

RUTHERGLEN & CAMBUSLANG HOUSING ASSOCIATION

**Minutes of Management Committee Meeting
held on
Tuesday 21st November 2023
at 5.45pm in the Association's Office**

Present:

Edward Harkins – Chair
Robert McLeary
Maryellen McKeown
Karen McCartney
Natalie Kirk
Karen Kirk
Frances Cunningham
Gary Gow
James Ross

In Attendance:

Elaine Lister – Director
Jim Kerr – Assistant Director
Angela Spence – Ideal Outcomes

AGENDA ITEM 1.0 – APOLOGIES

There were no apologies noted.

AGENDA ITEM 2.0 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AGENDA ITEM 3.0 – MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 24th October 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th October 2023 were noted as a true record subject to spelling amendments.

Proposed: Maryellen McKeown

Seconded: Karen McCartney

AGENDA ITEM 3.1 MATTERS ARISING

3.1.1 Aspire Lets (previous agenda item 3.1.2)

Elaine advised that the meeting with DM Hall regarding standardising the rent setting and legal documentation was proving to be difficult due to holidays and previous commitments.

It was noted that this would continue to be pursued after the holiday period.

Jim referred to his email regarding the interest in leasing Unit 10 I from the newly elected MP for the Rutherglen & West Constituency and advised that no member had objected to offering the lease. He confirmed that there would be no party affiliated signs or banners on display and everything would have the House of Commons logo etc.

Members expressed the view that it fitted in with a number of other public services that were in the office such as Healthy and Happy, 1st Credit Union etc.

Members approved the lease

3.1.2 Annual Declarations (previous agenda item 7.0)

Members noted that there were still a couple of declarations to be completed and returned. Elaine will gather these from the relevant members.

3.1.3 Annual Assurance Statement (previous agenda item 9.0)

Members noted that the amended Annual Assurance Statement had been signed by the Chair, submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator and uploaded on to the Association's website before the submission deadline.

3.1.4 Committee Appraisal Report (previous agenda item 11.0)

Elaine advised that there were 3 individual appraisals still to be carried out and that these had been scheduled for 28th November. Edward urged those members to make every effort to attend their appraisal as these were important to support good governance.

Committee noted that a final report would be presented to the Committee by EVH following completion.

3.1.5 Rutherglen's 900th Anniversary (previous agenda item 15.1)

Elaine advised that no member had, as yet volunteered to represent the Association. She also advised that the Association had received a request on behalf of Councillor Robert Brown who was the Chair of the Rutherglen 900 Steering Group asking to use the meeting room in the Aspire building for future meetings.

Members agreed to the request.

AGENDA ITEM 4.0 – DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Members noted that these would be presented at the next meeting for information.

AGENDA ITEM 5.0 – DRAFT BUDGET FOR APPROVAL

Members deferred this agenda item to the next meeting pending the full draft budget information being previously issued to all members.

AGENDA ITEM 6.0 – FINANCIAL REGULATIONS FOR APPROVAL

Members deferred this agenda item to the next meeting pending the full financial regulations being previously issued to all members.

AGENDA ITEM 7.0 – PROPOSED RENT INCREASE 2024/25

Edward referred to the paper prepared by the Director paper on the proposed rent increase for 2024/25 with detailed information on the impact on rent of various increase levels and highlighted the key points members should consider.

Concerns were raised as to how tenants would perceive a further rent increase while, at the same time, some of planned maintenance projects were not going ahead. A committee member cited the example of the replacement bathrooms planned for some of her neighbours being postponed for several years. She advised that some tenants felt they were paying more but receiving less.

Elaine acknowledged the concerns and explained that some projects had been postponed because, due to the unprecedented rise in costs, the Association was not getting good value for money. For a variety of reasons previously discussed by the members, the Association was now looking to update its stock condition information and planned maintenance programmes. It was agreed that it was important that tenants were given clear information when work would be carried out and as far as possible ensure the programmes were adhered to. However, it was acknowledged that this was not always possible, but it was essential that tenants were told why.

Members were concerned about the ongoing cost of living issues and were keen to avoid placing any further financial burdens on tenants whilst at the same time recognising that continuing with just inflation or below inflation increases were not sustainable long term. It was noted that increases below those assumed in the business plan had a knock-on effect for future years.

Edward recommended consulting on a choice between 5% and 5.6%. Members discussed the option of consulting on choices in the level of increases and the real value of the responses as some members felt tenants paying rent would obviously vote for the lowest option.

Taking everything noted in the report and the views of all members present, it was unanimously agreed to provide tenants with a choice between a proposed increase of 5% or 5.6%

AGENDA ITEM 8.0 – ANNUAL ASSURANCE EVIDENCE BANK REVIEW

Edward introduced Angela Spence. Members know that she had been commissioned to carry out a review of the Association's Annual Assurance Evidence Bank. It is considered good practice to carry out an independent review of what

evidence the Association could provide to support its assertion with regards to its level of compliance with all the requirements.

Angela gave an overview and advised that there were some gaps in the evidence as well as was no one place where everything was fully captured and it was therefore not so easy to quickly and effectively provide evidence and information.

She presented the report of her initial findings for the first five sections of the Regulatory Framework and advised that based on her findings, an action plan had been developed to improve the amount and quality of the supporting evidence, thereby improving the level of assurance for Committee members.

She advised that her findings on the evidence bank for other sections of the regulatory framework would be presented at future meetings but wanted to highlight 2 areas for the Committee to consider. She referred to the discussions at the last meeting on the work Dougie Gold was carrying out for the Association, particularly around procurement and recommended that members seek further clarity on the position with regards full compliance.

She also referred to the tenant and residents safety review that was nearing completion and reminded members that it was not simply about having the policies in place but that it was also important that the Association could demonstrate that all certificates were available and that any follow up work had been completed.

It was noted that for ease, the evidence bank would, going forward have hyperlinks to the relative documents. However, Angela advised that it was important that the evidence bank was maintained and updated when policies were reviewed, new evidence such as audits and percentage checks etc were available. As this could be quite onerous many associations had identified one member of staff to take ownership of the evidence bank along with other aspects of compliance and governance.

She noted that the Association was undertaking a comprehensive look at many of its activities, processes and systems and that this was resulting in a lot of work for the staff and committee. However, carrying out the reviews and the work was demonstrating to the Scottish Housing Regulator that the Association, and its Committee, knows what needs to be done and has the understanding and commitment to carrying it out.

Members noted Angela's initial findings and the action plan for improving the level of assurance and acknowledged the points raised by Angela.

On behalf of the members of the Management Committee, Edward thanked Angela for her report.

Angela left the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 9.0 – TENANT & RESIDENT SAFETY UPDATE

Elaine reminded members that Joe Dewar had been commissioned to carry out a review of the Association's policies, processes and systems relating to tenant and resident safety. The initial action plan was due to be completed by the end of November but for a variety of reasons, there remained a couple of pieces of work outstanding.

She confirmed the costs incurred to date and the projected additional costs to have all the work completed.

Members expressed concern at the costs and the need to extend the exercise, thereby by incurring further costs. The work that still required to be completed was identified and members considered how much of it could be done inhouse.

Maryellen apologised as she had to leave the meeting at this point due to a previous commitment.

As the meeting had been going for the 2 hours allowed, Frances proposed suspending the standing order to allow for the remaining matters of business to be concluded.

This was unanimously approved.

Edward's expressed concerns were shared by other members about the level of monitoring of the work and costs of the exercise. It was noted that progress reports on the work completed had been given at every second Management Committee and members discussed how the use of consultants in the future could be better monitored in order to keep control and members better informed.

After a lengthy discussion, members asked Elaine to discuss the work outstanding and identify what could be completed in-house. It was also agreed that the Chair and Secretary would meet with Elaine as soon as possible to further consider the position and the next steps required to complete the work.

AGENDA ITEM 10.0 – COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

This agenda item was postponed due to time constraints.

AGENDA ITEM 11.0 – CORRESPONDENCE

Members noted the items of correspondence received.

AGEDNA ITEM 12.0 – AOCB

There was no other competent business.

AGENDA ITEM 13.0 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 19th December 2023.

As there were no other items of business the meeting closed at 7.55pm.