

Minutes of the Regional Networks Chairs & Secretaries Meeting
2 February 2021 via Zoom

Present:

Cameron Grant (Chair)	CG	North of Scotland	1
Leonora Montgomery	LM	North of Scotland	1
Alasdair MacKenzie	AMack	North of Scotland	1
Gerald Low	GL	North of Scotland	1
Lillias Reid	LR	South East Scotland	2
Alan Frank	AF	South East Scotland	2
Terry Kirby	TK	South East Scotland	2
Jim Galloway	JG	South East Scotland	2
Anne Cameron	AC	South West Scotland	3
Margaret Anderson	MA	South West Scotland	4
John McKenzie (Mac)	Mac	South West Scotland	4
Margaret Dymond	MD	South West Scotland	4
Lindsay Anderson	LA	Central Scotland	4
Hugh McClung MBE	HMcC	Central Scotland	4
Shona Gorman	SG	Central Scotland	4
John Duffy	JD	Central Scotland	4

In Attendance:

Susan McLellan	SMcL	Scottish Government	SG
Carolynne Watson	CW	Scottish Government	SG
Annabel Hoatson	AH	Scottish Government	SG
David Reilly	DR	Scottish Government	SG

Item		Action
1	<p><u>Welcome and Introductions</u></p> <p>Cameron Grant, Acting Chair, North of Scotland, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Chairs and Secretaries.</p> <p>Members of the committee were deeply saddened by the passing of our dear colleague and friend, George McGuinness MBE; A minute's silence/applause took place to remember George.</p> <p>Cameron also gave news of the passing of Bill Geddes, of the Helensburgh and Cardross area, who also used to be part of the Networks.</p>	

	<p>Bruce Cuthbertson is currently recovering from a stroke and will be getting a care package to allow him to return home. All members wished Bruce all the very best for his recovery.</p> <p>Steve Byrne has been diagnosed with prostate cancer and will be undergoing treatment in due course. All members wish Steve all the best for this treatment and recovery.</p> <p>Cameron reminded everyone, as is now custom with virtual meetings, to mute themselves when appropriate.</p>	
2	<p><u>Previous Minutes of November 2020 and matters arising.</u></p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <p>Leonora noted some corrections:</p> <p>Under matters arising (page 2) – Alasdair MacKenzie’s name has been spelt wrong and the extra word ‘to’ was noted after resigned.</p> <p>The 5th paragraph down on page 4, ‘Hugh McClung stated it’ should be ‘of’ not ‘off’ and the 3rd line down, missed word, it should read ‘so we can get a comprehensive look’.</p> <p>This has been rectified in the minutes and Annabel thanked Leonora for noting these.</p> <p>Minutes:</p> <p>The minutes were proposed by John McKenzie, South West Scotland and seconded by Lillias Reid, South East Scotland, and agreed as an accurate record of the last meeting.</p>	
3	<p><u>Correspondence</u></p> <p>There was no correspondence noted for the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p><u>Participatory Budgeting presentation and discussion</u></p> <p>David Reilly gave a presentation on Participatory Budgeting (PB).</p> <p>David shared his screen and thanked everyone for allowing him to come and speak about PB. David stated he would give a short presentation about PB and then open the floor to questions.</p> <p>First of all, David asked if anyone had heard or had experienced PB. There was a good range that had and some who had not.</p>	

David shared the experience of the Ferguslie Park community. This area is known as an area of multiple-deprivation. In 2018, there was a focus on young people in the community that led to a PB community led action plan. This was the first time that the PB process had been open to the whole community. The young people of the community wanted everyone to have a direct say in PB process and how the money was to be invested for the good of the whole community.

There was a lot of learning through the whole process and it did bring the community together and made connections through building relationships and trust. It helped shift the focus of Ferguslie Park as a 'problem' community to one that had their own ideas to bring solutions to problems and it helped the community flourish.

This was a good experience of PB and how it was working in the community and then the pandemic hit but instead of the pandemic halting the work, the community used the funding provided to deliver support services to the wider area of Ferguslie Park.

The whole point of PB is the investment of public money in local communities, so the community should have a say in the process of how that money is spent and that is where the community empowerment comes in. It is about people having conversations about local priorities and what matters to the people that live in the communities.

The community then comes up with their own ideas and works with public services in order to shape them, they then go forward to a vote, and try and encourage people in the community to take part in the voting process. These votes are important as it brings part of the process and this is where the community empowerment comes in.

Those projects with the most votes are implemented and people can see that when the votes are being counted. Once the votes are in and projects decided, the money is then spent on these projects, the projects are delivered and then the community and public services come back together 6 months later to learn from the experience.

Why we do it? We are talking about community empowerment to achieve their own ambition and to have the power to implement decisions that have an effect on their community. It is important for people to be empowered, participate in the decisions that affect them.

There is also the poverty of participation, those that experience most inequality and most poverty are least likely to participate –

and that is why we are taking part and making this a priority for communities. There have been lots of research on how it is important for people to feel empowered.

The Scottish Household survey asked the following question: “Do you think you have an influence over decisions that affect your neighbourhood” and it was the lowest scoring question in the survey and what was interesting is that it was much lower than the other questions asked and lower again for people who live in deprived areas, who are disabled and lowest for tenants in social rented housing which is a bad thing as they don’t have control over decisions that affect them.

David noted that If PB is done well; it can bring people in their communities together and build relationships and resilience.

These PB decisions are made about public money and public resources it can bring other people who seem to be excluded from the community together, for example from David’s experience, young people have been excellent in taking part but if we are to really get PB to work then we will need to work with other areas of the communities such as homeless people and those who have experienced homelessness, BAME groups and so on as PB is driven by normal local people.

David posed the following questions to the RN committee members:

- Should people in your community have a direct say in decisions that affect them?
- What opportunities are there for PB in your community?
- What advice would you offer to empower tenants through the PB process - where should we start?

Hugh McClung (R4), thanked David for his presentation and stated it was very interesting how the PB process was described. However, the process does not always work that way. In Hugh’s area it was deemed that PB would have 1% of the local budget and the projects put forward, including roads maintenance, street lighting and other things that are paid through council tax.

Hugh noted his area, Stirling is part urban/part rural, the scheme was to allow nominations for certain projects and you were being then asked to attend a meeting to vote for your allocated project, when you arrived to vote, the rural project, for example, would get 400 votes then urban get 4000 so there is a degree of inequality in this scheme which is not the way forward for PB. If central and local government want communities to participate in PB then it should be more than the 1% currently offered.

Cameron Grant (R1), agreed with Hugh's point, there is certainly a feeling that when you participate in meetings and voting process that decisions about what projects are getting the money have already been made and that urban projects are always going to come out on top of any decision making and there needs to be a much fairer system in play to address the urban/rural question.

Cameron also noted the point on the social housing slide with only 20% of tenants answering that how they control what happens in their communities. Cameron would be interested to see a breakdown between RSL tenants and Local Authority tenants. Cameron stated that RSL tenants should have a lot more input and the % in that slide seems rather low.

Lillias Reid (R2) had not heard of PB and wanted to know how much had been done in the East of Scotland. David advised that there has been a lot of work done in the East of Scotland; some good examples and the best examples in Leith where the community councils had for some years now been involved in the PB process with successful results. David has been in Leith at PB event where 1,200 people came along in be involved and to vote on various projects. Midlothian has focused on schools and school pupils themselves being involved in the PB process have decided to focus on the poverty attainment gap in their projects.

John Duffy (R4) asked about the membership of the overall SG PB group. A number of years ago there was appointed group members, how did they get these people, was it cross community. John would like to see tenant members on this group. David notes that the Scottish Government has a priority for PB and would like other voices to be heard and they now have a range of people from all over including local government, education, community councils, third sector and the disability alliance. A tenant representative on the group would be beneficial, as we want to spread PB to as many housing groups (RSL's and Local Authorities) as we can to spend the resources that have been allocated via their PB budget.

Mac (R3) gave an example in his area of East Ayrshire when about 5 years ago (before the 1% LA PB budget was implemented) applied to the Community Choice for funding and held events in 5 areas, which did not have a community action plan and these were very successful. As in all cases of PB there were winners and losers but those that applied and were not successful did not walk away empty handed as the networking created as a result of these events allowed these groups to link up with other funding resources. When the process changed to the 1%, it changed the whole complex of the idea and as Hugh stated previously in his comments, the local authority were bringing

forward projects which should have been covered by other local authority spending revenues.

Margaret Anderson (R3) noted more of an observation. The 3 questions that David had posed to someone who has not known about PB, makes it look as if it is geared to only tenants which, of course, is not the case as the whole community can get involved. The voting can be also be top heavy to those who are not tenants and people who are really in need of the funding for their communities can be put on the back foot. Margaret asked If there is not some way that there could be proportional budgeting so the voting can be governed a bit fairer to make sure that the people who are in need get a chance at accessing the money for their projects. She noted it was a great concept but there is a lot to be done to make the voting fair across all areas as it is not much good if people who are living in the periphery are not getting to access the projects which would benefit them compared to communities in more affluent areas.

David thanked everyone for their comments and firstly covered the points from Hugh, John and Margaret – Hugh had mentioned the winners/losers in a rural urban split and Margaret to some extent in the less/more affluent areas. David stated that they have to be careful on how they design the process. The first PB projects were 1 person and 1 vote and it was a bit of a free for all which is the opposite of what PB is trying to achieve.

We have seen local authorities do different things to try and bridge the urban/rural gap by ring fencing part of the money, for example in Island communities , 20% of the budget is ring-fenced for the smaller islands and they only vote for projects with that money for their island. There is then deliberations as to if that is fair, as the smaller island communities may have greater need than the bigger island communities etc. David stated it is really important that we have a thoughtful process. It is important for community members to be involved in that PB process the same as community councillors and local authorities. Although, this is not about replacing elected members of the community it is really about adding to it and bringing lots more people in to be involved in the community.

David noted Mac's point about East Ayrshire and is really glad that it was a successful experience in running what is called a 'small grants process'. David also elaborated on the 1% which had been referred and explained that a few years ago it was decided by the Scottish Government that 1% of Local Authority budget should be decided by PB, not including council tax for example or any other money that elected officials had to spend. It is money the Scottish Government gives to all local authorities as part of a grant which equates to approx £100m, which is a lot of money but given that

	<p>the total public spending in Scotland is £11b across 5 million people it gives us some perspective. What the SG want is to discuss with the community as to where the money from the 1% needs to be spent</p> <p>Hugh (R4) stated that the principle of this scheme was to involve everyone in the local communities. However, he stated that power sharing was not always forthcoming and those elected officials were not always willing to share power with communities on how the money could be used to improve communities, in fact, the opposite was now happening and in his area they were asking communities to tell the council which services could be cut to save money rather than improve them.</p> <p>Mac (R3) stated that the original idea was for groups to come forward and ask for money and PB was for the community and not for roads, lighting etc and the way they are doing it now is not in the spirit of how the PB process originally started.</p> <p>Gerald (R1) stated that his area, Perth and Kinross, had agreed to fund various projects but they had to come out of the following year's budget and how do we get round that aspect. David stated that it was important for local authorities to be transparent and follow through on their word, there can be sometimes practical issues, but there should be trust with local authority representatives that working with the community they will be able to deliver projects within their timescale.</p> <p>David thanked everyone for their time and noted the slides and questions would be sent round and would be grateful for any feedback.</p> <p>Action - David and Carolynne will have a discussion about how we move forward with the idea of a tenant representative on the PB group.</p>	<p>DR/CW</p>
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5. Rent Consultation and Affordability

Cameron(R1) explained that Annabel sent out an email with Terry's response, Cameron asked if everyone had a chance to read this and had any questions or comments. Annabel noted that Gerald has not had a copy but will send a copy today.

Terry Kirby (R2), who submitted the original paper, thanked everyone for responding from the Regional Networks and he noted that it is clear that there is concern about the affordability issue. Terry stated at his own RN meeting, he had learned that 3 RTOs in Fife had requested a rent freeze, Living Rent have requested a rent freeze, Terry's own group, Wharton Square, had requested a rent freeze and Edinburgh Tenants Federation are also requesting a rent freeze. Terry also noted that 7 housing associations had already frozen rents. He also noted it was good to see that Regions 1, 2 and 4 had agreed that there should be a rent freeze.

Terry recommended to the Chairs and Secretaries that a working group be taken forward and some form of presentation be sent to the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, Kevin Stewart MSP, regarding this issue.

Gerald (R1) asked about the question of affordability, the question of what is affordable to some and not to others has been asked for a number of years, was there move towards a definition of affordability that would satisfy all parties?

Terry stated that this was indeed the big question and it was his understanding that some housing associations use the SFHA affordability tool and that puts the affordability at 35% of your income whereas Terry would like to see that as 25% as it is currently too high.

Hugh (R4) had total admiration for Terry and his region for the paper and noted there is something to be asked of the SG and the way rents are being considered. He noted the previous point regarding what is affordable to some may not be affordable to others but he reminded the group about the proposal that was put forward some years ago about rationalisation of rents. RSL rents are higher than LA rents so if we were to consider rent rationalization again, LA rents would likely be brought up the to the level of RSLs and that would be a disaster for LA tenants.

Hugh stated that we need to consider whether the affordability factor is going to influence what happens in future years, for example if £70 a week is affordable then what happens in future years when the Covid impact is assessed with the continued stress on the budgets, rents not coming in for loss of earnings,

furlough etc. The business case for local authority for progressing their house building programme, repairs and allocations etc, which all have to be paid for and as inflation continues to rise, and all these factors have to be worth bearing in mind going forward.

Alasdair Mackenzie (R1), agreed with Gerald and Hugh points regarding affordability. He also noted Hugh's point that things have to be paid for and RSLs/LA's have large developments and investment programmes that are ongoing. With regard to rent increases, Alasdair's own RSL went with the two options RPI only and RPI + 1.35% for a proposed rent increase and they engaged with tenants on this and left consultation open for 6/7 weeks to allow as many tenants to respond as possible. The RPI only was the lowest that could be brought forward to support the on-going business plan.

Margaret Dymond (R3) stated the Renfrewshire tenant scrutiny panel did discuss rents at their recent meeting, at the council wide forum and had a rent setting meeting online. Renfrewshire council provided the tenants with a copy of the business plan. Tenants agreed that the lowest rent rise of 1.5% should be put forward as the council would not agree with a rent freeze this year although they have done so in the past. The tenants did not want any more than 1.5% given the impact of Covid and the rent rise will be decided at the council housing policy meeting later on in the month.

Margaret Anderson (R3) stated that everything is on hold just now because of the pandemic and quite rightly there is government assistance for those that need it but reminded the group that everything will have to be paid back and this will have an impact on affordability in the future. Margaret does not agree with a 0% rent rise due to the economics, for example how are repairs going to be paid for if money is not coming in, everything goes up, wages, cost of living etc. She also reminded the group about the council tax freeze and as a result of that very little could get done as there was no money to pay for things. Each RSL/LA have their own needs and a lot of services are going to be cut in the future to pay back the money that has been borrowed from the government assistance programmes so she believes that rents have to go up to allow for things to be paid for in the future.

Cameron agreed with Margaret Anderson's point about the council tax freeze and this has again been frozen this year but Cameron noted he would rather pay for the 2% increase now rather than 6% further down the line to cover the services. As for the rent consultation in his area, the rents are going up again and the RSL noted what the rent was going to pay for but it is the same things that the rent was meant to pay for last year so there is the argument as to why there needs to be a rise at all. Cameron noted

that the Scottish Government needs to take control and legislate for a blanket rent freeze across the country or they need to come up with another solution because of the affordability issue for tenants.

Carolynne Watson, TP team, suggested that it may be an idea to split Terry's paper and discuss the rent affordability and rent consultation as separate issues. This was an issue that was brought up at the National Event in 2019 as an area that the network members would be interested in pursuing and she noted that affordability did not have to cover just rents it could cover other costs such as increasing energy bills etc. Carolynne noted that Susan and herself had discussed this during their conversations with Terry over the past few weeks and the possibility of setting up a working group around affordability and rent consultations and was looking for people's views on that?

Cameron noted that a rent consultation panel group would be useful for future years as most rents have already been set for RSL and LA's for this financial year and a letter to the Minister would be worthwhile highlighting the concerns of tenants.

Alasdair Mackenzie also noted that a number of new properties were being built in his area of the Western Isles but the cost of building these houses are far more than the mainland with a 35% uplift with the RSL covering the cost. A rent freeze would be detrimental to these small housing associations but a rent consultation panel going forward would be a good thing for the Regional Networks.

Hugh also noted that a letter should be sent to the Minister voicing our concerns not only on affordability but also in relation to the current rent strategy. The Scottish Government, in all fairness, have been asking that all housing providers take into account rent affordability in their rent consultations and none of them have done it until now. Hugh agrees with the working group but can it look at rent strategy including the affordability factor so we can have a consensus going forward. Hugh also noted the rent rises in the PRS as a result of the pandemic and the small uptake in tenants in that sector using the first tier tribunal for fear of losing their home and made the point that all housing providers should be taken into consideration. Hugh also agrees with Terry that there has to be a rent freeze and agrees with Cameron that it is too late now for this financial year.

Cameron asked, if everyone was in agreement, if Terry could draft a letter to the Minister highlight the concerns of the Regional Network. Terry agreed to do this and also stated he will be asking for rent standardisation as housing providers either use RPI or

	<p>CPI and as RPI is always higher, Terry would be asking if every housing provider could use the same format of CPI going forward.</p> <p>Cameron asked if the TP team could come back to the Regional Network members on the suggestion of the working group. Carolynne stated that the team would catch up with Terry after the meeting and look at the responses everyone provided to the survey on rent consultation and Terry’s affordability questions and will scope something and get back to you all.</p> <p>Action : Terry to write letter to the Minister to highlight the Regional Networks concerns on rent affordability.</p> <p>Action – TP team to get back to Regional Networks members about the creation of a rent affordability working group.</p>	<p>TK</p> <p>TP Team</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><u>HRA update</u></p> <p>Hugh (R4) provided a brief background on the HRA. He has been in contact with West Dunbartonshire tenants and residents Association, on behalf of the Networks, regarding the problem they are having with expenditure and their HRA account. West Dunbartonshire Council have indicated that they may spend money from the HRA to offset non HRA accounts.</p> <p>Hugh took this up with the appropriate Scottish Government department and had a response from Mary McCallum, who advised him that the 2014 guidance on Local Authority HRA is quite clear, if the expenditure is not HRA related then it cannot be used to offset non HRA spend. Hugh also stated that he has now heard that West Lothian, Fife and Borders are now planning the same course as West Dunbartonshire Council.</p> <p>Hugh’s letter was also forwarded to COSLA and COSLA responded, in November 2020, indicating that they had given guidance to Local Authorities advising them it was up to each authority on how they spent their HRA funds. Hugh has noted that any such decision taken by the local authority would be illegal. He responded to COSLA in December 2020 asking COSLA to rescind this suggestion and advice to all local authorities regarding HRA accounts but Hugh has yet to receive an acknowledgement to this letter.</p> <p>Hugh has since had further meetings with West Dunbartonshire tenants and residents association as they had further concerns about the how the council were going to spend this money. It was indicated at this meeting that West Dunbartonshire Council have yet to make a decision on how they intend to spend the HRA</p>	

money but this will be known by the end of the financial year and they have indicated that this money is likely to be spent on other services.

Region 4, with agreement of all other Regions, are now to approach the Minister with the intention of having the guidance made into law, and have further discussion with the Minister over the potential for councils to spend money from the HRA on non-HRA services. Hugh stated that if this does in fact occur whether it be West Dunbartonshire or any other local authority it will set a precedent for all local authorities who will look at their budgets to see whether or not they can use HRA money to spend on other services and indicated that it was a very dangerous situation going forward. Hugh realises that the pandemic has had an impact on services but this is not the fault of the HRA. This discussion is about getting the guidance in the statute books as a matter of law.

Gerald (R1) asked the question if the HRA has been used by other services had there been any attempt by the local authority to refund the HRA account with the money they have spent from the General fund. Hugh stated the 1983 Housing Act makes it quite clear that rents are ring fenced and the 2014 guidance has reiterated that. If local authorities have spent non HRA money on HRA accounts then that money has to be refunded back from the general fund but Hugh has stated he is not aware if this has happened.

Cameron thanked Hugh for all his work on this and although he is an RSL tenant, he is fascinated with how this money from the HRA is used. Cameron noted that prior to the last boundary change he was a West Dunbartonshire tenant and the HRA is something that is interesting and he would like to know more about it. Cameron noted that there is probably an awful lot more work needing to get done.

Hugh stated that the guidance is available and the TP team would send this on if anyone required it as it is useful reading. Hugh noted that the HRA can be spent on capital projects where there is agreement from tenants but it has to be within the confines of housing services. For example, if there is a mixed tenure estate and fencing has to be reinstated. Those who are tenants, the HRA will pay to cover their part of the expenditure to get the work done and for owner-occupiers, the general fund has to pay for it first and then the council steps in to recoup the money from the owner-occupiers as their share of that expenditure.

Cameron noted the points that Hugh made about owner-occupiers, RSLs have the same problems as local authorities, with owner occupiers not always paying their fair share.

	<p>Margret Dymond (R3) agreed with Hugh and stated that Renfrewshire do charge home owners if they are getting any work done, sometimes the work can't get done right away, but noted there must be plenty of times that HRA money has been spent and not recouped so Margaret would agree with Hugh on this and as a member of Region 3, has backed Hugh on moving this forward.</p> <p>Carolynne, TP Team, noted that she had taken an action point to contact Audit Scotland regarding this to find how they would approach the financial auditing of accounts in relation to the HRA . Specifically what they would do if they saw budget streams getting used against the HRA which is not HRA core functions. Carolynne has contacted Carol Calder, Audit Scotland, who had spoken to the Network chairs a few years about the remit of Audit Scotland and how the their function was used against the HRA. Carolynne has asked Audit Scotland to provide any background or information they can share on this subject and will forward on any information received.</p> <p>Cameron agreed that the Network members should back Hugh and a letter raising the appropriate concerns should be sent to the Minister. Hugh stated he would draft a letter and work with the TP team on this and would send a copy to all the Network chairs for their information.</p>	
7.	<p><u>Meetings Held – Updates</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHR Liaison Group <p>Leonora (R1) gave an update on the SHR Liaison Group. Only 5 people turned up to the meeting. Cameron stated he did not receive an invite to the meeting so he thought it had been cancelled. Leonora stated it was quite an intensive meeting so she will try and keep the overview brief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name of the group will be changed from Regional Network/SHR liaison group to RN/SHR Liaison group, apparently the SHR kept on referring to the group as RTO so that is why that has been changed. • The risk assessments the SHR will be focussing on will be Homelessness, Tenant and Resident health and safety, financial health of RSLs and Gypsy Travellers. • The national report of the Scottish Social housing charter showed 9 out of 10 tenants were satisfied with their landlord and 3.6 hours was the national average for emergency repairs. • The monthly dashboard showed the local authorities had the highest rent arrears with RSLs the lowest. 	

- There has been an increase in universal credit claims with an impact on first time claimants
- The SHR were currently looking at figures for homelessness, temporary accommodation and rough sleeping.
- The statutory engagement plan with Thistle Housing transfer to Sanctuary Housing had been delayed and Weslo is at stage 1 to be transferred to Link Housing Association.
- The SHR are looking into the impact of EESH2 and what percentage of landlords will meet/will not meet the requirements.
- The Governing Body guidance has been updated for Covid-19,
- The planning update for the monthly dashboard is at the end of Feb.
- The TPAS conference in April 2021 was discussed but not sure if this is still going ahead.
- All staff are working at home until at least April 2021 and will have virtual meetings with landlords
- The corporate plan has been postponed due to Covid 19
- The management group meet once a week,
- The resilience group meet twice a week
- the thematic for 2021 is depending on the situation going forward with Covid 19
- The SHR are also going to be looking at unsuitable accommodation, for example, using bed and breakfast for more the 7 days and have asked for an extension on June 2021 for that to be published.

AMack (R1) was at the TPAS AGM and can confirm the April conference has been cancelled due to covid and a new date has not been set up.

- JHPDG

Susan McLellan, TP Team, was tasked with finding our more information about when the Joint Housing Policy Delivery group would reconvene. Leonora, who is part of the group, has not heard anything about the group either. Susan advised the Networks that there was no plans to reconvene the group at this time. This has been put on pause in response to COVID-19 as the overarching group was split into smaller groups to allow them to meet with the Minister on these matters. The groups were as follows:

- The Social Housing Resilience group,
- The Local Government Resilience group,
- The Private Rented Sector resilience group

- The Housing system policy circle groups
- The Joint Resilience chair groups

The SG team behind the JHPDG group would email the members to let them know.

Gerald raised an issue in his local area, Perth and Kinross, they have a similar group, however, he noted that there was no tenant representation on it and has requested to the relevant authority that a tenant should be a member of this group. He has not heard back yet and did not even know that the group existed until a few weeks ago. He will keep the group informed of this progress on this.

- Housing and Social Security

Annabel will find this out for the next meeting.

- Age Home and Community Group

Annabel was meant to find this out for the next meeting.

- Fire Safety

Lenora gave an update and the group had a meeting with Joe McShane on the 18 December 2020. He gave an update on the SG response to Grenfell phase 1, which was published in October 2019, there were 31 recommendations, for the English fire service.

The Scottish Fire service, because most of the recommendations were already in place, have cited 6 recommendations for future implementation. 15 recommendation were sent to property owners. A company called Progressive will be contacting landlords and the fire service to ascertain if they are being implemented and the report will be issued in due course.

The issue about private homeowners receiving leaflets through their door about upgrades to the fire alarm system and how this had to be done by, the 1ST February 2021 was raised. This has now been postponed by MSPs has until February 2022. The group asked why it was not enforceable by law and was advised that this was something the tenants should raise directly at their meeting with the Housing Minister.

Hugh (R4) would like to raise a question regarding Fire Safety and the on-going issues that are occurring in England and Wales regarding cladding and the element of cost for the owners. Although this does not necessarily apply to Scotland, how much

	<p>money is going to be set aside to rectify cladding that has been deemed unsafe?</p> <p>A Mack (R1) noted Hugh’s point regarding unsafe cladding and it is his personal view that the SG should step in and assist private owners. The owners purchased these properties in good faith and as far as they were concerned, they were safe and should give form of assistance.</p> <p>Cameron noted that was an easy option to get the SG to pay for all the fire regulations that have amassed but his view is that if someone has bought a property it is up to them to maintain it.</p> <p>Hugh noted that someone has to be held responsible for this, the developer, the builder and it is not fault of the homeowner it is the fault of the companies that built these flats with cheap materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications subgroup <p>Lindsay Anderson updated on the Communications sub-group. The group met recently and are looking at compiling a 4-page document, which will have a page provided from each region, to say what we are what we do, with a preliminary information leaflet. The group are also looking at producing a trifold leaflet with similar information that can be handed out to tenants. The big issue is trying to get information about the regional networks out to the tenants and in the past this has been extremely difficult.</p> <p>The group will be updating the information on the back of the Regional Network Communication Plans as some of this is out of date, these should have all the details of those who should be receiving information about the Regional Networks. The info needs updated and some Secretaries may need some training to take this forward.</p> <p>The training for people who are going to be involved with the website is going to take place with Colin- once that is done we will be able to get on with the job of updating the website regularly. There is going to be a subscription service for any groups that are interested in hearing about the Networks.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>AOCB</p> <p>Lillias Reid (R2) asked if the Networks would consider having a virtual Regional Network event. There was some discussion on this and given the complexity of hosting this, it was agreed this idea would not be viable at this time. If circumstances change later in the year then it would be a great idea to get this in the calendar. Susan, TP Team, stated that other organisations have done this</p>	

	<p>and the team will look into it but we would need to see what the outcomes would be and we could reflect this back to the committee members at regional network meetings going forward.</p> <p>Cameron thanked for everyone attending today and noted that there was a lot of information from the meeting. He apologised for running over time.</p> <p>Hugh noted a vote of thanks to the Chair.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting 11 am on Tuesday 4th May.</p>	