



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
7th October 2009

The National Association of Empty Property Practitioners

Minutes

<i>Attending:</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Forum/Organisation</i>
	Graham Everett	Vice-Chair + Herts,Beds & Bucks
	David Gibbens	Treasurer + South West + p2psrv
	Sue Haigh	Secretary + South West
	Helen Heanes	Herts, Beds & Bucks Empty Property Forum
	Matthew Smith	West Midlands Empty Property Officer Group
	Alan Broadbent	Greater Manchester Empty Homes Forum
Apologies	Nick Caprara	Chair + London/NE London
	Keith Gunner	Hants/IOW
	Pam Smith	Hants/IOW
	Susan Cousins	North East Empty Property Forum
	Jez Mason	East Midlands Empty Property Officer Group (received after meeting)
	Fiona Roberts	ShelterCymru
	Kulwarnjit Kooner	Herts, Beds & Bucks Empty Property Forum
	Neil Dunk	Yorkshire and Humberside Empty Property Forum
	Darryl Lawrence	Rochdale Housing Initiative
	David Ireland	Empty Homes Agency
	Ketih Giles	Sussex Empty Homes Forum

The meeting was chaired by Graham Everett.

The Executive recorded its thanks to Matthew Smith personally and Birmingham City Council as an organization for hosting the meeting

1 Apologies – see above

2 Matters agreed by email since the last meeting

RESOLVED

- 09/14** that the minutes of the meeting of the 10th June 2009 be approved [*3 emails up to 25th 2009*]
- 09/15** that NAEPP should purchase Nuance PDF Converter software for installation on the NAEPP laptop at an estimated purchase price of £69. [*8 emails up to 07th September2009*]
- 09/16** that NAEPP should purchase a 2GB memory upgrade for the NAEPP laptop, based on an estimated purchase price of £38.69. [*6 emails up to 16th September 2009*]

09/17 that NAEPP should purchase a port replicator (docking station) for the NAEPP laptop, based on an estimated purchase price of £20 [6 emails up to 19th October 2009]

ACTIONS:

- [1] David G to place agreed minutes on the website. DG
- [2] David G to purchase and install Nuance PDF Converter on the NAEPP laptop. DG
- [3] David G to purchase and install 2GB memory upgrade in the NAEPP laptop. DG
- [4] David G to purchase port replicator for use with NAEPP laptop. DG

3 Matters Arising

- a) A Progress Sheet had been circulated prior to the meeting. This allowed most Matters Arising to be taken under the main Agenda Items below.
- [5] David G to remove matters arising from the Agenda for future meetings.. DG

4 Membership

Membership

- a) The contents of the Membership Summary sheet (circulated prior to the meeting) were noted.
- b) The issue of discounts for group membership was discussed, following an approach from the Sussex forum. David said if he would approach the SW REIP to see if they might pay for membership for all the South West LA's if the Executive agreed to implement a discount structure.
- c) The issue of the exact criteria for membership was discussed and the relevant clause from the Constitution was references. There was a consensus that membership criteria should not be applied too tightly but that it would be important to ensure that there were clear guidelines for applicants from commercial organisations about
- d) It was noted that Darryl and David had not yet liaised effectively on boosting RSL membership and no document outlining the benefits of membership had been prepared. It was agreed that it would be better if Darryl led on this issue.

RESOLVED

- 09/18** (i) that recognised empty homes forums of 5 or more members could apply for group Corporate membership, in which case fees for the entire forum should be calculated on the basis of 60% of the full fee rate for districts in two-tier authorities and 90% of the full fee rate for unitary authorities;
- (ii) that no further discounts would be applicable: for example in the event

that one or two forum members did not want to participate in the group membership this would not further reduce the group membership fee.

- 09/19** (i) that any commercial organisation wishing to belong to NAEPP can only belong as Corporate members
(ii) that clearer guidelines relating to membership criteria should be prepared

ACTIONS:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| [6] David G to progress group membership with Sussex and other forums | DG |
| [7] Darryl to take the lead on drafting the flyer encouraging RSL membership and to liaise with David as necessary | DL/DG |
| [8] David G to prepare more detailed guidelines on criteria for membership and rules applicable to commercial organisations taking up membership. | DG |

5 Finance

Finance / Treasurer Report and Budget

- a) The contents of the Finance Report and budget (circulated prior to the meeting) were noted.
- b) David reported that in addition to the 09/10 invoices having gone out, there was a trickle of late payments coming to NAEPP for 08/09.

Sponsorship and Income Generation

- c) David said that he had not pursued sponsorship much further. Other matters had taken priority. His view was that sponsorship was a medium priority best pursued most vigorously after immediate work with improving the website, getting the National Action Plan finalised and publicised
- d) However, David also reported having had brief contact with Nick about Pathmeads sponsorship. Nick was keen to lower expectations eg citing sponsorship of a few hundred pounds for a conference which also involved speakers. David recalled that NAEPP had received £2,500 sponsorship for the last conference. There was a consensus that sponsoring the website – giving prominence to the sponsor’s name – should not be given away too cheaply.

Treasurer, Cheque Signing and Internet Banking

- e) There was a discussion on these issues in the context of the relevant sections of the Treasurer Report. It was agreed that Graham, David, Keith and Sue should be cheque signatories. It was also agreed to expedite the previously agreed transfer of Treasurer functions to Sue, swapping the Secretary role with David. It was accepted that David would still be involved in the administrative functions associated with finance and he would prepare an outline of the suggested split of functions between peer2peer services and the Treasurer.
- f) David pointed out the advantages of internet banking whereby any of those with access would have be able to interrogate the bank account, whereas currently only the person receiving the statement could do so. It was agreed to pursue this.

RESOLVED

- 09/20**
- (i) to set up internet banking for NAEPP's bank accounts;
 - (ii) that cheque signatories should in future be Keith Gunner, Graham Everett, David Gibbens and Sue Haigh.
 - (iii) to expedite the previously agreed swap of Treasurer and Secretary functions between David Gibbens and Sue Haigh
 - (iv) to prepare a document clearly describing the split of responsibility between the Treasurer and peer2peer services.

ACTIONS:

- [9] David to set up internet banking with access for the cheque signatories as soon as possible DG
- [10] David to expedite the revision to cheque signatories and change of Treasurer, with initial steps to be taken by Friday 16th October. DG
- [11] David to prepare a document clearly describing the split of responsibility between the Treasurer and peer2peer services as soon as possible for consideration by the Executive. DG

6 Governance

Role of Chair

- a) Nick's difficulties attending meetings was noted.

ACTIONS:

- [12] David to raise attendamce in his next conversation with Nick. DG

7 Admin Issues

The Service Level Agreement between NAEPP and peer2peer services

- a) It was noted that the Service Level Agreement had not yet been signed.. This was to be sent to Nick for signing.
- b) There was a discussion about how David prioritised his time spent on NAEPP. David stated he would positively welcome the Executive indicating priorities. At the same time, it needed to be understood that the SLA under which he operated only covered some of his activities for NAEPP. Many other activities were carried out under his own initiative (normally but not always following discussion at Executive meetings). These activities were not paid for except in the general sense that if they increased membership he would benefit. The Executive did not have carte blanche to direct his activities outside of the SLA. It was agreed that the SLA should be circulated so that longer-term members could refresh their memories of what was in it and newer exec members could familiarise themselves with it.

Review of arrangements for support

- c) It remained the case that the review of the SLA had not been finalised.

PO Box

- d) David reported that NAEPP now had a PO Box: the address was PO Box 703, Exeter, EX1 9PX

ACTIONS:

[13] DG to send SLA to to Exec members

DG/NC

[14] DG to send SLA to Nick for signing. Nick to review the SLA with peer2peer services on behalf of the Exec and sign if appropriate (following resolution at Exec of 23rd Feb 2009)

DG/NC

[15] Nick to facilitate the completion of the Performance Review (following resolution at Exec of 23rd Feb 2009)

NC

8 Website and Communication

- a) The content of the Admin report on this issue was noted.

ACTIONS:

[16] David to continue to pursue improvements to website as previously agreed.

DG

9 Training & Development

Training

- a) David reported only minimal further contact with education providers about a possible distance learning course for empty homes practitioners . He anticipated there might be problems getting sufficient numbers. He would continue to pursue this.
- b) Following discussion at the previous exec, David reported having viewed the Housing North West website but it was not clear what the relevance was for NAEPP. He would have further discussions with Darryl eg about an event promoting TSHG. But Darryl should lead on this.

Strategy Toolkit

- c) David briefly outlined progress that had been made with the “Strategy Toolkit” and asked for suggestions for further content. Exec members suggested:
 - ⇒ Summary of research on empty homes
 - ⇒ Working with Members
 - ⇒ Living over the Shop
 - ⇒ Enforcement options

ACTIONS:

- [17] David to continue to investigate options for an accredited course and report back to the Executive. DG
- [18] David to review Housing NW website and discuss options with Darryl as previously discussed.. DG
- [19] David and Darryl to consider possibility of special event on TSHG as previously discussed. Darryl to take the lead initially. DL/DG
- [20] David to continue to pursue development of the Strategy Toolkit as a medium priority, taking into account the points made by Exec members. DG

10 Annual Conference

- a) David reported on progress. At the previous Exec meeting David Ireland had said that the EHA Conference would be held in November and David G was asked to liaise with him in terms of the NAEPP conference. David G did not consider a joint conference a practical option, given the radically different flavour and costs of previous EHA and NAEPP conferences and the need for the NAEPP Conference to be an AGM He did not consider it practicable to hold the NAEPP Conference as early as late September, after which it would certainly clash with the EHA Conference. He therefore considered it would have to be held at some reasonable interval after the EHA Conference.
- b) It was noted by Exec members that there had as yet been no publicity for the EHA Conference although the CIH was publicising a conference in mid December. There was some speculation as to whether this might be a joint

- CIH/EHA conference but no-one present had seen any evidence of this.
- c) Taking into account these various factors. it was agreed that the NAEPP conference should be held in April after the Easter school holidays. David would need to make some enquiries to make sure that the date selected did not clash with any other key events, though it was accepted that with so many events of various types being held, there would never be a perfect time.
 - d) David reminded the Executive Committee that the previous conference had been organised by Kelly Wetherell on the basis of a 50-50 split between her and NAEPP of the net profits and that he was assuming he (as peer2peer services) would proceed on the same basis. At the same time, Kelly had received help from many quarters, particularly on the day of the Conference itself when all the Exeter delegates had pitched in to help (other people from outside of Exeter had also helped by bringing laptops). He expressed some concern that it would not be possible to handle all the logistics of the Conference on the day itself without some similar help.
 - e) Graham express concerned about what would happen to the distribution of income between NAEPP and peer2peer services if there was also Conference sponsorship. It was accepted this would have to be addressed according to the specifics of the case.
 - f) Executive members indicated that they would expect assistance to be forthcoming if needed and in particular Matthew Smith offered the services of the Birmingham team to assist on the day (on the assumption that the Conference was still to be held in Birmingham).
 - g) Further topics of interest to be considered for the Conference were
 - ⇒ Living-over-the-Shop.
 - ⇒ Local Letting Agencies
 - ⇒ A political session where representatives from the 3 parties put forward their views and proposals on the issues of empty homes.

RESOLVED that

- 09/21** (i) the NAEPP/Conference should be held in April after the Easter school holidays, in Birmingham as previously discussed;
- (ii) the conference should be organised by peer2peer services on the basis of a 50:50 split of net income after costs, but excluding any sponsorship income;
- (iii) the issue of how any sponsorship income should be apportioned would be dealt with on the merits of the case

ACTIONS:

- [21]** David to progress the Conference based on it being held in Birmingham in April after the Easter holidays; and taking into account the various topics put forward for inclusion in the consultation exercise and since.

DG

11 Empty Homes Agency Update

- a) There was no-one available to give an update from the Empty Homes Agency. David reported that he had asked David Ireland if he might be able to supply a written report but it was recognised by all that the EHA had limited resources at the moment.

12 The NAEPP *National Action Plan* proposals

- a) The progress described in the Admin Report (circulated before the meeting) was noted. The Committee expressed its satisfaction that the Empty Homes Agency had now provided a Foreword.
- b) The best way of binding the Action Plan that were to be distributed in hard copy to key agencies was discussed. David produced a number of examples using cheaply available methods from stationery stores. None of these were felt to do justice to the document and it was thought that the expense of more professional binding was justified. Alan mentioned the perfect binding used for student dissertations. Wire binding was also considered an acceptable option but not comb binding. David to explore options and costs and report back to the Executive..
- c) David indicated that the text would need to be reformatted according to the method of binding as the margins were not necessarily sized in the right way (mirror margins would be preferable etc.)..
- d) The Executive considered that it would be worth investing some time in final changes to the content, bearing in mind current issues in local government and the probability of a change of administration. Particular attention should be paid to the following aspects:
 - ⇒ Living-over-the-Shop initiatives and possible retention of council tax on empty homes brought back into use
 - ⇒ Making it clear that the “national” dimension being proposed was not being put forward as an alternative to local delivery and should be viewed as a contribution to efficiency; top-down targets should be avoided.
- e) Regarding publicity, the following options were mentioned: info4local, CIH, CIEH; heads of private sector housing.

ACTIONS:

- [22] David to revise text of the National Empty Homes Action Plan taking into account the views expressed at the Executive and circulating the draft as soon as possible. DG
- [23] David explore options for binding the document to a professional standard, to be used for a limited number of copies to be circulated to key agencies DG

13 BVPI64 and Performance / Activity Reporting

- a) David reported that there was still at least one issue outstanding re the inclusion or otherwise of homes built on the site of demolished empty buildings. There was a general consensus that this was not desirable but that a vote should be held if necessary. David noted that there had been no response to the objections he raised in his comment on the post proposing that newbuild units should be counted. A deadline needed to be set for discussion to be completed and the final version agreed.

ACTIONS:

- [24] David to contact those who had expressed reservations about the latest monitoring guideline draft to ask them if they were going to pursue them and set a deadline for completion with possible vote if the issue still seemed contentious enough.

DG

14 Other Policy and Strategic Issues

- a) None discussed

15 Any Other Business

- a) Matthew raised the issue about a declining attendance from the first meeting he had attended in February. This prompted a discussion about the content and format to the meeting. There was a general consensus that the business could be dealt with increasingly rapidly, with more matters being dealt with in advance of the meetings or between meetings and more material being covered in written reports that did not detailed discussion in the meeting. It was thus considered possible to look at longer sessions dealing with practical issues after the main business had been concluded as had previously been mooted and trialled a couple of years previously. .
- b) It was agreed that David should contact forum reps to sound them out about format content and what would encourage them to attend. The possibility of themed meetings should be explored.

ACTIONS:

- [25] David to contact forum reps to sound them out about improving the format and content of Exec meetings and finding out what would encourage them to come, and to report back to the Executive prior to the next meeting.

DG

16 Dates of Future Meetings

- a) LONDON – 24th February 2009. Venue to be agreed. Fallback 25th February.

ACTIONS:

- [26] David to research possible venues for the next Exec meeting in London and circulate to members as soon as possible.

DG

Minutes taken by Sue Haigh, Secretary and David Gibbens, Policy and Support