

Cross Party Group on Housing

04 November 2020, 13:00 – 14:00

Online meeting

Minutes

Housing CPG members present	In attendance	Guest speakers
<p>Andy Wightman - MSP (Convenor) Charlotte Maddix - (Andy Wightman's office) Graham Simpson – MSP (Deputy Convenor) Ashley Campbell – CIH Scotland (secretariat) Lorna Cameron- Horizon Housing Association Alistair Cameron – Rural Housing Scotland Mathilde Delestre – PAS Caroline Elgar – Scottish Association of Landlords Claire Flynn – ESPC Sam Foster – Rural Housing Scotland Deborah Hay – JRF Fionna Kell and Tammy Swift-Adams – Homes for Scotland Jacq Kelly – Registers of Scotland Olivia Lindsay – Housing Options Scotland Wayne Mackay- Electrical Safety First Andrew McCall – Salvation Army Caroline Rooks – Age Scotland Rhiannon Sims – Crisis Steven Tolson – RICS Michael Tornow – Public Health Scotland</p>	<p>Ailsa Bruce – Social Housing Ecosse Gillian Campbell – ExHAS David Cowdrey – MCS Charitable Foundation</p>	<p>David Stewart – Scottish Land Commission (CPG member) Professor Ken Gibb – Collaborative Centre for Housing Exchange (CaCHE)</p>

1.	Welcome and apologies	<p>Convenor Andy Wightman MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Tony Cain – ALACHO Freya Lees – North Star Consulting</p>
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting	<p>Minutes were circulated in advance for information. As the meeting was not quorate, the minutes were not published in full but it was agreed that they were accurate.</p>
3.	AGM	<p>Graham Simpson nominated Andy Wightman as convenor and the nomination was approved. Andy Wightman nominated Graham Simpson as deputy convenor and the nomination was approved. Andy Wightman nominated CIH Scotland as secretariat and the nomination was approved.</p> <p>Andy Wightman thanked Charlotte Maddix for her help in organising the CPG meetings and CIH Scotland for secretariat support provided in the previous year. It was also noted that the CPG will end with the dissolution of Parliament in March 2021 but could be reconvened after this.</p>
4.	Scottish Land Commission review of land for	<p>David Stewart gave a presentation outlining the Scottish Land Commission’s review of land for housing development and recommendations to support new housing supply in future. He covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of the Scottish Land Commission covers urban and rural issues, making recommendation on how to make the best use of land for development in different circumstances. • Highlighted the recent report published by CaCHE – Delivering more homes and better places

<p>housing development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of households in Scotland is projected to increase by 16 percent by 2041 – we need to do more to deliver homes to meet future needs. We also need to ensure that the homes we are building and places being created support better health and address the climate emergency. • On the relationship between land and housebuilding, there is a misconception that ‘land banking’ is a wide spread issue. However, the system is not necessarily geared towards meeting housing need in the best way. The use of derelict and brownfield sites has declined and many SME builders have gone out of business. There can be long lead in times and slow build out for large sites. Current development models do not always work well in rural areas where costs may be higher and therefore less attractive to developers. • There is a case for the public sector playing a greater role in land assembly and place making. • A better system would focus on early engagement with communities, make use of brownfield sites to supply homes in proximity to existing amenities and public transport, facilitate development in rural areas to support local communities and jobs. • Cutting ‘red tape’ and increasing the supply of land will not be quick fixes to the housing supply issue. <p>Sam Foster asked David to explain what he meant by cutting red tape in relation to housing supply.</p> <p>David clarified that the example of cutting rent tape to increase supply is often cited as the answer to supply but the reality is not that simple. A practical solution to housing supply issues would be greater involvement from public bodies in land assembly and delivery.</p> <p>Graham Simpson asked David to expand on the idea of councils taking the lead in development and whether that should be the norm.</p> <p>David explained that there are examples in Europe of public bodies such as councils working well to bring together skills and resources and share risk with the developers. It would not be a case of the council doing everything but playing more of a role in directing the development. An example closer to home can be seen in the development of the Commonwealth Village in Glasgow.</p> <p>Andy Wightman asked if there is a timetable for the Commission’s work and if recommendations would be made ahead of the Scottish Parliamentary elections next year to help inform manifesto development and debates.</p> <p>David said that the final report of the Commission will include a range of ideas and recommendations and is expected to be published towards the end of the year or early 2021. The future workplan for the Commission is likely to include land value, taxation and land ownership.</p>
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5.	<p>Emerging findings on the impact of Covid-19 across the housing sector</p>	<p>Professor Ken Gibb gave an overview of the work being undertaken by CaCHE to monitor the impacts of Covid-19 across the housing sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing has been a key site for everyone during lockdown and where key policies such as self-isolation have had to be implemented. Careful consideration will have to be given to how we come out of lockdown and global examples could be useful. • The closure of the construction industry and housing market, while temporary, is likely to contribute to pent up demand and higher prices. However, we are seeing an increase in transactions as people seek to move home before another potential lockdown and take advantage of the current and time-limited reductions in LBTT. • The pandemic has also shone a light on the fact that a lot of our existing housing stock is not fit for purpose. • Evidence of the impact on the housing market is still emerging but we need to consider how market behaviour might change – people may seek to shift away from city centre living in favour of suburban and rural living and prefer to live in a house with outdoor space rather than a flat. We will need to consider how we build back better and reflect new priorities for housing following the pandemic. • Different groups of people have been impacted in different ways. Private rented tenants have been more likely to see their income fall or be made redundant and therefore more likely to have to reduce spending or use savings to meet their housing costs. The social rented sector is facing (modest) increased rent arrears, a backlog of repairs and a higher volume of cases associated with antisocial behaviour. • There is potential for a significant drop in house prices (always till now associated with recession) and if this is the case, young homeowners or others with high loan to value mortgages may face negative equity. <p>Ken outlined a number of areas that need to be considered as we recover from the pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with successful policies such as tackling rough sleeping, preventing evictions and maintaining benefit increases beyond April (the latter now confirmed). • Build back better – consider the design of new homes and integration of green technology to reduce carbon emissions. • CaCHE is currently involved in a project to retrofit a pre-1919 tenement block in Glasgow. It will explore how best to provide affordable warmth for residents while reducing emissions and share lessons on the extent to which this could be replicated. The project will look at physical measures, financial models and behaviour change. <p>Andy Wightman thanked Ken for the update on CaCHE’s work and emphasised the importance of evidence based policy.</p> <p>David Stewart asked for more information on CaCHE projects.</p>
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6.	Applications for membership	<p>An application for membership was received from MCS Charitable Foundation.</p> <p>David Cowdrey explained that the organisation promotes access to affordable renewable energy and low carbon technologies. More information is available online https://www.mcscharitablefoundation.org/</p> <p>The application was approved.</p>
7.	AOCB	None
8.	Next meeting	The next meeting is likely to take place virtually in early 2021.