

Southend Tenants and Residents Federation

Tuesday 25th August 2020 & 3pm

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom

Present: Keith Ducker (K.D), Bob Ayriss (B.Ay), Allison Mckenna (A.M), Dave Smith (D.S), Geoffrey Moore (G.M), Ingrid Ayriss (I.Ay), Jean Pickering (J.P), John Smith (J.S), Majzoub Ali (M.AL), Kirston Tozer (K.T), Martin Berry (M.B), Mike Smith (MS), Phyllis Ward (P.W).

1.0	K.D welcomed everyone to the meeting, including all the new residents and P.H the resident board member who we were glad to see attend the meeting and introductions were done.	
2.0	Apologies from: Stuart Long (S.L) and from the following due to not having internet access: Peter Sommerville (P.S), Barry Andrew (B.A), Hedley Brown (H.B), Edna Phillips (E.P) and Chinn Kalasapathy (C.K). <i>We will be trying to arrange for next month access to Zoom for residents without internet access. Once we get arrangements in place we will of course let them know.</i>	KD & SL
3.0	Minutes of the last meeting: The previous minutes were agreed as a true record.	
4.0	Matters arising from the minutes: All matter arising were attached to the last minutes, so none to report here.	
5.0	Update from the chair K.D. Firstly, I would like to report that I had a telephone call from a resident asking for the Federations help with a problem he had. He said that he had sent 2 emails to his estate officer with no reply and also, he had telephoned the 0800 number to ask why his emails had not be replied to and to at the same time reported his problem to the contact centre. He had no contact for 2 months so turned to us for help. He explained what his problem was and also gave me all his details and I sent off an email from the Federation to Paul Davey as I did not know who his estate officer was, asking that his estate officer to contact him regarding his problem. His contact was on a Friday this month and on the Tuesday, he was contacted, on the Wednesday he had a visit. He called on the Thursday to say thank you for our help and I told him, that's what we are here for as a last resort to help the residents if they cannot resolve their concerns themselves or through any other channel. Secondly. Another report came from a block that has no security on their front door as it is broken and has been for 4 weeks allowing anyone to enter. They have reported it so many times including 3 times last week and	

<p>each time they speak to the contact centre they are being told it is a 10-day job. When they explain it is not being repaired when Morgan Sindall attend, they are told that it will be reported again on a 10-day repair. They have sent in an official complaint, but that could take just as long to be sorted. They said they have had numerous visits by Morgan Sindall without a repair fixing the problem making it secure. They did not know where to go to next, so rang me asking if the Federation could help.</p> <p>I rang the correct senior person at SEH explaining that 10 days is not the correct length of time to secure an entry door, which they agreed was not and it is now being dealt with and a visit by a surveyor after, to make sure it is fixed safely and correctly.</p> <p>Next, we had two requests for funding come in, 1st from Get the Kids Out and 2nd from the Foodbanks. Most of you should have been contacted regarding the request for the first one asking for your comments. There were 11 emails sent out as that was all I had details of and out of them I had 8 returns along with the 5 committee members we had 13 views in all. 5 in favour of not funding them this year and 8 in favour of reducing the funding to £500. The main reason for saying no funding this time was because they had been funded 3 times in the last year. Also, the request was for items that residents felt they should already have had and also for items that were far overpriced and not needed. In the end it was noted to Stuart Long that the residents were in favour of only £500 and that they would need a full breakdown of where the money was going and after the event a full detailed expenditure so that they know where the money went. This was not received, so no funding from SEH was given.</p> <p>2nd request was the foodbank that came in the day before the committee meeting and that was just a straight forward request for any amount that could be given to them to feed those less fortunate than ourselves. The committee agreed that it was an urgent request and took it upon themselves to agree with the request that Stuart Long gave them as much as he could spare from the budget. It is hoped that the rest of you agree?</p> <p>I would like to see residents bring to the Federation applications for the Resident Led Project, as there has to be somewhere out there that is in need of upgrading to help residents enjoy their area a bit more. So, if you know of anyone then please let them know that they can put in for this grant. Sam Elliott told me that this has been going on at sheltered part 1 & 2 for some time now. Federation members have requested that as was agreed when it was set up, it should go back to the way it was before, with a committee formed from the Full Federation, who then select who is awarded the sum required and also make sure that the Resident Led Project is open to all across the borough. Sam Elliott said that this has been going on but only at sheltered part 1 & 2.</p> <p>The Federations Logo's and name have now been fully copyrighted so that no one can use them without the specific permission of the Federation. A letter will be sent to Glenn Ashdown asking for the webpage that he has on the internet to be removed, as he is now using the name and logo of the Federation illegally. We will at this moment not take legal action, but that may be necessary if he does not agree to remove all mention of STRF and our logo's.</p>	
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	<p>Street and Block Voices:</p> <p>I was asked if I thought that the residents wanted them anymore, I have told Sarah Lander, Stuart Long & Sam Elliott that the residents want them reinstated as sometimes they are the only voice residents have. After a good talk around this, it was decided that yes, they can be brought back with the following: They must be DBS checked. A definite set of rules they must abide by, like not representing themselves as official SEH representatives. They should agree that the Federation has their details so that the chair can contact them to see how things are going every now and then. Also have their details published on our website so that residents can contact them. The advert for them went in to the Insight and no one came back inquiring about the positions. This will go in again in the October issue. If we do not get a response from that, then we may lose the street & block voices and if we do, then they will not be reinstated.</p> <p>We have been thinking about something to do for the younger residents within SEH at Christmas. SCOG always do a Christmas party, but we are thinking of asking Alexandra Waite if she would like to join us in a project. This would be taking children to the cinema and would be any child from a SEH/SBC property. The cost would be, including a goody bag, around £3000. If agreed then I will contact our contractors to see if we can get a donation towards a Christmas trip. We have already received £1850 with another £750 promised to us.</p> <p>We have been busy during the lockdown with purchasing a full display unit for us to use when we go anywhere. Hopefully if SEH finance department pay for this before next Insight then there will be photos. They have had the invoice for over 3 months and we just hope that the cost does not rise before they pay for it. This happened with the chairs we purchased, as they rose by £25 before they gave the go ahead to purchase these.</p> <p>We are going to arrange some days around the borough with your help, where we can engage with residents. We can put the display up on any bit of grass area that belongs to SEH and for other places we can ask the council for permission to use their areas. This would let us get closer to residents and find out how their area is and if they have any problems and of course any compliments that can be fed back. We could also bring along different organisations for residents to speak to or to get information from. What I would like is for you all to take back to your area the idea of this happening.</p> <p>Our website:</p> <p>We are waiting for SEH finance department to pay this invoice as well and then we can get on with building the website and getting on to the internet for residents to use it. Again, the invoice was given to them 2 1/2 months ago and they are taking their time paying for it.</p>	
6.0	<p>The Big Conversation Day that was to happen earlier this year has not been forgotten as Stuart has this in hand but until we are clear of the Covid-19 it cannot be held. Stuart has said “as soon as it is safe to do so, we will be holding it”. He as well as us believe it is an important thing to have so that the residents can put their views and ideas forward to SEH.</p>	

7.0	<p>Update from Mario Ambrose;</p> <p>He apologises for not being able to attend the meeting as he is very busy due to Sarah being off. He said that the key things of note are that we are well on the way to installing a sprinkler system in one of the high-rise blocks as a pilot. The Capital programme is beginning to restart with external works happening first and then internal works afterwards, subject to methods of working and resident consent.</p> <p>The contact centre is now part of South Essex Homes and no longer within the Council's call centre, it's very early days but we hope having direct control of repairs reporting will enable us to provide a better service to residents.</p> <p>All our Fire Risk Assessments have been completed and they will be scheduled as part of a rolling programme. Our Fire Safety Manager, Graham Hart is working with the sheltered team to visit residents who may need special assistance with regards fire safety measures such as visual aids etc.</p>	
8.0	<p>Fossett's for the People (FFTP)</p> <p>Martin Berry secretary of the group gave a very interesting and informative talk on the use of the land known as Fossett's Farm. The land was sold to the Government for £7.8 million He explained that Homes England who are charged with dealing with land owned by the Government will sell it off to a private developer who have put in a planning application to build 145 executive homes on the land and local people cannot afford these type of homes. FFTP are campaigning for the council to reject this planning application for executive homes. They would like residents of Southend to write to their local councillor telling them to vote to reject this proposal and ask that Southend Council requests from Homes England to either sell or give this parcel of land to the Council, so that they can build decent social housing on the land, that will bring down the waiting list and housing a lot of residents already within Southend.</p> <p>The website for Fossett's is FFTP.co.uk and there is a lot of information on that site for you to read and also join their campaign. The members agreed the council that we do not agree that a private developer should have this land, as has happened with most of the land available within Southend. An email with Martin's details will be sent to Julia Pack for her to speak to him to see if there is anything she can put in to Insight informing the Residents, who may have children and other family members waiting to be housed allowing them to get involved and also that it would be a good idea for the Federation to get behind FFTP and inform residents.</p>	<p>KD See * below</p>
9.0	<p>Discussion on amalgamating groups to the Federation;</p> <p>B.AY gave a very good description on an ongoing problem for focus groups. He explained that the joining of the groups in to one group was due to four things. One, they were duplicating each other, two, they were using up a lot of SEH officers time, three, they were costing SEH money that could be used elsewhere and four, they did not report to the Federation at the time.</p>	

	<p>It is felt among the residents who used to go to these focus groups, that joining them together and calling them the Resident & Staff Involvement Focus Group (R&SIFG) has not worked as it should have done. The residents have said that they do not have any time or opportunity to hold their focus group meetings, that they need to have and only get asked if they have any comments to make at each R&SIFG meeting. It also does not allocate time for each individual group to meet as they need. So, after a lengthy discussion on what they would like and also telephone calls to residents who could not attend, it was decided unanimously that the residents would like changes for all the groups in the future and as the Federation is 'by the residents for the residents' this should be done.</p> <p>For full details please see the attached letter sent to Stuart Long on the 26th August 2020 explaining to him what the residents require in the future.</p>	<p>KD Done</p>
<p>10.0</p>	<p>M.A has asked if we could hold the meetings in the afternoon rather than in the morning. This was echoed by all at the meeting so will be tried for a couple of meetings to see how it goes.</p> <p>He also went on to say that the Board Meetings are open to all to observe if they wish to do so and it is far better than being part of the board and the important part of the Federation is, do the members support, do the members participate, are the members active, not everything should be left to the chairman or the secretary as that would put too much pressure on them and soon the chairman would say that they have not got time and give it up. He thinks that there should be a voice for the Federation at the board Meetings.</p> <p>KD explained that a resident does not have a voice at that meeting but of course you can send in a letter two weeks before the meeting with a question to be answered.</p> <p>M.A said he expects our resident board members to be very active and responsive. We elect them and their position is a voluntary activity they should put in the effort that is expected of them to put in the effort and anyone in this position should act in such a way that impresses the residents.</p> <p>K.D said that he was not going to be drawn in to that conversation as he respects board members and some do work.</p> <p>B.Ay reminded residents that we did put in a letter to the board and it was answered.</p> <p>P.W said that if any resident thinks that a resident board member is a waste of time then they should take it up with the chair of the board or senior management.</p> <p>B.Ay said that different to P.W other board members were not putting in any effort to their role so he sent in a letter on behalf of the Federation that was answered at the next board meeting, but we cannot reply to it unless we send in another letter. The resident's questions do not get put forward to the full board members to reply so they do not see the complete picture behind it and he is sure that some of the letters/ questions would have a different reply if all board members were to hear it and agree a reply.</p> <p>P.W said she thinks that these questions/letters should in fact go to the board not just the chair and senior management and it should come to the board. Residents should not separate resident board members from the whole of the board as it is a board in a whole. But as you say</p>	

	questions/letters should be seen by all of Board members and collectively an outcome from that.	
11.0	<p>B.Ay jumped back to the question of Focus groups and the resident's decision on what they want going forward.</p> <p>G.M wanted to know if a resident wanted to sit on two groups how would they go about it.</p> <p>K.D said, as you know we have changed the Federation completely and we do not tell the resident what they have to do, it is entirely up to them what they do. They could if they wished, go to one corner meeting for as long as they wished then move to another corner to join that group. In fact, if they wished to, they could go around the room sitting with each group running at that time.</p> <p>B.Ay said that we have time between meetings to arrange what groups will be sitting at that particular meeting. So, say a resident has two particular interests then we would try to make sure that those groups were not sitting on the same month to accommodate as many residents as we can.</p> <p>K.D said that it is such a shame that the old Federation members don't wish to interact with us. We are not getting any interaction at all from the Scrutiny panel they just seem to ignoring the New Federation completely.</p>	
12.0	<p>Focus group reports.</p> <p><u>Repairs, Gas and Voids Focus Group report:</u></p> <p>Arron services could not attend the Zoom meeting.</p> <p>Morgan Sindall said that the Rant & Rave is working well and receiving a lot of feedback from the residents with only two negative reports that were dealt with straight away. They have been asked to give us some figures so that we can see for ourselves how it is working.</p> <p>KD said that he was at the meeting and has asked as he has done for months, that Morgan Sindall bring to the meetings figures of appointments missed and the reason why.</p> <p>Voids are being returned slowly with 49 voids outstanding as of 18th August with 23 being majors.</p> <p>Returns are 10 in April, 6 in May & 24 in June.</p> <p><u>Update from the call centre</u> at the West Office as of this morning from Caroline the supervisor there.</p> <p>They have settled in well there and have taken on so more staff to cope with the calls. She said that since being back under SEH's umbrella the call centre is working well with very few lost calls now and also being able to answer calls a lot quicker.</p> <p>Again, no update from the Resident & Staff Involvement Group.</p>	<p>KD See ** below</p>
13.0	<p>Any other business.</p> <p>G.M reported that he has had his car vandalised with scraps on both sides of it and the bonnet then a tin of black paint was thrown on it. He said that he is not the only one with this problem down his road.</p>	

	<p>B.Ay told him to find out who his local neighbourhood watch co-ordinator is and ask them to get in touch with the Local Community Meetings and ask them to get involved.</p> <p>G.M said that he had tried to get the residents involved with a neighbourhood watch scheme without any success.</p> <p>K.D. With regards to people break-in at blocks or anywhere they shouldn't be doing so, a request from SEH is that if a resident hears anyone attempting to get in to their block they should ring 999 and report that there is "someone attempting to break into their property at the moment". This should bring the police out straight away and will also mean that the police will have a record of it. It will also get about that the police are attending each time someone tries to get in. The more times it is reported it will be recorded and will become a police hot-spot that will be patrolled more often. Also, if you could take note of the date and time so that both the police and SEH can look through any CCTV they can get hold of. Giving date and time makes it so much easier for them to find the incident.</p> <p>M.A wanted to know if the federation had tried to find out why the request for receipts of expenditure was not given. K.D explained that no one gives out money without a detail's expenditure, as it could then be used for any reason what so ever. Someone may come and ask for some money to take elderly people on a day out and we give them the amount. They could, and I'm not saying they would, but they could just go down the pub and have a good party on us and we would not know that it was our money they did it with. So, that is why SEH needs to know what they want it for and then receipts with names and addresses to prove that what they said they want to do, actually happened.</p> <p>A.M wanted to know why SEH are sending out letters stating that if a resident does not pay their rent they would be evicted from their property. The government have said that this would not happen while Covid was around. K.D will find out and report back.</p> <p>A.M said that since she had her windows replaced, she has a gap in the side and the bottom of her window allowing cold air into her rooms. K.D asked her if she had reported it and she said yes, to the contractor. K.D then told A.M to report it via the 0800 number so that there was a record of her problem and if she still does not get any joy, to let the Federation know and we will take it to the correct officer within SEH for her.</p>	<p>KD See *** below</p>
14.0	<p>Future Agenda Items:</p> <p>Maria Medina who can give us an idea on fund raising in the future.</p>	
	<p>Residents have requested email addresses of the Federation Committee.</p> <p>Chair - Keith.ducker@strf.org.uk – Vice- chair bob.ayriss@strf.org.uk – Treasurer - jean.pickering@strf.org.uk Committee Members - mike.smith@strf.org.uk – Geoff.moore@strf.org.uk</p>	
	<p>The meeting ended at 5:15pm with K.D thanking everyone for attending.</p>	

	<u>Future Meetings will be held via Zoom with these dates</u> 29 th September – 2pm 27 th October – 2pm 24 th November – time to be arranged	
	Date of next Meeting 29 th September – 2pm with Zoom invitation to be sent out on the 28 th September 2020	
	<u>Distribution List</u> The Residents & Officers that gave apologies, Communications - Julia Pack. Sent via Chloe Hague. All others will receive them via email.	

*	Email sent to Julia Pack regarding Fossett's for the People	
**	KD will send out a report as soon as he receives it.	
***	Reply from Simon Putt Finance Manager. I would confirm that we have not written to residents telling them that they will be evicted if they don't pay their rent. As I am sure you are aware, we continue to work very closely with residents, particularly through the pandemic, offering as much support as possible to assist them with all aspects of their tenancy, including payment of their rent. I am sure you also appreciate that there is still the requirement to pay rent, and we will continue to make every effort to collect the rent, sending the usual reminders, contacting residents by phone etc, rather than face to face of course, and we are of course very sympathetic to the situation that they are in and in fact we are all faced with the Pandemic, and will make every effort to come to an arrangement should arrears accrue on their rent account.	

PROPOSED REORGANISATION OF FOCUS GROUPS AS DISCUSSED AT FEDERATION MEETING OF 25th AUGUST.

It has been brought to our attention by residents of SEH that certain Focus Groups are not working to the best of their ability by not holding regular meetings and they are not being given the opportunity to voice any concerns brought to them by their members as a group. The groups in question are **ASB, Caretaking & Estate Services, Tenancy Service's, Resident Involvement, Customer Services, and Communication.** These groups in the past had been poorly attended and it was suggested that they merge into one larger group, (*The Resident & Staff Focus Group*), where all their issues could be dealt with under one umbrella. This group, like all other Focus Groups, then needs to make a report to the Federation (*which to date has not happened*), and in fact this group duplicates most of the work of the Federation, but without the resources and authority available to the Federation. It is still the case that these groups are not being heard as they should be so any matters arising are not being dealt with efficiently with more time being given to funding various projects, which in fact comes under the jurisdiction of the Federation, rather than to any relevant matters pertaining to the groups they are meant to represent. The various groups mentioned above are asked to provide written updates on any issues which arise, but they do not meet as a separate group meaning in fact that they cannot give a written update. It can take up to 2 months before an issue is dealt with correctly from the R&SFG if indeed it is passed on to the Federation at all and there is no direct input between residents and staff. As the Federation is now working well and has a strong following, it is felt that the R&SFG should now disband to save time, costs and resources that SEH no longer have. It has also been suggested that the Disability Group that has seen its membership drop, be included under this umbrella giving them a stronger voice, than they have at the moment. As an alternative the proposal that went to the residents was as follows;-

Two formats, one for when we can access The Civic Centre and one for Zoom meetings are detailed below.

CIVIC CENTRE FORMAT

The first half of the Federation meeting dealing with normal Federation business with the second half of the meeting split into three groups on a rolling format. Each group having their own 30 minute meeting within the same room as the Federation. They will then return to the full Federation Group to discuss anything brought to their attention for the final 30 minutes. This format will then allow any resident or group with an issue or suggestion to talk to the Federation and be heard on a regular basis which will hopefully lead to a faster and more efficient way of dealing with any issues or suggestions arising. One large room is needed for this meeting where the separate groups can then distance themselves from each other in different areas. Residents not wishing to take part in any of the separate meetings will then also be given the chance to raise any other issues with free members of the Federation committee giving **EVERY** resident a voice at Federation meetings.

ZOOM MEETING FORMAT

Each individual group will hold their own separate Zoom meeting either the day before or on the morning of the main Federation meeting. The main Federation meeting will then take place with a duration of no more than 1hr. This will then give the 3 groups who have previously met 15 minutes each to raise any concerns with the final 15 minutes then left to address any concerns.

Once each group has met, either by Zoom or in The Civic Centre they will present a report to the main meeting which will then be incorporated into the minutes of the main Federation meeting.

FOCUS GROUP STRUCTURE

ASB/Tenancy Services – Caretaking & Estate Services – Resident Involvement – Customer Services – Communication – Disability. These will be held on a rolling format and this format will allow each separate Focus Group to meet every other month with the opportunity given to speak to a Committee member when the group is not sitting.

The residents have decided by a 100% majority, (*those present and those telephoned*), that this is the way they would like to continue from now going forward.