

**Minutes of Meeting of the Management Committee of Orkney Housing Association Limited held in the Association's offices and via Zoom on Wednesday 25 January 2023 at 10.30am**

**Present:** In person: Fiona Lettice (Chair), Philip Cook, Brian Kynoch, Bruce Pilkington and John White  
Remotely: Roella Wilson, John Rodwell, Mervyn Sandison and Bill Wallace

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

## **PART 1 – STANDING ITEMS**

### **1.1 Apologies for Absence**

There were none.

### **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 Management Committee meeting held 30 November 2022**

Two amendments to the Minutes were required:

- 1) D1, Tenant Safety Presentation: include 'MC were updated on the improving situation regarding the gable end at Pickaquoy Loan'.
- 2) I1, RIHAF Conference Feedback: The final sentence should be changed to read: 'He suggested members might benefit from a session from a presenter on the role of housing associations in a wellbeing economy.'

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

### **1.4 Matters Arising & Deferred Items (Verbal update)**

- 1.4.1 1) The CE said the seminar for Highlands & Islands housing associations' management committee members, comprising 2/3 members from each association, will be hosted by Albyn Housing Association in Inverness on 4-5 May. He will forward more information when he receives it.
- 2) The DPM provided members with an update on the gable wall at Pickaquoy Loan.

## **1.5 Future Meeting / Training Dates:**

Tuesday 31 January, 10.00 - SHARE training: Factoring and the legal context  
Wednesday 01 February, 10.30am - Audit & Risk Management Sub Committee  
Friday 17 February, 10.00am - SHARE training: Affordability  
Wednesday 22 February, TBC - Management Committee followed by Workshop  
Friday 24 February, 10.00am - EVH training: Succession Planning  
Tuesday 28 February, 10.00am - SHARE training: Fuel Poverty  
Wednesday 01 March, 10.30am - Performance & Resources Sub Committee  
Wednesday 08 March, 10.30am - Health & Safety Working Party  
Wednesday 29 March, 10.30am - Management Committee

## **PART 2 – STRATEGY**

### **S1 Business Plan Update (Paper No MC/22/69)**

S1.1 Members noted that the work to support development of updated detailed appendices for 2022-23 as part of our Business Plan is progressing well. They noted the change of date of P&R Sub Committee to 01 March 2023.

### **S2 Equalities Work (Paper No MC/22/70)**

S2.1 The HCG presented the paper which sought members' approval of a plan to collect Equality Data as required by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The paper detailed the background to the requirement, what OHAL has already been doing, legal provisions, data collection and its use.

S2.2 An Action Plan detailing how to address the requirements of the Guidance to ensure compliance with the SHR Regulatory Framework had been drafted for approval.

S2.3 Members had a short discussion on reasons for collecting data, protected characteristics and anonymity.

S2.4 Members noted the Action Plan and that progress updates will be provided to Leadership Team quarterly and Management Committee every 6 months.

### **S3 Rent Setting (Paper No MC/22/71)**

S3.1 The FM introduced the paper, detailing the background information regarding the rent review situation to date. To check for viability in rent setting, several scenarios were modelled based on a number of assumptions. Three options were presented to members to consider putting forward for consultation.

S3.2 Members discussed the various scenarios and the impact they would have on services such as reactive repairs, planned maintenance and development.

S3.3 The DO gave context regarding comparability and outlined options undertaken by the Association's peer group. He went on to give details of rent setting affordability, with a table showing the impact on average rents of an inflationary increase of 12.6%. Service charges for 2023/24 are still to be set and a paper will be presented to members in February.

He outlined the proposed consultation process to begin this week and recommended all three options be put to residents.

S3.4 Responding to a query, the DO confirmed that the Housing & Customer Services staff were well-versed in dealing with any concerns tenants may have about how the proposed increase will affect their household, and was confident any issues would be addressed appropriately.

S3.5 Discussing the options, it was agreed to change the wording of Option 2 to 'recommended' rather than 'preferred'.

S3.6 As recommended, members:

- Discussed the content of the paper.
- Agreed the consultation timetable and options in section 5 of the paper, with one word change; and
- Considered the details of the scenarios modelled and impacts for the Association.

#### **S4 Garden & Grounds Maintenance Service (Paper No MC/22/72)**

S4.1 The DO presented his paper which asked members to consider options and agree a course of action for delivering the garden and grounds maintenance service. This follows OIC's decision to disqualify the garden maintenance portion of the Association's service charge as ineligible for housing benefit after 35 years, and given the number of complaints received about the service during 2022. Feedback from the recent Customer Satisfaction Survey was also presented to members.

S4.2 Members noted that the Association is a significant outlier in the sector, with the majority of Registered Social Landlords only providing a service to cut communal grass areas.

S4.3 Members had a lengthy discussion around the difficulties experienced with the 2022 grass cutting service, and the issues which may arise should the Association decide to cease providing this service.

S4.4 Following consideration of the two options for addressing the Housing Benefit shortfall for 2022/23, members agreed to go with Option 1.

For the level of service to be provided for 2023/24, members agreed to go with Option 1.

S4.5 Members:

- a) Noted and discussed the content of the paper;
- b) Considered the options presented in section 3 of the paper and agreed with the recommended course of action, ie Option 1 in both cases; and
- c) Noted that the changes will take effect from 1 April 2023.

## **S5 Fair Work Statement (Paper No MC/22/73)**

S5.1 The DPM advised members of the requirements to promote *Fair Work First* as part of the Scottish Government's procurement process. Although the Association has policies and procedures in place, these don't specifically refer to *Fair Work First* and he proposed a statement be produced to satisfy grant application requirements.

S5.2 Discussing the 7 elements of Fair Work First, members agreed that number 3 should be reworded as follows:

*'No use of zero hours contracts except in the case of relief staff.'*

S5.3 Members:

- a) noted the requirements of the Fair Work First;
- b) agreed the Fair Work First Statement, with the one amendment to element number 3; and
- c) granted authority to the Chair to sign the Fair Work First Statement.

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

### **G1 SHR Self-Assessment Update (Paper No MC/22/74)**

G1.1 Members noted the contents 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 minor amendments to the list of Governance Related Policies;
- d) Noted the Regulatory Requirements Evidence Bank additions; and
- e) Noted the Regulatory Standards Evidence Bank additions per Section 6 of the paper.

### **G2 Policy & Reviews (Paper No MC/22/75)**

G2.1 The DCE detailed the minor changes required to the Finance Policy and a member queried item 3.7 which states that codes are only inserted/deleted by the FM. The DCE explained this was due to the complexities of the spreadsheets involved and should remain the case.

G2.2 Members made minor suggestions for rewording, and typos were noted in the Email, Internet & Acceptable Use Policy.

G2.3 Following a brief overview of the report, Members:

- a) Noted the progress with policy work outlined in Section 1 of the paper;
- b) Approved the revised Finance Policy per Section 2 and Attachment 1 of the paper; and
- c) Approved the revised Email, Internet & Acceptable Use Policy, with minor adjustments, as per Section 3 and Attachment 2 of the paper.

**G3 Staffing Update** (Paper No MC/22/76)

G3.1 The HCG presented the paper which, she said, should read 'For Decision'. She updated members on the Care & Repair vacancy explaining that interviews were to take place later this week.

G3.2 Following discussion, Management Committee agreed to award the additional public holiday to staff on 08 May 2023, as detailed in the paper, and noted the remainder of the paper.

**G4 Resolutions & Applications for Membership** (Paper No MC/22/77)

G4.1 Members noted the contents of the paper and the one cancelled membership.

## **PART 4 – PERFORMANCE**

**P1 Cost of Living Report** (Paper No MC/22/78)

P1.1 The DO presented the paper which explained that in light of the current cost of living pressures, members are to receive a Cost of Living Report instead of the Welfare Reform Update, though relevant information on this will also be provided.

The report updated members on rent arrears and the work being done by the Housing & Customer Services Team to assist tenants requiring help. Members were pleased to note that a bid to the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund had been successful, with £123,600 received from the Scottish Government to assist tenants with their energy costs.

Responding to a query on the Department for Work and Pensions requiring 100% verification of rent increases, the DO explained that a landlord portal was used for this purpose although it was a time-consuming process.

P1.2 Members noted the contents of the report.

**P2 Development Report** (Paper No MC/22/79)

P2.1 The DPM's report updated members on progress with the development programme. Work at Walliwall Phases 6 and 7 is progressing well on site with

electricity meters fitted to all but 2 of the properties. Phased handover of the 28 properties has been agreed with the contractor. The 6 NSSE units at Yorston Drive, Stromness have been handed over with buyers identified for 3 properties.

Responding to a query, the FM agreed to produce a report to reflect progress of 20 units per year, as per the Business Plan, against the SHIP.

P2.3 Members noted the contents of the report.

### **P3 Report from Health & Safety Working Party (Paper No MC/22/80)**

P3.1 The HCG presented the paper and advised members that only one part-conformance, due to be completed by February 2023, remains outstanding from the health and safety audit, undertaken in 2021.

P3.2 Policy work on the Landlord Safety Manual was complete with procedures being worked on. Routine health & safety checks in the office and workshop had raised no concerns, staff training and Toolbox Talks continued to be provided, and one minor accident had occurred. Risk assessments are due to be reviewed in February.

P3.3 Members noted the contents of the report.

## **PART 5 – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **D1 MC Recruitment (Paper No MC/22/81)**

D1.1 The HCG expressed the importance of recruitment to members as we currently have eight members plus one co-optee.

D1.2 Members had a short discussion, agreeing that the previous recruitment process had worked well and were keen to repeat the “Come and Meet Us” session.

D1.3 Following discussion, Members:

- Noted the current position with regards to Committee Membership numbers;
- Noted aspirations for tenant, female and younger members;
- Discussed options for recruitment;
- Agreed they were happy to attend a “Come and Meet Us” session, with the HCG to email them re availability;
- Made suggestions for the interested persons list; and
- Delegated authority to the HCG and the Admin & Governance Assistant to make the necessary arrangements and promote the event.

## **PART 6 – ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**I1 Annual Lease Update (Paper No MC/22/82)**

I1.1 Information on current leased properties was presented to members. Members noted that there are no issues with any of the leases, that one lease is due for expiry in the next calendar year, and discussions with the leaseholder will be held around extending the lease.

I1.2 Members noted the contents of the report.

**Any Other Business**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.15pm.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair