

**WELLHOUSE HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
ON 28 APRIL 2022 AT 6PM – VIA ZOOM**

1. Welcome, Sederunt & Apologies

Present:

Maureen Morris	Chair
Clare Monteith	Vice-Chair
Michelle Harrow	Committee Member
Darron Brown	Committee Member
Carol Torrie	Committee Member
Jane Heppenstall	Committee Member

In Attendance:

Martin Wilkie-McFarlane	Director
Carol Hamilton	Housing & Customer Services Manager
Bill Black	Assets & Maintenance Manager
Robert Murray	Corporate & Finance Manager
Linda Logan	Minute Taker
Helen Lafferty	Guest

Apologies:

Shona McKenna	Committee Member (Leave of absence)
Sarah Morris	Committee Member

2. Jargon Buster

Noted for information.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of Interest.

4. Minutes of the Committee Meeting of 8 March 2022

The minutes of the committee meeting of 8 March 2022 were proposed by Darron Brown and seconded by Jane Heppenstall as an accurate record of the proceedings.

5. Matters arising from the minutes report.

The Director proposed that the new business plan be discussed at an Ad Hoc committee meeting. The Corporate and Governance Officer will contact members to arrange a suitable date.

6. Gas Servicing Report

The Maintenance Manager presented the report to update committee on the proposed changes to the gas servicing and maintenance contract with Saltire.

He highlighted that restrictions due to Covid had resulted in an unsettled market for procuring contracts with increases to both labour and material being reported and going to open tender in the current climate of uncertainty could potentially open us up to larger cost implication. He took committee through cost increases as reported by the contractor. A benchmarking exercise had been carried out with three other housing associations with their costs per property (excluding VAT) ranging from £95 to £110 per property. Our cost would equate to £96 per property excluding VAT.

He sought committee approval to extend the current gas management and servicing contract for a further 2 years at the cost increase of £80 to £96 +VAT per property, a total cost increase from £62,880 to £75,456 + VAT per year for the 786 property with gas.

Resolution:

Committee approved the extension of the current gas management and servicing contract for 2 years and the cost increase of £80 to £96 + VAT per property.

Proposed Clare Monteith and Darron Brown seconded the extension of the current gas managing and servicing contract at a cost of £96 + VAT per property.

7. Allocations Policy

The Housing Manager presented the report to update on the progress of the Allocations Policy and Equalities Impact Assessment.

She advised that all tenants and applicants had been provided with a summary of the draft allocation policy and invited to attend 1 of 3 consultation sessions in March, details were also provided on the website. She noted that only two tenants and one applicant had attended the session. No questions were raised in relation to the policy and no responses were received via email or telephone. Some feedback had been received from stakeholders who had advised they were satisfied with the content and that it met the needs of their clients.

She asked committee to note appendix 2 of the report which provided comments on the Equalities Impact Assessment carried out by the consultant. The assessment had not highlighted any key issues however further minor adjustments will be required. A further progress report will be presented to committee at a later date.

Committee noted the progress of the implementation of the Draft Allocation Policy.

8. Rent Arrears update

The Housing Manager reported that since the last committee update, gross current rent arrears had reduced by £14,175 to £279,282. For the same period net current arrears had reduced by £21,220 to £258,336 and former tenant arrears had reduced by £6,352.

Universal Credit is now claimed by 249 of Wellhouse households and account for £156,545 of total gross current rent arrears.

The Housing team are focusing on reducing the UC Debt, ensuring that affordable arrangements are being made for those with outstanding balances. The Tenant Grant Fund from GCC of £7,817 had been totally utilised by those households who fulfilled the criteria.

She advised that as per committees request the option of selling debt to an external company had been explored in discussion with TC Young. She noted that normally debt is sold at 15% of its value and the variety of methods used to recover the debt they have bought had raised alarm bells, some of which may cause reputation damage to Wellhouse HA and cause distress to current and former tenants. She stated that our preferred option would be to continue with the tracing of former tenants and seeking wage arrestment where appropriate.

She asked committee to note that a decree for eviction had been granted in March. The tenant ended his tenancy today. A technical eviction will take place in his absence and we will continue to seek payment for the amount outstanding as well as legal costs.

Committee noted the update on the arrears position.

9. Operational update

Housing Manager:

The Housing Manager stated that while collection of rent arrears remains a priority, estate management issues have escalated significantly and are taking up a great deal of Officers time. To ensure that all functions are carried out correctly in line with the new Homemaster system each of the 3 Housing Officers will concentrate solely on rent collection, estate management issues and the new allocations policy.

She advised that an open day will be arranged in the Café on 24th May 2022 to discuss estate management issues. Nicola Connelly and the Anti-Social Behaviour team, GCC and Scottish Fire and Rescue will attend. Tenants and service users will be invited to attend.

The use of CCTV in backcourts and other common areas had been explored by herself and the Maintenance Manager. She advised of a meeting with a company specialising in redeployable cameras, we await costings. In addition, the Maintenance Manager, had approached Innovate, our current provider for the alarm system, who will supply costs for solar controlled cameras and redeployable cameras

She asked committee to note that the Income Advise Officer has reported that tenants are struggling to cope with the cost-of-living crises and advised an increase in foodbank referrals as compared to last year. She continues to support tenants to access benefits and crisis support. The STV Winter Fund had now been distributed and benefitted 63 children across 25 families.

She noted that the digital support fund had £158 remaining. She asked committee approval to purchase 5 or 6 mobile phone to distribute to tenants who do not have access to a mobile phone.

Resolution:

Committee approved that the remaining balance of the digital support be used for the purchase of mobile phones, which was proposed by Jane Heppenstall and seconded by Carol Torrie

The Housing Manager advised that the Sustainability Policy was due for review at the April Committee meeting. Since this is a protracted piece of work, she sought approval that the final draft of the policy be presented to committee at its meeting in August to allow the Service Improvement Officer to engage with the management team to ensure that each part of service delivery is thoroughly reviewed.

The Director advised that it is also proposed that the Asset Management Policy be presented to the August committee meeting. He noted the importance of recognising that it is not a case of simply developing the business plan and then constructing the asset management plan as each feed from one to the other.

Resolution:

Committee approved that the Sustainability and the Asset Management policy be presented to Augusts committee meeting, which was proposed by Carol Torrie and seconded by Clare Monteith.

Assets and Maintenance Manager:

The Maintenance Manager reported that the windows and door programme was progressing well. Planned maintenance during 21/22 despite the difficulties with Covid restrictions and resulted in the install of 35 Kitchens, 31 bathrooms and 11 major adaptations. 225 electrical inspections had been completed and 163 upgraded smoke detectors were installed.

He noted that that vacant Estate Warden post has not been filled and to assist the wardens to focus on their main tasks of estate maintenance, Clyde Valley will collect the bulk uplift on weekly basis.

Jane Heppenstall asked why we were having difficulty filling the vacant Estate Warden post. The Maintenance Manager advised of a large number of vacant posts at present. Many of the candidates had not been qualified for the post and other potential candidates are choosing to work in the construction industry due to the higher salaries on offer.

Michelle Harrow asked if the organization had an acquisitions policy. The Director confirmed that we did and would forward to Michelle for information.

Finance and Corporate Services Manager:

The Finance Manager reported that the majority of files and folders had now been migrated to a cloud server with the SDM system being wound down by 1st July and fully removed from the servers. The services within the Hub will be decommissioned as all data will be stored within the cloud.

He advised that the Homemaster project went live on Thursday 7 April, staff were progressing well and gaining confidence in its use.

He advised of 5 policies that were due for review which would be presented to the audit and risk committee at its meeting in May 2022.

10. AOCB

1. Co-option of new committee members:

The Chair thanked Helen Lafferty for attending to observe tonight's meeting.

Helen left the meeting at this time.

The Chair and Director provided an overview to the background and recommendations with regards to the potential candidates for co-option to committee, these being Helen Lafferty, Graeme Wetherill and Gordon Kerr. Committee were asked to approve the co-options until the next AGM.

Resolution:

Darron Brown proposed and Clare Monteith seconded the co-option of Helen Lafferty, Graeme Wetherill, and Gordon Kerr until the next AGM.

2. Pay award agreement.

The Director advised that negotiations with the JNC had now concluded following consultation with resolution of 4.1% recommended.

Membership of EVH was discussed and deferred to the Staffing Committee for discussion.

Resolution:

Committee approved and the recommendation to progress with a 4.1% pay increase.

**There was no other business. Meeting closed 8PM
Next meeting 26 May 2022 at 6PM via Zoom.**