

## Orkney Residents' Panel

### Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 13 February, at OHAL Offices, Kirkwall

**Present:** Jon Barker (Tenant OHAL) Kate Barrett (Tenant OHAL) Pat Law (Tenant OIC) Glenys Brooke (Tenant OHAL) Alma Murray (Tenant OIC) Linda Lennie (Tenant OIC) Gareth Jones (Tenant OHAL) Kath Fennell (Sharing Owner, OHAL) Chris Soames (Tenant OHAL); John Foster (Sharing Owner, OHAL) Anne Fletcher (Director of Finance & Asset Management) Ria Leslie (Tenant Participation Officer, OIC) Suzy Boardman (Communication & Engagement Officer, OHAL)

**Apologies:** Jen Boam (Tenant, OHAL) Gillian Cater (Tenant OHAL) Inga Ross (Tenant OIC) Frances Wiles (Tenant OHAL)

**Facilitator:** Andrew Morrison AM Bid

**Minutes:** Suzy Boardman

Item	Action
<p><b><u>Welcome</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– SB thanked everyone for coming and introduced Andrew Morrison to deliver the session.</li></ul>	
<p><b><u>Background on Procurement</u></b></p> <p>European Procurement Law states that contracts worth more than £178K has to go through a full tender process.</p> <p>The Scottish Government introduced the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 which states public sector contracts worth over £50K have to go through the full tender process. Although Housing Associations are not classified as public bodies the Scottish Government want their contracts advertised in the same way. They have a website <a href="https://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk/">https://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk/</a> that lists all contract notices.</p> <p>Anything below £50K can go through something called quick quotes which means we can go to suppliers for 3 competitive quotes.</p> <p>2 major incidents brought procurement into the spotlight; Grenfell tragedy &amp; the collapse of Carillion. These incidents highlighted the need for stakeholders to be more aware and involved in procurement.</p> <p><i>How do tenants get involved?</i></p> <p>Does the group have the skills required to ask the right questions.</p> <p>Tenant led inspections of services are a good way to get involved</p> <p>Tenants can become board members that have decision making powers at Housing Associations.</p> <p>Tenants can influence what goes into the tender documents</p> <p>Tenants can get involved in evaluating the contract through tenant led inspections.</p>	

Contractors could be asked to deliver community benefits as a condition of being awarded a contract.

Brexit has created uncertainty in many areas, particularly construction where material costs are increasing and European labour leaving the UK creating a skills gap which increases cost of labour.

Questions in the tender can be more specific to the local community.

In order for tenants to get involved with this process they have to be able to put aside their own agenda and act for the benefit of the community.

There could be an opportunity for OIC to include something about procurement in the TP strategy during update.

Some landlords offer annual visits to all tenants as a way of keeping in touch.

Repairs contractors could speak to tenants and see if they have anything that should be brought to their landlords attention.

OIC Procurement strategy – should include social housing tenants as having a say on the tender process as stakeholders.

Tenants getting involved have to be impartial and confidential.

Lines of communication between tenants, staff & contractors must be very clear.

### **Grounds & Garden Maintenance Contract**

When retendering it is easy for staff to use the same documents but this could be a new opportunity to look at what has been provided in the past and if there are other ways of doing things.

Sometimes things can change over the course of the contract is there a way to have some flexibility?

Complaints are a useful to see where a contract can be improved to fix the issue in the specification.

Comments were made about the start and finish time of workers, as there had been incidents of contractors working until late in the day or early in the morning – this is specified in the contract.

A question was raised about sharing owners being able to opt in to the service, this could be costed and taken back to the group for further discussion. Sharing owners have in the past made their own arrangements with the contractor and paid them directly.

Winter maintenance could become part of the Gardens & Grounds contracts to make them year-round and give the contractors opportunities to keep staff on rather than have to re-hire at the start of every growing season. In winter it could include clearing leaves/moss from paths and parking spaces.

The group thought that it might be a good idea to have estate walkabouts in winter as well as during the summer.

The group should get together to collate all the issues associated with garden and ground maintenance. Staff could get each of the items costed so panel members can see where the price sits.

The information that is sent out to tenants needs to clarify what is for individual gardens and what is for communal areas? – This can be easily done in the next leaflet.

<p>What happens if an elderly tenant needs assistance to get hedge or shrubs cut back? In the past we have signposted tenants to the Age concern service for help with gardens as the contracts are only for grass cutting. Is it possible to add costs of one off hedge cuts (£ per meter)?</p> <p>Are there any contingencies in the contract should one of them take long term sick?</p> <p>Do the contracts specify what weed killers are used? Could they be harmful to children and animals playing in the area?</p> <p>More clarity on who is responsible for what in the gardens – this can be included on the leaflet sent out to tenants with the newsletter.</p> <p>Could the contracts include some flexibility if extra cuts are needed either side of the start/end of the contracts. We struggle in Orkney to get the 14 cuts completed in the time. It would be unrealistic to think that we might be able to get more cuts done.</p> <p>Could we hold an event to encourage more contractors to bid for the work? The local situation is we currently have 3 contractors and little or no interest outside of these.</p> <p>Do the contractors have the capacity to pick up the slack of the other contractors?</p> <p>It is important to be realistic with what can be provided. Tenants should expect a minimum standard and that anything over that would increase the costs to tenants.</p> <p>Is it possible to raise satisfaction levels?</p> <p>Tenants would be interested in monitoring contracts using tenant led inspections</p> <p>Tenants have to be mindful of what is realistic of what they can get for the money they are willing to pay.</p> <p>As everyone has different expectations, its important to manage these and try to be clear about what we are able to deliver.</p> <p>Could common-sense consideration be given to elderly or disabled tenants to provide help with moving items in their gardens.</p> <p>Winter maintenance – could we provide information to tenants on winter maintenance on gritting schedule?</p>	
<p><b><u>Next Steps</u></b></p> <p>SB &amp; RL to arrange another meeting to get the group together to see how to take this forward.</p>	
<p><b>Session concluded: 14.45</b></p> <p><b>Date of next meeting: TBC</b></p>	