

**WELLHOUSE HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
ON 25 October 2023 AT 6PM – via Teams**

1. Welcome, Sederunt & Apologies

Present:

Maureen Morris	Chair
Gordon Kerr	Committee Member
Helen Lafferty	Committee Member
Anna Dukova	Committee Member
Jane Heppenstall	Committee Member
Michelle Harrow	Committee Member
Darron Brown	Vice Chair
Leeann Brown	Committee Member

In Attendance:

Martin Wilkie-McFarlane	Director
Bill Black	Assets & Maintenance Manager
Robert Murray	Finance & Corporate Services Manager
Linda Logan	Minutes
John Stevenson	Service Improvement Officer (Item 6 only)

2. Minutes of the Committee Meeting of 30 August 2023.

Committee approved the minutes of the committee meeting of 30 August 2023 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Jane Heppenstall proposed and Gordon Kerr seconded the minutes of 30 August 2023.

3. Jargon Buster

Noted for information.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Matters arising and actions from the minutes report.

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

6. Annual Assurance Statement and Evidence Bank

The Chair welcomed John Stevenson to the meeting.

John asked committee to note points 4.5 and 4.6, advising that he was pleased to report that the damaged database had now been rebuilt and that all data and shared links were fully functional. A copy of the evidence database had been sent to the internal auditors to consider and to give assurance that their findings had been addressed. He stated that staff had reviewed all the core guidance and the databank had been updated to reflect the revised framework and toolkit issued by the SFHA as well assurance required from the Scottish Housing Regulator that we evidence an effective approach to the collection of equalities information and our

compliance in relation to tenant and resident safety. He asked if committee had any questions before progressing to the assurance statement.

Jane Heppenstall sought assurance that all of the recommendations had been updated and that committee would have the opportunity to verify the evidence bank before the end of the financial year. John confirmed that committee would be given access to review the evidence bank. The Director assured committee that all of the evidence and revised framework had been updated and reflected within the databank. He advised that a report from the auditors would be provided. He noted that the audit had taken place in October while the damaged databank was being repaired. He verified that he had himself checked the databank and thanked John for the work he had completed to rectify the damage. John stated that we have taken a lessons learned approach. He noted that during the quarterly business plan/ risk management review the evidence bank will also be updated and maintained. to provide further reassurance and updates provided to the committee at this time.

The Finance Manager suggested that committee delay reviewing the evidence bank until February when the ICT strategy would be place and committee would have access to the portal through the Wellhouse PCs provided to the committee.

John 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 stated that in reviewing our compliance with the regulatory framework we were assured that we have established appropriate systems for the collection of equalities data and working towards using this data to take account of equality and human rights issues in our policy making and day to day service delivery. He took committee through the areas the Association will focus on during the coming year to ensure that we remain compliant and using the Equality Impact Assessment when reviewing key policies and collected data to inform our decision and service delivery.

He informed the committee that we ae assured that Wellhouse Housing complies with the regulatory standard requested as set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework, the Scottish Social Housing Charter, legislative duties and the Scottish Housing Regulator Standards of Governance and Financial Management.

Michelle Harrow sought clarification on our level of SHQS compliance. John confirmed that the KPI's reflected a 96.4%. The Maintenance Manager confirmed this percentage however noted constant movement due to the EICR's.

Resolution:

Committee;

Noted the Regulatory Framework;

Approved the Annual Assurance Statement and authorised the Chair to sign said statement for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 October 2023.

Noted that we are compliant and meet the regulatory requirements including the standards of governance and financial management;

Agreed to 1 or 2 committee member be given temporary remote access to the server to verify the evidence bank and report back to committee.

Michelle Harrow proposed and Darron Brown seconded the aforementioned resolutions.

The Chair thanked John for his work on the Assurance Statement. John left the meeting at this time.

7. Management Accounts – 30 September 2023.

The Finance Manager presented the report to provide members with a comparison of the budget and actual financial positions as at 30 September 2023. He advised the Statement of Comprehensive Income showed a budgeted surplus for the period of £142,011, however the actual results to the period show a surplus of £373,736.

He noted an overall favourable variance of £231,725 arising from:

Operational activities – favourable variance of £253,581

Net interest and other activities – adverse variance of £21,856

Income:

The Finance Manager noted that income was close to budget. Void losses are lower than the budget figure of £21,551 as opposed to the actual figure of £9,324 in the main due to the number of void properties being lower than budgeted and turnaround times on some being better than in previous years.

Expenditure:

He advised an underspend of £36,065 in salaries against budget mainly due to staff being recruited at a lower pay scale. There was also a provision for long-term sickness or maternity cover which had not been used and for additional cost for handover if a new director had been appointed. He reported an underspend of £227,991 against budget over all areas of maintenance and provided an explanation with regards the reactive/cyclical and the major and planned renewals programme.

Overheads reflect on overspend of £27,300 against budget in the main due to additional utility charges being higher than anticipated and costs for development some of which may be supported by grant funding.

Cash flow report:

Overall, the cash flow report showed a surplus of £43,011 as opposed to a surplus of £373,736 in SOCI.

There were no covenant compliance issues.

Committee discussed in detail development agent costs, grant funding submissions and the overall increase in void property costs.

Action: The Maintenance Manager will prepare a graph to map the increase in costs and the level of damage for void properties, as compared to previous years and distribute to the committee for information.

Resolution:

Committee approved the management accounts to 30 September 2023.

The Management Accounts to 30 September 2023 were proposed by Anna Dukova and seconded by Gordon Kerr.

8. Rent Arrears update.

The Housing Manager asked committee to note that since the last committee update gross current tenant rent arrears had increased by £9,529 to £95,170 (8.46%). He stated the % for the same period last year was 8.81%.

He noted the arrears strategy was now in place and being actioned by the Housing Officers. A review of 30% of arrears cases had been completed which showed that the rent collection rate had increased to 99.8%.

Discussion ensued on the increased collection rate, the level of increased rent arrears and the reason for this. Focus on managed payments was discussed and the % of Universal Credit arrears accounts. Michelle Harrow sought clarification on how our rent arrears benchmarked against similar sized/profile housing associations. The Housing Manager confirmed that performance was poor. He had included this within annual performance visit that he had received from Scottish Housing Network

Committee noted the rent arrears update.

9. Policies

The Maintenance Manger & Governance Officer provided an overview of the reviewed Fire Safety Policy, the Electrical Policy and the Code of Conduct for Committee members. The policies will be reviewed 3 – 5 yearly with amendments being made as appropriate.

Resolution:

Committee approved the aforementioned policies and the Committee Code of Conduct.

Leeann Brown proposed and Anna Dukova seconded the policies and the Committee Code of Conduct.

10. Operational update.

Housing and Customer Services Manager:

Homemaster.

The Housing Manager advised that a Homemaster priority list had been set up to achieve key tasks for the benefit of our customers to include a tenant portal and an online waiting list application. A user group meeting for HomeMaster has been arranged for 25 October and the conference will be attended on 7 November.

The Cost-of-Living Tenant Protection Scotland Act 2022

The Cost-of-Living Tenant Protection Scotland Act 2022 was a temporary piece of legislation introduced to protect tenants from the cost-of-living crisis and has now been extended until the end of March 2024.

Scottish Housing Network Performance Visit 22/23.

The Housing Manager advised that our performance analysis visit by Scottish Housing Network was carried out in August 2023. A full report was included at appendix 2.

Rent/Debt Management.

The £2,000+ strategy is in place for arrears and an audit of performance will commence in October 2023.

Assets & Maintenance Manager.

Pipe Excavation works.

The Maintenance Manager advised that work on the drain outside the office commenced on 2nd October and had had a 5-day overrun due to some of the work encountered. He asked committee to note the photograph showing some of the excavated pipe being blocked which appears to have come from the foundations of the building when it was poured.

Reinforced Autoclaved aerated concrete. (RAAC)

He asked committee to note a letter received from the SHR regarding RAAC, appendix 4, and the possibility of it being in our stock. As per the advice in the letter a desk top survey using drawings from the development as well as stiff knowledge of the various types of construction. We had found no evidence that RAAC was used in any of the construction. An evidence bank of photos and copies of the drawings has been set up. The SHR will be advised of our findings.

Finance & Corporate Services Manager.

The Finance Manager advised that the internal audits on Governance, Risk and the Assurance Statement were now complete and will be reported to the November Audit and Risk Committee. An interim audit on the Business Plan was scheduled for 18 October 2023.

A meeting has been scheduled with the insurance broker in the next few weeks to discuss insurance premiums which appear to have increased significantly.

He asked committee to note that statutory returns had been completed, noting some issues which were explained within the report.

Gordon Kerr asked if the Insurance Broker had mentioned anything about the reinstatement values of the properties. The Finance Manager confirmed this. He stated that they had also requested information on the types of building, which would be discussed in more detail during the meeting. Gordon advised that properties appear to be undervalued and they had been informed that they would be required to have formal valuations completed on their stock for reinstatement values for next year.

Governance Officer:

The Governance Officer advised that proposals had now been received and the proposal and the package subscription agreed by the Director and Chair for migration to the new BoardEffect portal. 14 users have been registered at this time with an option to add further users should more committee members be recruited. She asked committee to note the migration schedule and the training dates for committee orientation. It is expected that BoardEffect will go live on 18th December 2023.

Community Activities.

The Director provided an overview of Hub activities provided by Easthall Residents Association. He has committee to note the Xmas Fayre similar to last year which will take place on 9th December 2023. He encouraged attendance.

11. AOCB

The Chair advised that EHRA was hosting a quiz night on Friday night. She invited committee members to attend the event.

There was no other business. Meeting closed 8:00PM
Next Meeting, 29 November 2023. 6PM.