

RUTHERGLEN & CAMBUSLANG HOUSING ASSOCIATION

**Minutes of Management Committee Meeting
held on
Tuesday 7th February 2023
at 5.45pm in the Association's Office**

Present:

Edward Harkins – Chair
Robert McLeary
Maryellen McKeown
Karen McCartney
Natalie Kirk

In Attendance:

Elaine Lister (to agenda item 6.0)
Jim Kerr

AGENDA ITEM 1.0 – APOLOGIES

Apologies noted: Frances Cunningham, Gary Gow, Karen Kirk

AGENDA ITEM 2.0 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AGENDA ITEM 3.0 – MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Agenda Item 7 – Edward requested that the minutes were amended to state that he had commented that the community engagement was additional work for the Association.

With this amendment the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th February were noted as a true record.

Approved : Robert McLeary
Seconded : Maryellen McKeown

AGENDA ITEM 3.1 – MATTERS ARISING

3.1.1 Apologies

Elaine advised that Jean Stewart had submitted her resignation from the Management Committee due to her ongoing health issues.

Members instructed that a gift and card was sent to Jean in appreciation of the years of service Jean had given to the Association and the contribution she had made to its growth and success.

3.1.2 Election of Office Bearers

Elaine advised that she was awaiting guidance from the Regulator regarding when the five year period of the Chair's tenure would expire.

3.1.3 Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Jim updated members on the progress with the surveys and noted that, to date, 300 had been completed.

3.1.4 Director's Absence

Members noted that the Notifiable Event regarding the Director's return to full time working had been submitted.

3.1.5 Development at New Road

Members noted that we were still awaiting funding approval.

3.1.6 A.O.C.B.

Edward commented that it was being reported that £40m in vouchers had not been claimed.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS

It was noted that there had been no sub-committee meetings since the last meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – COMMITTEE DIGEST

5.1 Committee & Senior Staff Strategy Planning Day

Committee noted the arrangements and agenda for the Strategy Planning Day being held on Saturday 11th February 2023.

Karen McCartney submitted her apologies for the day as she had work commitments.

5.2 Committee Training Register

It was noted that no members had attended any training events.

5.3 Tenant & Resident Safety Compliance

Elaine explained that, following tragedies such Grenfell and the death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale due to exposure to mould in his home, The Scottish Housing Regulator had announced measures it would be taking to get the proper level of assurance on tenant and resident safety. These include;

- Getting additional information from landlords
- Recommencing a programme of annual assurance statement visits
- Ensuring governing bodies have been assured regarding tenant and resident safety
- Landlords being required to advise the SHR when they have reviewed their systems relating to mould and dampness

- Requiring landlords to evidence appropriate, proactive and effective systems to identify and deal with reported cases of mould and damp
- Requiring landlords to make an explicit statement in the Annual Assurance Statement on their compliance with their tenant and resident safety obligations
- Making it mandatory for landlords to provide detailed comments on their performance, particularly regarding compliance with gas, electrical and fire safety as part of the ARC return

Committee members acknowledged that tenants and resident safety had to be a priority focus for the Association and discussed;

1. How they currently get information and assurance regarding the Association's level of compliance
2. If the level of information they receive is sufficient to give the necessary level of assurance
3. The potential consequences for the Association in the event of not fully complying with its obligations
4. How the Association can clearly demonstrate that it fully complies with its obligations relating to tenant and resident safety

It was noted that 4 of the engagement plans published by the Regulator mentioned tenant and resident safety as a reasons for its engagement with the landlord.

Elaine advised that the Association subscribed to, and followed, the ASC health and safety manual and stressed that she was confident that the Association was performing well with regards the actual service delivery relating to tenant and resident safety. However she further advised that it was extremely important that the Association could demonstrate full compliance with up-to-date policies, registers, systems etc.

Edward agreed with Elaine that the Association was performing well but stated that many landlords were failing to have the actual evidence of compliance readily available. He also noted that the maintenance department was going through a period of instability and change due to the Maintenance Manager's pending retirement. Given the importance of this issue, he felt it would be advisable for the Committee to seek external verification and assurance as to the Association's level of compliance.

Robert noted that he was concerned that, given the manager's retirement and his replacement requiring a learning and settling-in period, the department did not have the capacity to carry out a full review of the Association's compliance and, therefore, supported the proposal to have an external, independent review.

Karen agreed with the external route and stated that she felt it extremely important that the Association could demonstrate its compliance, not only to the Regulator but also service users and stakeholders.

Based on the discussions, Karen proposed the committee approved the recommendations to;

- Carry out a full review of the Association's policies and procedures relating to tenant and resident safety
- Have the review carried out by an external consultant

This was seconded by Robert and unanimously approved by the other members of the Committee

Members also gave the Director the authority to appoint a suitably qualified external consultant to carry out the review and report back to the Management Committee.

5.4 Staffing Update

5.4.1 Asset Manager's Post

Elaine outlined the proposals for the interviews for the post. Edward proposed that Gary, as Chair of the Maintenance Sub-Committee, was asked to be part of the interview panel.

Robert expressed concern as to potentially not being able to recruit a suitably candidate as many organisation both within and outwith the housing sector were experiencing real difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly in maintenance, finance and administration. Members discussed the possible reasons for this and the implications for the Association in the recruitment exercise was unsuccessful and it was agreed that consideration should be given to how the maintenance department could be supported until an appointment could be made.

Members agreed;

- That Gary should be invited to be part of the selection and interview panel
- For Elaine to identify a suitable external 'professional' to participate in the selection and interview panel in an advisory capacity
- For EVH to carry out pre-interview interview 'management test'
- The Office Bearers and Director to develop a 'plan B' in the event that an appointment was not made

5.4.2 Maintenance Officer

Committee noted that Robert Murray had been appointed as Maintenance Officer following interviews.

5.4.3 Temporary Receptionist

Elaine gave the background to appointment of a temporary receptionist. Members commented that the reception/administration team traditionally was the most

unstable as staff within the department tended to move on to other, promoted posts, both within and outwith the Association.

Elaine acknowledged that the department had experienced a higher than normal level of turnover in the past year and that it had been extremely difficult to get, and retain, temporary staff and that this had had a heavy impact on other departments. Going forward however, she was looking to put in place a structure for the department that would not only give it some stability, but also provide a higher level of support to other departments.

The Chair explained that he had previously approved Elaine leaving the meeting early due to personal commitment.
Elaine gave her apologies and left the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 6.0 – RENT INCREASE 2023

Members discussed the key points of the report and noted;

- The results of the consultation exercise (67.7% of respondents voted for 5% increase with limited investment in the stock for 2023/2024)
- Inflation running at over 10%
- 33% of GWSF members that participated in the rent increase survey were increasing rents by 5%, with just under half increasing their rents by over 5.5%
- The Association's average rents compared with those of South Lanarkshire Council, the peer group and the Scottish average
- The impact of a 5% increase on average rents
- Affordability of the Association's rents
- Results from the tenant satisfaction survey and the post COVID lockdown survey that show the majority of tenants reported never experiencing any difficulty in paying their rent
- The impact of the cost of living crisis on tenants
- Rising costs of materials and labour

Members also considered the potential implications of limiting the planned maintenance works carried out in the coming year on the Association's long term financial forecast as well as it's ability to maintain the stock to the highest standards.

After discussion and taking into account discussion at previous management and housing management sub-committee meetings, members felt a 5% increase was a fair balance between protecting the Association's future financial stability and supporting tenants through the current economic challenges.

Members approved the recommend rent increase of 5%.

Agenda Item 7 – Engagement Working Group

Edward requested that there was a standing agenda item for Engagement & Community Development going forward.

Jim provided an update to the management committee on the following.

Newsletter/Facebook/Twitter – Further meeting of media working group arranged for Friday 10th February 2023 to discuss the upcoming newsletter for Spring 2023. There would also be a focus on Facebook/twitter accounts for the Association to promote the Association's activities.

Karen raised the matter of committee recruitment and a discussion followed on progressing the recruitment of new management committee members by including further articles in our newsletter, writing to and emailing other organisations encouraging them to join our committee and detailing what it would entail and making sure that it is clear that full training would be provided. The emphasis from committee members was on the importance of person-to-person contact and very personalised communications when attempting to attract new membership. Broad impersonal appeals have made little impression.

Staff are continuing to talk with HealthynHappy regarding promotion of their activities within the Association's newsletter and on our website and for the Association to utilise Camglen Radio to promote our activities. Also looking to arrange a meeting with the relevant personnel within HealthynHappy to identify collaborative working opportunities. Edward requested that he be included in the meeting.

Discussed the provision of a map outlining the Association's area of operation for management committee members. Jim presented an A4 map of the Rutherglen and Cambuslang areas and following a detailed discussion it was agreed that this would form the basis of the information to be provided with subsequent maps highlighting the areas where our housing stock is located and stock information, number of tenants etc. to be included. Committee members' wish was for a simple but illustrative core map with 'strands' or attachments that went into more detail site by site. At this initial stage committee members were not seeking an especially large or complex wall display map. Something more simple but effective was to be the aim.

The Association are working in partnership with Glasgow West Housing Association and Tech Lending Hub to provide a lending service of tablets with free data. The criteria for the lending is for people who are Homeless or those that are threatened with homelessness. The Association has identified 8 individuals and that meet the criteria and contacted them and have received 5 notes of interest in borrowing a tablet. Association staff are working to facilitate the lending of the tablets as soon as possible.

Edward commented that the Association should look into sourcing external guidance, support and assistance in order to deliver its objectives in tenant engagement and community engagement. Committee members did not doubt staff enthusiasm and commitment. However, as this was new territory for the Association and there were practical capacity constraints when staff had their other core responsibilities. Committee approved the investigating and appointment of suitable agents by the Director within existing delegated authorities on expenditure etc. Jim to initially contact David at GWSF to find out if he is aware of people or organisations that can provide this type of expertise.

Agenda Item 8 – Correspondence

Members noted the correspondence received.

No committee members requested places in the EVH Governing Body Leadership Programme. Edward had offered to attend and support any committee members if they were thinking of attending. Given Edward's existing skills and knowledge his attendance on his own would not represent VFM for the Association.

Agenda Item 9 – Committee Training Session – Human Rights

It was agreed by members that this would be adjourned to a later date due to a lack of available time to allow for training to be effectively carried out.

Agenda Item 10 – AOCB

Edward again raised the topic of a digitally operative committee. He advised committee members that he would be issuing a survey to ascertain their views and needs on the use of tablets. The survey aim was to meet the imperative need to offer fully inclusive support to all members respecting their individual needs. Equally imperative is that members who prefer to continue with traditional methods will be welcome to do so and will receive proportionate equal support and training suited to their needs.

As there were no other items of business the meeting closed at 7.35pm.