Chairs and Secretaries

Tuesday 10th May 2022

Minutes

<u>In attendance</u>

Bruce Cuthbertson
Shona Gorman
Anne Cameron
Colin Stewart
Leonora Montgomery
Bill Campbell
Mac McKenzie
Liz Richardson
Margaret Dymond

<u>In attendance (SG)</u>

Susan McLellan
Carolynne Watson

1. Welcome and Introductions

Anne Cameron welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Previous Minutes of 8th February 2022 and Matters Arising

Leonora Montgomery pointed out two spelling mistakes which were replicated throughout the minute, the first being Mac Mckenzie to be amended to Mac McKenzie and Alasdair McKenzie to Alasdair Mackenzie. The minutes were approved and seconded as follows:

Approver - Leonora Montgomery
Seconder - Bill Campbell

3. Correspondence

There was no correspondence received.

4. Updates to the Communications Strategy

Colin Stewart updated the Communications strategy after the previous Communications sub group meeting. He used feedback from the C&S group in his updates as well as feedback from Sharon Donohoe (TIS). After today's Chairs and Secretaries meeting, Colin will issue a link to the final version of the strategy. Colin asked that anyone with final comments get in touch with him directly. If no further comments are received, the document as it stands will become the live internal Communications strategy.

The strategy is now stored online so instead of everyone having a word or pdf version, there will be a link available which will always connect to the latest version. Any changes made to the communications strategy will automatically be there next time you look at the strategy. The current appendices have been removed from the communications strategy and has been replaced with a spreadsheet. Each region will be given their own link to this from Colin.

Colin has also created a public version of the communications strategy which is a condensed version of the internal document, ensuring data protection compliance and focusing the public strategy only on the issues of relevance. Colin will be demonstrating the Strategy with the communications sub group tomorrow and hopefully will agree their final sign-off.

5. Housing to 2040 Update/New Deal for Tenants Consultation

Carolynne reminded the group of the H2040 stated objective on tenant participation:

"We will put tenant participation at the heart of developing rented sector strategy. For the social rented sector we will establish a national network of social rented tenants which will represent the diversity within the social rented sector by including people with protected characteristics, families with children and younger people, as well as people with a range of backgrounds such as those who have experienced homelessness".

Carolynne reminded the C&S group that earlier in the year, all Regional Network members were invited to take part in a working group scoping ideas on the H2040 TP objective. The group has now met twice and while thinking is at a very early stage, the group feel a panel, including both social rented and private rented sector tenants would be an appropriate way to achieve the objective. Panel members would be drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, based on Equalities legislation protected characteristics and lived experience, and would engage in ways that interest them and suit their circumstances and preferences. The working group are aware this would require a significant expansion on the current range of communication and engagement methods used by the Networks, but believe a Panel would complement the work of the Networks and reciprocal work could result from this.

Carolynne stressed that the working group's thinking is hypothetical at the moment- the group will need to wait for the outcomes of the consultation on the rented sector strategy, and as there were roughly 4000 responses received, it will take time for the analysis of these to be completed. The 2040 working group – whilst keen to keep the momentum going on this- understand that this is a long term project and want to take the time required to get this right. Carolynne told the group that Regional Network members will be kept informed and have opportunities to engage as this work progresses.

6. Housing for Varying Needs – Update

Susan met with Paul Bellamy who is temporarily seconded to Scottish Government from Blackwood Housing. Paul is currently working on the Housing for Varying Needs review. Paul's work is now at a stage of going out to consultation very soon and he is interested in talking to regional network members, and has asked Susan to set up a meeting when the consultation is looking to go live, most likely towards the end of June. Susan noted the Networks will be kept informed of this, and of any further developments with this work.

7. Meetings and Working Groups – Updates

- **HRA Group –** Hugh was absent from the meeting so Susan updated in his absence. Following the local elections, a new presidential team will come into post at COSLA so at this stage work cannot be taken forward. Working group members and Regional Network members will be kept up to date on developments going forward.

- **Rent Affordability Group –** Craig Sanderson from Edinburgh Poverty Alliance joined the most recent meeting of the Rent Affordability Group and gave a talk on affordability, the distinction between 'affordable' and soacia rented homes, the amount of affordable homes that are needed and developed, and how affordability is defined and calculated by landlords. There were also discussions on rent harmonisation, rent freezes and using CPI or RPI to calculate increases.

  Carolynne read a short paragraph from Andrew Wield who joined a previous meeting to update the group on the Scottish Government Affordability working group. The group hasn't met yet however have appointed Professor Ken Gibb as the Chair. Terry Kirby has been asked if he would like to sit on the committee as a social rented tenant representative, which he agreed to. There will be one other tenant on the working group, from the private rented sector. The C&S group felt one social rented sector tenant is not adequate to address the perspective of RSL and local authority backgrounds, and felt there could be a lot of pressure on Terry to represent alone. Carolynne noted that these views were also shared at the last Rent Affordability meeting, and the group agreed to consider how best their work can feed into the wider Scottish Government group. This discussion will take place at the next meeting.

- **SHR Liaison Group –** Leonora began her update telling the group that two tenant board members from SHR attended the recent meeting, as well as two new staff members to see what the SHR Liaison meetings entail. There were updates on the annual risk assessment outcomes, which are now on the SHR website, as well as everything that was discussed at the last meeting. The profile of regulatory statuses for RSLs and reasons for engagement with all social landlords were shared with the group. A short summary of the minutes from the February SHR board meeting, recent publications and engagement plans are available on the SHR website. Leonora also noted that a decision has been taken by the Social Housing Resilience Group decided to end the quarterly returns at the end of March. The next meeting is 2nd August, and Leonora reminded the C&S that at least 4 people from each network should be on the SHR meetings. Leonora asked that as soon as regions know their representatives following the AGMs to let her know.

- **Communications sub-group – update on website and subscription service –** The website is up and running and now up to date. After the AGMs Colin is happy to give refresher lessons to those who would like these on how to use the website. The subscription service is an on-going issue. Without the unsubscribe button in place, the regional networks are not updating RTO's and TPO's as Secretaries are currently not issuing minutes out to wider contacts. The longer this takes the bigger an problem this becomes. After a long discussion at the last communications group meeting it was decided that Colin will escalate the problem and write to Anne Cook. Colin has half written the email and put it on hold as there was a breakthrough in getting this resolved however this has not yet happened. Yesterday Carolynne emailed CIVIC and yet again no response. Susan and Carolynne will escalate again and will update the Communications group at this week's meeting.

8. Future All-Network event ideas

The four regional networks haven't met up as a whole since 2019. Some network members had been in touch with Susan asking if all-Network events are likely to happen in future, and if so will this be on a face to face or hybrid basis.

Susan has been informed that external guests can now attend meetings in Scottish Government offices. The team is aware that many Network members have indicated they would prefer not to attend face to face meetings at this time, and Carolynne reiterated that there is no expectation on members to attend in person- following the AGMs, the team will ask for everyone's preferences in terms of meetings going forward, and committees will discuss how they would like to proceed. The TP team will be working on planning for hybrid meetings in the meantime.

Susan suggested a whole network event towards the end of the year, around November. There were mixed feelings on this with some liking the idea with others not so keen due to potential issues such as transport issues due to the time of year. Susan stressed that any event taking place will take this into account and will be offered on a hybrid basis, with the choice of whether to attend in person or virtually down to each individual member.

9. AOCB

Shona highlighted that feedback from the Ministerial meeting was not on today's agenda, and Carolynne noted that a meeting note has been circulated to all Regional Network members. Colin feels that the group needs to ask the Ministers better questions that aren't as repetitive and detailed. Colin suggested having questions tabled to discuss at the pre-meeting as a starting point to allow easier preparation at the pre-meeting.

Colin told the C&S group that himself and Leonora are running a work shop at the TPAS conference about the regional networks and to promote the website. There is an opportunity to have a stand with merchandise and the conference as long as there are volunteers to man it. Bruce and Shona volunteered to help.

Next meeting: Tuesday 9th August at 10 AM – Region 4 to Chair