

Association or Retained Council Housing Ltd

Minutes of the ARCH Tenants' Group Meeting

Held on Monday 8 January 2018 at CIH Offices 236 Grays Inn Road London

PRESENT:

Tenant Group members:

David Bown (South Derbyshire).
Chris Gould (Norwich)
Jenny Hill (Runnymede) – Chair
Les Issacs (Stevenage)
Wyn Marshall (Epping Forest)
Stella Parkin (Rotherham)
Brian Rhodes (Welwyn Hatfield).
Eric Shipton (Birmingham)
Dennis Smith (Tendring)
Brian Tulley (Crawley)

In attendance:

John Bibby (ARCH)
Chris Danpure (Stevenage)
Gez Kinsella (HouseMark)

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mick Daniels (Sheffield), Yaw Boateng (Croydon), Martyn Lund (Kettering), Marlene Price (Wandsworth) - Vice Chair, Mavis Vines (East Riding), John Ranshaw (Lincoln).

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (6 NOVEMBER 2017)

Agreed as a true record

3. MATTERS ARISING

11.3 Skills survey

Not seen as necessary - covered in part by profiles on the website and skills assessed as part of the process when tenants joined the Group.

A question was asked about the location of the next meeting. John said he was working on this with Julie (HouseMark). If CIH have not moved by the date of the next meeting (26 March), we will use their offices again. Working on alternatives venues that offer value for money.

ACTION: John to report back on future venue

4. STEVENAGE SCRUTINY PRESENTATION

A short presentation by members of Stevenage's Scrutiny Committee was made, setting out the scrutiny process, outcomes and 'what next'. There were a range of questions, including; how do they recruit, specifically recruiting younger people and what impact a reduction in resources is having. Dave Bown pointed out that in his organisation the resident involvement function was withering, with fewer and fewer tenants and a weakening of the formal structures.

ACTION: John will contact South Derbyshire to stress the important of engaging residents, particularly at this time.

ACTION: Presentation will go on the website and GP will be circulated via the Bulletin

5. FEEDBACK FROM ARCH EXECUTIVE ON KEY ISSUES

John Bibby updated the Group on key issues the ARCH Executive meeting (30 November) including:

- Discussed rent formula and supported housing funding consultation - what ARCH's response should be
- Established new build network. First meeting in December sharing best practice
- Presentation from 3H York on leveraging additional resources
- Arrangement for AGM - no major changes. Board members can be viewed on the ARCH website

6. UPDATE ON GOVERNMENT POLICY /LEGISLATION

John Bibby delivered a presentation (see attached) to the Tenants Group about the key areas as follows:

Housing and Planning Act - specifically fixed term tenancies and RTB. Waiting for regulation on this. Autumn budget announced RTB pilot in West Midlands. Councils won't be asked to pay high value levy before April 2018.

Housing White Paper – 10/15 years fixed term council housing – no further announcements, but idea is still being pursued

Affordable Housing Programme - £2 billion announced in the budget, but no further detail yet.

Rent policy - CPI + 1% after 2020, still to be consulted on. Supported housing funding, consultation to close 23 January 2018. ARCH will submit a response.

The Homelessness Reduction Act – waiting for Code of Guidance. An issue for the sector going forward. Public Accounts Committee Branded Government policy “a national crisis”.

Welfare reform – Concessions made in the budget, eg interim payments relaxed and removal of 7 day wait period.

Autumn budget – Additional £1 billion incremental borrowing by end of 2020. Council must bid and applies only to areas of “high affordability pressure”. £400 million estate regeneration money announced. Awaiting detail.

The Housing Green Paper – Minister’s engagement meeting with tenants on-going. Round-table meetings with officers too. Publication expected in Spring 2018. ARCH Board preparing a response (Tenant Group will be asked for its view).

Review of Building Regs – Interim report published 18 December 2017. Reports sets out direction of travel and concludes current regulations are not fit for purpose. Final report expected in Spring 2018.

HMO Reform – extension of existing mandatory licence arrangements to include flats and one/two story flats. Extension of ban on rogue landlords

ACTIONS:

- John Bibby – to update Tenants Group as soon as more on Green Paper Consultation dates known
- Tenants Group Members – prepare to discuss in 2018 Green paper.

7. MEETINGS WITH THE HOUSING MINISTER

Meeting took place on 7 December, with Marleen and Yaw Boateng attending. Neither present at this meeting.

ACTION: Written report to be submitted to the next meeting (26 March).

8. VOICE OF TENANTS MEETING

Dave Bown attended, but very little to report and no proposal as to how such a national body would be formed or would work. Some confusion over why it was said at the meeting that its work was confidential. No date yet agreed for future meetings

ACTION:

- Marlene to attend the next meeting
- John to write to Nic Bliss to better understand what the plan is, what progress is being made, the issue of confidentiality and what happens next.

9. TENANT CONFERENCE

There are a number of possible venue options that need to be explored, with Birmingham’s kind offer as the ‘back-stop’.

ACTION:

- Gez to send out conference selection criteria
- Eric, Stella, Les and Chris to chase up their landlords (Birmingham, Rotherham, Stevenage and Norwich)
- Gez to discuss with Julie cost of Leamington Spa venue previously used

10. BENEFIT TO SOCIETY CAMPAIGN

The launch of this will take place on 28 February. The Group discussed how best to promote positive images of council tenants.

ACTION:

Jenny to ask Sarah to produce a standard press release proforma that can be share with members to be adapted and used locally.

11. WORK PLAN 2018

Various ideas were discussed for the 2018 Work Plan, including:

- Maximising the use of local media
- Impact of Universal Credit – both policy impact (CIH) and impact on businesses
- Complaints. Suggested members bring in their complaints processes to a future meeting to share good practice
- Invite the Housing Ombudsman to discuss effective complaints handling and the tenants' role in this
- Understanding costs/performance data – using data to hold landlords to account
- Understanding change in data protection and implications for tenants

ACTION:

- Gez to work up a programme of speakers
- Gez to share Community Champion criteria, so members can start approaching their landlords for nominations. Also, include in Board paper – the idea that Tenants Group promoting Community Champion
- Eric to provide Gez with a BCC contacts
- Wyn to provide Gez a contact to discuss Epping Forests approach to complaints
- Wyn to feedback on value of Data Protection course and relevance to the Group

11. AOB

Tenant section of the ARCH website has been updated.

ACTION:

- Members are asked to review and update with any further changes. Also, check if profile up to date and provide Gez wording

12. NEXT MEETING 26 MARCH

Venue to be confirmed.