



STIRLING TENANTS ASSEMBLY
MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 19TH AUGUST 2014
IN CRIANLARICH VILLAGE HALL
AT 10.30AM

Present: Michael Griffiths, Moira Robertson, Hugh McClung, Thomas Brown, Meg Amasi, Philomena McClung, Alec Lamb, Dolly Gemmell, Anna Johnston, Brian Telfer

Apologies: Richard Waddell, Delia Waddell, Cathy Traynor, Cathy Brown, Emma Meldrum STP

2. Approval of minutes [15.7.14] and matters arising.

Proposed Michael Griffiths Seconded Anna Johnston

Matters arising:

Comment – the presentation on Stirling Credit Union was very good and is now on the website at <http://www.stirlingtenantsassembly.co.uk/Speaker-Presentations-.html>

5 Phil will check if Emma has booked the Ochil Centre for the STA meeting on September 16th

Action Phil

6.2 At the meeting on July 22nd Emma showed Moira, Hugh and Phil several templates of websites from www.webwiz.co.uk which is free except for hosting fees and costs. We would be able to develop the template to suit our needs be able to update it ourselves. The group will meet again next week to take this further and will report back to the committee. **Action website group**

5.2 Phil responded to the letter from SC regarding allocation points.

3 Reports

Chairperson Hugh

3.1 Housing Services has been merged with Environmental Services and the 7 Heads of Department will be made redundant but can apply for the 5 Director positions. Tony Cain will not be applying for the new position of Director of Housing and Environmental Services and will leave SC late December/early January.

3.2 The next CRN meeting is on the 28th August.

3.3 Hugh represented the Regional Networks [RN] at meetings with the Scottish Government [SG] The representatives had to commit to attending 3 working group meetings; the next 2 being on 2nd October and 18th October. Under discussion is Housing Policy Strategy for the next 5 years. Hugh thinks that it should be for the next 10-15 years. The result of these meetings will be presented at the RN Conference on 18th November. Hugh will keep the STA informed.

Secretary Philomena

3.4 Phil forwarded TPAS Conference posters to delegates that are attending.

3.5 TPAS sent out information on TPAS National Good Practice awards again, but it has been agreed that we will not participate this year.

Treasurer Dolly

3.6 Bank Statement is due this week. Balance on the books is £2375.61

4 Service Level Agreement [SLA]

4.1 Hugh explained to the committee the background to why we are compiling an SLA with TPAS and SC. The Scottish Housing Regulator [SHR] examines the service provision of local authorities [LA]; this includes accounts and because we are financed by SC the SHR may come to us to ask what we do for the grant. The workplan plus SLA will show what we, SC and TPAS promise to do.

The latest meeting was between the working group, Emma and Lesley Baird, CEO, TPAS where several amendments were made.

The document was discussed by the committee and several more amendments were made.

The amended document was proposed by Michael Griffiths and seconded by Philomena McClung. The document will now go back to TPAS and SC. **Action SLA group.**

5 Housing Advisory Group [HAG]: Braehead Community Project

5.1 Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 - Disposal of Land at Broom Road, Braehead, Stirling.

In 2012, the Housing Advisory Group meeting discussed a proposal to dispose of Land, scheduled in the local Development Plan as belonging to HRA site, in favour of a proposal by Braehead Community Council to establish a Community Garden.

The Stirling Tenants Assembly lodged an objection to the plan, which is on record, and had requested that consideration be given not to approve the proposal. The officer dealing with the proposal application was Gregor Wightman, and he approached the Stirling Tenants Assembly for retrospective approval for the development.

Hugh, personally, was led to believe that this proposal was not approved by Stirling Council, but in late 2013 Hugh discovered that an application had gone to the Scottish Ministers [under HRA Guidance, this is a necessity] and the Scottish Ministers had approved the proposal. At no time were tenants informed of this, nor had they seen the Ministerial Response to the Application.

Hugh made numerous requests to Mr Wightman for a copy of said response, and then obtained a copy under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act from Luke Kelly, Housing Services Division, SG.

Within his response Luke says

“While you maintain that this land cannot be used for the provision of mainstream housing in the Council area, and that the land can only be used for open space or recreation use, this would raise the question why such an asset is being accounted for on the HRA when the implication is that it can never be put to direct use for the benefit of council tenants”

“We do see the use of assets in this way as being for the benefit of all residents of Stirling Council and not just for council tenants. As things stand, the Council has therefore made a policy choice not to compensate tenants for the loss of the asset. It is that choice that the Council should be ready to explain to tenants and auditors if asked the question by them”

Hugh has requested that answers to the following questions are given at the HAG meeting on September 5th.

1. Why is this piece of land being charged to the HRA for maintenance costs if it has no benefit to the tenants of Stirling and, if it has a benefit to the tenants of Stirling why is a nominal rent of £1.00 being charged as a lease?

2. Why is the lease for 15 years, when the objections by the Stirling Tenants Assembly clearly showed the application was for 10 years and that at any time, should the Council wish to recover the site, then the proposers must give up the lease without question?
3. The policy of Stirling Council is not clear in why they have chosen not to compensate the HRA, and tenants, for the loss of the site?
4. This piece of land is clearly shown on the Local Plan, marked as an HRA development option, so therefore why can't it be used for mainstream Housing?
5. Did the Stirling Council seek a request for the General Fund to compensate the HRA?

This will be discussed at the HAG meeting on September 5th. **Action HAG group**

6 Scottish Housing Regulator: Inquiry Report – for comment

6.1 Hugh downloaded from the SHR website a copy of an inquiry report on Stirling Council published in June 2014 which can be found at

<http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/stirling-council-inquiry-report-june-2014>

The report concerns Stirling Council's Assurance and Improvement Plan for 2013/16 which highlighted that in overall terms, the Council's housing and homelessness services were areas of low risk. However, there were concerns over the Council's performance in relation to its current tenant's rent arrears.

The Council had a good level of awareness around the causes of its reported weaker performance and it had taken a number of actions, but at that time, there was little evidence of sustained improvement in its performance. It was widely predicted that the proposed Welfare Reform measures would result in further pressures on all Councils' rent arrears performance. As a result it was agreed that SHR would carry out a piece of focused scrutiny, looking at the Council's processes and performance around gathering its tenant's rents.

The next steps are

This report highlights our findings following this targeted scrutiny activity. We expect Stirling Council to respond effectively and deliver identifiable improvements in its performance. We will use the findings of this scrutiny work to develop the Council's Assurance and Improvement Plan for 2014/17. We plan to regularly monitor the Council's reported performance in this area in order to ensure that its proposed recovery plan is effective in reducing its tenant's rent arrears.

7 Housing [Scotland] Bill 2014

7.1 This Bill got Royal Assent on 1st August 2014 and is now being implemented.

9 AOCB

9.1 Both TIS and TPAS are holding events to discuss 'Where are we now?' with regard to the Scottish Housing Charter. Anna, Brian, Meg, Thomas and Moira agreed to attend the meeting on 14th October at the Teachers Building in Glasgow. *At the meeting it was wrongly thought that the event was on the Housing [Scotland] Bill 2014.*

9.2 Anna told Thomas that SC is still building the 9 houses in Cornton which is probably why they haven't started on the 6 bungalows in Culterhove.

9.3 Hugh said that he would contact John McMillan to see why kitchen replacements in Raploch have been deferred until next year. **Action Hugh**

10 Date, time and place of next meeting.

Tuesday 16th September in Ochil Centre at 10.30am

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