

HJALTLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (Policy) HELD AT HJALTLAND OFFICES – 6 NORTH NESS AND VIA ZOOM ON THURSDAY 25th May 2023 AT 6.00 P.M.

Present: Agnes Tallack (**AT**) (Chair)
Andrew Lyall (**AL**)
Bob McGeady (**BM**)
Colin Nicholson (**CN**)
Jeff Goddard (**JG**)
Jim Anderson (**JA**)
Karen Eunson (**KE**)
Lorna Willis (**LW**) – via ZOOM
Lucy Lawson (**LL**) – via ZOOM
Neil Manson (**NM**)
Pamela Shead (**PS**)
Theo Smith (**TS**)

In Attendance: Bryan Leask (**BL**) (Chief Executive)
Ian Bray (**IB**) (Head of Housing & Customer Services)
Paul Leask (**PL**) (Head of Investment & Asset Management)
Susan Gray (**SG**) (Head of Finance & Corporate Services)
Kim Laidlaw (**KL**) (Corporate Services Officer)
Mark Henry (**MH**) (Housing Admin Assistant)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Emma Perring and Irene Hambleton.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The Chair asked for any declarations of conflict of interest in the evening's business, there were no declarations made.

3 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3.1 Management Committee Meeting 20th April 2023

AT went through the minutes of the Committee meeting, held on 20th April 2023, after which Members **APPROVED** the minutes on a motion by CN, seconded by AL.

APPROVED

3.2 Finance & Audit Sub-committee Meeting 11th May 2023

AT then went through the minutes for the Finance & Audit Sub-committee meeting, held on 11th May, after which Members **APPROVED** the minutes on a motion by LL, seconded by JA.

APPROVED

4 MATTERS ARISING

BL informed Members that senior managers were expecting a response from the Scottish Government, regarding the application for grant funding for the infrastructure for the Staneyhill development. BL was confident that this would be before the tender offer expiration date in July. As this was one of the largest projects in the Association's history, a Special Meeting would have to be arranged, once the response has been received. Members would go through what was involved, the costs needed, the potential risk factors, etc. and the offer would need to be approved by the full Committee before the contractor could be appointed. BL would get back to Members with proposed dates when the Scottish Government had been in touch.

5 ADMINISTRATION

5.1 Chief Executive Report

BL began by presenting Members of the Management Committee with a report on the sector and the issues facing Hjaltland at the moment. The main highlight of the report was concerning the research published by Changeworks setting out the impact of far higher levels of fuel poverty on the physical and mental health of people living in rural areas of Scotland. 'A Perfect Storm: Fuel Poverty in Rural Scotland' was commissioned by the Rural & Islands Housing Associations Forum (RIHAF), the Highlands & Islands Housing Associations Affordable Warmth group (HIHAAW), Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and administered by Hjaltland Housing Association. The research sets out the drivers, impacts, and extent of fuel poverty in rural Scotland, and, more importantly, also identifies solutions.

BL commented that it was important that national media outlets have picked up on the report and that, as he's the RIHAF secretary, he would be presenting the findings at the next Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) conference. There was a big nation-wide campaign set to start within the next 6 months and it was hoped that SFHA would be leading the national side of the campaign, RIHAF the Scottish side and HIHAAW the local side.

After an in-depth discussion, Members **NOTED** the report.

NOTED

5.2 Use of Seal

There has been no use of the seal during the period.
Members **NOTED** the report.

NOTED

5.3 Health & Safety Report

BL continued by providing Members with an update on health and safety, and assurance in the Associations activities for health and safety for April 2023. Highlights of the report included:

- 4 new policies created.
- Inherent Risk Rating is 10, Residual is 5 and Assurance Strength is Substantial.
- The Health & Safety themes remain the same.

After some discussion, Members **NOTED** the report.

NOTED

5.4 Committee Election and 9 Year Report

BL carried on providing Members with a report to ensure Hjaltland Housing Association has in place an effective and fair process for the implementation of the 9-Year Rule, as per the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator in line with the Associations own Skills Audit Policy & Procedures.

Under rule 39.1, one third of members must retire and, if willing to do so, and in line with the 9-years rule, make themselves available for re-election. The existing Members due to stand down and seek re-election are AL, LL and NM, with BM and EP being co-opted, so must stand for election. Where a member has served more than nine years, they must also complete and submit the 9 year rule recording sheet, there are no affected Members in 2023, so no submissions are required.

BL finished by saying that if any Members did not wish to stand down for re-election, could they please let him know.

After some discussion, Members **NOTED** the report.

NOTED

5.5 Staffing and Committee Report

BL went on to present Members with a report providing the Management Committee with an update on the staffing performance in terms of sick leave and overtime as well as highlighting the Members own attendance records. Highlights of the report included:

- Staff overtime (51 hours) was about the same as last year (41.5 hours) and was within the budgeted hours (120 hours). The Asset Management team accounted for almost all the overtime with the majority associated with call-outs to deal with emergency repairs.
- The level of sick leave (% days lost through illness) increased this year to 2.36%, very similar to last year.
- As far as the Committee are concerned, the average attendance at Management Committee meetings was 71%. There was one resignation and two co-options bringing the number of Committee Members to 13.

After some discussion, Members **NOTED** the report.

NOTED

5.6 Impairment Review

SG took over and presented Members with a report regarding the Impairment Review, which must be done for audit purposes every year. SG began by explaining that, in any organisation or business, the Fixed Assets include items such as land, buildings, properties, etc which are owned by the business. They also contribute towards the activities of the organisation. As part of the year-end financial analysis and assessment a social landlord must assess whether any indicators of impairment of these assets exists.

SG went on to inform Members that HHA continues to invest in new opportunities such as energy conservation and renewable energy. A pilot project is currently underway to investigate the energy improvement options for older properties included in the housing stock. Funding for this project has been awarded grant funding by the Energy Savings Trust. Extensive work on scenario testing has been carried out throughout the year in response to potential Scottish Government restrictions to rent increases. This has resulted in a reduction in the level of planned maintenance to be carried out during 2023/24 & 2024/25.

After some discussion, Members **APPROVED** the Impairment Review on a motion by AT, seconded by TS.

APPROVED

5.7 ARC Report

IB then presented Members with an update on the Annual Return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter, and therefore a picture of key performance indicators for the 2022/23 reporting year.

IB informed Members that, based on the performance and submission of the previous reporting year, the Scottish Housing Regulator recently published the engagement plan for the current reporting year, which confirmed "We don't currently require any further assurance from HHA other than the annual regulatory returns required from all RSLs. Hjalmland must provide us with the following annual regulatory returns and alert us to notifiable events as appropriate:"

- Annual Assurance Statement
- Audited financial statements and external auditors' management letter
- Loan portfolio return
- Five year financial projections
- Annual return on the charter

IB continued by saying the Association's data for the 2022/23 ARC, with a comparison to performance in 2021/22 shows that it is continuing to deliver a high quality, efficient

service to tenants, with a general shift back to pre-pandemic performance. IB finished by saying that a meeting was held with Office Bearers on Tuesday 23rd May 2023, to go through the indicators, and provide evidence of workings to validate the return. BL commented that this document, was one of the main submissions to the Regulator and needed approval to be submitted and provide approval for BL to submit the return.

After a robust discussion on the Annual Return, Members authorised the Secretary, BL, to submit it to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The proposal was **APPROVED** on a motion by CN, seconded by AT.

APPROVED

5.8 Notifiable Events Report

BL took over again to present Members with the year-end Notifiable Events Report, commenting that there have been no notifiable events for the previous financial year. Members **NOTED** the report.

NOTED

5.9 Five-year Financial Projection Return

SG took over again and presented Members with the Five-year Financial Projection to be returned to the Regulator. SG began by informing the Committee that this is another main submission to the Regulator and that the budget has already been approved in March, this return was just in the Regulator's format and provides some additional information.

After some discussion, Members **APPROVED** the Five-year Financial Projection Return and for SG to submit the return, on a motion by JG, seconded by NM.

APPROVED

5.10 Contractor Authorisation

BL resumed and presented Members with a report, seeking Management Committee approval to add one contractor to the approved list of Contractors, following receipt of the health and safety questionnaire.

After a brief discussion, Members **APPROVED** the addition of the contractor to the approved list on a motion by BM, seconded by KE.

APPROVED

5.11 Treasury Management Report

SG continued on by presenting Members with the Treasury Management Report, informing them that this has already been discussed by the Finance & Audit Sub-committee and LL had requested that it be put to the full Committee for info. The Finance & Audit Sub-committee felt it was a very useful report to be shown.

After some discussion, Members **NOTED** the report.

NOTED

6 POLICY UPDATES

6.1 Policy Update Report

BL followed on and presented Members with a report, seeking approval for updates to various Administration, Development, Financial, Housing, Maintenance and Health and Safety Policies.

BL commented that there were a few new policies and only a couple of minor changes to the existing policies.

There was a request for a minor edit to the Confined Spaces policy and for a definition for mechanical heat recovery systems to be added to the Damp & Mould policy.

After going through the various policies, AT asked Members if the policies could be split into 2 groups of 4 (Admin and Housing in the first, then development, health & safety in the second) and approve accordingly, after the changes have been made.

After some discussion, Members **APPROVED** the first group of policies on a motion by BM, seconded by PS 2023/24 on a motion by BM, seconded by PS.

APPROVED

The second group of policies was **APPROVED** on a motion by NM, seconded by AT. **APPROVED**

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| 6.1.1 | Duty of Candour
Previously APPROVED in Item 6.1. | APPROVED |
| 6.1.2 | Terms and Conditions
Previously APPROVED in Item 6.1. | APPROVED |
| 6.1.3 | Sabbatical Policy
Previously APPROVED in Item 6.1. | APPROVED |
| 6.1.4 | Communication Policy
Previously APPROVED in Item 6.1. | APPROVED |
| 6.1.5 | Flood Risk Management
Previously APPROVED in Item 6.1. | APPROVED |
| 6.1.6 | Confined Space Policy
Previously APPROVED in Item 6.1. | APPROVED |
| 6.1.7 | Damp & Mould Policy
Previously APPROVED in Item 6.1. | APPROVED |
| 6.1.8 | Construction Design & Management
Previously APPROVED in Item 6.1. | APPROVED |

7 STRATEGY

7.1 Overview of Committee Website

KL rounded the meeting off, by going through the Committee section of the website, showing Members where various things were in the section. KL and MH informed the Committee that if there was anything they felt should be included in the Committee section, any changes they felt were needed, or weren't sure where something might be within the section, to just ask.

Several Members commented how good the range of info in the section was and how relatively easy it was to negotiate the various pages. There were a couple of requests for additional info to be added, which would be actioned the following day.

8 AOB

8.1 Highlands & Islands Liaison Group conference feedback

AT informed Members that CN, KL and herself had recently attended the Highlands & Islands Liaison Group conference in Inverness, commenting that the presentation they'd attended had been really good. Some of these presentations have been uploaded to the Committee section for info. The main crux of the conference was centred around the cost of living crisis and it was good to see that Hjaltland is up there with helping our tenants. AT mentioned a Scottish First Minister meeting regarding tackling poverty they were informed about during the conference. And, while many good points were discussed, not 1 action point had come out of the meeting.

NOTED

BL noted that a motion has been tabled by an MSP requesting an investigation into the conduct of the Scottish Housing Regulator in carrying out investigations. BL informed the Committee that any news on this would be brought to Members as and when it was received.

9 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 9.1** Management Committee (**Operations**) – Thursday 22nd June 2023 @ 6pm
- 9.2** Management Committee (**Policy & Strategy**) – Thursday 20th July 2023 @ 6pm
- 9.3** Finance & Audit Sub-committee – Thursday 3rd August 2023 @ 1pm

The meeting closed at 7:45pm

.....Chairman