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STIRLING TENANTS ASSEMBLY
MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 15TH APRIL 2014
IN MAYFIELD CENTRE
AT 10.30AM

1. Present: Michael Griffiths, Moira Robertson, Hugh McClung, Dolly Gemmell, Philomena McClung, Alec Lamb, Richard Waddell, Delia Waddell, Thomas Brown, Cathy Brown, Anna Johnston, Frank McFarlane, Brian Telfer, Danny Mullen [SHR]

Apologies: Mary Rainey, Meg Amasi, Cathy Traynor, Emma Meldrum STP, Margaret McFarlane

2.Minutes of Previous meeting 18.3.14

Proposed by Philomena McClung and seconded by Thomas Brown.

Matters Arising

MA 4.2 Hugh is meeting with Emma on Thursday to discuss TP work and AGM; he will ask if she has sent STA meeting dates to her database contacts. **Action Hugh**

4a, Phil has requested a room close to the lifts for Dolly at the TPAS Conference and has also booked a 6th place.

Dolly has paid the membership fee of £27 to TPAS.

4b, Office Bearers met with Carol Hamilton on 31st March to discuss the proposed Work Plan and budget. Carol agreed to pay £12,500 into the STA account in 2 instalments; £6000 immediately and £6500 in October. Carol also gave an assurance that she will consider any application for addition funding. Stirling Council will continue to fund the contract for the TP Worker and for 2 STA newsletters.

3.Special Guest: Danny Mullen, Tenant Assessor of Scottish Housing Regulator.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard

The STA had previously returned the questionnaire below to Danny.

STIRLING COUNCIL
Scottish Housing Quality Standard Scrutiny

1. Introduction and background to visit.

The Council's Assurance and Improvement Plan for 2013/16, highlighted a risk around the Council's published progress in bringing its properties up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. The stock condition information which the Council bases its performance upon is out of date and is not

comprehensive. As a result, the Scottish Housing Regulator is proposing to carry out a piece of scrutiny looking at the Council's knowledge of its stock, its progress with its stock condition surveys and whether there is any risk of the Council failing to meet the Minister's deadline of 2015. The Council's staff are currently now carrying out surveys of all of its houses. As of October 2012, it had internal surveys of 23% and external surveys of 46% of its houses. Responses to the questions below will allow the Regulator to get a tenants' perspective of the present situation. Views expressed will not be attributed to individuals, but will be reflected in the Regulator's report.

2. Scottish Housing Quality Standard

- Have the Council involved STA in looking at SHQS standard generally and perhaps, the consideration of any enhanced local standards?
- A. STA have been continually informed and advised of the standards and any enhancements through the Repairs Working Group and the Housing Advisory Group.
- Are STA members aware of the 2015 Ministerial deadline for all social landlords' houses meeting the SHQS?
- A. STA are aware of Ministerial deadline for the SHQS as being April 2015
- Are STA aware of the provisions for Exemptions and Abeyances?
- STA are aware of requirements for Stirling Council to apply for Exemptions or Abeyances on the deadlines as being a requirement where there maybe completion/programme failures.
- Have the Council worked through with STA the investment needs of the housing stock and the funding of the works necessary to bring its houses up to the SHQS by the 2015 deadline?
- A. The Business Plan model for the Housing Stock and necessary funding are in a continuous advisement through: Housing Advisory Group and the Annual Rents consultation where an update is given.

3. Investment programmes

- Have the Council routinely involved STA in pulling together proposals for its annual programme of investment in its houses?
- A. Stirling Council has continued to involve the STA in its proposals by means of formal consultation meetings and surveys. Similarly, the model business plan has involved tenant input towards investment portfolio through the Housing Advisory Group and the Annual Rent Consultation
- Do STA members feel that their views are being reflected in the Council's investment planning decisions?
- A. Indeed, the Council has listened to tenants views very

sharply. In 2011 it was suggested that sufficient funding was available then the Council could bring forward its investment for Central Heating Programme 2012-2015. This was acknowledged and the Heating programme will be completed this year (2014). Similar steps will and have been taken towards kitchen/bathroom replacement programmes.

- Are updates provided as to tenant satisfaction with works/contractors?
- A. Yes. Lists are continuously reviewed and summary consultation is made personally and with survey sheets to tenants who have been recently had their home upgraded. These details are regularly reviewed to ensure progress is still being made

4. Progress reporting

- Are STA aware of the programme of stock condition surveys now being carried out?
- A. Yes. We are also aware that only 50% of the stock condition survey has been completed both internally and externally. A number of reasons for this, due to lack of access etc.,
- If so, has STA been kept up to date with progress?
- A. We are aware that there may be some failures on programmes still to complete. Some of the smaller issues such as smoke alarms will be concluded in the responsive repairs programme.
- Are STA aware of the potential impact in terms of investment which may be needed to houses and how this will be funded?
- A. STA are constantly advised of the investment programme each year at the Annual Rents Consultation and are guided in what costs are borne through HRA, including any Capital Investments. There are regular reports throughout the year at joint meetings to ensure targets are being met and any failures highlighted.
- Have the Council provided STA with regular progress updates as to progress against the SHQS?
- A. See previous answers. We are aware that some measures may fall behind but are confident that Stirling Council can complete all necessary works by the end of 2015

5. Any other comments or observations

Many of the issues are miniscule when looking overall at the Investment portfolio for our Housing. These maybe through access problems or owner/occupiers not willing to pay for the improvements.

The STA are satisfied that the overall programme will be satisfactory and will match all necessary investment criteria. Where practical Stirling Council is using SHQS

as a baseline quality and is ensuring that the quality is beyond that of the quality outlined. Such examples are of standards with energy efficiency and have recently improved the database to ensure that stock info is up to date and they are able to produce compliance reports accurately.

6. Thanks and next steps

- Many thanks for meeting and answering questions.
- Feedback will be provided to the Regulator's team.
- STA's comments, along with the results of the Regulator's scrutiny findings will be incorporated into a published report. We will ensure that a copy of the report will be forwarded to the STA Secretary, if we are provided with contact details.

Hugh introduced Danny who is a Tenant Assessor with SHR.

Danny asked if we were all aware that the Scottish Housing Quality Standard [SHQS] should be achieved by April 2015 and we are.

After meeting with SC, the SHR is concerned that SC may not meet the SHQS by April 2015. A Tenant Assessor always speaks to tenants as well as the landlord in order to get a complete picture.

The Council's Assurance and Improvement Plan for 2013/16 highlighted a risk around the Council's published progress in bringing its properties up to the. The stock condition information which the Council bases its performance upon is out of date and is not comprehensive. As a result, the Scottish Housing Regulator is carrying out a piece of scrutiny looking at the Council's knowledge of its stock, its progress with its stock condition surveys and whether there is any risk of the Council failing to meet the Minister's deadline of 2015. The Council's staff is currently now carrying out surveys of all of its houses. As of October 2012, it had internal surveys of 23% and external surveys of 46% of its houses.

Danny wondered if due to the stock condition survey results we thought that SC would have problems implementing SHQS on time.

The SHQS has been on-going for 10 years and some HAs and LAs carried out complete stock condition surveys, so they could access the investment required before 2015. Investment has to be paid for through rent. The SHQS is a minimum standard, and if tenants want a higher standard for their homes, rents would need to pay for this.

Many LAs don't have any capacity for borrowing more, so would need to increase rents substantially.

SC surveyed 22% of homes internally e.g. heating, electric, kitchen, bathrooms, and 46% of homes externally and because both figures are below 50% of the stock, the SHR is worried that there may not be enough investment.

How much were tenants involved in setting the investment? The STA has mentioned HAG etc. but what about tenants not involved with the STA? Did SC provide adequate methods for them to participate?

SC is confident that they will meet SHQS by 2015.

The Open Door newsletter included a questionnaire which asked whether tenants agreed with borrowing to build new council houses, the capital investment programme, savings proposals etc. and the majority of responses were in favour of SC proposals.

Richard said that his house has recently been surveyed and was in great condition [he has had several improvements recently]. He did not remember his home ever being surveyed in his 27

years of tenancy, but it must have been surveyed externally because this has been done every 5 years [this will be extended to 7 years under current proposals].

Danny said that asset management plan a notional figure for each capital investment, such as a kitchen will last for 15 years, so there is no necessity to check building every 2 years, but it is good practice to check regularly.

Maybe if homes were inspected internally regularly, then any problems with the tenant not properly maintaining the property could be picked up earlier.

Frank was advised not to discuss his problems with his house at the meeting but to go through SC complaints procedure,[which is a 2 stage procedure] and then if the problem is not resolved to go to the Scottish Ombudsman.

If the void standard that SC operates had not been adhered to before the property was let, the tenant has a right to ask for compensation.

The general condition of the houses is good, but at re-let times, SC is aiming for less void time.

Maybe jobs could be done when the house is empty? This is often not possible because workmen would need to be taken off other capital work jobs.

Much of the work identified in the survey has now been done, but some has not been completed on time due to tenants not being available or refusing to have the work done; also owner occupiers hold up the work when they are not willing to pay their share.

A tenant thought that it was unacceptable that external survey work was being extended from 5 to 7 years, but work that is identified by the tenants in the interim can be done as a repair.

Polystyrene ceiling tiles should be removed before a property is re-let.

Danny told the group that although the things identified above may fail SC's void standard, they do not fail the SHQS, which is about the building, how safe, how accessible, and the interior standard of the kitchen, bathroom, wiring etc, but he can understand the frustration that arises through the void process. Each landlord will have a standard, but not an enhanced standard, and sometimes repairs have to be done after the new tenant has moved in. If workmen are taken off SHQS work, this will impact on that; it is a balancing act.

Danny asked if we have any concerns about exemptions or demolitions that have not been carried out. We are aware that there are going to be exemptions caused by owner occupiers unwilling to pay their share, but new parts of the housing bill could help this; this is not an excuse, but a statement of fact. Also some tenants refuse capital work; SC is doing a 'mop-up' this year, but in some cases work will have to wait until the tenant moves out.

Danny said it has been good to be here; it is a long while since he heard such good debate and he thanked us for the invite and our time.

4.STA AGM timetable Saturday 31st May 2014, Mayfield Centre, Stirling.

10.00 - 10.30 Coffee/Registration

10.30 - 10.40 Welcome and Opening Remarks

10.40 - 11.10 Gillian Taylor, Stirling Council; Scottish Welfare Fund

11.10 - 11.40 Carol Hamilton, Stirling Council; Update on Council Service

11.40 - 11.50 Coffee

11.50 - 12.15 Steven McCabe, Welfare Advisor, Stirling Council; Update on Welfare Reform

12.15 - 1.00pm Lunch

1.00 - 2.00pm STA Annual General Meeting (This part is only open to tenants of Stirling Council)

2.00pm Coffee

2.15pm Depart.

The above timetable was agreed.

- Phil gave out notices of the AGM to those present and will post them out to those who gave apologies.
- Notices will go out to members next week.
- Hugh is preparing a poster for committee members to display in their local area.
- Emma is meeting with Hugh at 11am Thursday to help with publicity for AGM etc. Anna will come along and Thomas maybe.
- Michael and Phil volunteered to be on the door.
- Treasurer's report; the accounts have been independently examined and Hugh will photocopy an unsigned copy for the packs.
- Mrs Ena Campbell, Treasurer of Victoria Hall Management Committee, examined the accounts and Michael proposed that we make a payment of £50 for services rendered, [not a donation to charity as we are not allowed to spend public money in that way]. This was agreed by all.

5. Correspondence

5.1 There were no takers for a free half day scrutiny event by TPAS.

5.2 Day care costs for elderly; at the meeting with Christine Simpson it was indicated that there was to be a consultation in May. David Niven, Programme Coordinator [Change Fund] has emailed to say that the event taking place in SW Rural Stirling in May is for local Intermediate Care Practitioners and not a wider event. There will probably be a further event in late summer/early autumn with invitations going to a wider group of interested parties. He will ensure that we will get an invite.

Suzanne Player, Rural Development Worker, Killin, told Moira that the idea in Balfron was to copy the system used in Callander; although this model is great for people leaving hospital and allows them to live in their own home, it is not what we are looking for. We would like some form of regular events where elderly people can meet each other to combat loneliness.

Christine Simpson was not up to speed on care services, and the information we received about the consultation in Balfron was not correct.

We need to respond to Christine expressing our disappointment that the event we were told about is not what we are wanting and that it would be a waste of time because it does not resolve the issues that we are concerned about – mainly loneliness and how this can affect the elderly both mentally and physically. Moira will respond and involve Suzanne Player. **Action Moira**

5. CRN AGM 17th May 2014, Cladhan Hotel, Falkirk 10.30am for 11am.

5.1 Speakers at this event will be:-

Ken Dow on welfare reform and universal credit,

Anne Cook, Scottish Government.

And an update from SHR

5.2 Nomination of Election of Delegate to CRN Committee

Under the CRN constitution, where there are a full number of committee members for an area, one person has to stand down. Stirling has a full complement of 4 and Hugh has stood down but would like to restand.

It was proposed Michael Griffiths and seconded by Thomas Brown that the STA nominate Hugh McClung as a representative on the CRN. Agreed by all.

Phil will return the nomination form. **Action Phil**

5.3 Phil, Hugh, Alec, Thomas, Cathy B, Frank and Margaret McFarlane will attend the AGM.

5.4 Phil will ask Emma is she would like to attend. **Action Phil**

6.Reports:

6.1 Central Region Network [CRN]

6.1a At the CRN meeting on 27th March there was a report on the presentation to Scottish Government Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee on the new Housing Bill in Dumbarton on 24th February. Hugh was one of 3 tenants [the others were from Argyll & Bute and Western Isles] who made representation on behalf of all Scottish tenants on the implications of the bill. The CEOs of both TIS and TPAS also made representations.

Since the meeting Hugh has been contacted by senior advisors to SG who would like to know how Hugh felt about the meeting being held in a venue away from Edinburgh and not in the Scottish Parliament.

The new HB is approaching Stage 2; the proposal is that RTB is cancelled by 2017, but tenants want it to be cancelled one year and not three years after Royal assent is granted. This has been agreed as an amendment.

Tenants also asked for the SG to provide guidance on policies such as ASB.

6.1b Chairs and Secretaries meeting is being held today and they will discuss the report on the initial hearing on HB. The SG is also concerned about private sector rental properties not being up to minimum standards on wiring etc. and are proposing that wiring needs to be examined every 5 years for new build and 3 years for older properties.

6.2 Housing Advisory Group

6.2a The HAG meeting was held in the Council Chambers, Municipal Buildings and it was very hard or impossible for members to hear the discussions.

6.2b Responses to the rent consultation were good.

6.2c It was agreed that the usual format for the SC Open Day was no longer working mainly because it was new kitchens and bathrooms that brought tenants in, but as this programme is nearing completion, tenants are no longer interested. It may be that a fun day will be held next year to bring in families, but there will not be any event this year; SC will look at what other LAs do. [Danny says that West Lothian hold a fun day which is aimed at children but brings parents in]

7.A.O.C.B

7.1 Local connection points have been removed from homeless applicants. This was not mentioned at the homeless partnership. Brian Telfer is a member of the homeless partnership and will check previous minutes. It was discussed at a HAG meeting. Hugh to take up with Carol.

7.2 Phil will write to everyone about AGM and request that they let her know if they are coming so that it is easier and more economical for catering purposes.

7.3 Moira read out a very nice letter from Mary tending her resignation due to health and personal reasons. Hugh will send a formal reply thanking her for her contributions which have been considerable during the years she has been an STA member; participating in the homeless

partnership, initialising the Valley Project which is a great achievement in itself, holding several office bearer roles.

The STA will invite Mary to our AGM and members contributed to a bouquet.

Hugh and Philomena will make the arrangements. **Action Hugh and Phil.**

8.Date of Next Meeting. 17th June 2014 when office bearers will be elected.

Abbreviations

AGM Annual General Meeting

CC Community Council

FV Forth Valley

HRA Housing Revenue Account

LAs Local authorities

RN Regional Networks

SC Stirling Council

SHQS Scottish Housing Quality Standard

STA Stirling Tenants Assembly

TP Tenant Participation

ASB Anti-Social Behaviour

CRN Central Regional Network

HAG Housing Advisory Group

LA Local authority

LG Local Government

RTO Registered Tenants Organisation

SHG Strathfillan Housing Group

SG Scottish Government

TLI Tenant Led Inspection

TPAS Tenant Participation Advisory Service