

**WELLHOUSE HOUSING ASSOCIATION MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THURSDAY 30th
May 2019 AT 6PM AT THE ASSOCIATION'S OFFICE, THE HUB, 49 WELLHOUSE CRESCENT GLASGOW
G33 4LA**

1. Welcome, Sederunt & Apologies.

Present:

Maureen Morris	Chair
Clare Monteith	Vice-Chair
Darron Brown	Committee Member
Jane Heppenstall	Committee Member
Tom Lucas	Committee Member
Sarah Morris	Co-optee
David Robb	Co-optee

In Attendance:

Martin Wilkie-McFarlane	Director
Gordon Kerr	Finance & Corporate Services Manager
Carol Hamilton	Housing & Customer Services Manager
Vanda Cooper	Observer

Apologies:

Michelle Harrow	Committee Member
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Absent:

None

The Chair welcomed Vanda Cooper to the meeting. Introductions were made.

The Director informed committee of an incident that had occurred in reception today, resulting in a police presence. Committee expressed their concern for staff safety and the layout of the reception area. The Director reassured committee that a debriefing had been carried out with staff and that risk assessments were in place.

2. Declarations of Interest.

The Chair declared an interest at agenda item 10, Approved Contractors List, and her daughter being an employee of L & D Services.

3. Jargon Buster.

Noted for information.

4. Minutes of the Committee Meeting 24th January 2019 & 28th February 2019, including confidential minutes.

The minute of the committee meeting of 24th January 2019 were proposed as accurate by Sarah Morris and seconded by Clare Monteith.

The minute of the committee meeting of 28th February 2019 including the confidential minute were proposed as accurate by Clare Monteith and seconded by Darron Brown.

The minute of the Ad-Hoc Committee Meeting (Business Planning) of 11 April 2019 were proposed as accurate by Tom Lucas and seconded by Clare Monteith.

The minute of 25 April 2019 (e-mail agreement) were proposed as accurate by Darron Brown and seconded by Sarah Morris.

5. Matters arising & actions from the minutes report.

There were no other matters arising that were not covered by subsequent agenda items.

6. ARC Return

The Housing & Customer Services Manager presented the Annual Return of the Charter. She took committee through the verification of all of the entries, highlighting variances, areas of improvement and satisfaction levels from last year. She discussed areas where our systems could be improved in relation to the logging/recording of information, in particular to compliments from tenants. There has been improvement in satisfaction levels for keeping our tenants informed, average re-let times, adaptation timescales and high satisfaction levels in the turnaround of the kitchen and bathroom replacement programme. Factored owners satisfaction levels have increased to 86% and although encouraging further investigation will be carried out to ascertain the significant rise in these satisfaction levels. Gross rent arrears due had increased to 6.54% from 5.42% last year, which is thought to be in the main due to universal credit.

Jane Heppenstall sought clarification on point 9.1 on the types of tenancy granted. The Director explained the background in relation to secure tenancies being agreed through real life options. The individual tenancies are in the process of being rectified.

The Chair sought clarification on page 62, point 4.2.3 with regards complaints at 33.3%. The Director confirmed that stage 1 complaints were at 100% completion. The 33.3% refers to complaints where tenants were not satisfied with the outcome and were progressed to a stage 2 complaint or to himself for further investigation.

The Director highlighted that the ARC return had filed on the SHR portal with zero errors. He sought committee approval to verify the entries on the ARC and to delegate authority to him for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator no later than 31 May 2019

Resolution:

Delegated authority for the Director to submit the ARC Return to the Scottish Housing Regulator, no later than 31 May 2019, was proposed by Clare Monteith and seconded by Jane Heppenstall.

7. Regulatory Framework.

The Director presented the report to update on the SHR's new Regulatory Framework which came into effect on 1 April 2019 and to remind committee of their responsibilities thereof.

He highlighted key changes within the framework, highlighting that where the Framework had in the past referred to RLS's, it now refers to the Governing Body which places additional responsibilities on Governing Body members and a system of self-assurance. He stressed that it is crucial that members are familiar with the Framework.

He stated that each RSL must produce an annual assurance statement in accordance with the guidance. He referred committee to our voluntary submission of an annual assurance statement last year. The Director emphasised that members will need to confirm and be seen to have considered the appropriate evidence to support the level of assurance it has and that the standards of good governance and financial management are being achieved. Members will also be required to confirm the date of the meeting that they considered the annual assurance statement and agreement of the statement. It will then be signed by the Chair for submission to the SHR. A digital file is currently being compiled to provide committee with the evidence and assurance required.

The Director provided further information where RSL's must have evidence that it considers equalities and human rights, that we are meeting our legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness service delivery and have effective arrangements in place to learn from complaints and service user feedback. The minutes of governing body meetings will now be required to be published on our website. He provided further information where the Information Commissioners Office have stated that all governing body reports should also be publicly available. The SHR were unaware of this and will liaise with the ICO.

He took committee through a brief presentation which highlighted the responsibilities of the governing body in relation to leadership and direction, strategy, monitoring performance, being open and accountable and to ensure compliance. In addition the governing body will need to comply with regulatory standards, comply with the charter and understand where there are failings. The Director implored committee members that if they were uncertain or required further information about any items during a meeting, that they should not hesitate to seek clarification.

Committee noted the contents of the report.

8. Arrears Report.

The Housing & Customer Services Manager presented the report to update committee on the arrears position. She asked committee to note a typographical error at 4.4 which should read as at period 1 and not as at period 12.

She highlighted that the number of arrears cases over £1,000 remains steady at 64 since March. Significant analysis of each of these cases is on-going and an action plan is being developed. Gross arrears have risen by £10,570 and non-technical arrears by £7,702 for the same period.

The final draft of the Rent Management Policy is currently on our website and out for consultation with our tenants. Procedures continue to be developed to take account of the new policy and the impact of universal credit. The policy will be presented to committee following the consultation process. Recent analysis has indicated that some tenants have had rent arrears for many years with no meaningful reduction in the balance owed. Officers are working on reducing these timescales which may result in the escalation in legal actions.

She provided an update on the impact of universal credit being paid 5 weeks in arrears and the emerging picture. She highlighted that tenants will be in arrears until receipt of payment, however in reality we are experiencing delays of up to 5 – 14 weeks before payments are credited to rent accounts. She provided a brief example, as provided by the Income Advice Officer, as to how tenant rent arrears could escalate during the delay of UC payments.

Committee noted the contents of the report.

9. Housing Staff Activity.

The Housing & Customer Services Manager highlighted that resources within the housing section comprised of 3 full time housing officers, 1 part time housing assistant (currently on maternity leave) and 1 customer services assistant. She stated that each housing officer has an average patch of 265 tenancies. Their role is of a generic nature dealing with rent collection, allocations, anti-social behaviour, estate management, interviews, telephone calls and tenant participation. She provided examples of the time taken to deal with telephone calls, anti- social behaviour and the officers' visibility as front line staff. In addition, the queries received by officers in relation to services that are not provided by the Association e.g. street lighting, garden maintenance, speed bumps etc.

She drew committee's attention to the graph which tracks arrears to date. She discussed the increase in queries regarding trust deeds for debt write off, the average length of time a tenant is in arrears and recorded officer activity attributable to 15,828 actions which relate only to the 64 tenants who owe more than £1,000. The Housing & Customer Services Manager considered that there may also be a culture where some tenants won't pay, consider that there is no need to pay rent and the money used for other priorities. She highlighted historical staff turnover, inherited workload, payment arrangements put in place and not being followed through.

The Housing Customer Services Manager highlighted the various lines of approach from the housing team ensuring legislation, good practice and our policies and procedures are adhered to. They continue to have a firm but fair approach and to seek early intervention to reduce the length of time a tenant may be in arrears using various types of contact and suggest various methods of payment to the tenants.

The Director responded to a query regarding the requirement of more staff. He highlighted that a restructure had been carried where three housing officers were appointed to the section who would have the expertise to carry out the tasks required. He drew committee's attention to the graph which highlights the increase in rent arrears during the time of staff turnaround and the rollout of Universal Credit. He reiterated the Housing Managers comment on a culture within the areas and he believes that the current team have the skills to turn this around. He stated that he would be the first person to recommend if further resources were required, however, a value for money and cost saving analysis would be completed before any recommendation was made to committee.

Tom Lucas considered that managing a patch of 265 tenancies should be easily achievable, that rent arrears should be decreasing significantly and should be an absolute priority for the team. He praised the efforts of the Income Advice Officer for the financial gains she has achieved for our tenants and considered that a further part time post would offer additional support and provide further income for tenants to reduce rent arrears.

The Finance & Corporate Services Manager provided information on additional tasks required by the housing team in the form of a recent request from a tenant seeking subject access through his solicitor and the length of time it had taken to compile this information. He considered that these types of requests would become more frequent and we will be required to comply.

The Director concurred with Tom that a patch of 265 tenancies should be easily managed. Experienced housing officers had been recruited and he is quite confident that the current housing team will deliver. He discussed moving on from the legacy of the past. He applauded the achievements of the Income Advice Officer, however he did not feel that additional resources were required in this area in that, although there had been huge financial gains for tenants, there had been very little impact on the payment of rent arrears.

There was discussion regarding the time commitment required from the housing team during completion of the ARC return. The Director reaffirmed that all of the information required for next year's ARC submission

can now be accessed and the ARC submission will start much earlier in the year to ensure that we are prepared.

There were no other questions.

10. Approved Contractors List.

The Director presented the approved list of contractors and suppliers 19 – 20 to the committee for approval. He asked committee to note item 4 which highlights the 2 contractors removed from the list and the contractors added, all of who were approved by the committee during the year. He also reminded committee at point 3.2 that under the entitlements, payments and benefits policy as approved by committee, the use of WHA contractors and suppliers is discouraged. He referred to the guidance note at appendix 2 which sets out the rare circumstances in which it might be possible to seek consent for their use for personal purposes.

Resolution:

Clare Monteith proposed and Sarah Morris seconded the approved contractors list for 19 – 20.

11. Management Team Report

The Chair thanked Tom Lucas for his suggestion for an executive summary document for the 19 – 20 business plan. This has now been completed.

The Director:

EHRA

The Director reminded committee of training opportunities and to note that the next Chairs, Vice Chairs and aspiring Chairs Forum will take place on Wednesday 5th June. The subject will be “Appraising Your Director” which will be presented by him.

Wellhouse AFC

The Director has confirmed committee’s approval of sponsorship to Wellhouse AFC, who have expressed their gratitude.

Verandas

Committee previously approved a budget of £60 - £80K for carry out remedial work on 4 balcony areas. The Director informed committee that we are now progressing with resident consultation and procurement of contractors.

Health & Safety

The Director informed committee that the HSE will meet with him on Wednesday 5th June 2019 to discuss the RIDDOR report which was recently submitted to them. He will report to the committee at its meeting in June.

The Chair expressed her delight that the Association intends to prepare a Domestic Abuse Policy for approval. She highlighted her work with the Violence against Women group and offered her support if required.

Committee noted the various update reports for information.

12. Policy Review

Repairs & Maintenance Policy:

The Director highlighted the main changes to the Repairs & Maintenance Policy. He asked committee to note section 16 under Planned Maintenance and the proposed delay to non-statutory planned maintenance programs to properties if the

- Property is in poor condition through negligence;
- Money is owed to the association through rent arrears, recharge repairs or court expenses;
- The tenant does not wish the works to be carried out.

He also asked committee to note that while it is common practice we have now made it explicit at section 29.2 that the approved contractors list will be reviewed by committee on an annual basis.

Resolution:

Tom Lucas proposed and Clare Monteith seconded the amendments Repairs & Maintenance Policy for adoption.

Whistleblowing Policy:

There were no changes proposed to the Whistleblowing Policy other than the addition of an equal opportunities and diversity statement being added.

Resolution:

Clare Monteith proposed and Jane Heppenstall seconded the Whistleblowing Policy for a further 3 years.

13. Forward Planning June 2019.

The planned agenda for the 27 June 2019 meeting was noted for information.

David Robb suggested that given historical issues that the Association may want to change its branding and corporate colours. The Director highlighted that significant work had been completed in 16/17 in rebranding the organisation. Other members of the committee felt strongly that the name Wellhouse HA should remain.

Tom Lucas suggested that tenant participation be included on the next agenda.

The Chair, thanked Vanda Cooper for attending to observe the committee meeting. Vanda left the meeting at this time.

The Director confirmed that Vanda had indicated her willingness to join the committee.

Resolution:

The Committee unanimously approved co-opting Vanda Cooper to the committee until the next AGM, where she will stand for election.

14. Connect Community Trust update

This item was confidential and a separate minute applies.

15. AOCB

Committee Conference

This item was deferred to the June meeting for further discussion.

The Chair reminded committee that she would stand down as Chair at this year's AGM due to 5 years' service and the rules that apply. She asked if there were members who were interested in standing for the position as Chair and suggested that it may be beneficial if that person Chair a few meetings before she stands down at the AGM.

Darron Brown volunteered to stand for the position of Chair at the AGM.

AGM & 25th Celebration

The Chair highlighted that this year's AGM would be our 25th. It is proposed that the AGM be celebrated as an information and fun day with it being held on a Saturday. Committee approved the AGM and fun day being held on a Saturday.

The Corporate & Governance Assistant will send confirmation of the date on her return from annual leave.

Verbal Report from the Director.

This item was confidential and a separate minute applies.

There was no further business.

Meeting closed: 8:45pm. Next Meeting 27th June 2019.

I certify that the above minute has been approved as a true and accurate reflection of the proceedings:

Signed (Chair)

Date:.....