

Cross Party Group on Housing

Wednesday 19 September 2018, 13:00 – 14:00

Burns Room, Scottish Parliament, Holyrood

Minute of the Meeting	
Members Present	Andy Wightman, MSP; Pauline McNeill MSP; Graham Simpson, MSP; Lynda Johnstone and Susan Morris, TIS (Secretariat); Jil Dyson, Housing Options Scotland; Wayne McKay, Electrical Safety First; Ashley Campbell, CIH; Suzanne Flynn, CIH; Callum Chomczuck, CIH; Shona Mitchell, SFHA; Conor Hill, SFHA; David Stewart, SFHA; Jennifer Kennedy, Homes for Scotland; Lauren Trouten, Homes for Scotland; David Petrie, Homes for Scotland; Gavin Dick, National Landlords' Association; Caroline Elgar, (SAL); Mike Campbell, (SAL); Diane Marr, Cyrenians.
In Attendance	Kevin Stewart, MSP; Katie Talen, MSYP; Sarah Quinn, MSYP; Huw Sherrard, MSYP; Laura Pasternak, MSYP; Councillor Peter Barratt, Perth & Kinross Council; Esther Wilson, Viewpoint Housing Association; Jayne Moore, DGHP; Evie Copeland, DGHP; Jennie Renton, Lister Housing Co-operative; Craig Sanderson, Link Group; Tom Barclay, Wheatley Group; George McGuniness; Hugh McClung; Fiona Dow, Four Square representatives; Colin Hidlitch, Jane Devine, Kirsty Robertson: Jacob Smith; Peter Roberts, Midsteeples Quarter Project; Sandra Brydon, Home Group;

		Teachers and pupils from Craigmount High School: Nicola Cameron; Vicky; Lucas Denholm; Eva Barnet; Leigh Urquhart; Hannah MacQuarrie; Tess Couper; Amy Grant; Maia Johnston; Rob Lance; Joseph Heffernan; Andrew McDiarmid; Sean Andrew; Aiden Shiels; James Costello; Kirsty Nicholas; Lee HaNeul; Katja Adamson
1.	Welcome and Apologies	<p>Andy Wightman, MSP opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.</p> <p>Lynda Johnstone, TIS noted apologies had been received from:</p> <p>Jackie Baillie, MSP; Pete White, Positive Prison; Steven Young, Young Art Work; Katy Dickson, Scottish Land & Estates; Freya Lees, North Star Consulting & Research; Susan Napier, Susan Napier Consulting Ltd; Steven Tolson, RICS; Huw Edgar, RICS; Lesley Baird, TPAS; Nicola Barclay, Homes for Scotland; Alistair Hackland, RIAS; Neil Clapperton, Grampian Housing.</p>
2.	Dates and Topics for Next Meetings	<p>The next meeting is scheduled for 12th December 2018. Andy Wightman suggested that topics for the next meeting be forwarded via email between now and then to give time to focus on the hustings.</p> <p>MSPs and members were asked to consider a change to the times of future meetings to ensure maximum attendance. Pauline McNeil, MSP reflected that due to Ministers' diaries problems with attending meetings can arise at any time of the day – there were no other strong views to change, so decision was taken to carry on at the current time – 1pm.</p>
3.	Minutes of Previous Meeting: 23 May 2018	The minute was approved with no matters arising.
4.	Annual General Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Housing	<p>Andy Wightman, MSP advised that Ben Macpherson, MSP resigned from the role of Depute Convenor of the Group in June 2018, and that the AGM would begin with elections for Convenor and Vice Convenor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andy Wightman, MSP was elected as Convenor Proposed Pauline McNeil, MSP, seconded Graham Simpson, MSP

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pauline McNeil, MSP was elected as Vice Convenor Proposed Andy Wightman, MSP, seconded Graham Simpson, MSP • All other members of the group to remain the same • The CIH put themselves forward as the secretariat and this was seconded Graham Simpson, MSP. The CIH will now take over responsibility from TIS for the forthcoming year. <p>Andy Wightman, MSP thanked TIS for their support for the past 5 years and welcomed CIH to the role.</p>
5.	<p>Scottish Housing Day Hustings Session – Young Peoples’ Housing</p>	<p>Andy Wightman, MSP thanked the young people in attendance for the hustings session and invited the panel to take their places:</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Peter Barratt, Perth & Kinross Council (PB) • Pauline McNeill, MSP (PM) • Graham Simpson, MSP (GS) • Kevin Stewart, MSP - Minister for Local Government Housing and Planning (KS) • Andy Wightman, MSP (AW) <p>Callum Chomczuk took the role of Chair for the session and began by thanking everyone for coming along to what he hoped would be an interesting session. He then invited each of the panellists to deliver a two minute statement setting out their key housing priorities for young people.</p> <p>Cllr Peter Barratt - Set out the key priorities both for the Liberal Democrats, and for Perth & Kinross Council. The major focus should be on tackling homelessness and providing much more support for young people who find themselves homeless.</p> <p>Pauline McNeil, MSP - As Labour spokesperson on housing, Pauline detailed the work of the Labour’s housing commission, which has concluded that ultimately young people need choice – they need to</p>

be able to access the owner occupied sector rather than be wholly reliant on the private rented sector.

Andy Wightman, MSP - Agreed with the issues identified by first two speakers. Went on to state that housing is a human right but this isn't embedded in law.

Housing is unaffordable for young people, and shortages have been exacerbated by lack of building and rise of 2nd homes and Air BnB. He pointed to the limitations of the Private Rented Sector Act and suggested there is a role for the European model for PRS to be adopted in the UK

Graham Simpson, MSP - Housing doesn't get the traction it should in the press – little coverage of the planning Bill or days like today.

For young people renting and home ownership is unaffordable

The condition of existing homes is a massive issue

Kevin Stewart, MSP – There needs to be a focus on making stock suitable for future years. New homes need to be affordable. The role of planning is important – need to change attitudes about where houses should be built.

Callum thanked the speakers and invited questions from the audience:

(Q1) Huw Sherrard (MSYP)

- How effective are measures to tackle youth homelessness?
- What is affordability?
- How will supply targets be delivered?

Responses:

PB – Perth & Kinross have built in affordability calculator into rent setting calculations – these are capped at 24% of average incomes.

		<p>There is a focus on preventing youth homelessness - work with young people to explain reality of having a tenancy; provide mediation for families to prevent young people (YP) being asked to leave; Identify those YP most likely to be affected by homeless and work to provide extra support.</p> <p>AW – Local Government Committee enquiry into youth homelessness concluded that reform of PRS is needed – despite new Act, landlords can still sell up. The definition of affordability is based on tenure – should be on income. He listed the following measures as being needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax reform • Clamp down on short-term lets • Current ‘use value’ of land for social rented house-building <p>PM – Listed the following key problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough temporary accommodation • Local Authorities are not adhering to the law • Lots of reasons for people losing their home • 16-25 year olds are group most in poverty • PRS is not affordable • Deposits for owner occupation are pricing YP out of this as a choice • If you appeal the rent levels at a PRS tribunal, they can put rents up – this should be repealed. <p>KS - The HRSAG made 70 recommendations, these have all been accepted in principle – 8 are caveated because the powers sit with Westminster. We need to prevent Youth homelessness in the first place through investment in conflict resolution. We need to live up to our corporate parenting responsibilities towards young people leaving care – cited Queens Cross HA as a good example. Affordability – never reach an agreement on definition. Must increase supply of housing in the social rented sector.</p> <p>GS - Suggested that the proposed amendment to the planning bill – to allow land value capture before planning permission is granted will make land cheaper, helping Local Authorities meet their house building targets.</p>
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(Q2) Esther Wilson, Viewpoint Housing Association

- How concerned are you about Brexit on construction industry and our ability to deliver new housing?

Responses:

KS - Estimate that 10% of construction workers in Scotland are EU nationals, therefore Brexit is hugely concerning. We must work to increase the number of apprentices but there will still be difficulties in terms of delivery.

If people are no longer attracted or choose to return because of a lack of guarantees – this is a big concern

(Q3) Pupil at Craigmount (received in advance of session)

- Are young people not supposed to have home ownership aspirations?

(Q4) MSYP (received in advance of session)

- What can be done about the cost of renting in the Capital – especially student accommodation?

Responses:

GS - Without 'bank of Mum and Dad' YP will struggle. The solution is new homes of the right type. Local Authorities can apply to set up rent pressure zones – but none have done so yet.

PM – Owner occupation should be an option – banks need to extend funding
Help-to-buy needs to focus on those at the bottom of the scale to be of the most value.
Universities have an obligation to make accommodation available

PB - The balance is not right – need more shared equity models so households can increase their share as incomes grow and conversely, release equity in old age.

	<p>KS - OMSE is most accessed by young people and offers opportunities. Falkirk has a huge problem finding accommodation for students – need a shift of focus away from traditional university cities given rise of campuses in towns.</p> <p>(Q5) Carla Donald, Four Square</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing element of Universal Credit isn't paid quickly and households find themselves in arrears immediately – the PRS can use this as a grounds for eviction – what can be done to help? <p>(Q6) MSYP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you respond to claims that the emphasis on social rented housing is at the detriment of an effective PRS? <p>AW - PRS has a role to play but its growth has not been by design and the focus should remain on the Social rented sector. Council tax values are based on 1991 property values – councils need to get items on their agendas that aren't social housing or homelessness.</p> <p>KS - UC is a big problem. Some flexibilities have been devolved to Scotland but not as much as parliament would have liked. Mitigating welfare reform has a huge impact on resources available for other services – e.g. spend £47m PA on mitigating the Bedroom Tax – this is money that could be spent on the delivery of housing. We need to challenge UK government to see sense. Local authorities need to come up with deposit schemes to help people access the PRS, but the neglect of the SRS for decades needs reversed.</p> <p>PM – Universal Credit needs stopped.</p> <p>Callum thanked the panel for their contributions and everyone for their participation in the session before inviting all present to gather for a photograph to promote Scottish Housing Day.</p>
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6.	Applications for Membership of the Cross Party Group on Housing	None received to date – all applications to be forwarded to CIH in their capacity as secretariat.
7.	AOCB	None
8.	Dates of Next Meetings	12 December 2018 1-2pm. Venues to be confirmed.