

Cross Party Group on Housing

Wednesday 13 December 2017, 13:00 – 14:00

Sir Alexander Fleming Room (CR3), Scottish Parliament, Holyrood

Minute of the Meeting	
	<p>Members Present</p> <p>Andy Wightman, MSP; Graham Simpson, MSP; Lynda Johnstone, TIS (Secretariat); Susan Morris, TIS (Secretariat); Alistair Cameron, Scottish Churches Housing Action (SCHA); Libby McHale, Clachan Co-Housing; Caroline Elgar, SAL; Gavin Dick, National Landlords Association (NLA); Ashley Campbell, CIH; Gerry Young, Salvation Army; Lynn McMath, Crisis; Una Barclay, Crisis; Katie Dickson, Scottish Land & Estates (S,L &E); Susan Napier, Susan Napier Consulting; Jeremy Hewitt, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA).</p>
	<p>In Attendance: Non-members/Guests</p> <p>Fiona Selkirk, Audit Scotland; Lisa Innes, Employment & Housing Services; Nicola Barclay, Homes for Scotland; James Battye, Shelter; Rev. Russell Barr, Church of Scotland Minister, Edinburgh, Jack Kelly, Registers of Scotland.</p>
1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>Andy Wightman, MSP opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.</p> <p>Lynda Johnstone, TIS noted apologies had been received from: Ben Macpherson, MSP; Jackie Baillie, MSP; Alistair Hackland, Hackland & Dore Associates; Moira Bayne, Housing Options, Scotland; Janice Stevenson, LGBT Youth; Lesley Baird, TPAS; Wayne Mackay, Electrical Safety First; Pete White, Positive Prisons; Gordon Nelson, Federation of Master Builders; Grant Carson, Employment & Housing Services; Neil Clapperton, Grampian HA.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting: 13 September 2017</p> <p>Nicola Barclay advised that the minute recorded the name of her colleague incorrectly – It should be Tammy Swift-Adams. Lynda Johnstone advised this would be amended. There were no other matters arising and the minute was approved.</p>

<p>3. Presentations</p>	<p>Andy Wightman, MSP welcomed the speakers, noting that the presentations would be addressing two very topical issues:</p> <p>(1) The New Model Tenancy Agreement in the Private Rented Sector</p> <p>Gavin Dick, National Landlords Association (NLA), delivered a presentation outlining the key features and implications of the New Model Tenancy Agreements that became effective on December 1st 2017.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set to make things simpler • Agreements are open-ended – no set date • Tenant and Landlord can end the tenancy • New tribunal system – should help resolve issues before problems emerge • Some issues still need tidying up: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sub-letting – especially students etc. ○ Edinburgh particularly attractive during the festival ○ How to keep the flow of properties in each academic year • Evictions – new grounds make it harder for landlords to evict without reason • Requirement to notify of rent increases • Where property is no longer principal place of residence it is not covered by the Act • Will still be a mix of Tenancy types in place over coming years as a result of tenancies that started before 1st Dec 2017 not being affected. • Overall a positive development • 76 page tenancy document is excessive <p>James Battye, Shelter Scotland, set out the Shelter campaign and offered some reflection on how far the new Agreements deliver what Shelter were looking for from the changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47% of people in housing difficulty come from the Private Rented Sector (PRS) • The PRS has tripled in size since 1996 • Far more families with children now housed in the PRS • PRS is increasingly home to people who can't access social rented or owner occupied
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		<p>sectors – not a tenure of choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue of eviction for no reason was a key driver for change • Overall, pleased that the model tenancy agreement has been launched • It will take time for landlords and tenants to get used to • 18 grounds for eviction now – must be robust going forward, would be concerned if the eviction process was too easy for landlords • Establishing intention – needs close attention • Tenants can apply for wrongful eviction order if they can prove the landlord mis-led the tribunal or gave erroneous grounds for termination. • Model tenancy is really positive – will deliver uniformity. • Rent increases – the need for 3 months notice and the fact that they are limited to 1 per annum is positive. • Tenants can challenge any increases above the rate of inflation • Rent pressure zone can help in areas where rents are high – limit increase to CPI+(1)% • Ultimately it will strengthen the security of tenure for tenants • Shelter have produced lots of on-line resources and literature which hopefully tenants and professionals will find useful. <p>Q&As - A question and answer session prompted a discussion about the issues raised and the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of tenants/members wanted the security of fixed tenancy term that was in the original Bill. • National Landlords Association (NLA) was supportive of a minimum 6 month period, but recognise that fixed terms remove flexibility for those who need to move quickly. • A point of clarification – Gavin suggested that there will be an annual increase – the Act limits increase to 1 per annum but there is no obligation to increase. • NLA see that the new system will trigger annual increases as it is now written into the tenancy document. Given the changes to taxation of the sector, it would make
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business sense to impose annual increases.

- SL&E have concerns and believe close monitoring is needed. Our members are rural based – need rolling properties for farm workers. The changes mean properties are likely to be lost to long-term lets or holiday homes.
- NLA agree that there are still challenges, but better position now than before - challenges could usefully be addressed on an ongoing basis as they are uncovered.
- Highlights the problems faced by tenants looking for Rural housing – need secure, low-cost housing for the long term.

Andy Wightman, MSP thanked Gavin and James before moving to the next topic:

(2) The National Homelessness Strategy

Alistair Cameron, Scottish Churches Housing Action, began by announcing that he and his colleagues are delighted that after some resistance a National Strategy has been announced, however feel a number of issues are missing:

- Need a National approach to rough sleeping
- New approach to temporary accommodation – removing it from main-stream stock puts more pressure on that stock. Perhaps lower standards required?
- Prevention pathways for particular groups – there are good precedents but not integrated.
- Scottish Government need to recognise homelessness across all it portfolios, not just as a subset of the housing portfolio.
- Funding – need to move away from funding loopholes in current funding mechanisms but rather mainstream funding.
- More homes are needed – the price of land needs addressed.

Rev. Russell Barr, Church of Scotland Minister, Edinburgh, advised that he has been involved with the charity ‘Fresh Start’ in Edinburgh since 1999, however despite good efforts it continues to manage homelessness rather than resolve it. He outlined:

- It is broken – a fix is needed
- A new initiative is welcomed
- Working group on Rough Sleeping and Homelessness has been set up – 12 members, well represented by experts (short-life working group). It is looking at 4 questions:
 - 1) What can be done to reduce Rough Sleeping this winter?
 - 2) How we end Rough Sleeping?
 - 3) How we transform the use of temporary accommodation?
 - 4) What can be done to end homelessness?

Lynne McMath, Crisis, followed on from Rev. Barr to explain what the Working Group is doing to answer these questions as detailed above and outlined:

- No money for Q1
- £50million from Scottish Government from April 2018 for Q2,3 & 4
- Had to think creatively and focus on urban conurbations
- Recognised recommendations for Q1 might contradict Q2, 3 & 4
- Looked at pilot solutions to tackle Q1 that might usefully be rolled out.
- Triage for rough sleepers – most vulnerable at the head of the queue
- Joined up working – shared data between core agencies is needed.
- 1st December introduced the following measures:
 - Edinburgh – biggest increase in numbers of rough sleepers so:
 - Night shelter increased from 60 to 75
 - 12 B&Bs identified for entrenched rough sleepers
 - Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen – Increased outreach capacity
 - Front-line staff to access personal budgets to provide services direct
 - Response to the extreme weather conditions
- Next steps – Deliver
 - Q2 – By February
 - Q3 – By April
 - Q4 – By May

		<p>Q&As - A question and answer session prompted a discussion about the issues raised and the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about whether efforts are being hampered by people forgetting about homelessness in the summer. • The recent 'Big Sleepout' in Edinburgh raised awareness and we hope to turn this to our advantage. • Whether there is enough time over the lifetime of the group to address what is a systemic issue. • Group won't stop after May 2018 – recommendations need to be delivered and we will work to hold Ministers to account. • No more research is needed. Action is needed – but a focus on sustainability is one on the groups' challenges. • The group is not working in a vacuum – action group can generate agenda items for existing groups. <p>Andy Wightman, MSP thanked the speakers for bringing to life the work of the group and stressing the sense of urgency that underpins it.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Applications for Membership of the Cross Party Group on Housing</p>	<p>The following applications for membership were approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diane Marr, Network Development Manager – Cyrenians' Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution. • Jack Kelly, Registers of Scotland. <p>The following application was not approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shotts Tenants and Residents Association – <p>There is a concern that this would set a precedent for lots of individual tenant and resident groups to request membership and the group does not have capacity for this. However, it</p>

		would be useful to invite Registered Tenant Organisations Regional Networks to be involved, with representation at the CPWG organised on a rota basis. Lynda Johnstone, TIS will liaise with Anne Cook and the Scottish Government Tenant Participation Team to facilitate this.
5.	AOCB	<p>Andy Wightman, MSP advised that members are requested to submit topics for discussion one week in advance of the meeting to Jill Miller, TIS, email jmiller@tis.org.uk to allow the Convenor to allocate time within the meeting schedule.</p> <p>Items suggested for the next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » February 2018: Economics for House Building (Homes for Scotland) » May: Improving Outcomes for People with Learning Disabilities (Scottish Organisation for Learning Disabilities)
6.	Dates of Next Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 February 2018 • 23 May 2018 • 19 September 2018 • 12 December 2018 <p>All meetings will take place from 1-2pm. Venues to be confirmed.</p>