

GWSF news release for 23/11/18

Community controlled housing associations – evolving to prosper

Community controlled housing associations are evolving and adapting to ensure they are well equipped to face future challenges and protect their independence, according to the Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations (GWSF).

Over 200 delegates at GWSF's Annual Conference today will hear Forum Director David Bookbinder highlight the ongoing efforts of member associations to ensure that management and governance are as strong as possible, not least through effective succession planning as senior staff and committee members retire.

The Forum says recent events have shown that serious regulatory intervention can bring with it a threat to an association's independence on top of dealing with the governance/management issues themselves.

David Bookbinder said:

“CCHAs are evolving and adapting to the changing world, whilst retaining the essential localness and local control which make them different from other housing associations. In some cases it has meant changing how committee members are recruited, or making changes to the overall culture of the association. Or it might mean looking at sharing some services or at other ways of working with neighbouring associations.

“Being organisationally strong makes our members better equipped to deal with external pressures such as from Universal Credit. It also minimises the chances of regulatory intervention which can sometimes then lead to an association losing its independence.

“Protecting their independence is largely in associations' own hands. But we do think there are some aspects of the intervention process which can influence an association in the particular direction of merger/partnership. For example, some Special Managers appointed by the Scottish Housing Regulator seem to arrive with pre-determined views on the merits or otherwise of smaller housing associations.”

GWSF Chair Helen Moore said:

“We're keen to promote adoption of a default position for community controlled housing associations that retention of independence should be the assumption unless there are serious financial viability issues.

“We recognise that amalgamations are occasionally unavoidable. But our desire to promote this default position is based on what we passionately believe is the value of keeping things local – in terms of the services tenants get, the importance of

retaining local control over decision making, and the need to keep the association's assets in, and owned by, the community.

“In a world of globalisation, the community empowerment success story that CCHAs represent is hugely important and precious, and needs to be cherished and nurtured.”