

Meeting of Chairs and Secretaries
19 January 2011 in Thistle House, Edinburgh

Present	Steve Byrne	Highland and Argyll & Bute	R1
	Jennifer MacLeod	Highland and Argyll & Bute	R1
	Helen McPherson	Northern Lights	R2
	Stanley Green	Northern Lights	R2
	Rena Smith	Tayforth	R3
	Hugh McClung (Chair)	Central	R4
	Danny Mullen	Central	R4
	Jim Maryniak	BEEM	R5
	Hugh Wilson-Fraser	South West Scotland	R6
	Gerald Casey	West Strathclyde	R7
	Margaret Dymond	West Strathclyde	R7
	Rose Bowie	East Dumbarton & Lanarkshire	R8
	Peter Winnie	East Dumbarton & Lanarkshire	R8
	Kevin Paterson	Glasgow and Eilean Siar	R9
In Attendance	Anne Cook	Scottish Government	SG
	Michael Boal	Scottish Government	SG
	Susan McLellan	Scottish Government	SG
Apologies	Eric Allan	Northern Lights	R2
	Janice Manzur	Tayforth	R3
	Gerry Moss	BEEM	R5
	Jim Hendry	South West Scotland	R6
	Greg Hine	Glasgow and Eilean Siar	R9

Item		Action
1	Welcome and Minute of previous meeting	
1.1	Hugh McClung gave a warm welcome to all in attendance and especially welcomed Jennifer MacLeod who was attending for the first time. Hugh went on to say the original November meeting date had to be cancelled due to heavy snow and today's date was the earliest the meeting could be reconvened.	
1.2	Minute of meeting held on 14 September was approved on a motion by Hugh Wilson Fraser and seconded by Gerald Casey.	
1.3	There were no matters arising	
2.	Civil Service Restructuring and Budget 2011 Anne Cook advised members of the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Administration budgets would be reduced by 20% overall. ii. The Housing and Regeneration Directorate(HAR) is being reduced to three divisions. It was likely that the Tenant Priorities Team would be integrated within a new Peoples Division. The new structure would be confirmed in early February and become operational by 1st April 2011 iii. Despite a 20% reduction being applied to the tenant 	

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	<p>participation budget, Anne assured members that adequate resources would still be made available to support the Networks. However, managing the budget would necessitate stringent scrutiny of all departmental activity. The emphasis would now be directed towards supporting those Networks who most require it.</p> <p>iv. Anne advised that Ann Baillie would be in touch with individual Network treasurers to arrange an audit of petty cash account.</p>	<p>All Treasurers</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Feedback from Ministerial Meeting</p> <p>Hugh reported the meeting had gone well. The undernoted points were discussed with the Minister:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Chairs had expressed the view that there continued to be a lack of transparency regarding landlords housing revenue accounts (HRA). The absence of detailed information on how rent money is being spent is seriously undermining tenants' ability to determine the fairness of rental strategies and value for money. The Minister responded by stating the government had reached agreement with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and that new revised HRA guidance would be issued in the summer. b) With regards the 2010/11 Scottish Budget, the Minister advised there would be a 40% cut in the Housing Capital Budget. c) The Minister further advised the government intended publishing a 10 year housing strategy document in February in response to Fresh Thinking, New Ideas. The strategy would be tenure neutral and the Private Sector may gain from innovative use of Rent Plus Schemes such as Housing Bonds. Kevin Paterson R9 informed members that the housing strategy would be akin to a 10 year action plan and would not be subject to further consultation. d) Discussion ensued around proposed changes in Housing Benefit Entitlements and the likely negative impact for both claimants and social landlords. Particular concern was expressed in relation to the proposed 10% cut for those in receipt of long-term Job Seekers Allowance; partial withdrawal of benefit from single tenants occupying a house with more than one bedroom; and severe pressures placed on attaining the 2012 homelessness targets. e) Mr Neil informed Chairs the government is to publish a Scottish Social Housing Charter discussion paper in February. This will allow stakeholders to have further discussions around realistic Outcomes prior to a full consultation taking place in the autumn. f) The Minister also advised of a possibility of further reforms in relation to Right to Buy discounts. 	

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	<p>g) In relation to the Networks paper on Declining Communities, Mr Neil assured Chairs his team would research the issues raised in the paper. Possible outcomes worthy of consideration would be probationary tenancies and the introduction of Housing Tribunals. Anne Cook advised that the Chartered Institute of Housing had published a paper on Housing Tribunals and that she could make this available to members.</p> <p>h) Mr Neil also sought input from the Networks asking for their perception of how housing investment was working within their individual localities. The Minister recognised the need for innovative funding streams and was keenly interested in looking at ways to accrue some additional investment, for example, from pension funds.</p> <p>i) Hugh advised this was the last meeting between Network Chairs and the Minister due to the forthcoming Scottish Parliamentary elections. Hugh also wished to place on record the Networks appreciation of the Minister's readiness to engage directly with them. Immense value for tenants had been acquired through the Networks positive participation in these face to face meetings. Accordingly, the Networks standing as the promoter of tenants' interests is now being generally accepted.</p>	<p>Anne Cook</p> <p>All</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Housing Bill / Charter and Sounding Boards Update</p> <p>Anne Cook advised members of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Housing (Scotland) Act received Royal Assent on 9 December 2010 and will start to come into effect from April 2011. Danny Mullen expressed the view that Network members should be proud of the role they had played in securing safeguards for tenants in the new regulatory processes. • The Charter Roadshows had been very successful in gathering the views of stakeholders and the Outcomes they perceived should be included in the Charter. Rose Bowie proffered her opinion that there remained a gulf between what landlords and tenants wanted in terms of Outcomes. 	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Networks Selection Protocol</p> <p>Hugh McClung opened the discussion by suggesting the protocol was not working as well as was intended. Susan McLellan also advised the Tenants Priorities Team did not have a finalised copy of the protocol.</p> <p>Members discussed the issues and identified a number of obstacles undermining the selection process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each Network was using its own methodology for selecting individual nominees; • some Networks were selecting nominees using a skills matrix while other Networks adopted a more ad hoc approach; 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not all Networks are capable of submitting appropriate nominees at short notice; and • not all Networks are always aware of the coordinating Chair charged with appointing representatives. <p>While there was general recognition that the selection process could be better operated, it was felt that individual Chairs could encourage appropriately experienced individuals to volunteer and to ensure candidates are timeously notified to the coordinating Chair. Members also felt it would be advantageous to allow new committee members to shadow more experienced members on these panels.</p>	All Chairs and Secretaries
6.	<p>Communication and Support between Networks</p> <p>A paper had been prepared and circulated to members in advance. Hugh McClung (author) spoke to the paper outlining his views regarding what he considered to be the misuse and inappropriate distribution of Networks email communications. Hugh was particularly concerned that whilst the Networks discussions and business should be open and transparent there were certain issues that should be confined to committee members until agreement had been reached before being disseminated to non-Network persons. If individual Network members are minded to participate in public discussions via email, they should do so in a private capacity and should not in any way associate what they say as being the views of the Networks. Network business should only be conducted through the relevant Chairs and Secretaries.</p> <p>Rose Bowie apologised for inadvertently using the 'reply all' button when expressing her personal view in an on-line discussion relating to the CIH Charter discussion paper. Members acknowledged Rose's apology and recognised her right to express her views. However, members gave general support for a more circumspect use of emailing. Members also accepted Networks interests would be best served through everyone using common sense and goodwill. Members also noted that regular updates and better use of our existing website would improve communication with those we represent.</p>	All Chairs and Secretaries
7.	<p>Other Competent Business</p> <p>a) West Dumbarton – a paper had been circulated updating members in advance. Hugh McClung (author) advised he had spoken on the HRA Network Paper to the Annual General Meeting of West Dumbarton Tenants Federation (WDTF). Hugh also had the opportunity to speak with WDTF members regarding their joining in the work of the Networks. WDTF officials had expressed their desire to join the Networks, but not at this time as their priority is to get WDTF fully functioning following a period of inactivity.</p> <p>b) Regional Networks Website – Greg Hine R9, had produced and issued a paper (via email) updating members on the operation and functionality of the website. Members advised</p>	Agenda item

