

WESLO TENANT PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the above meeting held on Thursday 29 January 2009
Bathgate Office at 7.00pm

Present from Weslo:

David McLaren, Housing Manager
Margaret Walker, Admin Officer

Tenants:

Eileen Stirling –Tenant Director, Bathgate
Janette Wallace – Tenant Director, Stoneyburn
Evelyn Johnston - Livingston Station
Glenn Mulligan - Fauldhouse
Jim Porter - Bathgate
Hugh Ruck – Livingston
Gordon Smith - Bo'ness

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

June Harper, Housing Officer
Alex Bow - Tenant Director, Bo'ness
Andrew Sneddon - Tenant Director, Linlithgow
Colin Torrie – East Calder
Sybil Watt – Bo'ness

2. CHAIR

David McLaren invited Janette Wallace to chair the meeting.

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2008 were approved by Gordon Smith and seconded by Glenn Mulligan.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Glenn Mulligan asked for an update regarding the maintenance of the ground to the rear of Crofffoot Drive. Margaret confirmed that a meeting had been held with West Lothian Council who advised there had been access difficulties during the past year but the area will be brought up to standard when the grass cuts start in March/April.

5. OLDER PERSONS ADVICE PROJECT(OPAP)

David McLaren advised that to date 28 tenants had secured approximately £40,000 of welfare benefits. A further update will be included in the June Tenant Newspaper.

Gordon Smith informed the group that his wife had been visited and a claim for additional benefits has been submitted. He feels it has been a worthwhile experience and would recommend that in the current climate anyone who is given the opportunity to participate in the scheme should do so.

There was some discussion as to why some tenants may choose not to respond to the invite. Some of the reasons discussed included - pride, perceived lack of confidentiality and loss of privacy. It was agreed that we should continue to promote the scheme in the tenant newspaper and through word of mouth.

Glenn Mulligan and Hugh Ruck asked that they be referred to OPAP and David McLaren agreed to arrange this.

6. PROPOSED 2009/2010 RENT INCREASE

David McLaren introduced the paper for consideration and comment in advance of it being presented to Weslo's Board on 4 February 2009.

David explained Weslo's commitment to limit increases to a maximum of inflation +1%. Using the November Retail Price Index (RPI), which was 3.0%, the paper outlines the impact of 5 scenarios – ranging from 0%,1%,2%,3%and 4% on the budget and average rent level. It will be recommended to the Board that they consider and approve the maximum increase of 4% to ensure that we meet and maintain SHQS standards by 2015 and to allow the company to have sufficient reserves to meet its business needs.

The committee members were asked to consider the paper and provide feedback.

- Evelyn Johnston noted the proposed rent increases by other landlords only one of which is proposing the same 4% increase as Weslo while other RSL's are proposing higher increases ranging from 4.5% - 7%.
- Evelyn also felt that the projected RTB receipt of £609,000 was optimistic in the current financial climate. Margaret explained that while sales have slowed, the introduction of the modernised RTB to all tenants may result in an increased receipt for some individual sales. The average sale receipt for tenants with preserved right to buy averages £35,000. It is expected the average receipt for a modernised RTB sale will be in the region of £80 - £85,000.
- Glenn felt that as a former Tenant Director, he was familiar with how the rent increase impacted on the business e.g. future maintenance programmes, reactive repairs and business costs. He feels however that tenants generally may not understand how lower increases will impact on the services they receive and they will be more inclined to consider how much it will cost them each week/month.

- Janette asked what would happen if hypothetically we contacted all tenants and 85% of tenants objected to the proposed increase. David pointed out that the Board would have to consider the reasons for their objections also take account of such a large majority of tenants rejecting the increase.
- Evelyn and Eileen both commented that any increase in rent will be felt in the present financial crisis. However, they recognise that the money is invested in the stock and tenants should appreciate this.
- The Committee members unanimously supported the recommendation being put to the Board.

7. PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

David McLaren introduced the paper for consideration and comment in advance of it being presented to Weslo's Board on 4 February, 2009.

The paper outlines a programme of work for the coming year at an estimated cost of £920,000. It also identifies a programme of provisional works for 2010 - 2015. The work will assist Weslo towards ensuring that all stock met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015.

The committee members were asked to consider the paper and the following comments were made.

- Hugh Ruck asked if installing reflectors behind central heating radiators might further increase the energy efficiency of the replacement heating systems and if so could it be incorporated into the works. **David undertook to check this out and advise.**
- Eileen Stirling enquired if there was a minimum number of electric sockets in a property as her living room radiator has been installed over a socket and in the kitchen, a unit covers another socket. **David undertook to check this out and advise.**
- The Committee members unanimously supported the programme of works for 2009/2010.

8. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

David McLaren distributed a copy of the new Complaints Procedure leaflet and formal Complaint Form. He pointed out that Weslo receive very few formal complaints but as an RSL we are required to have a formal Complaints Policy and Register. A general discussion took place about what constitutes a complaint. The procedure was duly noted.

9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

(a) Attendance at TPC meetings

Margaret Walker pointed out that 3 committee members have not responded to invites to attend TPC meetings in the past 12 months. After some discussion it was agreed that Margaret will attempt to contact them in person to ascertain whether they wish to continue with their membership. If they chose to resign, Margaret will seek new members as part of an article in the June Newspaper.

(b) Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)

David McLaren advised that from 4 January, 2009 Weslo are required to produce an EPC for every void property it relets and every property it sells. Each certificate is valid for 10 years and will be displayed in the meter cupboards.

(c) Text Messaging & Rent Arrears

David McLaren mentioned a recent article in the Inside Housing journal where an RSL was using text messaging in the recovery of rent arrears and it was being hailed as good practice.

After some discussion, there was a consensus that sending a text message seeking contact was acceptable however, it should not be a means to for example send arrear messages.

There were no further matters raised and the meeting closed at 8.45pm

DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Thursday 16 April at 7pm - 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate

Chair - Hugh Ruck

Thursday 16 July at 7pm - 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate

Chair – Glenn Mulligan

Thursday 15 October at 7pm - 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate

Chair – Evelyn Johnston