

MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL HOUSING COMMUNITY NETWORK MEETING

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12TH JANUARY 2011 AT 11.00 A.M.

IN LEIGHHINMOHR HOUSE HOTEL, BALLYMENA

PRESENT:	B. Holmes	S.C.N.I.
	C. McDaid	S.C.N.I.
	M. Watt	S.C.N.I.
	L. Sproule	N.I.H.E.
	G. Flynn	N.I.H.E.
	J. Hunter	North East
	P. McQuillan	North East
	A. Johnston	North East
	J. Morgan	Belfast
	J. Kelly	Belfast
	A. McAvoy	Belfast
	H. Phillips	South East
	G. Blevins	South
	C. Wylie	South
	A. Hanlon	South
	M. Kelly	West
	S. McWilliams	West

IN ATTENDANCE:	B. Steele	N.I.H.E.
	C. Marks	N.I.H.E.

APOLOGIES:	B. McNally	South East
	L. Watson	West
	H. Walker	N.I.H.E.

B. Holmes extended New Year wishes to all H.C.N. members on behalf of S.C.N.I. and N.I.H.E. Best wishes were also extended to L. Mahaffy who was stepping down from both Central and South East H.C.N.s.

MINUTES

ACTION

1.0 CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY MAINTENANCE ISSUES

1.1 B. Holmes introduced this topic at the beginning of the meeting to reflect the serious nature of the events which occurred over the Holiday Period and to allow both N.I.H.E. staff to provide an update on the current situation and Central H.C.N. to voice any issues which they wished to raise.



MINUTE	ACTION
<p>1.2 B. Holmes informed the meeting that, having spoken with L. Findlay, the N.I.H.E. were keen to hear from H.C.N. members any specific incidents where tenants continue to experience problems as a result of the cold weather or where it was felt that tenants had not been dealt with in an appropriate manner by N.I.H.E. staff. Name/address and dates/times of these incidents should be compiled and passed to S.C.N.I. by Wednesday 19th January 2011 who will then pass them onto the N.I.H.E.</p>	C.H.C.N. Mbrs
<p>1.2.1 B. Holmes also reported that S.C.N.I. had been commissioned prior to the holidays and cold weather spell by the N.I.H.E. to carry out a Mystery Shopping Exercise on N.I.H.E.'s Emergency Repairs Service. When this is complete a Report on the findings will be provided to Central H.C.N.</p>	S.C.N.I.
<p>1.3 G. Flynn provided members with some statistics to reflect the unprecedented nature of the level of reporting during the cold weather period:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 77,000 calls had been made to the N.I.H.E. - 43,000 repair jobs had been raised <p>G. Flynn also paid tribute to the N.I.H.E. staff of all levels who had come in during leave to help man the phones during a very difficult period for the organisation.</p>	
<p>1.3.1 G. Flynn went on to acknowledge that lessons had been learnt as a result of the experiences over the period of cold weather and he confirmed that an Internal Review of the N.I.H.E.'s own Emergency Plan is underway as is how the N.I.H.E. work with other statutory bodies in terms of Emergency Planning.</p>	N.I.H.E.
<p>1.3.2. G. Flynn was also particularly keen to hear from H.C.N. members ways in which the community could assist the N.I.H.E. in implementing its Emergency Plan, especially from the point of view of identifying vulnerable people who do not have any family or relatives looking out for them and who had neither heat nor water in many instances during the recent cold spell. Any examples of good practice which occurred during the holiday period or suggestions on ways in which the community could work better in partnership with the N.I.H.E. are to be highlighted and passed to S.C.N.I. by Wednesday 19th January 2011 so that they can be pulled together and passed onto the N.I.H.E.</p>	H.C.N. Mbrs



1.4 Central H.C.N. members did collectively express their strong concerns on behalf of all tenants who had experienced difficulties over what had occurred during the holiday period but made the following comments:

- Directing tenants to a website for information – not everyone has access to the internet.
- Communication was a major issue – especially not getting through to the Emergency line. It was only when it was possible to make local contact (at a District level) that progress was made in many instances – lesson re: local involvement should be learnt for future reference.
- Role played by local District Offices and local Contractors was to be congratulated – examples provided from Omagh where Contractor worked all Christmas Day.
- Examples of when a fault was reported that it had to be followed up sometimes 5 times before a definitive response was provided. A call should have been made by N.I.H.E. to the tenant to keep them updated rather than have them ring back many times.
- Community Service Agreement – This Emergency Support could be revisited as community could have played role in working with the Emergency Centre in at least helping to turn off stopcock valves for vulnerable residents in particular.
- Non-occupation of flats created a major issue for tenants of occupied flats and gaining access to non-occupied properties in an emergency situation needs to be examined.
- Need for Home Contents Insurance – B. Holmes confirmed that he had contact from D.S.D. on behalf of the Minister and a meeting had been arranged for late February involving D.S.D. and the Home Contents Insurance Working Group.

S.C.N.I.

1.4.1 Any additional comments/good practice or where lessons can be learnt are to be identified to S.C.N.I. by Wednesday 19th January 2011 and forwarded to N.I.H.E.

C.H.C.N. Mbrs

2.0 PRESENTATION – TACKLING FUEL POVERTY

2.1 B. Steele provided an informative presentation which reflected on the findings of the N.I. House Condition Survey 2009 including the fact that Fuel Poverty in N.I. had increased from 34% in 2006 to 44% in 2009 i.e. where 10% or more of a household's income is spent on heat/electricity. H.C.N. members looking for access to the full N.I. House Condition Survey 2009 can obtain this from the N.I.H.E.'s website: www.nihe.gov.uk.

H.C.N. Mbrs



2.2 With particular reference to the problem of fuel poverty, Central H.C.N. members raised the following questions/issues of concern:

- Issue of Economy 7 Heating in flats/tower blocks in Belfast – it was clarified that this matter was being dealt with at Belfast Area level.
- Older/Younger People's inability to pay current oil prices – In addition to the payment methods as referred to in the presentation notes attached, a few other examples of good practice were identified including: B. Holmes explained about some oil distributors in certain areas/estates who were willing to deliver on a weekly/fortnightly basis where it was economically viable to do so while M. Kelly referred to the help from charities such as St. Vincent de Paul.
- Some H.C.N. members have heard about some tenants with central heating considering opening up their 'closed off' open fire places again – N.I.H.E. personnel strongly advised against any tenant doing this for health and safety reasons.
- Best location of Thermostat in house? – B. Steele recommended that the thermostat be situated in the hallway, where possible.
- Can N.I.H.E. act as a fuel broker? - G. Flynn commented that there is reference to this proposal in the Housing Amendment Bill which is currently out for consultation. N.I.H.E. cannot proceed with this proposal until legislation has been passed.
- Is N.I.H.E. considering other forms of heating? – B. Steele confirmed that the N.I.H.E. is currently piloting a District heating scheme in Ballymena and Central H.C.N. would be kept informed of its progress.

N.I.H.E.

2.2.1 L. Sproule also informed members that several questions are to be included in the next series of C.T.O.S. Central H.C.N. members to be informed of results as they occur.

L. Sproule

3.0 PRESENTATION H.C.N. TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS (T.N.A.)

3.1 As agreed at the previous meetings, C. Marks introduced herself as working along with H. Walker on carrying out 'A Capacity for Involvement' exercise of H.C.N. members in terms of their existing skills and knowledge as well as identifying where N.I.H.E. can assist in helping to build the capacities of members. It was pointed out that this exercise was being carried out with the assistance of S.C.N.I. and would help to complement future training by both N.I.H.E. and S.C.N.I.



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3.2	C. Marks circulated a draft questionnaire which she requested feedback/comment from Central H.C.N. members on its content and layout. Any comments are to be provided to S.C.N.I. by Wednesday 19 th January 2011.	Cent. H.C.N. Mbrs
3.3	It was also agreed that G. Blevins and A. Hanlon liaise with C. Marks with a view to acting as a sample group.	A. Hanlon G. Blevins
3.4	C. Marks agreed to keep Central H.C.N. updated on progress of her work during the forthcoming months.	C. Marks
4.0	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING	
4.1	Agreed as a true and accurate record.	
5.0	MATTERS ARISING	
5.1	(2.1) Neighbourhood Management Course S. McWilliams to provide update on progress at next meeting.	S. McWilliams
5.2	(2.3) Rural Residents Forum H. Phillips and P. McQuillan provided verbal feedback of the Rural Residents Forum meeting which was held on 6 th December 2010 including; update on Latent Demand Testing Programme, Rural Proofing Presentation and D.A.R.D. funding. Unfortunately B. Rowntree – N.I.H.E. Chairman was unable to attend due to weather conditions that day but hopes to attend the next meeting on 8 th March 2011.	H. Phillips P. McQuillan
5.3	(2.4) Stock Transfers to Housing Associations G. Flynn asked that this item be kept on agenda as there was no update at present.	N.I.H.E.
5.4	(2.6) H.C.N. Research L. Sproule reported that he had circulated a summary of the report findings, however, additional work still remained to be completed, including a comparison with the previous Report from 2 years ago. It was agreed that when the full Report is completed that a presentation be provided to Central H.C.N.	L. Sproule
5.5	(2.7) Long Term Voids in Omagh G. Flynn reported that this matter had received Board approval in November and said properties should be in process of being re-let as N.I.H.E. stock.	

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<p>5.6 (2.8) Gas Boiler Leaflets Although this leaflet had been circulated to District Offices, it was suggested by Central H.C.N. members that the leaflets be sent to all N.I.H.E. tenants with such Boilers. G. Flynn agreed to consider.</p>	G. Flynn
<p>5.7 (2.10) Sustaining Tenancies G. Flynn reported that the February/March meeting would be more realistic for R. Mahaffy to attend in terms of providing a presentation on work to date.</p>	N.I.H.E.
<p>5.8 (2.11) Rent Payment Advice G. Flynn reported that N.I.H.E. will be postponing the Rent First Week until later in the year due to the impact of cold weather spell. G. Flynn to keep Central H.C.N. informed of dates etc.</p>	G. Flynn
<p>5.9 (2.13) Community Conference 2011 – 20th October 2011 A suggestion was advanced that the Community Conference celebrates 40 years of Community Development in partnership with N.I.H.E. to coincide with the 40th Anniversary Year of N.I.H.E. It was suggested also that as well as the 5 area presentations covering the time periods:</p>	
<p>41-50 years 31-40 years 21-30 years 11-20 years 0-10 years</p>	
<p>showing how groups have developed and worked with N.I.H.E., the regular celebration of achievement and merit awards will be included in the programme.</p>	N.I.H.E. S.C.N.I.
<p>5.10 (2.14) Disability Forum L. Sproule informed members that he had received a proposal from Disability Action, however, he was still in the process of considering its contents. L. Sproule agreed to provide update at the next meeting.</p>	L. Sproule
<p>5.11 (5.1) Local Area Priorities (L.A.P.s) - L. Sproule commented that the L.A.P.s were very much dependent upon the N.I.H.E.'s budget. It was agreed that any Best Practice in terms of rolling out L.A.P.s be shared at</p>	



MINUTE	ACTION
Area H.C.N. level and brought to Central H.C.N. in due course.	Area H.C.N.s
5.12 (6.6) Policy on Allocation of Community Premises – L. Sproule provided to H. Phillips.	
5.13 (6.9) Cost Cutting Good Practice – J. Kelly reported that he had provided some suggestions to H. Walker and G. Flynn confirmed that these were to be considered by the N.I.H.E. in due course re: community employing Wardens.	N.I.H.E.
5.14 Community Premises and Fire Regulations – L. Sproule reported that apart from the presentation provided at Area H.C.N. meetings by G. Duffy, District Offices had subsequently completed what had been asked of them in terms of producing a document detailing current usage as well as providing basic health and safety information to each community letting. As a next stage, N.I.H.E. are to meet with Building Control representatives to negotiate a preliminary inspection of all 291 properties let to the community/voluntary sector. It is hoped that this exercise will provide a menu of work and associated costs that can then be presented to Area Managers for analysis and further decision. L. Sproule agreed to keep Central H.C.N. updated on any progress.	N.I.H.E.
6.0 LOCAL OFFERS	
6.1 At the outset and because of the confusion associated with the use of ‘Local Offers’ terminology, B. Holmes produced a list of other suggestions produced by Area H.C.N. reps which could be used instead. After some discussion it was agreed that ‘Local Service Scrutiny’ be put forward to the N.I.H.E. for consideration. L. Sproule agreed to do so.	L. Sproule
6.2 B. Holmes and L. Sproule proceeded to provide an update on the 5 pilot ‘Local Offers’ which are currently taking place:	
(i) Belfast Area: A meeting has been held with the B.M.E. Forum with a proposal currently being drawn up for further consideration. It is intended that the B.M.E. Forum will act in a Scrutinising Role as part of this proposal.	



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- (ii) N. East Area: A meeting has been held involving 2 Groups from the Ballymena District to pilot the 'Re-lets Local Offer' pilot which will also include reference to sustaining tenancies.
- (iii) West Area: Both Omagh and Cooktown Districts are involved in the pilot:- 'Estate Inspection Local Offer' by using the Estate Inspection Toolkit.
- (iv) South Area: Preliminary discussions were held on piloting the 'H.B./Rent Arrears Local Offer' at the last South Area H.C.N. meeting which involved H.C.N. members along with C.S.U. and South Area Managers.
- (v) S. East Area: A meeting involving the Area Manager and Dairy Farm D.M. was held to discuss potential of 'Minimum Standards for H.A.s/N.I.H.E. Local Offer' pilot – agreement was made on piloting Minimum Standards for dealing with A.S.B. A Working Group is to be set up involving H.A. and N.I.H.E. tenants who will act as scrutiny group.
- 6.3 It was noted that all 5 pilots will report back on progress in April. N.I.H.E.
S.C.N.I.
- 7.0 AREA H.C.N. FEEDBACK
- 7.1. Belfast Area – J. Kelly reported that further concerns were raised about tenancies being created where a lot of Social Service support is required and this is not being put into place. G. Flynn agreed to discuss matter with C. McQuillan who is responsible for the Supporting People programme. J. Kelly also agreed to continue lobbying M.L.A.s for a change in legislation regarding the same issue. G. Flynn
J. Kelly
- 7.2 N. East Area – A Presentation was provided on N.I.H.E.'s Child Protection Policy as well as an Update on N.I.H.E.'s Programme of Work for the N. East.
- 7.3 South Area – Main item discussed related to the initial discussions with C.S.U. Managers on 'H.B. and Rent Arrears Local Offer'.
- 7.4 West Area – Presentation provided by T. Steede on N.I.H.E.'s Child Protection Policy.

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7.5 S. East Area – 2 presentations were provided on the Rural Enabler Programme and N.I.H.E.'s Child Protection Policy	
8.0 N.I.H.E. ISSUES	
8.1 L. Sproule informed members that he had received a request from the Simon Community N.I.'s Assistant Director to attend a Central H.C.N. meeting in relation to a new Strategy being devised by the Simon Community. This was agreed.	L. Sproule
8.2 Housing News (Special Winter Edition) – L. Sproule circulated a draft copy of a special Housing News to highlight advice to tenants in light of the recent problems surrounding the cold weather. Comments were received from Central H.C.N. and to be forwarded to Information Section before printing.	L. Sproule
8.3 Heating Policy Review – L. Sproule requested if Central H.C.N. members would be willing to complete a short survey to assist in the Heating Policy Review. This was agreed.	L. Sproule
8.4 L. Sproule reported, on behalf of H. Walker, that as part of the N.I.H.E.'s money saving initiative, acknowledgement notices for repair requests would no longer be posted, save in some exceptional circumstances.	
8.5 Executive Briefings – L. Sproule circulated Executive Briefings for both October and November 2010 Board Meetings.	
8.6 Planning The Big Lunch 2011 – L. Sproule circulated information in relation to 'The Big Lunch 2011' to be held on 5 th June 2011. Further details can be obtained from www.thebiglunch.com .	
7.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
7.1 The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 9th February 2011 at 11.00 a.m. in S.C.N.I. H.Q., Ballymena.	



APPENDICES

1. Fuel Poverty Presentation Notes

