

**WELLHOUSE HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
ON 28 June 2023 AT 6PM – via Teams and in house**

1. Welcome, Sederunt & Apologies

Present:

Maureen Morris	Chair
Darron Brown	Vice Chair
Gordon Kerr	Committee Member
Helen Lafferty	Committee Member

In Attendance:

Martin Wilkie-McFarlane	Director
Bill Black	Assets & Maintenance Manager
James Wilson	Housing & Customer Services Manager
Robert Murray	Finance & Corporate Services Manager
Linda Logan	Minutes

Apologies:

Anna Dukova	Casual Member
Jane Heppenstall	Committee Member
Michelle Harrow	Committee Member
Leeann Brown	Co-optee

2. Jargon Buster

Noted for information.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of Interest.

4. Minutes of the Committee Meeting of 24 May 2023

The minutes of the committee meeting of 24 May 2023 were proposed by Gordon Kerr and seconded by Maureen Morris as an accurate record of the proceedings.

5. Matters arising from the minutes report.

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

6. Loan Portfolio Return.

The report was presented to provide committee with details of the Annual Loan Portfolio Return to be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator. There were no concerns regarding any aspect of the Return.

The Finance Manager highlighted that approximately 17% of all housing stock was not granted as security for loans and compliance, which remains unencumbered. Total loan debt at March 2023 was £7.421.4M and

around 86% of loan debt is on a fixed rate basis, which complies with the treasury management policy. There were no issues in terms of covenant compliance. He drew committee's attention to appendix 1 of the report and invited comments. There were none.

Resolution

Committee approved the submission of the Annual Loan Portfolio Return to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Darron Brown proposed and Maureen Morris seconded submission of the Annual Loan Portfolio Return.

7. GDPR.

The Finance Manager presented the report to provide the committee with an update on GDPR and any breaches that have occurred as at appendix 1 of the report.

The Committee noted the details of the register and any lessons learned.

8. Information Commissioners Office

The Finance Manager presented the report to provide the statistics on the Freedom of Information requests made during the year 22-23. The report benchmarked the requests received by Wellhouse Housing Association against other members of EHRA for the year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. During the year 6 FOISA requests and 1 EIR were responded to. We had the highest number of requests of all EHRA members.

Committee noted the details of the quarterly returns submitted to the Scottish Information Commissioner.

9. Disability Committed Employer

The Finance Manager presented the report highlighting Wellhouse Housings' commitment to the Disability Confident Scheme. He noted that due to lockdown the progression of the scheme requirements were not within timescales and therefore registration of the scheme was withdrawn. We have now registered on the scheme at level 1. He outlined the 5 key commitments of the scheme and actions required in relation to where vacancies are advertised and providing work experience to disabled people. An update on progress will be brought to the committee annually.

Committee noted the details of the Scheme and the timescales of progression through the levels.

10. Rent Arrears Report

The report was presented to update the committee on the rent arrears position. Since the last committee update gross current rent arrears have decreased by £1,683. During the same period net current arrears decreased by £13,464. Former tenant arrears increased by £1,643. Housing Officers continue to make new payment arrangements or alter previous arrangements to assist tenants who are dealing with the cost of utility bills and the cost of living. The collection rate was 94.3%.

He provided an overview of the rent arrears performance charts. 60% of tenants in rent arrears have arrangements in place. 51% of tenants have arrears under £1,000, 25% have arrears between £1 – 2,000 and 24% of tenants have arrears of over £2,000.

The committee noted the rent arrears position.

11. Complaints and Compliment Report.

The Housing Manager presented information for complaints and compliments in line with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and the Association's regulatory requirements covering the period 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023. We received 1 stage 1 complaint within the period 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2023. The resolution time was 5 days against the SPSO target of 5 working days. 1 stage 2 complaints were received within the quarter with a resolution time of 9 days against the SPSO target of 20 working day.

The Housing Manager noted that compared to last years outcomes, stage 1 complaints decreased from 30 cases during the year to 11 cases this year. In the last year 18 stage 2 complaints were received with 3 being carried forward to this year. This year 6 new complaints were received and the 3 carried forward had been responded to.

Committee noted the update on our complaints and compliments position.

12. Policy Review Report

Committee were provided with the reviewed Contractors in Liquidation, Defects and Acquisition, Protocol for entering into settlement agreements, Smoke Free and the new Disciplinary policy for less the 2 years service for consideration and approval. The polices will be reviewed 3 – 5 yearly with the amendments being made as appropriate and communicated to all staff and relevant stakeholders.

Resolution:

Committee approved the reviewed Contractors in Liquidation, Defects and Acquisition Policies approval. The polices will be reviewed 3 yearly.

Committee approves the new Draft Disciplinary policy for less than two service and the reviewed Protocol for entering into settlement agreements and the Smoke Free policies. The policies will be reviewed 3 – 5 yearly.

Darron Brown proposed and Helen Lafferty seconded the aforementioned policies.

13 Operational Update

Director:

EVH:

The Director noted that committee had been considering cancelling full membership of EVH as discussed at previous staffing committee meeting in 2022. He highlighted that if we were not a full member we would

need to negotiate every year on salary increase and that staff would lose continuity of conditions of service if they changed jobs. Committee had agreed in principle to remain members at the May committee meeting. He recommended that we remain full members as it would save significant time negotiating salaries and other Terms and Condition for an organisation of our size. He sought comments from the committee.

Gordon Kerr concurred with the Director. He advised that his organisation were not members of EVH and negotiations were complex and time consuming.

Resolution:

Committee agreed to remain full members of EVH.

Maureen Morris proposed and Darron Brown seconded the proposal to remain full members of EVH.

Regulation of Social Housing.

The Director advised that the SHR was conducting a review of regulation of social housing. He will respond on behalf of the Association. Committee noted the discussion paper and agreed to email the Director with any specific comments.

Investors in People awards 2023.

The Director advised that the Association had been initially shortlisted in the top 20 UK Employer of the Year Silver in the liP 2023 award. We did not apply to be shortlisted. We have been invited to submit a supporting statement by 1 September 2023 which will enable liP to determine if Wellhouse HA will reach the final shortlist. The Director will complete the statement on behalf of the committee.

Committee noted the Cost of living (tenant protection Scotland Act 2023). The Director will keep committee updated.

e-learning portal.

The Corporate and Governance Officer will advise when new committee emails addresses are active and when all members have been registered on the e-learning portal.

Housing Manager:

HomeMaster.

The Housing Manager advised that the first HomeMaster user group meeting had taken place on Tuesday to share best practices and issues arising with HomeMaster.

Insurance:

He sought approval to share information received from ECH Facilities with regards contents insurance in the upcoming newsletter, general correspondence and at sign up of new tenants. He noted that few of our tenants have contents insurance which leaves tenants in a vulnerable position when damage is done.

Committee agreed to the option being made available to our tenants.

Rent & Debt Management.

The new arrears procedure will be implemented from 1st July 2023. Committee will be updated on results at the August committee meeting.

Factoring Service.

The Housing Manager noted that the review of the factoring service was progressing well. A further internal meeting is scheduled, and thereafter looking to begin consultation with owners. The Factory Policy and Factoring Debt Policy is due for review and will be presented to committee one the above changes have been implemented.

Welfare Advice update

Committee noted the increase in pension age tenants accessing the service to claim benefits such as attendance allowance and pension credit.

Allocations and Voids.

He advised that the property which had fire damage has now been repaired and back with the tenants since 16th June 2023. We are dealing with our insurance company to recover costs for damages.

Maintenance Manager:

Saltire are currently completing the surveys for boiler replacements.

Sheils Construction have withdrawn their labour with no notice to us. We have obtained the services of S & D Maintenance for joinery works.

The Maintenance Manager advised that we have started reviewing our EPCs to work out potential costs. A budget against each property will be implemented depending on its failure range from reach a B from the EPC information we have.

Finance Manager:

The Finance Manager advised that meeting had taken place with our lenders and a third potential lender (CAF Bank) regarding funding options for future development. Further specifics will be provided on their rates and reported to committee at a future meeting.

The Finance & Corporates Services Assistant vacancy has now been filled. He welcomed Stephne Moir to the team.

Our IT provider has completed setting up Wellhouse email addresses and a dedicated file space for the committee to access. Appropriate training will be provided to the committee. We are currently sourcing entry level laptops for committee use.

He noted that the HomeMaster system enables purchase invoices to be authorised using the system. Any spend above £15,000 is required to be approved by a committee members. He noted that training is required for committee members who would be willing to review and authorise invoices.

He noted that Fraud training has taken place on 1st June 2023. A recording of the session was made on teams was available for members to access should they wish to do so.

14. AOCB

AGM planning/venue.

The Corporate & Governance Officer sought committee's preference on the format and venue for this year's AGM. It was agreed that the AGM will be convened in the Hub Café and be an in-house event. Easthall Residents will be asked to cater the event.

There was no other business. Meeting closed 7:40PM
Next Meeting 30 August 2023 at 6PM via Teams and in house