

**Tenants' Regulation Advisory Group  
Friday 4 December 2009, Highlander House, Glasgow**

**Minute of Meeting**

---

**Present:**

Jeanette Boyd	Michael Cameron (SHR)
Robert Lewis	Iain Muirhead (SHR)
Rena Smith	Roisin Harris (SHR)
Nigel Slater	Ana Richardson (SHR)
David Tares	Andy Robinson (SHR)
James Bennett	Elaine Whyte (SHR)
Katy MacMillan (Chair, ODS Consulting)	Mia Ayres-Donnelly (SHR)
Pamela Kellock-Shetty (SHR)	

**Apologies:**

Therese Mullen	Kevin Paterson
Rose Bowie	Moseka Mambi

**1. Welcome**

Katy welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

**2. Introduction of the New SHR Chief Executive (Michael Cameron)**

Michael outlined that 2008/09 was a busy and successful year for the SHR. He noted his appreciation for the TRAG members. In 2008/09, TRAG has influenced the SHR Intervention Strategy, has been engaged in development of the Housing Bill, and has welcomed three new members.

The SHR has also recruited 8 new tenant assessors, taking the total to around 25. Tenant assessors have been involved in every SHR inspection since it was established in April 2008. Landlords clearly value the involvement of tenant assessors in inspections.

Michael explained that the future of the SHR will be short lived, as it will be transforming into a new regulation agency. The Draft Housing (Scotland) Bill, which sets out these changes, will go to Scottish Parliament in January 2010. The new regulator will have a new board, along with new powers and duties. At its heart, will be a focus on protecting tenant interests.

There are opportunities for TRAG to influence how these changes develop. TRAG will have opportunities to discuss and influence the role for tenants in the new regulation agency, and influence development of the new Scottish Social Housing Charter.

Finally, Michael expressed his great appreciation for Charles French, a real champion of tenant participation.

The group discussed the role of the new Housing Regulator in dealing with complaints. Michael explained that the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman would continue to be the key route for individual tenant complaints about their landlord. The new housing regulator would also want to have a way for tenants individually, or as a group, to raise concerns with them. There may be a right for tenants to make a representation to the regulator, which would form part of the process for deciding how the regulator will intervene. As the new housing regulator develops, it will need to work with tenants, and other organisations, to decide how to take account of complaints and concerns expressed by tenants.

**Action: It was agreed that Andy would explore whether the Ombudsman could attend a future TRAG meeting.**

David asked about whether the SHR website would be redeveloped, and questioned whether this was efficient. Michael explained that the SHR would not want to change aspects of its work that are working well already.

### **3. Minutes of Last Meeting, 14 August 2009**

Jeanette proposed that the minute of the previous meeting be adopted as an accurate record. Nigel supported the motion.

### **4. Update from the SHR Regulation Board (Iain Muirhead)**

Iain provided an update from the SHR Regulation Board. The minutes from this meeting will be available online. Key issues covered included:

- updating the Strategic Risk Register;
- discussing the new Housing Bill, feedback on consultation, and the timeline for implementation;
- ensuring data security through encrypted files;
- receiving a report from the Audit Committee, setting out the findings of the SHR's first audit.

Iain explained that the new Housing Bill was a key policy area for the SHR. The parliamentary timetable has slipped slightly, with Royal Assent anticipated in August 2010 and a new Regulation Agency in April 2011.

The group agreed that this update was useful, and should continue as a standing agenda item.

**Action: It was agreed that TRAG members would be made aware of when the SHR Regulation Board minutes go on the website.**

**Action: It was agreed that TRAG members would receive a breakdown of grades awarded to inspected RSLs, and a list of upcoming inspections (including thematic studies).**

## 5. SHR Annual Report (Roisin Harris)

Roisin provided an overview of the SHR Annual Report 2008/09. She highlighted that while there was limited flexibility in the way in which the accounts were presented, she would welcome views on all other aspects of the report.

The group felt that the design was user friendly and eye catching, but that it could include more on TRAG activities. Roisin highlighted that there were opportunities for TRAG to influence both the internal SHR Corporate Plan and the 2009/10 Annual Report.

**Action: TRAG will be offered the opportunity to provide a statement for the next SHR Annual Report, along with a photograph. Input to the annual report will be put onto the agenda for the January 2010 TRAG meeting.**

The group discussed how much tenants know about the SHR, and how to raise awareness across Scotland. It was suggested that a simple leaflet on the annual report should be produced, with a guide to how to find out more. TRAG members also felt that the SHR could raise awareness through linking to the tenant participation team within the Scottish Government.

**Action: Roisin will explore production of a one page flyer summarising the annual report.**

**Action: Andy will explore links with the tenant participation team.**

## 6. Performance Statistics (Ana Richardson)

Ana gave a presentation on the performance statistics that the SHR gathers from Registered Social Landlords. This was based on information produced on the SHR website. Ana explained that the SHR has worked to make the statistics more user friendly, and easier to track progress over time. The group welcomed this.

The group discussed stock numbers. These have remained broadly stable in 2007/08 and 2008/09. Glasgow Housing Association is demolishing a lot of stock, which is having an impact on stock numbers.

David asked for figures on how many accessible houses are being built, or created through adaptation. Ana mentioned that figures on wheelchair accessible accommodation are available on the SHR website. This can be found here: [http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/shr\\_2008-09tablea1arslstockbyp.xls](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/shr_2008-09tablea1arslstockbyp.xls)

**Action: Ana will have information on local authority SHQS performance available in December 2010 and will provide an update to TRAG.**

**Action: Andy agreed to speak further with David about an issue relating to his own landlord.**

The group discussed lets and re-let times. Ana highlighted that re-let times were reducing, corresponding with reduced voids. The SHR sees this as very positive progress. James questioned the reasons behind these figures, stating that reduced vacancy rates could reduce choice for applicants. He felt that it was important to look below the surface of these figures, to explore the reasons for this and impact on applicants, and suggested the possibility of a thematic study in this area.

**Action: Andy and Ana agreed to establish whether any more detail could be provided on the reasons behind these figures.**

## **7. Housing Bill Update: Scottish Social Housing Charter (Andy Robinson)**

Andy provided an update on the Scottish Social Housing Charter. He emphasised that there was a real opportunity for TRAG, and other tenants, to become involved.

Andy set out the timetable for the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

- Stage One: Initial stakeholder discussions – Autumn 2010
- Stage Two: Discussion paper published – Early 2011
- Stage Three: Second stage stakeholder discussions – Spring 2011
- Stage Four: Formal consultation on draft charter – Autumn 2011
- Charter effective – April 2012

Once the Charter is in place, it will take at least one year until the SHR is able to measure and assess its impact. The group highlighted that the key issue was what difference the Charter would actually make to tenants, and how the Charter would be monitored. It was agreed both statistics and softer information would be needed to detect and measure landlord compliance with the Charter. Areas like tenant participation can't be measured just through statistics.

The group agreed that it was important that individual tenants were aware of the opportunities to influence the Charter development, through the consultation process. The consultation needs to be simple and straightforward.

**Action: TRAG to discuss Charter at summer and autumn meetings to input to Stages One and Two.**

## **8. Update on Tenant Assessors (Elaine Whyte)**

This item was deferred until a future meeting, when the three new TRAG members were present.

## **9. Any Other Business**

Robert asked whether the National Housing Trust would have an impact on the Scottish Housing Regulator. Andy explained that it was still in the early stages of development and being led by the Scottish Government. More information can be provided as it develops.

The group discussed the future style of TRAG minutes. It was agreed that, provided the minutes reflect discussions fully, they could become sharper and more action focused. The group agreed to revisit the style of minutes at the next meeting.

**Action: Katy agreed to provide a copy of TRAG member contact details to all group members.**