

# AGM REPORT - 2010



This year, Region 9 has been actively working on your behalf to encourage the links with Scottish Government, the Regional Network and Ministers.

We now have regular meetings with the Housing Minister Alex Neill and several issues such as potential

## Kevin Patterson discussing the year to date.



misuse of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) have been raised for further investigation.

The region has also been actively involved in the Allocation Sounding Board.

Your region has continued to participate in the ongoing Housing Bill with over 50% of the RTOs re-

sponding, and we are working hard on trying to get the best deal on the Social Housing Charter and new Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Regional Networks website, www.regionalnetworks.org.uk has launched and we are looking for feedback from our members.

**Ann Cook** from Scottish Government spoke about the progress of the Regional Network to date: The creation of the 2001 Housing Act and the creation of RTOs often forms the basis for which tenant engagement and involvement is now based.

The Government is committed to engagement and in the case of the Network, there have been over 6 years of work so far.

Tenants and representatives across the board have stated that they want to get more involved in shaping the future of Housing in Scotland.

There are several challenges to the economy and housing as a whole at the moment and it is critical that the Region works with its tenants and representatives to help drive the best possible outcome.

- Recession
- Rising Population
- Aging Population
- 2012 Homelessness Target
- 2015 Housing Quality Standards
- 2016 Fuel Poverty Target
- 2020 Climate Change Target

As a group aiming to represent over 90 RTOs in the region, and working with the other regions to form a National view on housing policy and discussion.

One of our key challenges is making communication flows two ways between tenants & residents, and the region.

2010/11/12 are going to be interesting years for the shaping of housing in Scotland.....

## Special points of interest:

- > Housing Bill
- > Housing Regulator
- > Housing Charter
- > HRA
- > Communication
- > Apathy or Antipathy?

## Thanks to the Glasgow Housing Association

This years AGM was hosted by the GHA in the offices in Trongate, and the region would like to thank the GHA for the excellent organization and facilities they provided.

GHA has over 35 of the 90 RTOs based in the region and has a long history of engagement with their tenants, so it was good to look at their approach and strategy for the coming years.

Both **Mary Scahill**, Chair of the GHA RTO Federation and **Maureen Dowden** head of Customer Engagement presented to us on the day.

GHA was asked how they fund tenant involvement whilst making sure tenants are empow-

ered.

Admittedly making some of the audience a bit 'jealous' and showing some RSLs up, GHA described how they have higher level participation budgets, but also provide devolved funding to area committees which is used for 'non-national strategy' projects. These projects may not fall into corporate strategy but are deemed to have an impact. Area committees will have up to £million to spend.

Each Area Committees bid for funding must be considered and an explanation for approval or declination must be given. There is also an appeal process to the board/committee.

GHA is also working on an empowerment grant for funding LHO committee activity and what they need to get involved and function properly.

Mumtaz Hussein from M.E.R.G raised the issue of rough accommodation, minorities and landlords taking advantage of 'non-standard' housing requests.

The GHA has a contract with Glasgow City Council to provide up to 1400 properties for asylum seekers in conjunction with the Home Office. Those that have the right to remain are entitled to be housed. GHA views its status as the largest Landlord in the region as a responsibility which they take seriously



**THERE HAS NEVER BEEN SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE SCOTTISH HOUSING POLICY TO MEET THE COMMUNITY'S REQUIREMENTS AS THERE IS NOW**

What is it about getting people involved that is so difficult?

Many voluntary organizations struggle with membership, and the tenants movement is no different often hampered by the lack of involvement especially by younger sections of the

### Apathy of Antipathy?

community.

Tenant Priorities identified that whilst the priorities and expectations of the younger and older groups differ an opinion was expressed by both groups.

Glasgow traditionally has an

issue with getting people involved and we need to understand what we can do to help make it better.

10% lower attendance than any other area in the election is a good example

As mentioned there was a good response from RTDs and other organizations to the initial consultation on the Draft Housing Bill.

The Regional Network gave evidence to the Local Government & Communities Committee and we now attend regular meetings with the Housing

Minister to view the progress of the bill through Parliament.

One of the key areas which was identified by nearly all was the fact that COSLA should accept the fact that the Housing Regulator will regulate the performance of Local Authority Landlords and homelessness services.

Originally there was an indication that this element of regulation should be separate creating a two tier system.

Thankfully opposition to this concept was great and the Bill now includes some changes.

We will keep you updated through our Newsletters and website.

### The Scottish Social Housing Charter(SHCC)

Where the Housing Bill does not contain all that we desire, there is another avenue we can explore.

The Housing Charter is different from many 'charters' which just express a way of thinking.

The SHCC is a legal and binding document to which landlords must adhere. Think a more powerful tool than the improve-

ments given in the Scotland Housing Act 2001.

We are looking for your involvement in making the Charter work for tenants.

How to empower tenants

How to work with Landlords

What do you want to see in the Charter?

How best to consult with you?

Is everyone included?

We know that many areas such as allocation are important to you but this can be so much more when used with the new Scottish Regulator and Housing Bill

The Charter is expected to be in place by 1st April 2012.

### The Scottish Housing Regulator

Recent work has shown that very few tenants are aware of the regulator and what they do.

Tenant assessors often form parts of the RTDs in the region and the network, but time and time again we are told that the tenant participation in inspections is poor and inadequate.

The Scottish Housing Regulator is undergoing a period of change along with the Housing Bill and Charter, but the region has not had the opportunity to grasp the bull by the horns to date.

Our committee is represented on T.R.A.G the Tenants Regulatory Advisory Group but as it's

title implies it is 'advisory' and no move as yet has been made to formalize the groups involvement in future discussions.

One thought is to 'beef up' the charter to force the onus onto the new SHR to measure performance.

What do you think?

