

**WELLHOUSE HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
ON 26 October 2022 AT 6PM – via Zoom**

1. Welcome, Sederunt & Apologies

Present:

Maureen Morris	Chair
Gordon Kerr	Committee Member
Darron Brown	Committee Member
Helen Lafferty	Committee Member
Jane Heppenstall	Committee Member
Michelle Harrow	Committee Member

In Attendance:

Martin Wilkie-McFarlane	Director
Bill Black	Assets & Maintenance Manager
Carol Hamilton	Housing & Customer Services Manager
Robert Murray	Corporate & Finance Manager
Linda Logan	Minute Taker
Leeann Brown	Observer
Fiona Cochran	Housing Officer, Observer
John Stevenson	Service Improvement Officer (Items 6 & 7 only)

Apologies:

Shona McKenna	Committee Member
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The Chair welcomed Leeann Brown, who would observe tonight's meeting. Graeme Wetherill had been detained due to work commitments. He will attend the November meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Jargon Buster

Noted for information.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of Interest.

4. Minutes of the Committee Meeting of 24 August 2022

The minutes of the committee meeting of 24 August 2022 were proposed by Darron Brown and seconded by Jane Heppenstall as an accurate record of the proceedings.

4.a Minutes of the Committee Meeting of 1st September

The minutes of the committee meeting of 1st September 2022 were proposed by Jane Heppenstall and seconded by Darron Brown as an accurate record of the proceedings

5. Matters arising from the minutes report.

The Housing and Customer Services Manager informed committee that that the Tenant Participation Strategy would be presented to committee at the November meeting. She proposed to email committee members with Equalities Training dates for December.

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

6. Assurance Statement & Evidence

The Director recapped that the assurance statement was an annual submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator and to provide assurance to the committee that we are meeting our regulatory requirements. He introduced John Stevenson, who would present the report.

John Stevenson affirmed that all RSL's must produce an annual assurance statement and as part of the statement, the management committee must confirm that the governing body has assurance that we comply with the SHR's published guidance. He noted an updated spreadsheet which had fully functioning linked evidence, that the Association remains compliant and meets the regulatory requirements including the standards of governance and financial management.

He stated a major change in providing assurance was the process of implementing an effective approach to the collection of equalities information and how we adopt a human rights approach to our work as outlined at 5.2. He noted that committee had recently approved our Equalities and Diversity policy and the action plan.

He emphasised that whilst going through the evidence bank no material issues of non-compliance were highlighted however it was noted that we need to improve consultation with residents beyond committee, complete planned works to fully comply with human rights and equalities, understand the continuing impact of Covid and Brexit including the current cost of living crises. In addition, we must ensure that we continue to meet our tenant's safety requirements and support tenants through these challenging times.

Jane Heppenstall sought clarification on the timescales for delivering the above improvements. John confirmed that delivery would include good planning, actions that have been received and built into the business plan and consultation with our tenants.

Michelle Harrow referred to recent guidance on ECIR's and abeyances and how we record these. She sought clarification if the Association were compliant with the recording of ECIRs and abeyances and whether there was a crossover into the assurance evidence. John confirmed that alterations had been made to the ARC return to reflect the guidance and recording of ECIRs and abeyances. He stated that guidance from the SHR was that if we felt we wanted to reflect recording of ECIRs and abeyances into the assurance statement, we could, however we had covered the position directly with the Regulator at the time of the ARC submission.

Committee discussed and the Director reflected on whether the committee would prefer that the recording of ECIRs and abeyances be within the assurance statement. Committee considered that the recording of such within the ARC and clarification directly with the Regulator provided sufficient reassurance.

The Finance Manager confirmed that the Assurance Evidence Bank would be reviewed by the Internal Auditors in January. The Director asked that those committee members who wish to volunteer to meet the internal auditors following their review email him directly with their availability.

Resolution:

Committee

- **Noted the regulatory framework;**
- **Noted that we were currently complaint and that we meet the regulatory requirements including the standards of governance and financial management;**
- **Approved the Assurance Statement and authorised the Chair to sign said statement;**
- **Agreed that 1-2 committee members would meet with the Internal Auditors following the internal audit in January to discuss their findings of the assurance evidence bank.**

Michelle Harrow proposed and Gordon Kerr seconded that the Chair sign the Assurance Statement on behalf of the committee for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator Portal no later than 31 October 2022.

7. Performance Analysis 21/22

John Stevenson informed committee that as part of the Scottish Housing Network (SHN) we submit benchmarking information to the SHN submitting a report on our performance against other organisations within our peer groups as outlined within the committee report. He asked committee to note that overall satisfaction was good at 95.83% with performance being above the peer group and SHN average. 93.40% of tenants felt that we were good at keeping them informed with 94.79% satisfied with the opportunities to participate in their landlord's decision making process. He took committee through data in relation to our stock condition and repairs performance. 99.12% of our stock had a valid EPC of C or better with 95.08% of our stock meeting SHQS.

He noted that turnover of lets over the reporting period were low, as they had been in previous years. He provided an overview of offers refused and the reasons thereof as reported. Tenancy sustainment indicates that 95.83% of new tenancies sustained for more than one year.

Michelle Harrow sought clarification if repairs were carried out before or after a tenant moves into a property and if this could be a reflection on the high refusal rate on tenemental properties. The Maintenance Manager confirmed that all repairs were carried out before a tenant moves into a property.

Committee discussed at length the rate of refusals and why some properties may be less desirable than others. Darron Brown reflected that further consideration would be required at a later date on the type of housing required within the new build programme.

Action: John Stevenson will forward the full report to committee for information and report to committee at a later date in relation to refusals data, the reasons thereof and investigate in combination with the Housing Manager, the grant funding being made available by the Scottish Government for improvements to properties if let for humanitarian reasons, as advised by Michelle Harrow.

Committee noted the results of Performance Analysis for 21/22.

8. Allocation Policy

The Housing Manager presented the Allocations Policy for approval. She noted that final adjustments had been made resulting from the recommendations of the Equalities Assessment and action plan. The final draft had been published for consultation and discussed by the Customer Opinion Panel in October. There were no responses to the website consultation and the panel were supportive of the policy.

She asked committee to note and comment at page 14 of the policy in relation to aspirational moves. She stated to make best use of our housing stock and to keep a balanced community, where an existing tenant had expressed an interest to move from a flat to a house within Wellhouse that an aspirational move may be considered for a small percentage of applicants.. Such moves would come from existing targets and where there

was no other demand from within the transfer list. Detailed allocation procedures would be developed following approval of the policy.

Michelle Harrow agreed that providing the option of an aspirational move within the policy to be a good idea. She considered that providing a small number of moves from a transfer request list, creates a letting chain which opens up another property for let from the waiting list.

Committee discussed the allocation procedures and the percentage of homeless lets being offered.

Resolution

Committee approved the Allocations Policy.

The Allocations Policy was proposed by Michelle Harrow and seconded by Darron Brown for adoption.

9. Management Account to 30 September 2022

The Finance & Corporate Services Manager presented the report to provide committee members with a comparison of the estimated and actual financial position to 30 September 2022.

He provided a brief overview of the Statement of Comprehensive Income and variances. The budgeted surplus for the 6 months to 30 September was £307,391. The actual results for the period show a surplus of £369,908, a favourable variance for the period of £62,517.

The overall variance arises from:

Operational activities ££59,846 – favourable variance

Net interest and other activities £2,671 – favourable variance

The Finance & Corporate Services Manager provided a breakdown overspends in relation to reactive and voids maintenance which were in the main as a result increased voids for the period and the poor condition of the voids as compared to previous years. He discussed the underspend in cyclical maintenance against budget however a detailed program of works is now being worked through and it is anticipated that the underspend will be utilised in the following quarter for programmed works.

He asked committee to note that the property at Newhills Road has been let and provided an explanation of the grant energy fund of £15,00 and how it was recorded within the balance sheet.

He reported no covenant compliance issues and a gearing result of 17.88%

He noted the cash position had reduced and in a reasonably healthy position finishing the period at over £2.952M.

Resolution:

Committee noted and approved the Management Accounts for the period to date.

The Management Accounts to 30 September 2022 were proposed by Michelle Harrow and seconded by Gordon Kerr.

10. Rent Arrears update.

The Housing Manager noted that as reported at the last committee meeting the Association is in the process adopting a similar reporting method to our peers. Homemaster had updated our system which now allows us to record within our technical arrears all universal credit payments. She noted that there are still some issues with the calculation of technical arrears which Homemaster are working to resolve.

She asked committee to note concern regarding the increased in arrears bands as a result of the cost of living crisis. Officers continue to provide support to tenants.

She discussed the evictions moratorium announced by the Scottish Parliament in September which will impact on any decrees granted in respect of court proceedings. The impact of the Bill on any such order will prevent enforcement of the decree for a period of six months starting on the day in which the decree was granted. In addition to the Bill, the Sheriffs Principal introduced guidance on Sheriff court practice intended to prevent a culture of repeat hearings. She noted that Sheriffs are less likely to sist cases to allow monitoring of payment arrangements with the likely impact that some tenants' may take advantage of the situation and choose not to pay their rent or rent arrears which may result in Officers having to restart the process of recovery as well as increasing court costs.

She asked committee to note correspondence received from the Deputy Director of Better Homes at appendix 1, which had been written to landlords to provide assurance that concerns raised by the social rented sector would be considered.

She advised that since the last committee update gross tenant rent arrears had reduced by £1,372 to £27,885. During the same period net current arrears had reduced by £32,872 to £235,969.

Committee noted the update on the arrears position.

11. Operational update.

Housing Manager.

She advised that the consultation event which had been planned for earlier in the week with regards Estate Management had been cancelled due to concern for tenants gathering in an enclosed space following a Covid outbreak within the office.

She noted that we had been awarded £15K from the SFHA Fuel Insecurity Fund to help household experiencing fuel poverty over the winter period. Staff will help identify tenants in need of support.

The Income Advice Officer continues to support tenants by providing benefit advice and crisis support. She noted that one tenant with rent arrears over £3K had been assisted by the Income Advice Officer to challenge housing benefit decision which had resulted in the tenants receiving over £12K in backdated housing benefit.

Assets & Maintenance Manager.

The Maintenance Manager informed committee that we would be re-advertising the vacant Estate Wardens position in October/November.

Void meters are still causing an issue with need to be reset. A meeting had been arranged with Utility Aid for resets on 20 October 2022.

Finance Manager.

The Finance manager advised that an internal audit on Cyber Security had been carried out in early October with no significant issues being raised. A full report will be presented to the Audit & Risk Committee in November 2022.

Committee noted the operational update.

12. Election to Committee

The Corporate & Governance Officer presented the report confirm elected members following the 2022 Annual General Meeting and to seek nominations to elect a Vice Chair.

Darron Brown volunteered to stand for election for the position of Vice Chair. There were no further nominations.

Resolution:

Darron Brown was duly elected as Vice-Chair.

Committee agreed to elect Chair for the Audit & Risk and Staffing Committee at their next meeting.

13. AOCB

The Director advised of requests for donations from Sandaig Primary and Cllr Kelly for a firework display being held at Glasgow Fort. He considered that given the current financial climate that we do not contribute to a fireworks display or to Sandaig Primary as it not a school within our area. Committee agreed with the recommendation. The Director will write Sandaig Primary outlining our position.

There was no other business. Meeting closed 7:30PM

Next Meeting 30 November 2022 at 6PM via Zoom and in house