

## Minutes of a Meeting of the Management Committee of Orkney Housing Association Limited, held in the office and via Teams on Wednesday 25 March 2026 at 10.30am

**Present:** In person: Fiona Lettice, John Foster, Suzanne Lawrence, John Rodwell and John White.  
Remotely: Mervyn Sandison

**In attendance:** Craig Spence (Chief Executive – CE)  
Mhairi Hughes (Head of Corporate Governance – HCG)  
Tracey Longworth (Director of Housing & Operations – DHO) - remotely  
Alan Sim (Customer Service & Performance Improvement Manager – CSPM)  
Luke Fraser (Development Manager – DM))  
Fraser Devine (Care & Repair Manager – CRM)  
Sandy Dennison (Relief Accountant – RA)  
Connie Shearer (Minute Taker)

**Observing:** Mary Laird and David Bertram

In the absence of the Chair, Fiona Lettice (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting.

### PART 1 – STANDING ITEMS

#### 1.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted from Brian Kynoch, Bruce Pilkington, Roella Wilson, Kirstin Mackay and Emma McConnachie.

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

The HCG noted that for Item G8, David Bertram would be asked to leave the room.

#### 1.3 Minutes of Management Committee meetings held on:

**25 February 2026:** The Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were proposed by John White and seconded by Fiona Lettice. The Minutes were later signed by the Chair.

**11 March 2026:** The Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were proposed by John Foster and seconded by John White. The Minutes were later signed by the Chair.

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

- 1.4.1 1) Management Committee were updated on a letter from OIC, noted further correspondence and agreed the next steps.

- 2) Responding to a query on Loan Agreements (MC meeting 25.02.26), the CE confirmed that everything had gone well and all finances were in place as agreed.

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

Wednesday 22 April, 10.30am – Audit & Risk Management Sub-Committee  
Wednesday 06 May, 10.30am – Performance & Resources Sub-Committee  
Wednesday 27 May, 10.30am – Management Committee

## **PART 2 – STRATEGY**

### **S1 Orkney Housing Association Business Plan (Paper No MC/25/87)**

- S1.1 The CE introduced the paper, explaining this was a culmination of work which Management Committee has directed and contributed to over the past six months. “Delivering for Orkney” was approved in March 2025 and covers the years 2025-2028. Appendices are presented annually to members for review/approval, and the CE went over these, noting that KPIs were reviewed by senior staff and two have been amended.
- S1.2 The RA gave a brief summary of the cash flow position, explained how the Stress Testing process is undertaken, and went through eight different scenarios and graphs on the financial viability of the Business Plan.
- S1.3 Following discussion and review, Members:
- a) approved the detailed appendices to the 2025-28 Business Plan which form the Operational Delivery detail for 2026-27; and
  - b) delegated authority to staff to finalise the documents, along with any minor typographical and layout amendments.

*Sandy Dennison left the meeting.*

### **S2 Orkney Care & Repair Business Plan 2026-27 (Paper No MC/25/88)**

- S2.1 The CRM presented the Care & Repair Business Plan which outlined the current environment the service is operating in and highlighted the challenges facing the service. The Plan detailed opportunities to explore, and proposed plans and targets for the service to achieve during the financial year.
- S2.2 Following review, Members approved the Orkney Care and Repair Business Plan 2026-2027, and delegated authority to staff to implement the plan and make any necessary operational adjustments within the approved framework.

*Fraser Devine left the meeting.*

**S3 Orkney Housing Enterprises Update & Business Plan** (Paper No MC/25/89)

S3.1 The DHO's report informed members of OHE's Board of Directors meeting held on 09 March 2026. The OHE Business Plan was put forward for Management Committee's approval. Option appraisals for growth had been requested and policies discussed.

S3.2 Following a query on air tightness testing, the CE confirmed that OHA had a staff member qualified to undertake this.

S3.3 Following brief discussion, Members:

- a) Approved OHE's 2026/27 Business Plan;
- b) Noted that the Director of Housing & Operations, in consultation with the Chief Executive, has agreed to lease 7 Lyron to OHE in line with our leasing policy;
- c) Approved the continuation of option appraisals for the growth of services under OHE; and
- d) Approved the additions to the list of group policies as detailed in the paper.

**S4 2026/27 Budget Approval** (Paper No MC/25/90)

S4.1 The CE informed members that the draft budget for 2026/27 was reviewed in detail by P&R Sub-committee on 11 February 2026, following which a number of refinements were made to the budget assumptions and the planned works programme, as detailed in the paper.

S4.2 Following discussion, Members:

- Approved the 2026/27 Revenue and Capital Budgets as presented;
- Noted the corresponding financial KPIs; and
- Noted that the approved budget forms the financial basis for the Association's Business Plan projections and covenant compliance.

**S5 Rented Allocations Policy** (Paper No MC/25/91)

S5.1 The CSPM went over the background to the review of the Rented Allocations Policy explaining the process for allocations is bound by legal duties and informed by statutory guidance. The changes to the current Policy are in line with the Scottish Government's Guidance on Allocating Social Housing in Scotland.

S5.2 A consultation with tenants, applicants and stakeholders took place in December 2025 and positive feedback had been received on the proposed changes.

- S5.3 Members noted issues around the Common Housing Register Protocol (a single route for applicants to register with both OHA and OIC), established in 2014 and requiring annual review. This is overdue.
- S5.4 There are similar issues with a Section 5 Referral Protocol, however the current DHO has had a commitment from OIC to carry out a full review of this.
- S5.5 Members noted the comprehensive work done on this and had a full discussion, including:
- acknowledging the need for changes to the policy;
  - OHA's commitment to ensuring homeless applicants are given the same opportunity to bid for properties as other applicants – they should have a choice of where they want to live;
  - impact assessment of the proposed changes on existing and future applicants;
  - medical assessment criteria.
- S5.6 Members acknowledged and commended the huge amount of work which the housing team had undertaken. They:
- 1) Discussed the contents of the paper and associated documents, noting the amendments to the Rented Allocations Policy and the impact this will have on applicants;
  - 2) Agreed the Association's position in terms of further discussions with OIC around joint working processes and that they will be updated accordingly; and
  - 3) Agreed the new Rented Allocations Policy and Medical Assessment Criteria.

## **S6 Lettings Plan 2026-27 (Paper No MC/25/92)**

- S6.1 The CSPM presented the paper explaining that a Lettings Plan was necessary in order to ensure that the Association meets a range of housing needs. It provides details on properties allocated to particular groups (homeless, transfers and direct applicants).
- S6.2 Members noted there are historic issues and differences of opinion with OIC, specifically around homeless household allocations. The paper explored the current arrangements for allocations and compared quotas with OHA's peer group. Options were proposed for the Association's allocations quota for 2026-27 which allowed OHA to fulfil its legal obligations and duties to assist OIC in discharging their homeless duties but also continue to meet the needs of all our applicants, tenants requiring transfer and wider community needs.
- S6.3 Members had a constructive discussion on the contents of the paper, and:
- noted the Association's position as at beginning of March 2026 in terms of allocating void properties;
  - noted OIC's position in terms of homelessness and the comparison with our peer group in terms of allocation to the 3 different applicant groups;

- considered the options for allocation quota for 2026/27 outlined in the paper; and
- approved Option 1 as detailed in section 4.1 of the paper.

*Alan Sim left the meeting. Luke Fraser joined the meeting.*

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

### **G1 SHR Self-Assessment Update (Paper No MC/25/93)**

G1.1 There was one update to the paper – the notifiable event regarding Orkney Community Housing Bonds had now closed.

G1.2 Members noted the contents of the report and:

- a) agreed that no material changes are required to the AAS since its submission;
- b) noted the notifiable event had closed;
- c) noted the update to the list of Governance Related Policies; and
- d) noted the additions to the Evidence Bank in relation to the Regulatory Requirements and Regulatory Standards.

### **G2 P&R Chair Report (Paper No MC/25/94)**

G2.1 Management Committee noted the update and record of decision from the recent Performance & Resources Sub-committee meeting.

### **G3 ARM Chair Report (Paper No MC/25/95)**

G3.1 Management Committee noted the update and record of decision from the recent Audit & Risk Management Sub-committee.

### **G4 Staffing Update plus Workforce Plan (Paper No MC/25/96)**

G4.1 The HCG presented the paper and updated members on recent recruitment for a Head of Finance. They also informed members that one of the Estates & Trades Team Assistants is moving on so that post is currently being advertised.

G4.2 The Workforce Strategy, which accompanies the 3 Year Business Plan, had been reviewed with minor amendments.

G4.3 An additional public holiday on 15 June, proposed and approved by the Scottish Government to enable celebration of Scotland's opening game at the World Cup, was considered.

G4.4 Following discussion, Management Committee:

- Noted progress with the Head of Finance vacancy;
- Approved the Workforce Strategy as detailed;
- Agreed not to approve the additional public holiday; and
- Noted the remainder of the Paper which was for information only.

**G5 MC Appraisal Feedback (Paper No MC/25/97)**

G5.1 The Chair and Vice Chair's report highlighted a busy year for the Association - celebrating our 40th anniversary, re-branding, the very successful launch of Orkney's Community Housing Bonds and the re-activation of our subsidiary, Orkney Housing Enterprises. Challenges are never far away but are met with determination. Committee training and knowledge-building continued throughout the year, and several topics were suggested for part of the Training Plan.

**G6 MC Training Plan (Paper No MC/25/98)**

G6.1 The HCG reported that Management Committee had completed most of the planned training sessions, with the remaining deferred to 2026/27. In addition, several conferences and events had taken place, together with brief training sessions delivered by staff.

G6.2 Committee appraisals had highlighted a few potential training topics, and the HCG suggested a few courses for consideration. Members noted the very comprehensive training plan suggested by the HCG.

G6.3 Members:

- noted the progress with this year's Training Plan;
- noted the results of the annual skills and knowledge exercise; and
- agreed the 2026/27 Training Plan.

**G7 Policy & Reviews (Paper No MC/25/99)**

G7.1 Members noted that the remaining two overdue policies for review, will be presented for consideration at the next meeting. Staff members went over changes required to several documents which had been amended.

G7.2 Members:

- a) Noted that the Complaints Handling Procedure has been reviewed, remains fit for purpose in line with the SPSO Model with only one minor amendment;
- b) Approved the amended Entitlements, Payments & Benefits Policy as detailed, subject to formatting and checking of footnotes throughout;

- c) Approved the revised Treasury Management Policy and Strategy as presented;
- d) Approve the revised Development Policy as detailed in the paper; and
- e) Approved the revised Development Risk Management Policy as detailed in the paper.

*Mervyn Sandison left the meeting.*

*David Bertram was asked to leave the room for the next item.*

## **G8 Resolutions, Applications for Membership & Co-option (Paper No MC/25/100A)**

- G8.1 The HCG presented the paper which detailed two applications for general membership, and one application to be considered for co-option to the Management Committee.
- G8.2 Members approved the 2 general membership applications and the co-option of David Bertram to Committee, until the next AGM.

*David Bertram returned to the room.*

## **PART 4 – PERFORMANCE**

### **P1 Development Report (Paper No MC/25/101)**

- P1.1 The DM updated members on progress with the development programme. A meeting with OIC planning is taking place next week to discuss further sites. Work on updating the Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) is expected to start shortly, and OHA will be putting forward a number of suggestions.
- P1.2 Work at Walliwall 10 is underway for 41 properties, and it is hoped a phased approach to handing over houses be utilised.  
  
Funding was received to purchase a former shared ownership property in Stromness and two properties in Rendall for rented stock. A further opportunity has arisen to purchase a one-bedroom property in Kirkwall, and authority to progress this is being sought.
- P1.3 Walliwall Phase 8 properties (8 x NSSE) have all been sold. Walliwall Phase 9A (8 x NSSE) properties are nearing completion and offers have been issued for all.
- P1.4 Members:
  - Noted the position of the development programme; and
  - Delegated authority to the Development Manager (or Chief Executive in their absence) to progress the purchase of the property detailed in section 8 of the paper and to accept the associated AHSP grant for purchase and upgrading.

*Luke Fraser left the meeting.*

**P2 Report from Health & Safety Working Party (Paper No MC/25/102)**

P2.1 The HCG presented the paper which reported on the Health & Safety Working Party meeting held on 04 March 2026. Members noted the updates on the current position, as presented in the paper.

**PART 5 – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**None**

**PART 6 – ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**I1 Arrears & Bad Debts Write Offs (Paper No MC/25/103)**

I1.1 The DHO presented the paper, and it was noted the paper relates to the year 2025/26. Responding to a query, the DHO explained how the budgets for irrecoverable rents and recharges are 'predicted'. Members noted the hard work the housing team put into recovering debts and thanked them for all their work.

I1.2 Management Committee:

- 1) noted the current position for write offs as at the end of 2025/26;
- 2) approved the write off for two former tenancies for rent arrears, as detailed in the paper;
- 3) approved the write off for three former tenancies for rechargeable repairs as detailed in the paper; and
- 4) noted the remainder of the paper which was for information only.

**I2 New Housing Software Update (Paper No MC/25/104)**

I2.1 The DHO updated members on progress with the replacement finance and housing software project. Due diligence is being undertaken with our solicitors regarding the contract; with further information being sought from the preferred supplier before any further decisions are made.

I2.2 Members:

- noted the update to the implementation plan; and
- noted that a further paper will follow once the legal review and final discussions with the chosen supplier are complete.

**Any Other Competent Business**

The CE updated members on correspondence and publications from the Scottish Housing Regulator.

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

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair