

**WELLHOUSE HOUSING ASSOCIATION  
MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30<sup>TH</sup> April 2020  
AT 11:30am via ZOOM**

**1. Welcome, Sederunt & Apologies.**

**Present:**

Maureen Morris	Vice Chair
Clair Monteith	Committee Member
Sarah Morris	Committee Member
Michelle Harrow	Committee Member
Jane Heppenstall	Committee Member
Shona McKenna	Co-optee

**In Attendance:**

Martin Wilkie-McFarlane	Director
Gordon Kerr	Finance & Corporate Services Manager
Carol Hamilton	Housing & Customer Services Manager
Linda Logan	Minute secretary

**Apologies:**

Darron Brown	Chair
Carol Torrie	Co-optee

The Vice-Chair welcomed everyone to the first Zoom committee meeting. Procedures and protocols for the meeting were agreed.

**2. Declarations of Interest.**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of the committee meeting of 27 February 2020**

The minute of the committee meeting held on 27 February 2020 was proposed as accurate by Michelle Harrow and seconded by Shona McKenna.

**4. Matters arising from the minutes of 27 February 2020.**

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

**5. KPI report.**

The Housing & Customer Services Manager presented the report to bring to the attention of Committee the performance targets in relation to Key Performance Indicators to be in place for the financial year 20/21. She stated that there were no significant changes in customer services targets. She asked committee to note a typographical error at appendix 5.1, rent arrears, which shows a target of 9% whereas the actual agreed target should read 8%. She confirmed to committee that the allocation refusals figure of 30% was

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correct. She highlighted that the refusal rate was difficult to predict but it is hoped that last years percentage would be maintained in 20/21.

**Resolution:**

**Committee approved the 2020/21 KPI targets.**

**Clare Monteith proposed and Shona McKenna seconded the 2020/21 KPI targets**

**6. Rent Arrears update**

The Housing Manager updated on the February/March rent arrears position.

She stated that that since last reporting gross current rent arrears had increased to £283,324 in February and subsequently reduced considerably throughout March to £264,217 resulting in a reduction of £2,674 during the final quarter, which was in the main due to double Universal Credit payments from DWP. In addition, housing staff had secured substantial Discretionary Housing Payments throughout March.

She highlighted that Universal Credit applications continue to increase as a result of Covid-19. It is unclear at this stage how it has affected the ability of some tenants to pay their rent on time. She asked committee to note that since lock-down the Universal Credit arrears had changed significantly from £97,705 as reported to £130,000. The situation will be closely monitored by the housing team and contact made with tenants. A further report will be presented to committee at its meeting in May.

**Committee noted the contents of the report.**

**7. Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill**

The Housing Manager informed committee that emergency legislation had been introduced in response to the Coronavirus crisis which increased the eviction notice period, depending on the grounds used, for a period of up to 6 months and increased to 3 months for those created as a result of criminal convictions or anti-social behaviour.

**Committee noted the main issues arising Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill.**

**8. Operational Update:**

The various updates reports were noted for information.

**Director:**

The Director asked committee to note that the staff away day scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> April had been cancelled. The committee away day will also be scheduled for a later date. It had been proposed that the Special General Meeting be convened to adopt our New Model Rules earlier in the year, this however is likely to be postponed due to the current Covid situation. There has been discussion within the sector of allowing 18 months between AGM's, this has not yet been confirmed.

In relation to the query from Clare Monteith as to whether staff could be furloughed, the Director informed committee that we had not as yet furloughed any staff. All staff are working remotely and fully occupied and the Estate Wardens are carrying out the majority of their duties. He highlighted fly tipping within the estate as being a huge problem for the Wardens. He asked committee to note that if an employee is furloughed, they cannot carry out any work for the Association during the period which could mean a reduction in services. The Director highlighted additional expenditure on I.T equipment to allow staff to work remotely, however noted reduced spend on repairs at present. He asked the Finance Manager to provide an update on cashflow during the period.

The Finance Manager highlighted a current cash balance of £2M. He stated in theory the cash balance should not reduce with full rent continuing to be charged, however rent arrears could rise with tenants having issues with their own employers, which could affect their ability to pay their rent. The cash balance will be closely monitored as to how much arrears are increasing due to this issue.

Michelle Harrow sought clarification if there were staff who may have child care issues and their ability to do their work. The Director confirmed there were staff who have a degree of childcare and carer arrangements in place. They continue to work as normal at present but have been informed that flexible working is in place if needed to support them.

#### **Housing and Customer Services Manager:**

The Housing Manager stated that the housing team have been working really well, have dealt with tenant queries and are grasping the opportunity for further data cleansing. The tenant handbook is near completion and will go to print once approved.

#### **Finance & Corporate Services Manager:**

The Finance Manager provided an update of the Finance & Corporate Services team activities since the February committee meeting as outlined within the report.

He asked committee to note that external and internal audit functions were due for tender, with work planned on these for February/March. Due to the current situation, this has been delayed with no definitive timescales. He highlighted the audit function by way of a 3 year cycle audit plan. Due to the uncertainty of when normal audit will resume and to encourage consistency, he advised that it may be advisable that the tendering process for both contracts to start in 2021/22, but with work starting on both these exercises later in 2020.

He asked committee to approve an extension of the current contracts with internal auditors, Wylie & Bisset and external auditors, Scott Moncrieff for 1 year and tendering process to proceed with contract start dates of 2021/22.

#### **Resolution:**

**Committee approved the extension of the current contract with internal auditors, Wylie & Bisset and external auditors Scott Moncrieff for 1 year.**

**Shona McKenna approved and Jane Heppenstall seconded the extension of the current contract with Wylie & Bisset and Scott Moncrieff for a further year.**

**Assets & Maintenance Manager:**

In the absence of the Assets & Maintenance Manager, the Director presented on his behalf.

**Veranda Works.**

The Director provided background information on historical veranda works that had been carried out on 5,7,8 Wellhouse Gardens and 19 Balado Road. He highlighted consistent leaks and solutions put in place to try combat the problems. He stated that committee had previously approved to proceed with the rebuilding of the verandas and the work had been provided for within the budget. Tenders for the works and the returns were detailed within the report.

Committee asked if these problems had originated during the build period. The Director confirmed that the building plans had been correct however it is thought that errors were made during the build stage.

The Director sought committee approval to accept the lowest offer from Total Reinstatement Services in the amount of £64,333.19 to complete the works.

**Resolution:**

**Committee approved Total Reinstatement Services to complete the works and accepted the quote in the amount of £64,333.19.**

**Clare Monteith proposed and Sarah Morris seconded completion of the works by Total Reinstatement Services in the amount of £64,333.19.**

**Gas Servicing.**

The Director highlighted that when lockdown commenced the Association only had two properties that required gas servicing. These have been completed. Saltire have confirmed that they have safety measures in place and are happy to continue with emergency repairs during this time. He stated that there has been conflicting information from the Scottish Government and Gas Safe for a possible relaxation for the timescale in completion of gas servicing. The SFHA is seeking clearer information from the Scottish Government.

He advised that a letter from Saltire to all tenants regarding gas servicing had not included the requirements for tenants to advise if they were self-isolating when contacted. The letter will be amended and reissued to tenants by Monday.

The Director asked the Housing Manager to update committee on discussion with GCC with regards to homelessness within the last week.

The Housing Manager advised that prior to lockdown there had been two void properties that we were aware we would be unable to let due to restrictions in place. We had advised GCC that these properties were available for homeless people for use during self-isolation. GCC have now accepted the offer and the keys to properties have been picked up.

## 9. Policy Review.

The Housing Manager advised that the Complaints, Compliments and comments policy had been updated in accordance with guidance from the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman to take account of an additional category entitled Resolution, although it remains a 2-stage complaint process.

The Collection, Debt Recovery and Write Off Policy had been updated to take account of the recommendation from Internal Audit to include the timeframe of when a tenant should be notified that a repair was rechargeable and invoiced with a rechargeable repair.

The Housing Manager sought committee approval for the above policies to be ratified for a further 3 years.

### **Resolution:**

**Committee ratified the Complaints, Compliment & Comments and the Collection, Debt Recovery and Write Off Policy for a further 3 years.**

**Jane Heppenstall proposed and Clare Monteith seconded approval of the above policies.**

## 10. AOCB

### **Committee Appraisals.**

The Corporate and Governance Officer sought confirmation from Committee Members that they were comfortable to complete their annual appraisals via a Zoom meeting.

Committee agreed to complete appraisals via a Zoom meeting.

**Action: The Corporate & Governance Officer will contact Linda Ewart for suitable dates and set up appraisal meetings in due course.**

Michelle Harrow sought clarification on thought given to a recovery plan and consideration given to the office facilities to accommodate social distancing upon return to work.

Committee discussed a possible return to work and processes to be put in place to ensure staff and tenant safety.

Jane Heppenstall considered that a floor plan of the office should be drawn up to ensure social distancing and that further information on track and trace was required first to mitigate the risk of infection.

**Action: The Director stated that he would bring a further report to the next committee with regards a recovery plan and measures to be put in place for return to work. He considered the risk to be too high at present and will continue to follow Government advice.**

Meeting closed 12:45pm. Next meeting 28 May 2020.

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

Signed (Chair) .....

Date:.....