



WESLO TENANT PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the above meeting held on Thursday 14 July 2011 Bathgate Office at 7.00pm

Present from Weslo: Mike Bruce, Chief Executive
David McLaren, Housing Manager
Jessie McCue, Housing Officer, Bathgate
Margaret Walker, Admin Officer

Tenants: Evelyn Johnstone – Livingston Station – Chair
Eileen Porter – Tenant Director, Bathgate
Glen Mulligan - Fauldhouse
Jim Porter – Bathgate
Kevin Symon - Uphall
Colin Torrie - East Calder
Sybil Watt – Bo'ness

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Action

Alex Bow - Tenant Director, Bo'ness
Hugh Ruck, Tenant Director, Livingston
Janette Wallace, Tenant Director, Stoneyburn
Pamela Menzies, Housing Support Officer

2. **Introduction**

David McLaren welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Evelyn Johnstone to chair the meeting.

3. **Previous Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2011 were approved subject to the following amendment. David McLaren asked that the minutes reflect that the committee had unanimously agreed with the proposal to take forward the Bathroom Upgrade Improvement Scheme.

4. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Bathroom Update**

David McLaren confirmed that a standard specification has been prepared by Rob Tait, Technical Unit Manager. In the next few weeks we will be taking this forward and developing our thoughts on how best to introduce such a scheme and the committee will be updated accordingly.

D McL

Post Meeting Note – Due to the amount of work associated with the yard refurbishment programme that is due to start it has been decided that this proposal be put on hold for the time being.

6. Improvement Plan

David McLaren provided an update on a couple of items being introduced as part of the regulatory improvement plan. Craigforth Consultancy will be undertaking training for Board Members and staff on Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This restricts the types of payments and benefits that RSL's can make to employees, governing body members and the families of employees and governing body members. These provisions are designed to make sure that such people do not abuse their position or benefit from their connection with a RSL and play an important role in maintaining the RSL sectors good reputation. Mike Bruce confirmed that under Schedule 7 all gifts and hospitality must be placed in the Business Gift Register and signed off by an appropriate Line Manager.

D McL

7. Tenant E-mail Group

David McLaren confirmed we currently have 62 tenants signed up with e-mail addresses who have confirmed they are happy to receive information electronically. They have recently received the minutes of the 21 April 2011 Tenant Participation Committee and the Summer 2011 newspaper. It is intended to send them regular electronic information and obtain further e-mail addresses when we sign up new tenants.

D McL

Sybil explained that she had experienced difficulties with her service provider, Virgin. She suggested that other tenants who had previously provided their e-mail addresses may have experienced similar problems. David McLaren to check this out and report his findings at the next meeting.

D McL

Evelyn suggested that some recipients' computers may have categorized the e-mail as spam. David will arrange to have this checked out with our IT staff.

D McL

There was some discussion on how we ensure that this facility is an effective means of communicating with tenants.

8. Review of Tenant Participation Strategy

The Tenant Participation Strategy 2008 – 2011 requires a full review. David McLaren confirmed that most of the content has fundamental principles that do not require changing which the committee acknowledged. It was agreed that David McLaren and Margaret Walker will edit the strategy and produce a draft Tenant Participation Strategy covering 2012 – 2015 for comment by the committee.

D McL
MW

It was also agreed that the Tenant Participation Leaflet is no longer required as the information is now contained within the new Tenant Handbook.

9. Any other Business

Margaret Walker

Margaret Walker offered congratulations to Jim and Eileen Porter who were recently married.

Margaret sought feedback on the June edition of Tenant News – all of which was positive.

10. Q & A Session with Mike Bruce, Chief Executive

Mike gave a summary of the current situation in the housing development. Mike explained that despite government cuts in grants Weslo are planning to build a 16 property development in Ellen Street, Whitburn which is being funded under the Governments old funding regime, which means that they will be offered at affordable rents.

Weslo have also submitted a bid to build 25 flats at Station Road, Armadale and 14 properties at Charles Crescent, Bathgate. 6 of the flats in Armadale would be for mid market rent for people who would not receive any priority on the Common Housing Register. As grants for these developments are likely to be 40% this would result in rents being higher.

The following questions were then put to Mike:

Evelyn

Q: Evelyn asked Mike about maintenance contracts against the background of the recession.

A: Mike explained that we estimate what the likely costs of the contracts will be each year and when tenders were returned for the 2011/12 contracts we have made savings in the region of £140,000. Evelyn also asked if the contractors submitting lower prices could remain financially viable. Mike said most of the contractors have worked with Weslo in the past and he is sure they are happy to secure small contracts to keep their employees in employment.

Q: Evelyn also enquired how Weslo was bearing up after the regulatory inspection.

A: Mike said since the regulators visit we had been very busy with in-house training and introducing new Policies and Procedures as the regulator wanted written confirmation to verify our working practices. It has been a slow, deliberate process but when the improvement plan is fully implemented we will emerge a healthier organization, albeit there is little in the Improvement Plan which has a direct bearing on our service to tenants.

Q: Evelyn also asked if Mike could clarify the definition of "Feu Superior"

A: He explained that this was abolished under the Abolition of the Feudal Tenure Act 2000. When the legislation was implemented in 2004, we became Estate Managers.

Jim

Q: Jim asked if Weslo had any provisions to help tenants struggling with escalating fuel costs.

A: Mike advised that we are installing energy efficient boilers in our houses and that the Housing Officers are speaking to tenants regularly offering advice and guidance when needed. Margaret advised that we mention in the newsletter about keeping the heating on and the thermostat at a minimum. Jim asked if we could include in the newsletter a room thermostat to provide guidance on suitable temperatures. Margaret said this is something that will be considered.

Sybil

Q: Sybil asked Mike if he could clarify the retaining wall issues in Kinneil.

A: Mike confirmed that a Structural Engineer Report has been received which identifies two walls in need of urgent attention. A meeting to discuss the content of the report in more detail is being held next week. He is still hoping that after consultation with our Solicitors that Falkirk Council will agree to pay some of the costs.

Mike said he was looking forward to seeing the new Tenant Participation Strategy and hopes the new e-mail bank will play a big part in our communication as the regulator is keen to see other methods of consultation with tenants.

Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 17 November 2011 at 7pm in the Weslo Boardroom