



Swindon Tenants Voice

**Notes of Meeting held on
Saturday 15th November 2008
Civic Offices**

***Chair – Nat Lannin
Notes – Wendy Welch***

Present:

Swindon Tenants Voice (STV):

Peter Armstrong, Carolanne Bond, Paul Burgess, William Dickens, Frank Gething, Norris Kiddle, Ruth Kiddle, Nat Lannin, Peggy May, Gene Nygaard, Percy Ruck, Jeanette Taylor, Florence Tindall, Wendy Welch, Sue Wood

Swindon Borough Council Housing:

Briony Edlington, Pete Holohan, Georgina Rapson

Observers:

Patsy Badenski, Margaret Hudson, Joanne McCue, Thelma Rees

Apologies:

Bernie Brannan, Derek Fry, Shirley Jones, Phil Lango, Sandys Powell
Cllr David Renard, Shelley Slater, Vasanti Thakrar, Paul Wilkins

1. Welcome and Apologies – Nat Lannin

Nat welcomed everyone to his first meeting as chairman of STV. Introductions were made and apologies given.

2. STV Officer Report – Nat Lannin

Nat welcomed Wendy to the Officer's group. The Officers look forward to working with STV members and Swindon Borough Council with the changes that will be happening in 2009.

3. Voids Update – Briony Edlington

Briony Edlington (Operations Manager, Housing Voids) was welcomed to the meeting. Briony circulated a handout regarding voids standards. Briony explained the voids process to the members:

When the keys are collected, a surveyor should, where possible, carry out an inspection and report within 48 hours, detailing any repairs needed. The keys are then passed to the contractors along with the allocated times and costs of the repairs. These are the new guidelines from April 2008. After completion of the repairs, gas, electric and asbestos reports, the keys are then returned to the Voids Department. A question and answer session then opened up.

Members were advised that all the locks are changed in voids for security purposes and that all old keys are destroyed before a void is re-let. A question was raised regarding how this would work with flats with street doors? Any fob entry fobs are reprogrammed. It was asked how additional security keys were obtained and Briony advised she would check and advise members. *Action - Briony Edlington to report back.*

Any personal property that is left in the void is photographed and then removed and this will be charged to the previous tenant. The Council has a relatively good success rate for recovering the costs incurred.

Kitchens fitted by the tenant and not SBC that are not in good state of repair will be replaced whilst the property is void and the cost of this may be charged to the previous tenant. The importance of the yearly safety checks carried out to leaseholder properties as well as the flats of tenants was discussed. One leaseholder also asked why she could not have a water meter fitted in high-rise. Briony suggested she speak to Thames Water in the first instance.

All time scales regarding voids are set by the Government and these can be met depending on the condition the property was left in. Currently, the average turnaround time of a void is 37 days. This should be 25 days, and as the new system is now in place, hopefully the time scales will improve greatly. The members were advised that void standard guidelines were decided and set out by Tenant Groups and Swindon Borough Council.

It was mentioned by a member that they felt we were going very

quickly through the handout. Briony apologised for the handout having not been included in the mailout prior to the meeting, but if anyone required a copy or had any further questions regarding it then to contact her on 01793 464464.

Paul Burgess requested if he could receive all handouts and minutes in audio form. *Action Paul Wilkins.*

4. Housing Participation Budget – Pete Holohan

This has been a big investment year for Housing Participation and although some areas are above budget (due to HIF's and other hospitality costs), generally the budget is good – some areas are even well below budget.

It was re-iterated that if any members of STV feel they need training etc, please let Pete Holohan know and he will look into it (tel. 01793 464425). With regard to the Grants budget, the only cost is for rental of the photocopier in the old Resources Room. We are looking to hand the rental of this over to another dept, but may have to let the rental run its course.

One member raised the question of whether the £30,000 cost of the Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) came out of the Housing Participation budget? Pete explained that there was a separate budget to pay for the Options Appraisal, Stock Assessment and cost of the ITA.

Members discussed the ways that STV is currently publicised and ways we could improve this. We need to look at local press and community-based publicity routes, and perhaps through local web pages. Currently, STV is advertised in Housing Matters, Swindon Borough Council Web Site and in New Tenant Packs.

5. Christmas Event – Wendy Welch

The venue and date for the Christmas meal was agreed by members and will take place at the Kembrey Inn on Wednesday 17th December at 8pm. Transport and menu choices have been sent out since these notes were taken. Another £19 was raised in the raffle at this meeting, which brings the grand total to £149 towards the Christmas meal. Swindon Borough Council has kindly agreed to match fund this amount. A very big thank you to the Tenant Participation Group.

6. Update on Housing Options Appraisal – Ruth Kiddle

As Sandys Powell was unable to attend the meeting, Ruth kindly stepped in to discuss the above. There has been a lot of activity regarding the Options Appraisal, including meetings with the project team and REG (Resident Engagement Group). The Governance Board will be meeting this month to discuss the report completed by Rand regarding the stock condition, which currently has been passed to Tribal who have completed their draft financial report.

DWA (the ITA) will be meeting with STV, TASH and Leaseholder's Link and their second newsletter is expected at the end of December. Members received a handout, survey, quarterly report and details of three future events:

- Discussion Day – 6th December 2008
- Open Day – 17th January 2009
- Open Day and discussion – 14th March 2009

DWA are raising awareness of the Housing Options Appraisal process. The first part of the study is now nearing its end, with conclusions due in Spring 2009. However, once we know what the options are, there will be a further consultation process before any decisions are made. Pete Holohan encouraged all STV members to attend the DWA events, as all opinions are vital.

Action – Nat Lannin to contact members who left message on 27th June asking for details of STV.

Action – Officers to discuss and contact Tenants who had trust issues with STV. This will be discussed at the next Officers Meeting.

Ruth asked all members that any information sent in mail outs should be read thoroughly before meetings.

7. Future Agenda Items – Wendy Welch

Wendy asked all members to reflect on the reasons they joined Swindon Tenant's Voice and the things they would like discussed at future meetings. The intention being to make the agendas more relevant, dealing with issues that members are concerned about. We plan to keep the agendas smaller in the next year, but as informative as possible. *Action STV Officers – Discuss findings at Officers*

meeting and plan future agendas containing all the members' requests.

8. **Minutes & Matters Arising From Meeting held on 17th September 2008 – Nat Lannin**

No queries or questions asked.

9. **AOB – Nat Lannin**

Leaseholder, Margaret Hudson, requested to become a full STV member. *Action – Wendy to send new member pack out to her.*

Diaries for 2009 kindly provided by SBC were issued.

A Government review is underway regarding the Housing Revenue Account. Haydn Jones and Ian Burbidge will be attending a seminar in London on this subject. Ruth Kiddle asked STV members to vote on whether the Chair of STV should send a letter to the Government, (along with the response from SBC), putting forward the views of tenants and leaseholders. This vote was agreed, although members accept that their views are unlikely to influence the Government's decision, but that it would do no harm to voice our opinions.

There was also a discussion that we as members of STV are not a tenant body representing all tenants, but a task group of tenants and leaseholders giving their perspective.

10. **Close – Nat Lannin**

Nat thanked everyone for attending and wished everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The meeting closed at 11.55am.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 20th January 2009

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 6, Civic Offices

*(with refreshments available ½ hour before the meeting
for those who have requested them)*