

RUTHERGLEN & CAMBUSLANG HOUSING ASSOCIATION

**Minutes of Management Committee Meeting
held on
Tuesday 30th April 2024
at 5.45pm in the Association's Office**

Present:

Frances Cunningham
Robert McLeary
Karen McCartney
Gary Gow
Mary Ellen McKeown
Heather Ross

In Attendance:

Elaine Lister - Director
Jim Kerr – Assistant Director
Sandra Wallace – Admin Assistant
Dougie Gold – Gold Consultancy

AGENDA ITEM 1.0 – APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from James Ross, Natalie Kirk and Karen Kirk.

AGENDA ITEM 2.0 – DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Jim declared an interest in agenda item 12.5 – Staffing Issues.

AGENDA ITEM 3.0 – NOTIFIABLE EVENTS

There have been no Notifiable Events.

AGENDA ITEM 4.0 – MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 30th April 2024

It was noted that Dougie Gold was not in attendance at the meeting as noted in the sederunt.

With this amendment the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30th April 2024 were noted as a true record.

Proposed: Robert McLeary

Seconded: Gary Gow

Agenda Item 4.1 - Matters Arising

4.1.1 EVH Pay Negotiations

Jim advised that negotiations were now finalised between EVH and Unite Union. The majority of members voted to accept the 6% pay increase. EVH have now confirmed the annual pay increase of 6% will commence April 2024.

4.1.2 Internal Auditors

Jim advised that only two tenders were received from Wylie Bisset and TIAA by the submissions deadline of Tuesday 17th April 2024

He had represented the Association at the Internal Audit Scrutiny panel meeting at Clydesdale Housing Association on 23rd April 2024 when both tenders were scored, which resulted in Wylie and Bisset being the preferred tenderer.

Jim advised that the next step would be a meeting with Wylie Bisset to draft an Internal Audit Programme. Members asked how areas for internal audit would be identified. Elaine confirmed that the programme would be risk based.

Dougie Gold confirmed that the process had been fully compliant with procurement legislation and good practice.

Committee accepted Wylie & Bisset as Interna Auditors of the Association for the period 2024 – 2027 commencing 1st June 2024

4.1.5 Directors Appraisal

The Directors Appraisal is due to take place on Friday 10th May 2024 with assistance from EVH for Chair and Secretary who will be conducting the appraisal.

4.1.6 Committee Laptops

Jim advised members that pending changes to the Association's governance structure this matter is ongoing.

AGENDA ITEM 5.0 – DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS

5.1 Minutes of the Finance, Audit & Risk Sub-Committee Meeting –13th February 2024

5.2 Minutes of the Aspire Board Meeting –13th February 2024

5.3 Minutes of the Maintenance Sub-Committee Meeting –26th March 2024

Committee noted the minutes

AGENDA ITEM 6.0 – ASSET MANAGEMENT REVIEW UPDATE

It was noted that Dougie had a potential conflict of interest but, as this report was for information only, members agreed he could remain in the meeting but not participate in any discussions unless asked for clarification on any point.

Jim presented the report on the progress with the review and highlighted;

- that work was now being carried out on Phase 3 of the review
- 42 out of 62 days programmed had been completed, which approximately 62% of the time allowed for commission
- the total invoiced to date

Members noted and agreed the outcomes from the review to date represented good value for money and had greatly contributed to improving the process and making the systems more robust.

AGENDA ITEM 7.0 - ASSET MANAGEMENT – TENANTS AND RESIDENTS HEALTH AND SAFETY COMPLIANCE VALIDATION PLAN

Dougie confirmed that, as agreed at the Strategy Planning Day, Joe Dewar had been asked to provide independent validation on the Tenant and Residents Health & Safety Validation Plan. This was previously known as the 'Big 6' but as Damp & Mould has been added it is now referred to as the 'Big 7'.

Dougie and Joe have been working on this and believe the plan presented to the Management Committee was fit for purpose and would deliver the desired outcomes of strengthening the level of assurance given to members. The plan highlighted what areas would need to be concentrated on as priority.

Frances asked Dougie if a 10% validation check of EICRs would be adequate to provide sufficient assurance of the Association's compliance. Dougie advised that with timescales and number of properties involved 10% was a reasonable and practical target to give assurance of compliance. However, if the validation checks highlighted gaps, potentially a 20-25% target would be needed going forward.

Robert asked that if, conversely, the 10% checks showed full compliance, would a lower target be acceptable. Dougie confirmed this could be the case and 5% could be used so long as there was clear, robust evidence of validation of compliance.

Dougie asked members to formally approve the Tenant and Residents Health & Safety Validation Plan in working towards full compliance and assurance of the 'Big 7'.

Members approved the Tenant and Residents Health & Safety Validation Plan and asked for regular updates on progress.

AGENDA ITEM 8.0 – REVIEW OF ANNUAL ASSURANCE EVIDENCE BANK & ACTION PLAN

Elaine presented the report and the programme for ongoing review of the Evidence Bank to provide members with assurance that the Association was compliant with the Regulatory framework and standards. The programme covered the next 16 months and would be complete for the 2025 Annual Assurance Statement

Committee considered the evidence that supported compliance with the regulatory requirements relating to Whistleblowing and Equality & Human Rights.

Elaine demonstrated the format of the Evidence Bank and the hyperlinks that would allow members to confirm the documentation was available and easily verified.

Whistleblowing – Elaine advised that the policy and information leaflet had previously been approved and would now be included with staff and committee inductions. Staff training has taken place and committee training will be arranged.

Equalities & Human Rights – Elaine advised that, as part of the Equalities Action Plan, further supporting evidence would be added to the bank. She further advised that the Association would be looking at updating the website to include links for different languages, larger font, audio etc.

Sandra confirmed that staff currently use google translate, when necessary, via their phones. Elaine added that other methods such as a tablet at the reception desk would be considered.

Collecting Data – Jim advised that he was liaising with Information Law Solutions on updating the privacy notices that had to go out with the equalities data surveys. He further advised that the data collection for tenants was due to be started within the week but that work had to be done to develop safe ways of storing the data that still allowed the data to be accessible and useful.

Frances asked if quality impact assessments could be added to policies so members could be assured that they met with equalities requirements. Elaine confirmed that will be done going forward.

Robert raised concerns that the focus on updating the Evidence Bank was using resources that should be focusing on ensuring compliance with the requirements for the 'Big 7' tenant safety activities, particularly as this was an explicit and key element in the Annual Assurance Statement.

Elaine reminded members that the 2023 Assurance Statement had the caveat that, whilst we believed we were compliant based on the ACS audit and previous Internal Audits, it was recognised that some of the processes and systems were not as robust as both staff and Committee wanted. It was this that had been the catalyst for the current work that was being carried out by Dougie, Joe and Angela. The objective was to get to a position where the Association could submit a future Annual Assurance Statement advising that the Management Committee was confident that the Association was fully compliant with all the regulatory requirements.

Committee considered the updated Annual Assurance Action Plan (AAAP) and the actions that had been completed. There was a lengthy discussion on the resources that would be required to deliver the plan but it was ultimately felt that, with the exception of some areas that would require external support or independent review (e.g. the ARC validation) the new systems and processes that were being implemented would allow the majority of actions to be completed in-house.

Going forward, Elaine advised that only the current action plan would be presented to the Management Committee and completed actions would be removed from future updates in order to minimise the length of the papers. However, she reiterated that the full plan would be available at any time for scrutiny by members.

AGENDA ITEM 9.0 PLANNING DAY APRIL 2024

Elaine presented the report from Angela Spence on the Joint Staff & Committee Planning Day held on 20th April 2024.

The report covered the areas that had been discussed and any actions agreed including;

- Reflection on what had worked well and what had not worked so well over the past year and the areas identified for improvement, in particular, the gaps in meeting the Regulatory requirements
- The planning and points for consideration for the visit by the Regulator in May
- The Decision-Making Structure and the options for combining and streamlining meetings
- Risk Management and the review of the Risk Register and how members get assurance on the risk management processes
- Management Committee Learning & Development needs
- Succession Planning

The report also summarised the training session that covered;

- Roles & Responsibilities
- Delegated Authority
- Standing Orders

Members discussed the outcomes from the day and the progress that had been made to date in addressing some of the issues and gaps identified. They unanimously reiterated their commitment to delivering improvements and the best outcomes for tenants.

Members confirmed their commitment to additional nights over and above the scheduled Management Committee meetings to allow for training and development. These will be incorporated in the new calendar of meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 10.0 DRAFT PROCUREMENT POLICY

Dougie presented the reports and draft Procurement Policy and explained that it was intended to address gaps in the previous procurement systems and to modernise the processes going forward.

He advised however that certain elements of the draft policy did not align with the with the financial regulations and delegated authority levels but that this would be addressed in consultation with the Director and FMD. Until then the default position

was the financial delegated authority levels which allowed staff to approve contracts up to £10,000.

Committee members discussed the changes to Procurement legislation and good practice and were keen to ensure that all procurement exercises going forward were fully compliant. As part of giving this assurance Dougie advised that the appropriate members of staff involved in tenders and procurement would be undertaking some on-site training.

After further consideration and discussion, the draft Procurement Policy was approved for implementation.

AGENDA ITEM 11.0 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Dougie advised that, even though the Association did not require to have this as it did not meet the threshold, it is considered good practise to have it in place.

Members asked about the Fair Working First statement and Elaine confirmed this will be uploaded to our website once approved.

Robert asked about the Community Benefits element and Dougie explained the framework for the requirement to have a percentage of the contract costs made available for Community Benefit projects such as apprenticeships, community events etc.

Committee approved the strategy.

AGENDA ITEM 12.0 – COMMITTEE DIGEST

12.1 Vice Chair

Elaine advised members that Gary had volunteered to take on the role of Vice Chair and asked members to formally elect Gary.

Mary Ellen proposed Gary as Vice Chair and Robert seconded it. Committee unanimously approved the proposal.

Elaine further advised that both Frances and Gary were booked to attend the Chairs forum and a Chair's Skills training event.

12.2 FMD Rate Increase

Jim informed members that FMD had increased their fee by 6% which is in line with EVH wage increase.

Members discussed the costs versus the benefits of continuing with the arrangements to buy in financial services from FMD. Members felt strongly that the Association had built up an excellent working relationship with FMD and that they had total faith and trust in the company to provide the highest standard of advice and support.

Members unanimously agreed to retain the services of FMD and accept the increase in fees.

12.3 Complaints

Jim presented the report on the complaints received in the previous financial year.

There was a in depth discussion on how the Association defined complaints and how these should be recorded.

Jim and Elaine acknowledged that there still appeared to be some confusion as when an expression of dissatisfaction should be treated and processed as a complaint and, as a result, they felt many were not being dealt with in line with the policy and procedures. Elaine advised that further training for staff had been arranged both on complaints handling and the systems for recording and processing complaints

12.4 Insurance Renewal 2024/2025

Jim informed members that a full rebuild valuation had been carried out by Nixons Surveyors on the Association's rented stock and Factored properties as part of the requirements from the insurance companies prior to submitting renewal costs.

Two quotes for the annual cover had been sought by the broker working on behalf of the Association with the lowest one from Howdens for £368,806.63. Jim explained that this was a three year agreement with costs increasing each year based on the Association's claims record.

Members discussed the ongoing difficulties being experience within the sector of both getting insurance companies to provide cover and, where they will, the massive increase in costs. Dougie advised that some of the other associations he was working with, had much higher percentage increases in their premiums.

Members expressed concern that, if the current trend continued, some associations may find themselves uninsurable and that this was something representative organisations such GWSF and SFHA should be lobbying the Scottish Government to get some support and assurance, particularly for vulnerable organisations.

Members recognised that, in the current situation, the quote for full insurance cover was in line with that being provided to other organisations and therefore accepted the quote for 2024/2025.

12.5 Staffing Update

Jim Kerr and Sandra Wallace left the meeting.

Elaine advised that Jim Kerr had proposed moving to the position of Housing Manager to fill the vacancy left by Ronnie's retirement. This had been discussed at the staffing sub-committee but needed ratification by the Management Committee.

There was a discussion on the benefits of the move for the organisation, cost savings, the Housing Management team and for Jim himself. Members also considered the impact on the succession plan that was in place in the event of the Director leaving the organisation or having an unexpected long-term absence.

Members agreed that Jim should move to the position of Housing Manager but retain some corporate responsibilities to be agreed with the Director. In recognition of this, his job title will be Housing Manager/Depute Director with a responsibility allowance equivalent to 2 additional spinal points above that of Housing Manager.

Jim Kerr and Sandra Wallace rejoined the meeting.

12.6 Schedule of Regulatory Returns 2023/2024

Members noted the report on the submission of regulatory returns during 2023/2024 and noted that all had been submitted by the deadline. Members also noted the submission dates for 2024/2025.

12.7 Equalities Action Plan

Elaine presented the updated Equalities Action Plan and advised that many of the actions were either complete or in progress. Members discussed how the action plan reflected and supported parts of the Annual Assurance Action Plan.

Members noted the progress made with the Equalities Action Plan and that it would be reviewed quarterly as per the schedule of reports.

12.8 Fair Work First Statement

Elaine explained the background to the Scottish Government's Fair Work First policy and that, as the Association could potentially apply for grant funding in the future, it is expected to demonstrate its commitment to advancing Fair Work First by publishing a statement on its website, display it in the reception area etc.

The draft statement reflected the terms of the Government's policy and expectations.

Members approved the statement.

12.9 Remit for Commission of TIS/TPAS

Committee members confirmed that they saw customer engagement, participation and consultation as a key objective for the Association and acknowledged that this was reflected in a number of actions in the Annual Assurance Action Plan. Members stated that they were keen to progress this and to get the support needed to develop meaningful and sustainable engagement.

Members considered the draft remit and agreed that it addressed the key areas of the work to be carried out to achieve the desired objectives and outcomes.

Members approved the remit specialist Customer Engagement services and noted that, realistically, there were only 2 organisations that provided such services. They therefore instructed that both organisations should be invited to submit proposals and costs

12.10 Annual Schedule of Committee Reports 2024/2025

Committee noted the schedule of reports that would be presented at the monthly Management Committee meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 13.0 – COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Members discussed the best day of the week, time etc for meetings in order to maximise attendance and ensure meetings were quorate.

Members asked for a 'survey' to be issued to determine the best time for meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 14.0 – CORRESPONDENCE

14.1 SHR Visit – 15th May 2024

Elaine reported that the Regulator had sent an ‘agenda’ for the meeting and a timetable for the meetings with individual staff members as well as the Chair and Secretary.

She confirmed that all the information previously requested by the Regulator had been forward prior to the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 15.0 – AOCB

15.1 Staff ‘Wellbeing’ Survey

Robert advised that at the Staffing Sub-Committee there had been a discussion on concerns that staff may have about the Regulator’s visit. Elaine advised that she had met with the staff to explain the purpose of the visit and reassure them. It had been proposed that a staff ‘wellbeing’ survey should be carried out to gauge staff morale and identify concerns.

Frances advised that she had forwarded a questionnaire her organisation had issued to staff. Robert also advised that further advice and information had been sought from EVH.

Members agreed to a staff wellbeing survey to be carried out with the support of EVH.

15.2 AGM 2024

Elaine informed members that the Association’s AGM would be Tuesday 20th September 2024 and may be preceded by a Special General Meeting to approve an amendment to the Association’s Rules relating to the number of appointees allowed.

15.0 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21st May 2024.

As there were no other items of business the meeting closed at 7.30pm.