

MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL HOUSING COMMUNITY NETWORK MEETING

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2011 AT 11.00 A.M.

IN S.C.N.I. HEADQUARTERS, BALLYMENA

PRESENT:	B. Holmes	S.C.N.I.
	C. McDaid	S.C.N.I.
	M. Watt	S.C.N.I.
	H. Walker	N.I.H.E.
	G. Flynn	N.I.H.E.
	L. Sproule	N.I.H.E.
	M. Kelly	West
	L. Watson	West
	S. McWilliams	West
	J. Morgan	Belfast
	J. Kelly	Belfast
	P. McQuillan	North East
	H. Phillips	South East
	G. Blevins	South
	C. Wylie	South
	A. McAvoy	Belfast
IN ATTENDANCE:	H. McVeigh	Simon Community NI
	L. Allison	Simon Community NI
APOLOGIES:	J. Hunter	North East
	B. McNally	South East
	A. Hanlon	South
	I. Hamilton	South East
	A. Johnston	North East

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- 1.0 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
- 1.1 B. Holmes welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Hugh McVeigh and Lisa Allison from the Simon Community NI.
- 2.0 HOMELESS PREVENTION PROGRAMME – SIMON COMMUNITY NI
- 2.1 H. McVeigh gave a presentation on how the Simon Community NI work to address homelessness and provide additional support to those in homeless situations. A copy of the presentation materials and support information is appended to the minutes.



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- 2.2 A number of key roles for the Simon Community NI were highlighted including:
- preventing homelessness
  - responding to crisis
  - assisting return and support including rent and deposit bond scheme
  - transition to the community.
- 2.3 Members were made aware of the numbers of people being referred to the organisation and the various and assorted reasons which contribute to homelessness (including marital breakdown, family disputes, loss of private rented accommodation, unsuitable accommodation and in some cases, neighbour harassment).
- 2.4 H. McVeigh outlined the Simon Community NI Youth & Community Homelessness Prevention Programme. It was noted that a key element of the programme is the facilitation of a co-ordinated approach maximising the use of community based resources, both statutory and voluntary sector based.
- 2.5 Members were advised that this programme involves a range of activities such as:
- developing local community task groups
  - developing volunteer programmes
  - supporting the development of local homelessness prevention strategies
  - developing community homelessness education and information resources.
- 2.6 It was noted that Simon Community NI has resourced 3 Youth and 3 Community Homelessness Prevention Co-ordinators with a range of key responsibilities involving working with local communities and community groups aimed at assisting communities to find solutions to local homelessness issues.
- 2.7 Members noted that the benefits of the Programme include:
- reduction in the number of people presenting as homeless
  - reduction in the number of repeat homelessness
  - reduction in stigma attached to being homeless
  - local solutions to homeless issues

- providing better value for money by identifying local co-ordinated approaches to service delivery.

2.8 Following the presentation a question and answer and discussion session was held and a number of key issues were highlighted, including:

- the complexity of the homelessness issue and the likely reduction in housing options, particularly for young people, in the future
- it was noted that floating support is available through the Simon Community Centres, yet at the same time accessing support was a voluntary choice of the individual in question
- it was also noted that a key element of the work of Simon Community NI is working alongside and with other agencies e.g. social services etc. and this often presents as many challenges as it does solutions.

2.9 It was noted that information materials are available via the Simon Community NI website [www.simoncommunity.org](http://www.simoncommunity.org) and the Homeless Prevention Programme brochure will be available in March 2011. Any interim requests for contact and/or information can be made to [lisaallison@simoncommunity.org](mailto:lisaallison@simoncommunity.org) and [hughmcveigh@simoncommunity.org](mailto:hughmcveigh@simoncommunity.org).

### 3.0 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 G. Flynn on behalf of the N.I.H.E. apologised to all tenants who could not get in contact with the Executive through the switch board, those tenants who had to wait for repair and also to those who may still be waiting.

3.2 With the above amendment, the minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

### 4.0 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 (1.4) B. Holmes reported back on issues which were raised by H.C.N. members regarding the good practice and lessons learned in response to the issues caused by the recent severe weather. These included:-

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- Better communication
- Better co-ordination of work – plumber/electrician etc.
- Advice new tenants on location of stop cock
- Advice new tenants on how to use heating systems
- Advice new tenants of trip switch
- Make better use of Community Groups – Turn off stop cock for elderly
- Mobile number for Community Groups to contact N.I.H.E.
- Tenant employ own plumber if work not fixed within 48 hours
- Drain all empty houses including C.O.T.s
- Make sure all pipes are lagged in roof space
- Open Local Offices
- Support Community Groups to form befriending scheme for elderly
- Local Group Plumbing Course
- Compensation
- Winter Edition of Housing News should be resent October 2011.

L. Sproule highlighted contact with Belfast Metropolitan College regarding tailored courses on domestic plumbing etc. courses that could be made available through colleges, in communities and even online. Central H.C.N. asked L. Spoule to pursue this contact further.

N.I.H.E.

N.I.H.E. will review suggestions and feedback at a future meeting.

N.I.H.E.

4.1.1 Copy of Policy Papers

As was agreed at the Central H.C.N. meeting in September 2010, a query was raised as to why no copies of relevant Policy Papers impacting on tenants were being circulated to Central H.C.N. members for information.

H. Walker agreed to follow up and report to next meeting.

H. Walker

4.2 (2.8) Tackling Fuel Poverty

M. Kelly reported that an initiative with oil suppliers in the Omagh area is being explored to consider more appropriate supply and payment methods.

4.3 (3.2) Training Needs Analysis

Comments received from members were circulated and passed to C. Marks. It was noted that G. Blevins and C. Marks had met and pilot work has commenced in some Districts. A report will be made to Central H.C.N. subsequently.

N.I.H.E.



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<p>4.4 (5.1) Neighbourhood Management Course S. McWilliams provided an update on progress. Noted that the course is due to finish in March. L. Mahaffy is unable to complete course due to work commitments.</p>	
<p>4.5 (5.3) Stock Transfers to Housing Associations Nothing further although it was noted that a number of vacant properties have been transferred in Springfarm, Antrim. It was also noted that N.I.H.E. are piloting the marketing of long term void properties both for sale and letting. G. Flynn will provide more detail subsequently as the pilot is currently focused on 5 Districts at present.</p>	N.I.H.E.
<p>4.6 (5.6) Gas Boiler Leaflet Leaflets are available from all District Office or can be download of N.I.H.E. website.</p>	
<p>4.7 (5.8) Rent Payment Advice 'Rent First' week deferred to later in the year.</p>	N.I.H.E.
<p>4.8 (5.10) Disability Forum Reference made to a draft proposal tabled by N.I.H.E. relating to the establishment of a Disability Forum. The proposal originates with a mapping study undertaken by Disability Action and the proposals have been based on a number of subsequent discussions. It was agreed that the proposal be presented to the five Area meetings for discussion.</p>	N.I.H.E. S.C.N.I.
<p>4.9 (5.11) Local Area Priorities Update to be provided at the next meeting.</p>	N.I.H.E.
<p>4.10 (5.13) Cost Cutting Good Practice Noted that H. Walker had responded to J. Kelly as agreed.</p>	
<p>4.11 (5.14) Community Premises and Fire Regulations Nothing further from N.I.H.E. although it was noted that S.C.N.I. staff have had an awareness session with N.I.H.E. on Building Control issues and the Fire Regulations. It was noted that discussions are ongoing between N.I.H.E. and Building Control practitioners regarding pre-application inspections.</p>	N.I.H.E.



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4.11.1 A query was raised regarding the possibility of commercial rents etc. being charged to community leases where commercial leases apply. H. Walker will clarify at next meeting.	N.I.H.E. S.C.N.I.
4.12 (6.1) Local Service Scrutiny It was noted that Local Area Priorities (L.A.P.s) will be included in the Estate Inspection Toolkit – L. Sproule will provide the items for inclusion. All other pilots progressing well.	N.I.H.E.
4.12.1 Choice Based Letting 4 Districts identified to pilot but L.S.S. on re-let could also pilot. Update at next meeting.	N.I.H.E.
4.13 (8.2) Housing News Winter Edition Noted that the magazine has been printed and circulated.	
4.14 (8.3) Heating Policy Review H. Walker reported that a meeting will be held with A. Frew (Heating Policy Manager) and will report subsequently.	N.I.H.E.
5.0 AREA H.C.N. UPDATE	
5.1 A number of issues from each of the Area meetings were highlighted to be noted. This included:  - Local Service Scrutiny Updates. - Cost Cutting Suggestions - Suggestions included: - Sensor lights in Communal Areas - Print on both sides - Use right size of envelopes - Email to tenants rather than post.  - Customer Service Unit Monitors. - Visit to Apex Housing Scheme in Portballintrae by Coleraine and Ballymoney H.C.N.'s. - Equality Scheme and Child Protection Policy. - L.E.A.N. Working Group on Maintenance in Belfast.	
6.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
6.1 H. Phillips requested details and clarification of the proposed budget to N.I.H.E. in terms of block grant from D.S.D. and the proportion of the overall that should be made from capital receipts.	



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<p>6.2 H. Walker highlighted a potential value for money saving to be made through vouchering of redecoration allowances and the direct provision of materials. Members were asked to seek the views of Area H.C.N.s on this proposed shift.</p>	A.H.C.N.
<p>6.3 Mystery Shopping C.S.U. A report on the Mystery Shopping exercise for the period November 2010 – January 2011 was tabled. A very positive response from tenants. A copy is appended to the minutes.</p>	
<p>6.4 Central H.C.N. Meeting Dates It was noted that N.I.H.E. Boardroom is not available and the March and April meeting will be held in S.C.N.I. Headquarters. The May, June and September meetings will be held in N.I.H.E. Headquarters.</p>	All
<p>6.5 Youth Justice Agency L. Sproule highlighted that the Youth Justice Services Agency is currently subject to a review and the review team is keen to debate the issues with the H.C.N. It was felt that it would be useful to have this discussion. L. Sproule will engage directly with the review team to progress.</p>	N.I.H.E.
<p>6.6 Future Presentations It was agreed to consider the findings of the H.C.N. research as an agenda item at the next meeting. It was also agreed that the presentation on sustaining tenancies should be put on the agenda for the April meeting.</p>	S.C.N.I.
<p><b>7.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p>	
<p><b>7.1 The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at 11.00 a.m. in S.C.N.I. Headquarters, Ballymena.</b></p>	



## **APPENDICES**

- Presentation Notes on Homeless Prevention Programme – Simon Community NI
- C.S.U. Mystery Shopping Results – November 2010 – January 2011

