**Minutes of Rural Residents’ Meeting**

**Tuesday 4th December 2017**

Present: Patricia McQuillan, June Livingstone, Phyllis Clarke, Martin McCartney,

Clifford Wylie, Anne Quinn, Mary Watson and Susan Welsh.

Apologies: Sam Lockhart, David Quinney Mee, Noreen Rice, Sinead Collins, Deirdre

Crawford and Aidan Campbell.

In attendance: Kate Clifford, Orla McCann, Eoin McKinney, Michelle Hazlett and Teresa

McKernan

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kate welcomed Michelle Hazlett to the meeting who was representing Deirdre Crawford. Introductions were made.

1. Matters arising

Presentation on Universal Credit, to be forwarded to RCN. **Action: Mary**

Martin felt that the people were not aware of the implications of Universal Credit. In his area only eight people turned up to an information session about the changes. There are delays in particular with new claimants. Kate said that there has been an increase in the use of food banks. RCN has written to Leo O’Reilly at DFC asking if the Universal Credit policy had been rural proofed, his response was that this was a revised policy so no need to rural proof – RCN are responding to him again. Kate felt it would be productive to collate case studies of how people are affected including consideration of: sanctions being imposed, appeal rates, the potential and real impact of DHSS office closures, lack of transport, getting access to GP services, not accessing advice and support services were added concerns.

1. Update on representation

North West area – Aidan to contact Gordon Speer. **Action Aidan.**

Kate is working in Newtownstewart area and she hoped to recruit someone from this area. Kate had contacted LCDI. The person they had in mind lived in a rural area and had no access to transport. Patricia forwarded Sheila McWilliams number to Kate to contact. **Action: Kate**

1. Missing the rural new build target – UUP update

Meeting had taken place with Andy Allen of UUP. Patricia felt the meeting was very productive and Andy was well briefed and had taken on board recommendations. He is going to write to the Department of Communities as a result of the meeting. Aidan has been in contact since with Andy. Meetings still haven’t been arranged with the DUP and Sinn Fein. **Action: Briefing paper to be forwarded to Michelle Hazlett.**

1. Consultation on changes to the Housing Selection Scheme

Kate circulated the draft response to the HSS. Closing date for responses is 21st December. Patricia said a presentation had been delivered to the Central Forum and information on this is contained in the November Central report. Clifford said that at the Disability Forum meeting it was advised that individual responses to the Consultation were better. Mary felt that the locations of the Consultation events were not suitable.

Points from the RCN/RRF response:

* There are 37,500 households on the waiting list
* Issues around landlords
* Intimidation points – discussion on whether intimidation fund will be scrapped if intimidation points are removed. This needs to be explained further. Evidence needs to be gathered
* Interpretation of ‘reasonable offer of accommodation’ Previously was three offers, this has been reduced to two.
* Succession tenancy – talk about removing this. Often the most vulnerable still live with their parents.
* Adaptation to property – needs to be looked at on an individual basis
* Multiple offers – Clifford raised this issue. Letter from NIHE should clearly state this when making a housing offer to a tenant.

**Action: These points will be forwarded to Aidan who will then circulate to members. Members were reminded to respond individually.**

**Patricia said that the Central report had some good pointers for the response.**

1. Just Us/Gaslight update

Letter of offer has been issued. Recruitment flyer for 16 youth facilitators will be ready in January. Training will be over 2 ½ days at RCN. Kate is meeting Stephen from Gaslight on 14th December

**Action: Members were asked to encourage those from their area who may be interested in taking part to contact Kate.**

1. Succession planning – request from Supporting Communities

Supporting Communities are looking to devise succession planning animation for its website. This is an issue for a lot of groups. Mary’s group in Carnlough would be ideal for this. Patricia’s group in Moneydig and Phyllis’s group in Fivemiletown would also be willing to contribute.

1. Mid Ulster Networking event feedback

Kate congratulated everyone involved with the event. Patricia felt that the event was very entertaining with a good variety. Phyllis felt it was a good opportunity to network. The rural awards at the end worked well. Members felt that Ann Marie McAleese was excellent and a good advocate for rural. Ann Marie is going to contact all the award winners to invite them on to her talk show. Members felt that the format had worked well and should be replicated in the North region. Patricia had been approached by the Ardglass group at the event who were looking for assistance. **Action: Eoin to give Ardglass group contact details to Orla.**

9.0 Rural update

Eoin to send figures to RCN to forward to Councillor Terry Hearty regarding housing in Crossmaglen  **Action: Eoin**

* Crossmaglen Ph3 (Radius). 12 units. New Build. Started 2006/07. Completed 2008/09.
* Fairy Glen (Radius). 18 units. Off-the-Shelf. Started 2008/09. Completed 2009/10.
* Crossmaglen Ph4 (Radius). 18 units. New Build. Started 2009/10. Completed 2010/11.
* Rathkellan Park (Radius). 1 unit. New Build. Started 2011/12. Completed 2013/14.
* Crossmaglen Ph5 (Radius). 9 units. New Build. Started 2013/14. Completed 2015/16.

Whilst there have been no additions to the social housing stock inSilverbridge**,** Glassdrumman and Culloville in recent years, Apex did deliver 14 new build homes on the Tullymacreevie Road (close to Silverbridge and Mullaghbawn) in 2014/15, and Triangle Housing is aiming to start on-site in 2017/18 with a 5-unit scheme on Housing Executive owned land in Culloville.

Meeting regarding Aghadowey housing needwill take place next week.  Patricia McQuillan will be involved.Housing needs tests to occur in these areas for the 18/19 programme.

Kate raised the housing issue in the Armoy area. A representative from Armoy had contacted her and also Patricia. Patricia then contacted Leonie Lavery from the Ballycastle office who is interested in visiting Armoy.   Discussion arose about these issues.  Kate suggested that a factual walk around the area take place to see what the issues are. Patricia said that tenants need to be present during this visit. Sinead Collins will attend  this. Patricia suggested that she raise the issue with Mervyn Storey. Michelle suggested that the group apply for funding to the Cohesion Unit or through the Community grants scheme which provides equipment. Orla said that Charlene Wray is the Causeway Liaison Officer, Armoy would be her area.

**Action: Eoin to find out what work/improvements has been carried out in Armoy.  Date of factual walk to be arranged.**

1. Supporting Communities update

Community Involvement Strategy hasn’t gone to the board yet.  Formal consultation will be triggered once this happens.

Understanding Social Enterprise Level 2 takes place in Coleraine (Westbann Community Development) on 24th January from 10.30am to 1.30pm for 6 weeks. For further details contact Stephen Marks ([stephen@supportingcommunities.org](mailto:stephen@supportingcommunities.org))

E-zine was issued on Monday 4th December.

Independent tenant organisation – two meetings have been held to date. The Panel considered the Review of Social Housing Allocations at the last meeting.

Good governance health checks for community organisations holding a Housing Executive community letting are taking place with follow up training to be completed by the end of March 2018.

1. Central report

Central report for November had been previously emailed to members. Patricia highlighted the Central visit to USEL, Belfast. USEL support people with disabilities and health conditions in Northern Ireland. The organisation recycles mattresses, and also upcycles furniture. Patricia was very impressed by the organisation and felt that community groups could get involved also. **Action: Kate to forward USEL contact details to Mary.**

1. Scrutiny panel update

Phyllis - Mid Ulster Networking event had taken place.

Clifford/Sam - Meeting is taking place today (5th December). Sam is chairing the meeting.

Susan – houses are being re-wired and new bathrooms put in. Issues with workmen not returning to fix problems. Contracts are coming up again soon. It was felt that the RRF should raise Susan’s concerns.

**Action: Susan to email 5-6 bullet points on what the issues are. This will be forwarded to Patricia to raise at Central and to Orla. This will be raised with Valerie who sits on Central.**

Mary’s area – meeting will take place next week.

Disability forum – Clifford reported that at the meeting the Consultation on Housing selection scheme was discussed. They also received a presentation on Amazon Alexa and Echo trial. Occupational therapists will be educated on this.

Martin - Encompass meeting had taken place, this is run by the health board. The aim is to link people digitally to hospitals for their appointments etc. The aim is to be more direct and interactive. Martin also is working with Healthy Cities/Age Friendly cities Way finders project in Altnagelvin hospital. There is an issue with signage in the hospital.

1. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 9th January 2018 at 10.30am.