

Minutes of Virtual South East Scotland Regional Meeting
29 March 2021, Via Zoom

Present:

Alan Frank, Vice Chair
Lillias Reid, Secretary (Acting)
David Rintoul, Committee member
Cath McArthur, Committee member
Jim Galloway, Committee member
Terry Kirby, Committee member
Isabella Vint, Co-optee
Irina Lazarenko, Committee member.

In attendance:

Carolynne Watson, TP team

Apologies:

Alan Dunton, Chair (Acting)
Debra McCreath, Committee member.

1. Welcome

Alan Frank, Vice Chair, agreed to chair the meeting in the absence of Alan Dunton. Alan welcomed everyone to the meeting, apologies were noted and the attendees agreed that a recording of the meeting should be taken for the minutes. The committee members introduced themselves for the benefit of those joining the committee meeting via telephone.

Following the resignation of David Rintoul, West Lothian, from his local group and therefore from the Regional Networks, the committee noted their gratitude for David's contribution and extended their best wishes for the future to David.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

Lillias Reid proposed the minutes of 1 February 2021 and Alan Frank seconded.

There were no matters arising which are not covered on the agenda for today's meeting.

3. AGM

Carolynne introduced this agenda item, noting that the virtual AGM for South East Scotland is planned for Saturday 8 May. Carolynne confirmed that TPAS will administer this meeting on behalf of the Regional Networks. The AGM paperwork has been updated to reflect the fact that all committee members have stood down, as per the constitution, and places will be advertised in all local authority areas covered by South East Scotland.

Carolynne noted that the committee agreed at the previous meeting to focus on planning for the AGM at today's meeting, primarily on any changes to the constitution to be tabled for the AGM. Carolynne confirmed that any changes the committee wish to propose will need to be tabled with the final paperwork pack which will be issued the week before the AGM. The committee have previously discussed the differences between the Region 2 constitution and that of the other Networks and at the request of the committee, Carolynne has provided a summary table setting out these differences ahead of today's meeting.

The committee discussed the constitution and the differences in more detail, covering the following points:

- Terry noted that South East Scotland represents fewer local authority areas comparatively, and therefore there is a case to be made for retaining three members per local authority area as opposed to the two members per area as per the other Networks' constitutions. Terry noted his concern that the network is at a disadvantage in terms of numbers compared to other Regions, and Carolynne noted that if the committee feel there are gaps and that knowledge/input is required in specific areas, the committee can co-opt members on to fill these specific roles. The committee discussed the status of co-optees with regard to voting rights and Carolynne stated that co-optees would not have voting rights. Lillias noted that in her experience, committees generally work collaboratively and there has not been a need for a vote in quite some time;
- At present the constitution allows for members from other areas to fill spaces from local authority areas which are under-represented, and there were mixed views on this, with some committee members of the view that it is important to keep the membership as full as possible and some concerned about the potential that in practice one local authority area can effectively dominate the committee;
- The SES constitution at present is worded in a way that this year has required all committee members to step down as an eligible member wishes to stand for the committee. This change was adopted at the last AGM in 2019 and Carolynne noted that Michael Boal of the Scottish Government TP team had clarified the potential impact of this during the meeting. This year all committee members have had to step down and will have to complete nomination for re-election- in other areas, one third of the committee step down annually either through committee members volunteering or through a fair process agreed upon by all committee members;
- Irina noted that ahead of the 2019 AGM it was not clear how members stepping down were decided on and Carolynne stated that her understanding was that a decision was made by the Chairperson at the time on this;
- The committee are aware the requirement for all members to step down and submit themselves for re-election does cause complications, as some members are finding it difficult to secure endorsement to stand again. Irina noted her view that the nominations process is too arduous and that any tenant or resident should be able to stand for the committee and be voted upon at the AGM. Carolynne stated that the reason for this is that everyone standing for the committee must be a representative, representing tenants and residents. The requirement for nominees to be endorsed is there in order to show the nominee is a representative of their fellow tenants and residents;
- Irina noted that she feels the changes made to the constitution at the last AGM have not yet had an opportunity to bed in and for outcomes to be seen. Carolynne noted that the changes which substantially vary from the other Networks were introduced at the 2018 and 2019 AGMs and given the requirement for all committee members to step down and complete nominations this year, the impact of some of the changes is becoming clear now, as outlined above. The outcomes are proving

inconvenient for some members in securing nominations, and there is a risk to the continuity of skills and experience on the committee if all members have to step down and submit themselves for re-election on an annual basis.

Following discussion on the points above during which all committee members offered their views, the committee did not reach a consensus on whether to take forward changes to align the constitution more closely with that of the other Regional Networks and Alan Frank proposed that a facilitated session with a third party could help the committee to move forward. Carolynne agreed to invite Lesley Baird of TPAS to lead a session with the committee members as soon as possible to look at the constitution in more detail. Carolynne noted that the Scottish Government has no preference or view in terms of whether changes to the constitution should be made or not, but stressed that different members have a range of different views on the subject, everyone's view should be respected and decisions on the constitution should be made by the committee as a whole.

AP: Carolynne to invite Lesley Baird to meet with the committee to discuss and progress planning for constitution changes at the AGM.

4. Rents Focus Group Update

Terry and Lillias provided an update on the Rents Focus Group, which has been set up in response to some of the issues raised by Terry at previous committee meetings and with Chairs & Secretaries on rent affordability and the fact that some landlords have applied rent increases this year despite the challenging circumstances facing many tenants as a result of the pandemic. The group is facilitated by Lesley Baird of TPAS and has agreed a remit to look at affordability considerations, how tenants are consulted on rent setting by their landlord and how landlords factor affordability considerations into their rent setting, as well as the lived experience of tenants in relation to rent and other 'whole housing' costs such as energy and other running costs. A schedule of meetings has been agreed and the group have proposed inviting along guest speakers.

Terry noted that he has written to the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, Kevin Stewart MSP, outlining these concerns on behalf of the Regional Networks, following agreement on this approach from the Chairs & Secretaries group. Terry will update the committee on outcomes from this.

5. Chairs & Secretaries Update

The last Chairs & Secretaries meeting took place on 2 February and updates were made on the Rents Focus Group, the Communications sub-group and Annual General Meetings, all of which are covered elsewhere on today's agenda. A guest speaker, David Reilly, of the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment team, attended to discuss participatory budgeting in a housing context and Carolynne noted that slides and discussion questions had been issued to all Regional Network members following David's presentation. If anyone would like to contribute views or ask questions, these can be submitted via the TP team or a call can be arranged directly with David.

Under AOCB, Lillias raised the issue of a training day on behalf of the South East Scotland committee and the attendees noted that this would be something they would like to consider after the AGMs are complete. Carolynne stated that the TP team have noted this and we will revisit this suggestion after the AGMs are complete in the summer.

The next Chairs & Secretaries meeting will take place on Tuesday 4 May and Carolynne and Lillias will be in touch closer to the time to confirm attendees for the meeting.

6. Additional Network meetings

SHR Liaison group

The SHR Liaison group last met in January 2021 and Carolynne noted that this was not well attended with no attendees from South East Scotland committee in attendance. Carolynne confirmed that, as per the discussion at the last meeting, she has confirmed the representatives who wish to continue on the SHR Liaison group with Leonora Montgomery who is currently coordinating the group. David Rintoul's resignation leaves one vacancy on the group from South East Scotland and the committee agreed to look again at this following the AGM. The next meeting with SHR will be Tuesday 11 May and the committee agreed it will be important to have representatives from South East Scotland in attendance.

Communications sub-group

In Debra's absence, Carolynne gave a short update on the Communications sub-group. Colin Stewart, North of Scotland, has provided training for sub-group members including Debra on making updates to the website. The Comms group also agreed that Annabel Hoatson of the TP Team will carry out a review of the contact details in each Regional Network's Communications Plan to ensure these are up to date. This will also include the details of each of the committees following the AGMs.

The Comms group will be working on a collective Newsletter following the AGMs and will also be looking to produce a printed promotional leaflet on the Regional Networks and the work they do.

7. AOB

The TP Team will be arranging a session on Freedom of Information for Regional Network members with staff from the Scottish Information Commissioner. The session will likely take place at some point in June, and further information and booking details will follow shortly.

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be the session facilitated by Lesley Baird of TPAS, and further information on this will be issued as soon as possible. Following that, the next meeting will be the AGM on 8 May. The next committee meeting will be Monday 24 May at 11am. Carolynne will issue an invitation and Zoom link closer to the time.

The meeting cycle to the end of the year is as follows:

- 24 May;
- 19 July;
- 13 September;
- 8 November.

Alan closed the meeting, thanking everyone for their attendance.