know about the effects of climate change and rivers bursting their banks; places in the area were flooded, with water reaching the level of gardens, so is the Kildean site suitable for building houses because it is known to flood? Yes all proposals are cross-checked with SEPA; sometimes the site needs to be built up by a couple of metres.

3.4 Viable and Sustainable Communities, Reinforce the role of the Housing Advisory Group and explore delegating powers to a democratically elected body of tenants. This proposal is included in the document Serving Stirling, but the STA have not been approached. We assume it is proposed in an effort to expanding remit of HAG to include all areas. It suggests the inclusion of tenant voices etc. and maybe as a group we should think about what we want this to be. There are already tenant voices and tenants not on any group representing different areas, so we need to find out what the aim of the proposal is. **Action HAG members.**

4.3 Homelessness, Ensure that services are accessible to all; at present people who are homeless have to go to Springkerse House and this is not acceptable; there should be a place in town. The STA thought that when the One-Stop-Shop [OSS] was proposed that it would be taking over, but this did not happen and they are sent to Springkerse House. There is no privacy at OSS, but we were told that the 2nd floor would be on stream by the end of first year, and privacy and officers would be there. The Homeless staff is really good, but the homeless people need somewhere close to the OSS.

5.3 Particular Housing Needs, Ensure an integrated and well-funded approach to securing adaptations. SC spend £1m on adaptations to existing houses both council houses and private sector. At the STA meeting focused on Social Care we highlighted that older people in hospital leave with no care package in place because the process is started at end of hospital stay and should be started at the beginning, then the Social Work department can plan ahead. This should be in the strategy.

5.7 Particular Housing Needs, Develop a project to demonstrate how the private sector could meet older persons' needs. How can we do this? We could tell developers that we don't need large houses, but do need small houses that are built to meet needs of older people. The developer may find that this is not viable for him. Former council house owner occupiers, who are now elderly and living in a house that doesn't meet their need, could be approached to sell their home to the developer or SC which would leave them with enough money to buy a smaller house that met their needs from the developer. If SC brought the house it would be let for mid-market rent. There was some discussion about the morality of this because the STA has been told mid-market rents would apply to houses that were of superior quality/amenities to council houses.

5.8 Particular Housing Needs, Evaluate the developments for people with learning disabilities at Torbrex & Raploch and the accommodation for people with poor mental health at St Ninians. The thinking behind this aim is to see whether it meets the needs of the people it's provided for and whether it's a model for other projects. As long as it is not just a ploy to put them in an area on their own; they should be in the community although have their own supported place in smaller units.

3 Approval of minutes [10.7.12] and matters arising.

Proposed RW, Seconded TB

Matters arising:

MA 4.2 Maria has been told that a place has been booked for her at the TPAS Conference.

MA6.1 The accounts have been audited by Brenda Griffiths and she will receive the same payment as last year, namely £80. **Action Moira**

3.2 The consultation event on the Scottish Housing Regulator [SHR] proposals being held at the Raploch Campus was fully booked. Hugh and Moira attended a CRN event run by TPAS and TIS to discuss SHR and Right to Buy [RTB]; there were 4 people there who decided not to attend the Raploch event and Emma managed to fill the 4 vacant places with tenants from Stirling Council.

3.3 Hugh responded on behalf of STA to the RTB consultation which ended on 30th August; the vast majority of tenants want RTB to end completely.

5.5 Moira, Richard and Hugh produced a Report on The Cost of Day Care. A hard copy of the document will be sent to Margaret Brisley, Social Care Portfolio Holder, Bob Jack CEO and Deirdre Cilliers, Head of Social Services. A copy will be emailed to all Local Councillors and the 5 panel members who attended our meeting in Crianlarich. **Action Moira**

6.1 Violet Weir, Portfolio Holder for Housing, wanted more time in the post before she attended an STA meeting.

6.2 Hugh has not had time to delve further into Service Level Agreements; this will be on the agenda at a future date. **Action Hugh**

6.3 Before Moira booked the Kirk Hall in Callander she queried whether Committee members could get there. Hugh can take 3 people and Thomas will come by bus. **Action Moira**

4 Reports

Chair

4.1 Hugh thanked the committee for all their hard work this year, and hoped that we would all be present at the AGM. Richard gave apologies because he is on holiday.

4.2 Michael Griffiths proposed, seconded Thomas Brown that Hugh is nominated for TPAS Board.

Accounts

4.3 A copy of the accounts were handed out to Committee Members. They were approved as a good and fair record to be presented at the AGM; proposed by Michael Griffiths and seconded by Philomena McClung.

Correspondence

4.4 Invitation to nominate for the TPAS Good Practice Award; Michael Griffiths proposed, seconded by Philomena McClung, that Moira is nominated for her voluntary work. **Action Hugh**

Housing Advisory Group [HAG]

4.5 The Review of the Allocations Policy was discussed;

Hugh thought that the document should have gone back to the Working Group that worked on the original policy.

Allocating extra points for servicemen leaving the Armed Forces was discussed and Hugh believes that Stirling Council have decided to award 500 extra points for servicemen.

Although issues brought up at group meetings were not included in the statistics document presented, they will be included in the review.

People who have been in care and are aged from 16 -25 are still the responsibility of the Council. They often don't stay in the allocated house for long, but move to friends etc. and need a support package. The review will give them extra points to enable them to be rehoused until they are 25. The Local Housing Strategy was also discussed.

Repairs

4.6 The next meeting of the Repairs group is 20th November.

TLI

4.7 The TLI group will be presenting their Report on Voids at the HAG meeting on the 28th September.

5 AGM

5.1 The Scottish Cabinet has had a reshuffle and Keith Brown MSP is no longer Minister for Housing; this post has gone to Margaret Burgess MSP who has a background in CAB. Hugh asked her if she would replace Keith at our AGM, but she need more time in the post. Merlin Kemp, a Scottish Government Officer with a background in Welfare Reform will fill the slot.

5.2 The Conference start at 10am, will finish at 2pm and be followed by the AGM.

5.3 The main speakers are Jackie Gibson, CAB, Morag Bissett, Money Advice and Fuel Poverty, Eamonn O'Boyle and Steven McCabe, Income Maximisation Officers and John Macmillan to update on Repairs.

5.4 Hugh thanked Emma for arranging the information stalls manned by CAB, Credit Union, Poverty Alliance and Income Maximisation Officers.

5.5 Emma has received 28 applications so far; there will be 10 staff present, plus 5 from Clackmannan and possibly Anne Cook from SG. With the speakers, stall holders and STA this means that we should cater for 60 people.

5.6 Committee members will make up packs containing water and juice, so we do not require any on the tables. Option 2 was agreed; Tea/Coffee biscuits on arrival, Hot Option of Stovies, Pasta, Haggis with Tea/coffee and biscuits for lunch. This option includes light refreshments of water and juice, but as this is not required it should be cheaper than the price quoted of £10.95 a head.

Action Hugh

5.7 The agenda for the AGM will be

1. Opening Remarks
2. Apologies
3. Approval of minutes of 1.10.11 and matters arising
4. Chairman's report
5. Secretary's report
6. Treasurer's report and approval of accounts
7. Election of Committee members
8. Any proposed resolutions/motions
9. A.O.C.B.
- 10 Closing remarks.

5.8 In the minutes of July 2012 item 4 stated 'We would like to change the date of the AGM and propose the election of Assistant Treasurer [if required] and also consider if resignation of

members of the Management Committee on a rotational basis is necessary. Proposed amendments must be sent out 21 days in advance of the AGM'

Hugh put forward his proposals and amendments by Moira. In both cases the amended versions were proposed by Michael Griffiths, seconded by Thomas Brown and agreed by all. The motions going to the AGM are:-

Motion 1

STA recognises that administrative support is funded by Stirling Council. Currently the STA financial year runs from April to March in line with that of Stirling Council's financial year, but notes that the accounts submitted by the STA are not approved until the AGM of each year, which results in late submission of audited account to Stirling Council.

Therefore it is proposed to:

- 1] Amend the Constitution to change the month of the Annual General Meeting from that of September to May or early June each year commencing in 2013.
- 2] That accounts are presented for audit in April each year.
- 3] That after the AGM, once accounts have been approved at the STA Annual General Meeting, they are presented to Stirling Council.

Motion 2

Currently the STA elects from among the number present at the Annual General Meeting a Committee to serve for the following 12 months duration. At the first subsequent monthly meeting, the Committee selects from among its number its Office Bearers, namely:- Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Minute Secretary and Treasurer.

It is proposed that:

A Sixth Office Bearer is appointed to act as Assistant Treasurer in which to assist the Treasurer with accounts, expenses distribution and issue of cheques etc. Said Officer would be responsible to the Treasurer.

This Office Bearer also to be elected by the Committee at their first meeting.

5.9 Michael and Maria agreed to man the door. Emma will produce a registration sheet. **Action Michael, Maria and Emma.**

5.10 Emma has some name holder and will produce cards for those who have responded to her. **Action Emma**

5.11 Thomas will join Hugh and Philomena on Thursday at 2pm to make up packs. **Action Thomas, Hugh and Philomena**

5.12 Committee Members will be at Old Viewforth for 9am.

6. AOCB

6.1 The Salvation Army will be running the winter shelter project again this year. They have been providing 40 meals a day during the year but this has risen to 50-70 meals a day.

6.2 Emma suggested we ask Gregor Whiteman to speak about changes to Factoring at the next meeting in Callander. The main change is that Stirling Council can, from October, charge owner occupiers for lighting the closes, stairs etc. This was agreed and Emma will ask Gregor. **Action Emma**

6.3 The SC Rent Forum is being held on 24th November. The STA will have a special meeting solely to discuss rents on 27th November at 10.30am in Mayfield.

6.4 Emma gave an update on her work plan:-

Next year starting one to one training for staff.

Next week training on various things on housing including TPAS and the Charter.

Working with homeless tenants, including newssheet issued 4 times a year, setting up a 'Have Your Say' group for homeless tenants, and spending set times at The Bridge.

Marketing TLI for younger tenants; taking part in the TLI will give them skills to put on CV.

February next year training on Welfare Reform.

Emma now has Publisher and Word 2000, so will be able to produce notices, flyer etc. for STA.

The Housing Department is sending out a second letters to tenants who are under-occupying; this will be followed by one-to-one visits.

The DVD to replace the Tenant's Handbook is now finalised.

6.5 Carol Hamilton informed Hugh that a complaint had been made by a tenant to Anne McGuire MP about the amount of food left after the meeting in Cornton in May; they asked which organisation arranged the meeting and how they were funded. Emma did a synopsis of what the STA does and how it is funded, which Hugh plagiarised and sent to Anne. He met with Anne on 31st August and told her that we had collected several names of people at the Open Day who had said they would be attending the meeting but did not, but obviously we catered for them. The meeting finished earlier than expected and people left before the food arrived. Anne understood the scenario perfectly and is satisfied nothing untoward was going on. The complaint was raised through Violet Weir.

Date, time and place of next meeting.

11th October in Callander Kirk Hall at 10.30am. This is a Speaker event.

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