

CHAIRS & SECRETARIES MEETING

**Minutes of the Regional Networks Chairs & Secretaries on
Wednesday, 14th September, 11am, 2010 at Victoria Quay, Edinburgh**

Present:

Steve Byrne	Highland and Argyll & Bute	R1
Stanley Green	Northern Lights	R2
Helen McPherson	Northern Lights	R2
Rena Smith	Tayforth	R3
Janice Manzur	Tayforth	R3
Danny Mullen	Central	R4
Hugh McClung	Central	R4
Jim Maryniak	BEEM	R5
Hugh Wilson-Fraser	South West Scotland	R6
Alex Younger	West Strathclyde	R7
Gerald Casey	West Strathclyde	R7
Peter Winnie	East Dumbartonshire & Lanarkshire	R8
Kevin Paterson	Glasgow and Eilean Siar	R9
Greg Hine	Glasgow and Eilean Siar	R9

In attendance:

Anne Cook	Scottish Government	SG
Michael Boal	Scottish Government	SG
Duncan Clark	Scottish Government	SG
Susan McLellan	Scottish Government	SG
Luke Kelly	Scottish Government	SG
Jamie Hamilton	Scottish Government	SG

Apologies:

Michael Crowe	Highland and Argyll & Bute	R1
Eric Allan	Northern Lights	R2
Heather Anderson	Northern Lights	R2
Sheila Rutherford McCallum	BEEM	R5
Ronald Ritchie	South West Scotland	R6
Margaret Dymond	West Strathclyde	R7
Rose Bowie	East Dunbartonshire & Lanarkshire	R8

Absent:

Item		Action
1.	<u>Opening Remarks</u> Rena Smith welcomed all to the meeting.	

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2.	<p><u>Apologies</u></p> <p>Apologies as listed above.</p>	
3.	<p><u>Minute of Previous meeting & Matters Arising</u></p> <p>Correction – Change Hind to Hine in attendee’s list.</p> <p>The minutes were proposed by Steve Byrne and seconded by Gerald Casey.</p> <p>Matters arising that were not already on the Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Anne Cook advised of Tenant Voice Week which starts on the 27th September and the TPAS good practice awards b) Kevin Paterson handed out papers from Housing Policy Advisory Group which was meeting again in the afternoon. c) Large Scale Voluntary Transfer contracts. 	
4.	<p><u>Duncan Clark, Scottish Government – Fresh Thinking, New Ideas</u></p> <p>Duncan advised that the Minister had been promoting the housing policy discussion paper during his summer tour around the country. The housing discussion started in May and aimed to attract a wide range of views. He stated that “we are facing an unprecedented changing economic future, and that finding new ways to sustain investment in housing is a big challenge.” Duncan encouraged everyone, if they hadn’t already done so to join the debate and give their views as it was critical that there was a strong voice from tenants so that the Government know the key things tenants were concerned about and their priorities.</p> <p>Hung McClung highlighted that he felt the Scottish Government was hoping for inspiration from tenants but that it was difficult to do that when the guiding principal was not clear. He felt it was difficult to produce an outcome which would vary from region to region. He did acknowledge the need to have a debate.</p> <p>Steve Byrne noted that the summary document was inaccessible, in terms of the colours, and fonts used and asked that this be taken into account in future publications.</p> <p>Danny Mullen thought it was a good discussion document as it had concentrated people’s minds. However he was concerned that the discussions had not included any likely impact on tenant’s rents of any of the proposals. Danny felt that any shortfall in funding for new housing provision would fall on current tenants rent levels and the paper didn’t address this issue.</p> <p>Kevin Paterson – felt that smaller RSL’s would benefit from receiving</p>	

	<p>short term interest loans from the Scottish Government.</p> <p>Greg Hine commented that the Scottish Quality Housing Standard to be met by landlords by 2015 was not being taken into account in relation to the difficulties faced by landlords in the current economic climate.</p> <p>Hugh McClung advised he had made a personal submission stating that HAG (Housing Association Grant) be retained but spread across all landlords including local authorities.</p> <p>Anne Cook advised that there is limited resources and one of the key issues raised in the discussion is where should they be targeted?</p> <p>Duncan encouraged everyone to consider the Fresh Thinking New Ideas document, and if there were any further ideas, to submit them. He explained that the next stage is the delivery of a policy statement in December to outline what happens next.</p> <p>Hugh McClung asked what would happen if there was a change of political colour at the next election?</p> <p>Duncan Clark responded that no matter who was in power, the same issues needed to be addressed.</p> <p>Kevin Paterson – advised that he had discussed these issues with Mary Mulligan, and that the view from her was that a single funding stream was the way to go and further work was needed to investigate other funding streams.</p> <p>Rena thanked Duncan Clark for coming along.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p><u>Jamie Hamilton – Update on COSLA and HRA</u></p> <p>Hugh McClung highlighted that following the networks submission to Alex Neil of their paper on abuse of Housing Revenue Accounts, Jim Maryniak, George McGuinness and Gerald Casey had tried to get a meeting with COSLA. COSLA wanted the Regional Networks to come up with priorities but it was felt that these had already been raised in the HRA document. The HRA group were not happy with COSLA's lack of willingness to meet with them. The HRA sub group met in Glasgow and wrote to the minister expressing their views on the issue, just before this letter was sent; there had been contact with Caroline Johnson from COSLA, via email. She explained that she had read the report and forwarded the networks key points to a finance committee and was awaiting comments back.</p> <p>Jamie highlighted that the HRA sub group came to Victoria Quay in June and met with Audit Scotland, Scottish Housing Regulator and Scottish Government. He explained that the SG is committed to writing guidance for this and Audit Scotland stated that if SG writes the guidance, they will apply the guidance stringently.</p>	

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	<p>Draft guidance will be sent out and Regional Networks were encouraged to look at the paper and submit their views back to Jamie Hamilton's team. It was agreed that the views of the networks be reported back to the HRA subgroup.</p> <p>It was advised that the guidance needed to be written at a level that could be understood by tenants, not be pitched at council employees and be in plain English.</p>	
	<p><u>BREAK FOR LUNCH – 12NOON - 12.55</u></p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p><u>Discussion on Ministerial Meeting</u></p> <p>Due to Eric Allan's ill health, Hugh McClung was asked to submit the report "Perceived Decline of Communities and Estates" to the minister. This report was drawn up largely from Eric's own experience as there had been little input from other regional network committees. Hugh commented that he felt the recommendations in the report were clear.</p> <p>Hugh also identified from the report that there was a view that there seemed to be a lack of accountability from landlords. In particular with regards to anti-social behaviour landlords had a strategy regarding dealing with this but there appeared a lack of willingness to use the powers available. It was commented that some individuals see ASBOs as a "medal". Hugh McClung was happy to take any comments on the report.</p> <p>Danny Mullen – At the ministerial sounding board, some of these issues had been discussed and it seemed there are landlords who have powers that they don't use. It was felt that it's not that we need new laws/enforcement powers but that we need to have more research on how the current services operate so there might be better guidance on how to use the current powers.</p> <p>Hugh Wilson-Fraser felt it was difficult for landlords to take perpetrators to court.</p> <p>Stanley Green commented there were issues relating to how landlords allocate their properties, in his view inappropriately on occasion.</p> <p>Greg Hine agreed there needed to be more research, common feedback he had received from landlords was that they don't have a choice regarding who they house. Perpetrators need to be re-housed especially if there are children involved.</p> <p>Hugh McClung added that you have to take into account that there is only so much a community can take. Unless landlords take action, the current problems in communities will persist.</p>	

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	<p>Jim Maryniak commented that he didn't think the age of those carrying out anti-social acts was relevant, anyone can suffer ASB. There are 4 stages of intervention but before it even goes to court, Housing officer prepares report, progressed to ASB team, progressed to courts, allowed to appeal. Jim gave an example of the length of time the ASB process can take before it is resolved.</p> <p>Hugh McClung agreed that there was a need to have in-depth research into what's going on in our communities.</p> <p>Hugh McClung agreed to address the concerns in the report to the minister at their meeting in the afternoon. He would feedback to Eric Allan the comments made and would also update those attending the next Chairs/Secretaries meeting so they could inform their committee members.</p> <p><u>Any Further Business for Discussion At Meeting with Alex Neil</u></p> <p>Danny Mullen requested that with regards to the Scottish Housing Regulator, tenants should be given places on the board. He asked for this to be raised with the Minister.</p> <p>LSVT contracts - Greg Hine explained at the time of housing transfers, communities spent months/years negotiating transfers/contracts and ring-fencing funds/loans for 30 years but it seemed that the Government was encouraging these RSLs to get rid of these contracts. Greg felt this had big implications and wanted this to be raised with the Minister.</p>	
7.	<p><u>Housing Charter Consultation Discussion</u></p> <p>Update was given on what each region was doing:</p> <p>R1 – Newsletter went out to all Associations, article went into a local newspapers. Steve also had a 20min spot on radio. Charter event in Inverness and one due to take place in Lochgilphead. The committee also sent out a questionnaire to all RTOs in the area.</p> <p>R2 – Aberdeen charter event went well. Also to put out a newsletter.</p> <p>R3 – Workshop in Perth went well, awaiting return of questionnaires. Still to hold workshops in Dundee and Fife. There will be an event in Dundee on 14th October.</p> <p>R4 - Falkirk event went well. Published a newsletter (some landlords distributed it to their groups too). Articles for Tenants News, RTO event on 3rd November – SG invited to speak and TPAS also invited to assist with Charter workshops.</p> <p>R5 – There are 2 events planned (East Lothian 27th September and</p>	

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	<p>Edinburgh in November). BEEM organising an event on 15/11 with RTO's</p> <p>R6 – Dumfries event went well. Ayr event on 27th September. Questionnaire sent out.</p> <p>R7 – Organised an event in Paisley on 6th October. East Renfrew event will be on 30th October with William Fleming attending. Trying to organise an event at the shopping centre but no response from Inverclyde yet</p> <p>R8 – Wishaw charter event to take place.</p> <p>R9 – Newsletter out shortly, slot on community radio and there is to be an event in Glasgow on 29th September.</p> <p>The regional events list was handed out.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Region 9's paper on rationalising joint meetings</u></p> <p>Due to lack of time available this item to be taken forward to the next meeting.</p>	
9.	<p><u>AOCB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Website update – Greg Hine and Janice Manzur can contact Whitespace directly if they have any issues, just copy in Anne Cook's team. Ann Baillie to arrange a meeting for the web subgroup to get together. b) West Dunbartonshire involvement in the network update – none as yet. c) TPAS conference volunteers/workshop – Hugh McClung and Margaret Dymond will be doing the workshop, Janice Manzur, Rita Smart, Rena Smith and Helen McPherson offered to help at a network stall. d) Hugh Wilson Fraser – issue with selection of members to attend charter sounding board. Anne Cook advised this was being looked into and would be resolved. e) Reissue of selection protocol requested –it was requested this item be put onto the agenda for the next meeting. f) Tenant Voice week is taking place from Monday 27th September. TPAS Good Practice Awards in the process of being judged. 	
10.	<p><u>Date of next meeting</u></p> <p>The date of the next meeting will be 8th December at 1.30pm in Thistle House, Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.</p> <p>Any papers for the meeting to be sent in advance to the Tenant Priorities Team so they can be issued with all the correspondence for the meeting.</p>	