

## Minutes of Meeting of the Management Committee of Orkney Housing Association Limited held remotely via Zoom on Wednesday 26 January 2022 at 10.30am

**Present:** Fiona Lettice (Chair), Wendy Baikie, Philip Cook, Dave Dawson, Linda Forbes, John Rodwell, Jason Taylor, Bill Wallace, John White and Roella Wilson

**In attendance:** Craig Spence (Chief Executive – CE)  
Paul Scott (Director of Operations – DO)  
Richard Flett (Development & Property Manager – DPM)  
Anne Fletcher (Director of Finance– DF)  
Sandy Dennison (Finance Manager – FM)  
Mhairi Hughes (Secretary / Head of Corporate Governance – HCG)  
Connie Shearer (Minute Taker)

### PART 1 – STANDING ITEMS

#### 1.1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

#### 1.2 Declarations of (a) interest and (b) hospitality given/received in last 12 months for any items on the agenda

There were none.

#### 1.3 Minutes of the Management Committee meeting 01 December 2021

1.3.1 Two anomalies were noted in the Minutes – Wendy Baikie had given apologies so her name should be removed from those attending; and John Rodwell was in attendance so his name should be added.

1.3.2 A member enquired about the wording of item 1) in AOB and it was agreed this should be re-worded:

*Jason Taylor gave some feedback from the recent SFHA Finance Conference: 1) A lot of talk about Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policies, with a number of Housing Associations going down this route. Going forward, lending is likely to be determined by climate agendas so this is something which should be on our radar.*

1.3.3 With these changes, the Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were proposed by Philip Cook and seconded by John Rodwell. The Minutes to be signed by the Chair at a later date.

#### 1.4 Matters Arising & Deferred Items (Paper No MC/21/71)

1.4.1 Meeting 01 December 2021, Item G2.2 – Possible engagement event with other housing associations

Members discussed the proposal in the paper and agreed this would provide a good opportunity to meet with others in similar situations as OHAL. In-person sessions would allow collaboration and sharing of good practice and ideas.

### 1.5 **Future Meeting Dates:**

Wednesday 16 February, 10.30am - Performance & Resources Sub Committee

Wednesday 23 February, 10.30am - Audit & Risk Management Sub Committee

Wednesday 02 March, 10.00am - MC Workshop

Wednesday 09 March, 10.30am - Health & Safety Working Party

Wednesday 30 March, 10.30am - Management Committee

## **PART 2 – STRATEGY**

### **S1 Business Plan Update (Paper No MC/21/71)**

S1.1 Members were updated on progress with previously approved plans for the production of the Association's new 3-year Business Plan covering 2022-25.

S1.3 A productive Strategy Day had been held in December and, following this, members were asked to discuss and approve an updated Vision; approve the Mission Statement; and discuss and approve updated Corporate Outcomes.

S1.4 Following discussion, it was agreed the Vision should be updated to **Be recognised across the country as a leading Housing Association that provides quality affordable housing.**

S1.5 OHAL's Mission Statement of **We will provide good quality affordable homes and services for the benefit of the people and community of Orkney** continues to remain current, and no change was suggested to this.

S1.6 There was some discussion regarding the proposed Corporate Outcomes and the CE agreed to reword these and email out to members for approval.

S1.7 Following this, members:

- a) Approved the updated Vision at 4.3 of the paper.
- b) Approved the Mission Statement continues as detailed in 4.4 of the paper.
- c) Agreed that the CE reword the Corporate Outcomes suggested at 4.5 of the paper and send out to members for approval.
- d) Agreed that further work be done on a purpose statement, including staff involvement, and that this be brought back to Management Committee.
- e) Noted the current position and that the next important stages are the P&R Sub-committee and a priorities and Risk workshop from 1000-1300 on 2 March 2022.

### **S2 Rent Consultation Results (Paper No MC/21/73)**

S2.1 The DO presented the paper which detailed the responses received to the recent consultation on the proposed rent increase for 2022-2025.

- S2.2 Members discussed some of the comments received, including:
- *Older properties being more expensive to heat so should this be reflected in the rent charged* – Rents are set as per our Rent Setting Policy and does not differentiate age of properties.
  - *Costs per annum of grass cutting* – Current costs include 14 cuts and 7 strims as well as maintenance of communal areas.
- S2.3 Any complaints and compliments which comes via the consultation responses are recorded and dealt with accordingly. The DO accepted that the software used has limitations however, there were no concerns about the validity of the responses received and no reason to believe the consultation results weren't valid.
- S2.4 Responding to a query, the DO confirmed that members will continue to receive an annual report on the long-term financial viability and affordability of rent levels prior to any increase for 2023/24 and 2024/25 being applied, so are not committed, at this stage, to years 2 and 3 and there may be a need for further consultation. He also confirmed that the SFHA Affordability Tool is used to assess affordability but advised that with all data sets of this nature it is subject to time delays and for example will not include details of the energy cap rises for this financial year (2021-22).
- S2.5 Members expressed concern about the affordability tool not being suitable for the specific needs of Orkney and felt this should be looked at to see if there are other options available that take into account local matters. The DO advised that further options will be considered as part of the anticipated review of the rent setting policy and will be presented to members at March's meeting.
- S2.6 Members:
1. Reviewed the responses from tenants and sharing owners.
  2. Agreed to the proposed rent and occupancy charge increase of 3.9% for 2022/23 and an automatic rent increase in line with September 2022 RPI for 2023/24 and September 2023 for 2024/25.
  3. Noted that the increase will take effect from 1 April 2022 for all tenants and sharing owners.

## **PART 3 – GOVERNANCE & ASSURANCE**

### **G1 SHR Self-Assessment Update (Paper No MC/21/74)**

- G1.1 Members noted the content of the report and:
- a) Agreed that no material changes are required to the AAS since its submission;
  - b) Noted that no Notifiable Events have occurred or been reported to the SHR since the last meeting;
  - c) Noted the amendments to the list of Governance Related Policies;
  - d) Noted the Regulatory Requirements Evidence Bank additions and progress with regards to Regulatory Requirement 13 as detailed in Section 5;

- e) Noted the Regulatory Standards Evidence Bank additions per Section 6; and
- f) Noted the COVID-19 Evidence Bank additions as per Section 7.

**G2 Audit & Risk Management Sub-Committee Chair's Report** (Paper No MC/21/75)

- G2.1 The Chair of ARM said she had been pleased that the additional ARM meeting in November had gone well.
- G2.2 Members noted the update and record of decisions from the Audit and Risk Management Sub-committee.

**G3 Policy & Reviews** (Paper No MC/21/76)

- G3.1 Data Protection & Privacy: although not due for review, this was done following an update to SFHA's Model Privacy Policy.
- G3.2 Membership Policy: this has been updated in accordance with the revised Rules, gender neutralised and to reflect our increased use of electronic communications.
- G3.3 Complaints Handling Procedure: an update was required to provide clarify on complaint outcomes as per the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Model procedure.
- G3.4 Members approved the:
  - a) revised Data Protection & Privacy Policy as at Attachment 1 of the paper;
  - b) revised Membership Policy as at Attachment 2 of the paper; and the
  - c) additional paragraph 3.7 to the Complaints Handling Procedure as detailed in Section 4 of the paper.

**G4 Resolutions & Applications for Membership** (Paper No MC/21/77)

- G4.1 Members approved the resolution in respect of one shared ownership disposal and noted the remainder of the paper.

## **PART 4 – PERFORMANCE**

**P1 Welfare Reform Update** (Paper No MC/21/78)

- P1.1 The DO presented the paper which informed members that the Association's rent arrears performance continues to be strong and compared well nationally and to local peers. Since November, staff have again been contacting tenants to provide bespoke help and support; it was noted that the main issues were energy and financial advice.

P1.2 Brief discussion took place regarding the Tenancy Sustainment Fund, the impact of Universal Credit reducing by £20/week and the proactive approach taken by staff in contacting tenants to identify any difficulties.

P1.3 Members then noted the content of the paper and the Welfare Reform Mitigation Plan.

## **P2 Development Report (Paper No MC/21/79)**

P2.1 The DPM updated members on current developments. The handover at Kirk Park, Orphir has been delayed slightly, to 9 February, due to sound and air testing still to take place. The Crafty is due for handover on 28 February but Covid is having an effect on the available workforce and handover may require to be delayed. Works at Walliwall 6 and 7 are progressing well.

P2.2 Responding to a query, the DO confirmed that the properties at Kirk Park have been allocated and those at The Crafty have been advertised and will be allocated shortly. He also confirmed that properties are allocated using the Local Lettings Plan Initiative whereby preference is given to Association tenants in the first instance, according to housing needs.

P2.3 Members discussed the Evie and Upper Sunnybank, Stromness sites and the DPM agreed there were issues with these, in particular the Stromness site which may have to be reviewed.

P2.4 Members noted the current position with the development programme.

## **PART 5 – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

None

## **PART 6 – ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **I1 Annual Lease Update (Paper No MC/21/80)**

I1.1 The DO reported there were no issues with current leases. Responding to a query about the two different leases for Marengo Centre, he said one was for land and storage, with the other being for the communal facility. Further information about the lease on the land/storage will be reported back at the next meeting.

I1.2 Members noted the contents of the paper detailing the current leases.

### **I2 Annual Service Charge Review (Paper No MC/21/81)**

I2.1 The FM gave a brief overview of the paper which provided an update on the services equalisation account position for 2021/22 and the approach to charges for 2022/23, with details of the services involved.

- I2.2 Responding to a query, the DO confirmed that garden and grounds maintenance services are monitored regularly with any issues fed back to contractors. A proactive approach is taken and, occasionally, contractors have been asked to go back to do work again. On the whole however, service is good with complaints at their lowest this year. There is the option of asking contractors for a credit note but that is rarely done.
- I2.3 A member enquired about Gas Appliance Testing which had caused a performance fail in a report to the SHR several years ago. The CE clarified that we have no gas appliances in any tenanted property, and this only relates to a gas heater in a leased property which is to be offered as a gift to the facility.
- I2.4 Members noted:
- a) that the projected services equalisation position at 31 March 2022 is a credit balance, which will be carried forward and used to offset the differences anticipated from the re-tendering of the garden and grounds contracts; and
  - b) the proposed approach to service charge setting for 2022/23.

### **I3 Staffing Update (Paper No MC/21/82)**

- I3.1 The HCG presented the paper which provided an update on recent recruitment. Members were pleased to note that that 2 Housing Services Officer posts have been recruited to, with offers being verbally accepted. Discussion took place as to the reasons behind the recent resignations.
- I3.2 Progress with staff professional training and development qualifications was presented and noted.
- I3.3 Members noted the contents of the paper.

### **Any Other Business**

The Chair informed members that Jason Taylor had decided to resign from Management Committee. She thanked him for his contribution and wished him well for the future.

Due to time constraints, it was agreed to postpone the planned Presentation by the CE and DPM to a future date.

*All staff except the HCG left at this point.*

### **AOUB Confidential Paper (Paper No MC/21/83)**

The Chair presented this confidential paper to members who, following discussion, agreed to delegate authority to the HCG to instruct a full evaluation as detailed in the paper.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 13.25pm.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair