

Inaugural AGM

Minutes of South West Scotland Regional Network AGM - Region 3, held on Saturday 2 June 2018, in The Studio, 67 Hope Street, G2 6AE at 11am

Present:

Mary McCartney	Gretna & District TARA
Catherine McAlpine	Gretna & District TARA
Margaret McSkimming	Trust Housing Registered Tenants Association
Jackie Duncan	Campbell Area TARA
John McKenzie (Mac)	Campbell Area TARA
Bruce Cuthbertson	East Ayrshire Federation
Heather Cuthbert	Auchenback TRA
Chrissie Kerr	Mearns Village Community Association
Elizabeth Kay	Mearns Village Community Association
Helen Westwater	Mearns Village Community Association
Margaret Tait	East Kirk Court RTO
Helen Malcolmson	Castlepark & Eglinton TRA
Kelly Malcolmson	Castlepark & Eglinton TRA
John Nisbet	Cunninghame Scrutiny Group
Alex Younger	Fullarton & Harbourside TARA
Cate Weir	Saltcoats High Flats TARA
Mary Mathieson	Saltcoats High Flats TARA
Shirley McLean	Glenburn Community Tenants and Residents Association
Frank Williams	HEART Scrutiny Panel
Jean Rhodes	Maxwellton Court Tenants Association
Margaret Dymond	Maxwellton Court Tenants Association
Tam Higgins	Maxwellton Court Tenants Association
Lynn Dawson	Housing Options and Support Scrutiny Group
Margaret Anderson	Housing Options and Support Scrutiny Group
Eudora Tabor	Maintenance Scrutiny Group
Anne Cameron	Treetops TARA
Margaret Jamieson	Treetops TARA
Robert Cherry	Treetops TARA
Lynn Graham	Tenant, East Ayrshire

Apologies:

Ann Buckley	Inspection Panel, North Ayrshire
-------------	----------------------------------

In Attendance:

Andrew Watson	Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)
Lyndsey Murphy	Link Housing
Ann Marie Stanley	Scottish Government
Annabel Hoatson	Scottish Government

1. Welcome

Heather Cuthbert, Interim chair, was delighted to welcome everyone to the first Annual General Meeting of the recently restructured South West Scotland Regional Network, and extended a very warm welcome to Andrew Watson from the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) who was the guest speaker.

2. Chair's report – Heather Cuthbert

Heather reminded everyone about the background to the Regional Networks and gave an insight into what drove the need to restructure and its purpose to make the networks work more efficiently and effectively in that all network committee members contribute in a way that uses their knowledge, experience, skills and abilities.

Heather highlighted some of the more notable achievement the Regional Networks had made:

- The Networks have made significant contributions to shaping the Housing (Scotland) 2010 and 2014 Acts and helped develop the first ever Scottish Social Housing Charter
- They gave written and oral evidence to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment committee, during the consultation on the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, resulting in the Act being amended to require landlords to involve their tenants in preparing their Annual Return of the Charter (ARC) for the SHR and ensuring that Council tenants were protected by the regulatory regime.
- Following concerns by the networks about inappropriate use of Local Authority Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA), we produced an evidence paper outlining the issues and the Scottish Government reviewed and produced robust guidance on what HRA resources should be used for.

Heather ended her report by stating that all of the Network achievements are having a lasting impact, improving services on the ground for all the 610,000 social housing tenants and the customers of social property owners in Scotland. She was confident that the new Regional Network structure would build on these achievements and continue to work effectively with the Scottish Government in areas of National housing policy.

3. Andrew Watson, Board member, Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Andrew Watson gave an overview on the future of social housing regulation in Scotland, he advised that there was a planned review of the current framework which was launched over five years ago looking at the future of social housing regulation in Scotland:+

- We published a discussion paper in January 2018 and held a series of events and had written submissions from over ninety individuals and organisations, including tenant organisations and the Regional Network committees.
- The statutory objective hasn't changed, safeguarding and promoting the interests of tenants, people who are homeless and other service users will remain centre stage. The SHR are committed to empower tenants by providing useful, accessible information about landlord performance and promoting a strong tenant voice will also stay core to our work.

- The creation of an Annual Assurance Statement will ensure that each landlord would confirm that it meets the Regulatory Standards and requirements, or set out what it is doing to address any instances of non-compliance. This would be approved by each Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) board or appropriate committee of the local authority. The SHR would use the statements in the risk assessments of all landlords.
- The SHR will be speaking to tenants, landlords and others as they develop this. The role for tenants in the annual assurance is how they capture and use the tenants views of their landlords.
- There is overwhelming support for internal audit to be mandatory for all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Most landlords already have internal audit, those that don't are very much in the minority and it will be important that landlords ensure that the internal audit is effective and adds value.
- The SHR will be making the regulatory view of each landlord readily available to tenants, service users, and others with an interest in social landlords. It is likely that the SHR will focus this around our judgement on each landlord's compliance with Regulatory Standards and regulatory requirements. We will develop our thinking on how we do that, and we'll keep talking over the summer to help us develop an approach.
- The SHR are looking for tenants views on how we can present the view of each landlord in a way that is useful for tenants. Many stakeholders stressed the importance of the SHR continuing to promote a strong tenant voice and to support tenants with accessible and useful information about their landlord. In addition, tenants have told the SHR that information on rent affordability and landlord costs is increasingly important to them.
- The SHR will be taking forward a project over the coming year to see how innovative technologies can help us achieve that objective.
- The SHR will be talking to landlords about the data we collect on their performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter, to make sure the indicators are as meaningful as possible.
- The SHR will be engaging with many tenants as possible of the autumn with TPAS and TIS supporting them with the consultation process and thanked the Scottish Government for funding this.
- The proposed framework for formal consultation will take place in the autumn and this is all about setting the direction of regulation in the next five years that is effective and sustainable.

In response to this, those present raised their concerns with Andrew that some Local Authority landlords were not engaging with their tenants or taking note of their opinions. They acknowledged that where landlords engage effectively, tenants are generally satisfied with

the services they receive, however where tenants are not being consulted, tenants felt isolated and frustrated with the mechanisms available to instigate change.

They highlighted the extensive length of time that SPF's take to resolve and not always to the satisfaction of the tenants. They said that the SHR dealt more effectively with housing association landlords but not with local authority landlords. They urged the regulator to look at this matter as tenants felt that there had to be changes made to give them support.

In addition, there were still barriers to resolving the continued misuse of HRA resources which was made more complex by the Audit Commission having responsibility for Local Authority Finances. It was suggested that the HRA could be separated out with the SHR being responsible to monitor its use.

Andrew said that he would discuss their concerns with his colleagues.

4. Regional Networks – Looking forward – Ann Marie Stanley Scottish Government

Ann Marie Stanley, Tenant Participation Development Manager, gave a short presentation about the Regional Networks and moving forward in the future. She highlighted that:

The Networks are important as they:

- Provide a broadly representative view of tenant/residents interests in the development of national housing policy
- Give tenants and residents a recognised place alongside the professional sector in working in partnership with the Scottish Government on national policy
- Scottish Government greatly values the networks views and insight in national policy development
- Help shape housing policy in Scotland

Achievements:

- Ensured tenants views are reflected in housing policy and legislation
- Give evidence directly to Parliamentary committees
- Recognised role, alongside the professional sector, in national policy development
- Input and views highly valued by staff and Ministers
- Influenced and changed legislation and policy

Why review?

- Ensured tenants views are reflected in housing policy and legislation
- Give evidence directly to Parliamentary committees
- Recognised role, alongside the professional sector, in national policy development
- Input and views highly valued by staff and Ministers
- Influenced and changed legislation and policy

Looking forward:

- Improving communication and effectively representing views
- Working smarter and efficiently

- Making the best use of people involved and sharing the load
- More than just meetings!
- Responding effectively to policy ideas and consultations
- Identifying and suggesting ideas for improvements
- Maintaining national influence in policy development

Ann Marie quoted from a committee member that effectively summed up the real impact that the regional networks were having nationally:

“Who would have thought 20 years ago that tenants of social housing would have access to Ministers as we do now. Tenant Participation is working well in Scotland and having the Charter enables tenants to be meaningfully involved in developing national policy and work with our landlords to improve services and standards.”

4. Business Matters

- **Treasurer’s report**

Bruce Cuthbertson gave an update on the accounts from November 2017 to March 2018:

Former Region 6 covering Dumfries & Galloway, East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire

The former Region 6 bank account has not been active since August 2017.

The current balance in the account to be transferred to the new Region 3 South West Scotland Account is £1333.31

There is no petty cash outstanding.

Former Region 7 Regional Network covering East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire

The former Region 7 bank account has not been active since May 2016 and no money has been paid in or out of this account. There is currently no money in the account.

The amount outstanding in petty cash is £346.26 and that is currently being held by the Scottish Government until a new treasurer is appointed.

- **Changes to the Constitution**

No changes to The Constitution were submitted.

- **Elections to the Committee**

Due to the network restructure, all members had stood down for re-election. the constitution states that 2 members per Local Authority can stand for election.

The following people have been elected to the committee:

Dumfries and Galloway

- Margaret (Jackie) McSkimming, Trust Housing Registered Tenant Association

East Ayrshire

- John (Mac) McKenzie, Campbell Area TARA
- Bruce Cuthbertson, Hurlford TARA

East Renfrewshire

- Heather Cuthbert, Auchenback TARA
- Helen Westwater, Mearns Village Community Association

Inverclyde

- Margaret Tait, Trust Housing Registered Tenants Organisation

Renfrewshire

- Frank Williams, (HEART) Scrutiny Panel, Hanover Housing
- Margaret Dymond, Maxwellton Court Tenants Association

South Ayrshire

- Anne Cameron, Treetops TARA

The committee has the following vacancies:

- 1 place from Dumfries and Galloway,
- 1 place for Inverclyde,
- 2 places for North Ayrshire and
- 1 place for South Ayrshire.

Ann Marie advised the election of office bearers would take place at the committee first meeting and they would agree how to fill the committee vacancies.

6. Close of AGM – Heather Cuthbert

Heather thanked everyone for their contributions today, it was a really interesting and informative day, and wish everyone a safe journey home.

7. Date of Next meeting

The first meeting of the newly elected committee will take place on Thursday, 5 July 2018, venue to be confirmed.