

## Minutes of a Meeting of the Management Committee of Orkney Housing Association Limited, held in the office and via Zoom on Wednesday, 31 January 2024 at 10.30am

**Present:** In person: Fiona Lettice (Chair), Brian Kynoch, Bruce Pilkington and John White  
Remotely: Philip Cook, Kate Hayes, Suzanne Lawrence, Mervyn Sandison and Roella Wilson

**In attendance:** Craig Spence (Chief Executive – CE)  
Mhairi Hughes (Secretary / Head of Corporate Governance – HCG)  
Paul Scott (Director of Operations – DO)  
Dean Campbell (Building Services Manager – BSM)  
Kirstin Mackay (Director of Finance – DF)  
Connie Shearer (Minute Taker)

### PART 1 – STANDING ITEMS

#### 1.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted from Mary Ann Lewis and John Rodwell

#### 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 on 04 October 2023

- 29 November 2023: The Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were proposed by Bruce Pilkington and seconded by John White.
- 06 December 2023: The Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were proposed by Roella Wilson and seconded by Mervyn Sandison.

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

- 1.4.1 Director of Housing & Operations: The CE informed members that a good response had been received for this position. A shortlist had been drawn up for the 2 stage interview process. This week, Teams interviews will take place, followed by in-person interviews on 12 February. Members will be updated on progress.

#### 1.5 Future Meeting Dates:

Wednesday 07 February, 10.30am – Audit & Risk Management Sub Committee & Risk Register review  
Wednesday 14 February, 10.30am – Performance & Resources Sub Committee  
Wednesday 06 March, 10.30am – Health & Safety Working Party  
Wednesday 27 March, 10.30am – Management Committee

### PART 2 – STRATEGY

*Suzanne Lawrence joined the meeting.*

## **S1 Business Plan Update** (Paper No MC/23/65)

S1.1 Members agreed that the work to support development of updated detailed appendices for 2024-25 as part of the Business Plan is progressed in line with the process set out in Section 3 of the paper. They noted that the Risk Workshop will take place on 07 February 2024, following the Audit & Risk Management Sub Committee.

## **S2 Rent Review** (Paper No MC/23/66)

S2.1 The DO introduced the paper, detailing the background leading up to the recommendation to hold a one-year consultation with tenants and sharing owners for 2024/25. Three options were consulted on, with residents being notified through a variety of means. A summary analysis of responses was presented which showed that 91% were in favour of a below-inflation increase for 2024/25. In addition to questions on rent and occupancy charges, tenants in selected areas were asked about opting in or out of the trial grass maintenance service which had run successfully last year. Most responded that they were satisfied with the choice they made in February 2023 so the Association will extend the trial for the final year of the grass maintenance contracts.

S2.2 Members had a discussion around the feedback comments, noting that energy and heating were of particular concern for tenants. The DO confirmed that HCS staff will contact those tenants who provided their details to discuss their issues in more detail and see how the Association can help.

Responding to a query, the DO confirmed that tenants are informed of the results of the consultation 4 weeks prior to the rent increase.

S2.3 Members:

- 1) Reviewed the responses from tenants and sharing owners.
- 2) Agreed to the proposed rent and occupancy charge increase of 7.5% for 2024/25.
- 3) Noted that the increase will take effect from 1 April 2024 for all tenants and sharing owners.

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

*Brian Kynoch joined the meeting.*

## **G1 SHR Annual Assurance Statement** (Paper No MC/23/67)

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 no notifiable events have been made since the last meeting;
- c) Noted the update to the list of Governance Related Policies;

- d) Noted the additions to the Evidence Bank in relation to the Regulatory Requirements and Regulatory Standards per Sections 5 and 6; and
- e) Noted we await findings from the SHR's consultation on the future of regulating social housing in Scotland.

## **G2 Policy & Reviews (Paper No MC/23/68)**

G2.1 The HCG's paper detailed outstanding Policies and highlighted minor amendments to the Scheme of Delegations. The Chair noted mention of the DCE in the Policy and it was agreed this would be removed as this position no longer existed.

G2.2 Members:

- a) Noted the position with regards to overdue Policy reviews as detailed; and
- b) Approved the amendment to the Scheme of Delegations as per Section 2 of the Paper, together with the removal of reference to the DCE.

## **G3 Application for Addition to the Approved List of Maintenance Contractors (Paper No MC/23/69)**

G3.1 The BSM's paper sought approval for the addition of a contractor to the Approved List of Maintenance Contractors, mainly to provide garden and grounds maintenance.

G3.2 A member queried the 'Value of Contracts' limits and the BSM said that any contracts over £10k would go out to tender. Following discussion, it was agreed that the BSM would review the forms which go out to contractors and bring this back to the May MC meeting.

G3.3 Members then approved the addition of 'Beattie's Garden Services' to the Approved List of Maintenance Contractors, subject to the receipt of a second satisfactory reference, and agreed that contractor forms be reviewed.

## **G4 Amendment to Bank Mandate (Paper No MC/23/70)**

G4.1 Members approved the addition of the recently appointed Director of Finance, Kirstin Mackay, to the Association's principal bank mandates with:

- Royal Bank of Scotland
- Bank of Scotland
- Nationwide
- Triodos Bank
- Santander

## **G5 Walliwall Phase 9 (Paper No MC/23/71)**

G5.1 The BSM presented the paper which sought authority to proceed with the Walliwall Phase 9 development. Finance for the 9 rented properties would come

from a grant from the Scottish Government together with Association finance. It is proposed that Orkney Builders (Contractors) Ltd undertake the Design & Build project as part of their ongoing development at Walliwall.

G5.2 Members had a discussion about the development at Corse West (Soulisquoy) and issues regarding the infrastructure which are being addressed by OIC. Value for money was discussed with members acknowledging they wished to continue building high specification, energy efficient properties.

G5.2 Following this discussion, members:

- a) noted the position of the Walliwall Phase 9 project.
- b) granted authority to the Building Services Manager (or the Chief Executive in his absence) to accept the tender submitted by Orkney Builders (Contractors) Ltd for 9 rented units at Walliwall Phase 9 for the maximum sum of £2,321,603.44 and sign all relevant associated documentation.
- c) granted authority to the Building Services Manager (or the Chief Executive in his absence) to accept the offer of £1,712,348 AHSP funding from the Scottish Government for the Walliwall Phase 9 project.

## **PART 4 – PERFORMANCE**

### **P1 Development Report (Paper No MC/23/72)**

P1.1 The BSM informed members that the Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) is expected to be finalised by OIC in February 2024 and once finalised, this document will enable future reporting to members.

P1.2 He noted that the Association is on track to complete 62 new units as per the Business Plan 2022-25. The proposed Walliwall 9 development has received grant funding and is up for members' consideration today.

P1.3 Work on Walliwall 8 continues on-site and will eventually provide 8 NSSE properties. There had been delays with the installation of mains power cables but equipment for this is expected by August. Members will be kept updated on progress.

P1.4 Following short discussion, members noted the current position with the development programme.

### **P2 Report from Health & Safety Working Party (Paper No MC/23/73)**

P2.1 The HCG's paper reported on the Health & Safety Working Party meeting held on 12 December 2023. The paper gave updates on the current position, and members noted that a Damp and Mould Policy will be presented to the next H&SWP meeting in March 2024.

The HCG said that the Health & Safety Consultant had informed her that they would be moving away from Orkney but intended to continue with their work on

the islands. A training plan is to be drawn up for work OHAL requires when they are in Orkney, ie, training, office/workshop inspections, etc.

A member enquired about OHAL's audit 'score' and the HCG will come back about this at the March meeting.

P2.2 Members noted the content of the report.

## **PART 5 – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

There were none.

## **PART 6 – ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **I1 Annual Lease Update (Paper No MC/23/74)**

- I1.1 Information on current leased properties was presented to members. Members noted that there are no issues with any of the leases, that two leases are due for expiry in the next calendar year, and discussions with the leaseholders will be held around extending the leases.
- I1.2 Responding to a query, the DO confirmed that rents for leased properties increase at the same rate as rented properties.
- I1.3 Members requested that a review of statistical information from one leaseholder be brought back to members for consideration, prior to renewing their lease.
- I1.4 Members noted the contents of the report.

### **I2 Annual Service Charge Review (Paper No MC/23/75)**

- I2.1 The DF presented the paper which outlined the services equalisation account position for 2023/24 and the proposed charges for 2024/25.
- I2.2 Responding to a query, the DF confirmed that all residents pay the same service charge per scheme and depending on services used. The DO explained also that there is a legal obligation to undertake certain services, ie, those on health & safety grounds, etc, but going forward some services (grass cutting) will be optional for some tenants.
- I2.3 Members noted:
  - a) The projected services equalisation position at 31 March 2024 has an anticipated surplus of £28,501, which will be carried forward and used to offset the historic variances within garden and grounds maintenance.
  - b) The proposed approach to service charge setting for 2024/25.

**I3 Cost of Living Update (Paper No MC/23/76)**

I3.1 The DO’s report highlighted the continued impact the cost-of-living crisis is having on tenants. OHAL staff continue to engage, both locally and nationally, with relevant support organisations which augments the support offered by our staff and allows access into funding streams. Members noted that rent arrears were comfortably under our Key Performance Indicator of 5%, though this has been rising slowly due to the Housing Benefit payment cycle.

The Association’s Tenancy Sustainment Fund has helped 21 tenants who have required assistance. A successful bid to the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund enabled each tenancy to receive £150 to help with energy and fuel costs. However, it is unlikely this Fund will continue in 2024/25.

I3.2 As has been done in previous years, staff have been undertaking Winter Support Calls and contacting tenants to offer bespoke help and advice.

I3.3 Members noted the contents of the report. The Chair acknowledged the huge amount of work being done to help alleviate pressure on tenants.

I3.4 With this being the last Management Committee meeting for the DO, the Chair thanked him on behalf of everyone for all the improvements he has made to the Housing Department, and the huge number of changes he brought in for the benefit of both tenants and OHAL and wished him all the best in his future ventures.

**Any Other Competent Business**

The CE informed members:

1. Salary increase – a 5.5% cost of living increase across all salary points has been recommended and is out for consultation with EVH and Union members.
2. Care & Repair Tender – this has been submitted to OIC for consideration.

There being no further business, the formal part of the meeting closed at 12.10pm.

**MANAGEMENT OF WAITING LIST**

Presentation by:

Emma McConnachie, Senior Housing Officer (Housing Management), and Alan Sim, Senior Housing Officer (Customer Services)

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair