

WOLVERHAMPTON FEDERATION OF TENANTS' ASSOCIATIONS C.I.C

Minutes of the General Meeting 7pm Monday 18th February 2019 at Coven Lodge.

Attendance: as per list.

Ann welcomed Angela Davies vice chair of Wolverhampton Homes (WHs) Board, Cllr Brakenridge, Simon Bamfield from WHs, and Paivi Jimott a new attendee from Heath Town.

1. **Apologies:**

John Pemberton, Margaret Durber, Mr Motawalla, Maureen Smith, Gloria Blair Riley, Mary Price, and Stuart Clarke.

2. **Declarations of interest:**

None.

3. **Minutes of the meeting on 19th November 2018:**

Janet Taylor's apologies not noted, otherwise agreed.

4. **Matters arising:** None.

5. **Fire Safety – Cllr Brakenridge.**

Cllr Brakenridge distributed a handout on his presentation and introduced himself and explained his role leading on fire safety for the Council and his background as a fire fighter. He said that Wolverhampton is taking a lead in responding to the issues raised by the Grenfell disaster and is acting as a beacon authority. He said they are going over and above what is presently legally required. He said sprinklers save lives and these are to be installed in all high rise properties in the City. He played a short video of the Grenfell fire. He explained that a Scrutiny Board had been set up in Wolverhampton of which he is chair. He said it is important that tenants are represented on the panel so the membership includes a tenants' representative, Bob Deacon and disabled group representatives, Councillors, and the WHs chair and said the overall aim is to assess the City's response to the Grenfell fire. The panel interviewed various key figures from the Council and other relevant organisations and from this they made 26 recommendations. The recommendations include - establishing a clear strategy and management structure in relation to the responsibility for fire safety in Wolverhampton - lobbying Ministers to get changes in legislation and to get funding to install sprinklers in schools and residential high rise - that only the highest rated fire retardant materials be used in the future - that every tower block and building owned by the Council with a cladding system be independently tested, that fire safety training be put in place for staff – that a qualified housing officer go into schools to check compliance with fire safety regulations – that the Council's web site be regularly updated on fire safety – that there is regional coordination of emergency planning – that an audit take place to ensure access of emergency vehicles to corporate buildings – that Councillors and those who have responsibility for fire safety have training as regards their legal responsibilities – that a working group be established that will report to the Scrutiny Board – that the situation as regards leaseholders be reviewed and that they should have fire safety included in their leasehold responsibilities – that legislation should allow for landlords to have greater powers of access to check services and safety – that the Government review current building regulations – and that the Council have enhanced rights in independent schools as regards fire safety. He said the Scrutiny Board will continue for at least 2 years and they are making progress on the recommendations.

Cllr Brakenridge said the interim report of Dame Hackitt identified that the current system of building regulations and fire safety is not fit for purpose. The final report made various welcome recommendations which included a focus on clear and accountable duty holders, new gateway points, digital record keeping, stronger sanctions and a fund to support enforcement action. However it did not call for an out-right ban on the use of combustible cladding on all buildings and

the use of desk top studies to test materials and it did not call for the compulsory installation of sprinklers. In October the Government said there would be a ban on the use of combustible materials on external walls for certain buildings above a height of 18m. However he said the ban does not go far enough.

The Grenfell Tower inquiry has been set up and it is an independent public inquiry to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire at Grenfell. It will establish the facts and make recommendations as to action needed to prevent a similar tragedy. The formal opening of the inquiry took place in September 2017.

The Scrutiny group in Wolverhampton will monitor their own recommendations and await recommendations from the inquiry and legislation from Government following the Hackitt Report. Ann said she has concerns about leaseholders, Simon said this is something they are looking into. Ann inquired why leaseholders are not represented on the Scrutiny Board. A discussion took place about vulnerable people and Simon said they are looking to identify them in WHs properties. Cllr Brakenridge says he believes in the 'stay put' policy and that it is important to make the buildings safe.

6. Finance:

Ann referred members to the report that had been handed out. There were no queries and the report was agreed.

7. Correspondence: None

7. AOB: None

Date/time next meeting: Monday 18th March 2019, 7pm at Coven Lodge.