

WESLO TENANT PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the above meeting held on Thursday 14 August 2008
in the Bathgate Office at 7.00pm**

Present from Weslo:

David McLaren, Housing Manager
Margaret Walker, Admin Officer
June Harper, Housing Officer

Tenants:

Alex Bow - Tenant Director, Bo'ness
Andrew Sneddon - Tenant Director, Linlithgow
Eileen Stirling –Tenant Director, Bathgate
Janette Wallace – Tenant Director, Stoneyburn
Evelyn Johnston - Livingston Station
Jim Porter - Bathgate
Hugh Ruck – Livingston
Gordon Smith - Bo'ness
Colin Torrie – East Calder
Sybil Watt – Bo'ness

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Margaret Colquhoun – Whitburn
Glenn Mulligan - Fauldhouse

2. CHAIR

As Eileen, who was due to chair the meeting, had been delayed it was agreed that David McLaren chair the meeting. Eileen to chair the November meeting and Janette will chair the January 2009 meeting

3. WELCOME ALEX BOW

David McLaren welcomed new Tenant Director, Alex Bow to the meeting.

4. PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2008 were approved.

5. MATTERS ARISING

(a) COMMON HOUSING REGISTER

The 6 month pilot is now complete and been reviewed. Weslo has advised West Lothian Council we are happy to continue to participate in the CHR for a further 12 months. Janice Gray, Lettings Officer will also continue her secondment for a further 12 months.

The introduction of CHR's is a government objective. In West Lothian this means that applicants who are seeking housing with Weslo, West Lothian Council or Almond Housing Association complete 1 application form. Falkirk Council is looking at introducing a CHR in the future but progress is slow.

David confirmed that in the past 6 months approximately 60% of Weslo's allocations have been to homeless applicants.

(b) TENANT MEMBERSHIP OF CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF HOUSING

Margaret asked those tenants who had not yet completed the application forms from the CIH to complete and return asap. Weslo will meet the membership costs.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

Janette and Eileen attended their first Equalities and Diversity group meeting on 13 August. Janette outlined some of the actions being undertaken by the group and made specific mention of the equalities questionnaire that has been merged with the census form and is being issued to all tenants while completing the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement (SST). The data collated will then be input into a data base which will provide a profile of Weslo tenants' needs and enable Weslo to deliver appropriate services.

7. UPDATE ON LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE IN HOUSING

Congratulations were offered to Eileen Stirling, Colin Torrie and Janette Wallace who successfully completed this 3½ training day CIH training course.

All three gave a brief description of their experiences. Janette is looking forward to going out again with Graeme Murray, House Inspector, to follow up on some inspections that she assisted with.

8. CONTRACT UPDATE

David McLaren gave an update on the 2008 – 2009 contracts which will cost approximately £1.5 m. All contracts are progressing well. He also advised that Weslo had appointed a Consultant Engineer who was surveying unadopted footpaths in Weslo's ownership with a view to preparing a report on their condition for inclusion in future contract programmes.

9. METHODS OF PAYMENT

Margaret distributed a leaflet detailing the various methods of payment available to tenants. She advised that we were looking at extending these further to include a mobile phone text payment system available through Allpay. Allpay currently operate the card payment facility and offer a secure network, processing payments daily. Tenants would have to register but thereafter they would only need to text "Pay rent" and "the amount" along with a "password". This would enable tenants to make payment 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The consensus was that this seemed a good idea and would particularly suit many of our younger tenants.

10. TPAS WORKERS FORUM

June attended a Tenant Participation Workers Forum in May. The majority of delegates attending were directly involved in tenant participation. Some of the sessions included;-

- Discussions on the stress on housing created by the Homeless legislation.
- Regulation and Inspection from a tenant perspective.
- Young people.

The forum provided a good networking experience and provided an opportunity to share working practices.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

(a) Pass Doors

Gordon asked if there were any proposals for internal works such as replacement doors to properties.

David explained that F3 have carried out a sample survey of all Weslo properties and this has been used to determine the contract priorities to ensure that we meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015. At this time pass doors are not featured as a priority. We will however look at any reports by tenants who may be experiencing problems with the doors and will respond appropriately.

(b) Contract Work

Evelyn raised a concern that Housing Officers may not be as familiar with details of contracts taking place in their estates as they used to be. This may result in them not being able to respond appropriately to tenant enquiries thereby reducing the service standards that tenants have been used to receiving.

David advised that housing staff are aware of contract work that is being undertaken in their areas however he pointed out that responsibility for contract supervision lies with the technical staff. We have increased the number of technical staff and are currently reviewing working

practices. We will continue to operate on the basis that technical and housing staff liaise on any matters that arise during the course of a contract.

In conclusion David did not consider there was a reduction in the service by Housing Officers to tenants who have raised contract queries. If a HO did not know the answer, they would find out and respond to the tenant accordingly.

(c) Upgraded Bathrooms

Hugh reminded the group that some time ago they were asked to discuss options for future programmes of work. At that time one suggestion was that replacement bathrooms should be considered. Was this being taken forward?

David informed the group that there were no proposals to include replacement bathrooms in the programme at this time as we are attempting to meet the SHQS by 2015.

(d) OPAP

David McLaren updated the committee on progress of the Older Persons Advice Project (OPAP). This scheme will be managed by Linkwide. They will seek to contact approximately 200 households each year for the next 3 years, where the tenant is over 60 years of age.

They will interview the tenants with a view to maximising the take up of benefits. This has been very successful in other areas and we would encourage everyone to make use of the service provided.

There were no further matters raised and the meeting closed at 8.15 pm

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 6 November, 2008 at 7pm - 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate