



WESLO TENANT PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the above meeting held on Thursday 21 April 2011 Bathgate Office at 7.00pm

Present from Weslo: Gillian McAllister, Assistant Housing Manager
Margaret Walker, Admin Officer
June Harper, Housing Officer, Bathgate
Pamela Menzies, Housing Support Officer, Bathgate

Tenants: Hugh Ruck – Tenant Director, Livingston
Eileen Stirling – Tenant Director, Bathgate
Janette Wallace – Tenant Director, Stoneyburn
Evelyn Johnstone – Livingston Station
Glen Mulligan - Fauldhouse
Jim Porter - Bathgate
Gordon Smith – Bo'ness
Colin Torrie - East Calder

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Jessie McCue - Housing Officer
Alex Bow - Tenant Director, Bo'ness
Kevin Symon - Uphall
Sybil Watt - Bo'ness

Action

2. **Introduction**

Gillian McAllister welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced June Harper, Housing Officer who was standing in for Jessie McCue.

3. **Previous Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2011 were approved by Glenn Mulligan and seconded by Eileen Stirling.

4. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Bathroom Updates**

Gillian explained that since the last meeting in January Weslo had appointed a new Technical Unit Manager – Rob Tait. Rob has prepared a paper outlining a Bathroom Standard that will be considered as part of the voluntary improvement scheme for sanitary ware replacements. The standard being considered includes full replacement of white sanitary ware including; steel bath, wash hand basin, wc bowl and wc cistern. In addition an electric over the bath shower will be installed including a shower curtain and rail. Waterproof wall panels will be fitted around the bath and bath panels fitted and flooring installed. Tenants will be able to choose from a selection of wall panels and floor coverings.

Tenants asked what would happen if tenants required a shower cubicle or had a medical condition requiring a wet room. Gillian explained that if a bathroom was small then we could look at installing a shower cubicle in place of a bath and shower however if there were medical needs it was likely that these would be referred to the Social Works Department.

Gillian confirmed that there were no firm costings as yet and that if the scheme was agreed it would be implemented before 2015.

6. Improvement Plan

An item previously raised is the Regulatory Improvement Plan and the 31 items that Weslo require to address. Gillian provided an update on a couple of the items being reviewed:-

Antisocial Behaviour Policy – this has been revised to incorporate a survey to be undertaken when the case has been closed in order to monitor performance. Complainants are now being given the opportunity to tell us how they felt about the process rather than the outcome of the complaint.

Complaints Procedure – complainants are now being invited to tell us what they thought about the processes (in a similar vein to the antisocial complaints) once the case has been closed. Letters are being issued 14 days after the case is closed and

Responses will be analysed monthly and reported to the Operations Director.

7. Hearing Loop

Gillian pointed out that in the UK there are approximately 9 million people who are either deaf or hard of hearing - that is 1:7 of the population. Of these approximately 28% are aged between 16 and 60 and a staggering 72% are over 60.

As part of our Equalities Action Plan we are looking at how we can make it easier to communicate with tenants who have a hearing impairment. Initially we are looking to install a hearing loop in the reception area of the Bathgate office and make a portable system available for use in the interview rooms. Once we have had the opportunity to review how this works we will look to roll out an installation at Bo'ness and possibly the yard.

Evelyn who works with Hearing Dogs for Deaf People commented that this was an excellent idea in order that we comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Glenn pointed out that signing is another option that could be considered; we advised that we currently had 2 staff attending a signing course at Donaldson School for the deaf in Linlithgow. there was some discussion in the merit of signing as there are a lot of regional variations.

Evelyn raised an issue with customer care that she experienced recently while calling at the Bathgate office. On approaching reception, the member of staff who was aware someone was there, did not look up to see who was there but said "I'll be right with you". While Evelyn acknowledges that the member of staff was working on some figures, she had no way of knowing if the caller had some form of disability – blind or deaf. She suggests that this would have been better perceived if the member of staff had made eye contact while apologising for the delay in giving her full attention to the caller.

Margaret advised that we have a very rigorous Customer Care Policy that aims to provide a

quality service to our customers and everyone in Weslo should strive to get it right the first time, every time, to achieve maximum customer satisfaction. Margaret agreed to take this matter forward for internal discussion.

8. Draft Business Plan 2011-2012

Margaret explained that we have always worked with a 30-year business plan but in 2010 we were required to produce an annual business plan. The draft plan for 2011-2012 was circulated to allow TPC members to make comment in advance of the paper being put to the Board on Wednesday 27 April. After summarising the reasons for having an annual business plan and the contents she invited comments from those present; these included:-

Hugh This is a comprehensive document that demonstrates that Weslo is well placed to respond in an uncertain economic climate.

Evelyn Evelyn commented that by developing and updating the Business Plan annually, Weslo is able to respond quickly to economic changes and the environment.

In general, the group commented that we seem to be completing an increasing number of consultations and producing additional reports that must be having an impact of staff time.

Evelyn asked what impact the change from measuring inflation from Retail Price Index (RPI) to Consumer Price Index (CPI) would have on Weslo. Margaret advised that historically we have used RPI to determine rent increases and that we are aware that the government want to move to using CPI figures when determining benefit increases. Suggestions have been made that RSL's should also use CPI for rent setting purposes. Margaret will discuss further the impact on Weslo and report at next meeting.

MW

Post Meeting Note - In the UK, there are two main measures of inflation – the **CPI**, which excludes housing costs and mortgage interest payments, and the **RPI**, which includes them.

9. TPAS AGM

Margaret informed the group that this years AGM would again be held at the Apex Hotel, Dundee on 21 – 23 October 2011 and invited 3 nominees from tenant representatives. Colin Torrie and Hugh Ruck indicated that they would like to attend and Margaret agreed to invite further nominations via the minutes.

MW

10. The Scottish Social Housing Charter Discussion Paper

The discussion paper was circulated in advance of the meeting and Margaret explained that the Government was seeking comments by 16 May. These comments will be taken into consideration while drafting first Charter, which will undergo formal consultation in the summer of 2011.

Margaret summarised the paper and invited feedback, specifically relating to the points raised in the discussion paper:-

- Have we missed anything?

Response – how will the Charter will be reviewed in future and by whom?

- Is there anything you are particularly concerned about that would not fall within one of the above outcomes?

Response - No

Remember that the participation and communication outcomes, in particular, should give customers a say in how housing services are provided locally.

Response – Weslo is careful to ensure that tenants are consulted.

- Is the wording of any these outcomes likely to cause problems? Do you have any suggestions that you would like us to consider?

Response - No

- Is the level of detail about right, or do we need more detail, or less?

Response – no comment

- Are there too many outcomes? Are any unnecessary? Are there any we should drop, and why?

Response – No Comment

In general, tenants felt that this was an additional monitoring exercise that was being foisted on Weslo. The tenants view is that Weslo already consult its tenants on the services it provides and the standards set. They are of the opinion that the development of a charter is to bring other social landlords, who do not consult on services, into line.

Margaret advised that Weslo would make a submission but would encourage everyone present to make their views known to the Housing Charter Team by 16 May 2011.

MW

Contact Details are as follows:

- post them to: The Housing Charter Team, Social Housing Division, The Scottish Government, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ,
- email to: housingcharter@scotland.gsi.gov.uk,
- online at : <http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk>

11. **Any other Business**

Margaret

E-Mail Communication

An e-mail was sent at the beginning of April to those tenants who had expressed an interest in receiving information by e-mail. On this occasion we asked for feedback on the December issue of the Tenant News. One respondent asked if it was possible to include details of properties that were currently advertising for exchange in the Tenant News.

Margaret explained that there are a large number of properties currently advertising in our exchange register and that these are also available for the public to view on our website. These include a large number from tenants of other landlords and Margaret asked those present if they thought it appropriate to promote individual exchanges in the paper.

After some discussion it was agreed that it would be more appropriate to draft an article promoting exchanges as an option for tenants to consider; pointing out that the list is available in our offices Mon – Friday and online at all times. We should also suggest that tenants who are seeking an exchange should be encouraged to discuss their needs with their Housing Officer / Housing Support Officer who can check what is currently available. We could feature a successful exchange to bring out some of the reasons surrounding exchanges.

Chief Executive Attendance at next Meeting

Mike Bruce is scheduled to attend the next meeting on 14 July for his annual Q & A session. It would be appreciated if all members could give some consideration to any questions they would like to pose to Mike and pass them to Margaret in advance of the meeting to allow Mike

ALL

to prepare responses where necessary.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.05pm.

Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 14 July, 2011 at 7pm in the Weslo Boardroom.

Chair – Evelyn Johnstone