



**STIRLING TENANTS ASSEMBLY
MEETING HELD IN MAYFIELD CENTRE, ST NINIANS,
ON 18TH AUGUST 2015 AT 10.30am**

1. Present:

Alec Lamb, Dolly Gemmell, Thomas Brown, Cathy Brown, Anna Johnston, Hugh McClung, Philomena McClung, Delia Waddell, Moira Robertson, Meg de Amasi, Michael Griffiths, Brian Telfer.

Apologies:

Richard Waddell, Robert Cairney, Emma Meldrum.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 21st July 1015:

Acceptance of minutes was proposed by Philomena, seconded by Dolly.

3. Business arising from Minutes:

- 1) Item 9 – Hugh reported that at the joint meeting of Regional Networks Chairs and Secretaries there was a speaker from the Freedom of Information section of the Scottish Government. Hugh had criticised the department for not asking those online to spread it around so that more people would have the chance to comment on consultation. In future any contact the department have with people online will include a request to cascade the information to people not online. A hard copy will be available from the Scottish Government.
- 2) Item 4 – meeting on 20th October will now be held in Bannockburn Community Centre. Venues for all meetings have been booked. Steven McCabe and possibly one other will be attending our meeting on 15th September to discuss the effect of personal credit on rent arrears.
- 3) Promoting Positive Outcomes – copies were distributed.
- 4) Item 5.3 – DMS Office Stationery offering prices for promotional materials. Hugh will enquire about costs for lapel badges.
- 5) Item 6.4 – Philomena acknowledged that all members had advised her of their attendance or non-attendance at today's meeting.

4. Reports:

• **Chair**

- 1) At Regional Networks Chairs and Secretaries Meeting Hugh had hoped to speak on the changes to HRA Guidance. It had been decided to reconsider cases for consent under £10,000 so that landlords who are intending to dispose of land under that amount would not need to consult with tenant groups. Consultation had shown various concerns from RTOs about the proposals.
- 2) An officer from Scottish Government was supposed to attend Regional

Networks meeting to update information. However, the officer did not turn up. A member of the TP team advised that the officer concerned had actually left and his replacement had not been given up-to-date information. Hugh was not happy about this and has been instructed to write to the Minister about this. Hugh had hoped to report to Housing Advisory Group. He did have the analysis of the proposals which he passed round.

- 3) Housing Advisory Group meeting is on 4th September 2015. It is likely that there will be an update on the Empty Homes Project. Agenda is not yet available, although Hugh has received an e-mail asking if he had any item he wished included. Moira pointed out that every member of the Housing Advisory Group should be asked the same thing.

- **Secretary**

Nothing to report which has not already been covered.

- **Treasurer**

August statement not yet received. Balance £6,581.49

5. **Correspondence:**

- 1) Scottish Welfare Fund Consultation – Hugh had received documentation. There is now a consultation which will ask if it should be only for those who find themselves in an emergency situation, or if it should be broadened. They are asking if the criteria should remain the same, how many grants should a person receive in one year, etc. Philomena emphasised that consideration has to be given to individual circumstances. It was agreed that couples should not be allowed six grants if a person on their own is allowed three. Stirling Council had £600,000 for the Welfare Fund last year and did not even use one-quarter of it. Welfare Fund needs to be highlighted. Scottish Government are trying to streamline this by making it easier for those in need to claim. Scottish Government are saying that Councils should have the budget and the right to set the criteria. Hugh will respond – anyone wishing to respond individually can do so online at www.scottishgovernment.co.uk
- 2) Consultation on further extension of coverage of the Freedom of Information Act 2002 to more organisations – this had been discussed at our last business meeting. Consultation is open until October and can be done online.
- 3) Consultation on draft regulations that govern eligibility criteria for appointment to the Scottish tribunals – Council have agreed to set up a private sector tribunal. First tier tribunal is to have a certain number of members on it and must have legal representation. Upper tribunal will have another tier – ordinary members will be allowed. We are being asked if there should be any changes to the eligibility. It was agreed that there should be tenant representation on the tribunal. It was also agreed that the regulations were a bit “top heavy”. Hugh will respond. Moira asked if there is to be a private sector tenants’ charter coming out. Hugh responded that they were still going through the information.

6. **Any other competent business**

- 1) Moira reported that the cost of heating in rural homes is an issue needing attention. Moira and Emma had put out a survey for affected tenants. Emma is now working through the data and will meet with Moira after the Housing Advisory Group meeting. Moira will seek clarification at the Repairs meeting on 22nd September.
- 2) Hugh reported that Regional Network Chairs will be meeting with the Housing Minister on 24th November.

- 3) Hugh will have a private session with Scottish Housing Regulator on 21st September to discuss the risk to tenants of the new Housing Policy.
- 4) Hugh has not arranged a special Stirling Tenants Assembly meeting to discuss the impact of Universal Credit, due to time constraints. It would be more prudent to listen to what Steven has to say at the next Stirling Tenants Assembly meeting. Forum which Regional Networks had set up to discuss Universal Credit etc. has made no impact whatsoever. They are now asking if we know of any hardship cases whose needs are not being met by Local Authority or Department of Work and Pensions - if so, we should let the Networks tenant representative know and they will let Scottish Government know. Some pilots have been carried out to get tenants to sign an agreement to pay rent direct to landlords.
- 5) Philomena said the dates of future meetings are as stated in the minutes of 21st July, except for the change of venue for the October meeting (discussed above).
- 6) Meg said that, as her daughter is expecting twins, she will not be around much and she felt that she should step down from the Stirling Tenants Assembly. However, Philomena felt that Meg should reconsider stepping down in the meantime. Meg's apologies for non-attendance will be noted at future meetings until we hear from her further.

Date of next meeting

15th September 2015 at 10.30am at Travellers' Site, Stirling.

Hugh closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.