

## **HJALTLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD**

### **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT HJALTLAND OFFICES – 6 NORTH NESS AND VIA ZOOM ON THURSDAY 12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2024 AT 6.00 P.M.**

Present: Colin Nicholson (**CN**) (Chair)  
Agnes Tallack (**AT**)  
Andrew Lyall (**AL**) – via ZOOM  
Bob McGeady (**BM**)  
Emma Perring (**EP**)  
Karen Eunson (**KE**)  
Neil Manson (**NM**)  
Pamela Shead (**PS**)  
Rachel Hunter (**RH**)  
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)  
Elizabeth Sinclair (**ES**) (Health & Safety Manager)  
Mark Henry (**MH**) (Housing Admin Assistant)

Before the meeting began, Colin shared the sad news of the passing of Gordon Mitchell, a dedicated member of the Hjalmland Housing Association (HHA) for over 40 years.

Throughout his tenure, Gordon held various positions, including Vice-Chair and Chair of the HHA Committee. He also expanded his housing experience by serving on the Board of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, Scotland (TPAS).

Gordon was also on the Board of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) for 6 years. He was known for his dedication to improving housing standards and ensuring better management of properties. His efforts have significantly contributed to the transformation of HHA into a flourishing, financially strong organisation with high-quality housing.

Gordon resigned from the board in September 2020, but his impact on the Association and the community will be remembered for years to come.

Colin asked that it be noted that the Committee's thoughts and condolences go out to Gordon's family and friends during this difficult time.

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Lucy Lawson.

#### **2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The Chair asked for any declarations of conflict of interest in the evening's business, PS declared an interest in item 5.3 on the Agenda.

#### **3 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

##### **3.1 Management Committee Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

CN went through the minutes of the Committee meeting, held on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024. There was a slight typo in Item 5.8.3.

After the amendment, Members **APPROVED** the minutes on a motion by NM, **APPROVED** seconded by KE.

### 3.2 Finance Sub-committee Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024

CN then went through the minutes of the Finance Sub-committee, held on the 6<sup>th</sup> November.

Members **APPROVED** the minutes on a motion by EP, seconded by KE.

**APPROVED**

### 3.3 Draft Hjaltland Trading Ltd Minutes 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024

CN finished this section of the agenda by going through the minutes of the Hjaltland Trading Ltd meeting, held on the 14<sup>th</sup> November.

After a short discussion, Members **NOTED** the minutes.

**NOTED**

## 4 MATTERS ARISING

BL commented that there has been a lot of work around the provision of Community Housing in Orkney and that he's arranged for Davy Campbell from Orkney to visit and do a presentation, with Members requesting a presentation for not just Hjaltland Trading but the full Committee too.

PL updated members on Item 7.3 from the October meeting regarding the energy improvement works at Thistle Court. He confirmed that the most recent bid the Association made to the Net Zero Heat Fund for further work in Thistle Court, has been unsuccessful. Senior managers have decided to use one of the two empty properties as a decant property and relet the other property, once the underfloor insulation has been upgraded. *"Specific information in this section has been removed as it has been deemed to be commercially sensitive and is therefore, not available to the public at this time."*

## 5 ADMINISTRATION

### 5.1 Use of Seal

There have been three uses of the seal during the period.  
Members **NOTED** the report.

**NOTED**

### 5.2 Health & Safety Report

ES provided Members with an update on the Health & Safety Risk Strategy. The Healthy, Safe, and Secure Risk Strategy helps the Association adapt to changing conditions and supports its broader priorities.

The Association is continuing to pull through the same Strategic Themes which include:

- Leadership and Management
- Competence
- Risk Management
- Health and Wellbeing
- Collaborative working
- We are a Health and Safety Team

And it is these themes that the health and safety framework is based on.

After a short discussion, Members **NOTED** the report.

**NOTED**

### 5.3 Rent Consultation

BL took over presenting the Committee with the options for the proposed rent increase for 2025/26. BL began by explaining that various key points are taken into consideration when figuring out the various options for rent increases. These include:

- The current economic climate
- Peer group rents (Local Authorities are planning a higher increase than RSL's for the first time in many years)
- Value for money
- Rent affordability
- Value for money
- The needs of the business

Last year a rent increase of 6% was agreed, 1.4% above October CPI, although it was 1.4% below the average CPI for the year. This higher than inflation increase followed 3 years of below inflation increases, which also included a 2-year delay to the planned maintenance programme which is only due to fully restart in April 2025.

It was further agreed that it would be necessary to increase future rent by CPI + 2% for at least 3 years to offset the reduced income that arose from the below inflation increases applied between 2020 and 2023. CPI has fallen slowly since last year and is currently sitting at 2.3% resulting in a proposed increase of 4.3% (CPI+2%).

It was assumed in the Business Plan (BP) that the rent increase for 2025/26 would be 4.5%. BL commented that it was worth noting that many Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are moving away from inflation-based increases and moving towards the actual costs to the business.

Senior managers were recommending consulting with tenants on a single option as there is little ability to vary the service delivery beyond the changes made last year. It is the opinion of the staff that the Association should stick with the policy position of 4.3%.

After a lengthy discussion, Members **APPROVED** the Rent Consultation to go out as the recommended 4.3% option on a proposal by NM, seconded by AT.

**APPROVED**

### 5.4 Service Charges

SG then took over to present Members with information on the proposed Services charges to be applied in 2025/26.

SG began by informing the Committee that the Association only passes on the actual costs incurred for the various services provided and these are divided amongst all of the properties in the various areas covered by the services. SG commented that there is a time lag in that actual costs for the six-month period to September are used as the basis to calculate the service charges for the coming year.

SG finished off by commenting that the main points to note for 25/26 is that there has been a significant increase in grass cutting costs following the tender. There has also been a significant increase in the insurance premiums charged to factored properties.

After some discussion, Members **APPROVED** the Service Charges for 2025/26 on a motion by EP, seconded by KE.

**APPROVED**

### 5.5 Business Plan

### 5.5.1 Development Programme 2025-30

BL resumed by providing Members with information on the proposed level of new build development to be included in the 2025/30 Business Plan.

BL began by informing the Committee that a recent £200million cut to the housing budget has seen the level of grant funding available to Shetland over the next 5 years reducing by approximately 60%.

Hjaltland work in partnership with the Council to develop the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP), which is the key document to show how resources will be applied and prioritised in delivering the outcomes contained in the Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The SHIP is required to look ahead over a 5-year period and is reviewed every 2 years. The SHIP has had to be reprofiled to manage the reduced budget which has impacted on the rate of development and the number of units planned for completion.

BL continued by commenting that as of the 31/03/2025, the Association has no units under construction, however, work continues on the infrastructure at Staneyhill. In future years the majority of development is centred on Staneyhill. The Masterplan is complete and has been approved and adopted by the Council. Planning permission is in place for the first 3 phases of works (66 units), and it is hoped to progress with the 1st phase of housing in Q3 2025. The infrastructure works which commenced in December 2023 will complete in January 2027.

The planned development of 12 units in Brae, on the site of the old Moorfield Hotel, has been the main victim of the reprofiling and has dropped out of the SHIP and has been included in the 'shadow programme' which will only go ahead if additional funds are made available.

After some discussion, Members **APPROVED** the Development Programme for the BP on a motion by BM, seconded by RH. **APPROVED**

### 5.5.2 Staffing Plan 2025-30

BL continued by providing Members with the proposed staffing plan to be included in the 2025-30 Business Plan.

BL began by informing the Committee that the currently employ 32 members of staff, 27 of which are classed as core staff, 4 in senior management roles, and 6 in ancillary roles including direct labour staff and estate maintenance.

BL continued by commenting that with the increasing level of bureaucracy and the proposed energy efficiency works required to the older stock, it is felt that the Association needs additional admin support in the Corporate Services, and Asset Management teams from Year 1. With the stock numbers increasing due to the completion of Phase 1 and 2 at Staneyhill it is forecast that additional staffing (1FTE) may be required in Year 5 of the plan, although this will be kept under review as we look to identify efficiencies in the way we operate.

After some discussion, the Staffing Plan was **APPROVED** for the BP on a motion from RH and seconded by KE. **APPROVED**

## 5.6 Committee Skills Audit Report

BL then went on to provide Members with a report that forms part of the Annual Skills Audit of the Committee of Hjaltland Housing Association (HHA). It provides the results and analysis of a survey completed by Committee Members and Managers in 2024, on the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting the Regulatory Standards.

BL commented that the Skills Audit information is used identify training needs for Members and to provide a basis to the advertising for new Members.  
EP commented that it might be time to have a refresh of the competence framework.

**NOTED**

After this quick discussion, Members **NOTED** the report.

## 5.7 Association Membership Report

BL rounded off this section of the Agenda by providing Members with an update on the level of Membership and any new applications for Membership.  
BL informed the Committee that the Association currently has 94 Members. Staff continue to actively encourage new and existing tenants to join the Association. There has been one new application for membership, from a current tenant and senior managers are not aware of any reasons as to why this application should be refused.

After a brief discussion, Members **APPROVED** the application for membership on a motion by KE, seconded by AT.

**APPROVED**

## 6 HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICE

### 6.1 Tenant Participation Strategy

IB took over to provide Members with the 3 year review of the Tenant Participation Strategy, commenting that there were really only a few minor changes and IB was happy to answer any queries the Committee might have.  
PS commented that the document showed the importance of having such a strategy and that it was a very well laid out strategy.

After this discussion, Members **APPROVED** the Tenant Participation Strategy on a motion by EP, seconded by BM.

**APPROVED**

## 7 INVESTMENT & ASSET MANAGEMENT

### 7.1 Development Report

PL began this section of the agenda by providing an update to the Committee on the progress of the Associations new build development programme. Highlights of the report included:

- An update on the reduced Resource Planning Assumption's (RPA's) within the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) recently approved by the local authority.
- The practical completion submissions for the Associations Ladies Mire, Marthastoon Phase 2 and Berryview Phase 2 projects are still being finalised prior to lodging with the Scottish Government.
- The Associations site at Walls was handed over on the revised completion date and all four houses have been let.

*Specific information in this section has been removed as it has been deemed to be commercially sensitive and is therefore, not available to the public at this time."*

After a brief discussion, Members **NOTED** the report

**NOTED**

### 7.2 Staneyhill Update Report

PL finished up by giving an update on the Staneyhill development,  
*Specific information in this section has been removed as it has been deemed to be commercially sensitive and is therefore, not available to the public at this time."*

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

**NOTED**

**8 FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES****8.1 Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

SG took over, presenting Members with the management accounts up to 31<sup>st</sup> October. SG commented that there have been no significant changes in the accounts since the November Finance Sub-committee meeting. The cash balance has dipped, as predicted and the surplus is currently in line with budget. After a short discussion, Members **NOTED** the report.

**NOTED****8.2 Private Finance Tender**

*Specific information in this section has been removed as it has been deemed to be commercially sensitive and is therefore, not available to the public at this time."*

After some discussion, Members **APPROVED** going with the Allia proposal on a motion by AT, seconded by KE.

**APPROVED****9 POLICIES & STRATEGIES****9.1 Policy Update Report**

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

BL commented that there were only a few minor changes of note.

Members **APPROVED** the policies (apart from 9.1.7 Association & Committee Membership) on a motion by AT and seconded by TS.

**APPROVED****9.1.1 Menopause Policy**

Updated policy in line with EVH terms and conditions. Previously **APPROVED** in Item 9.1.

**APPROVED****9.1.2 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan**

Date review and minor amendments to wording. Previously **APPROVED** in Item 9.1.

**APPROVED****9.1.3 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Policy**

Updated Policy in line with new Strategy and Action Plan. Previously **APPROVED** in Item 9.1.

**APPROVED****9.1.4 Dignity at work Policy**

Updated policy in line with EVH terms and conditions, this policy includes duties as per the new Worker Protection Act 2023 which is an amendment to the Equality act 2010 and aims to better protect employees from Sexual Harassment, prioritising prevention. Previously **APPROVED** in Item 9.1.

**APPROVED****9.1.5 CEO Payment Policy**

No fundamental changes – 3-year review. Previously **APPROVED** in Item 9.1.

**APPROVED****9.1.6 Salary Sacrifice Policy**

No fundamental changes – 3-year review. Previously **APPROVED** in Item 9.1.

**APPROVED****9.1.7 Association & Committee Membership**

Updated policy with track changes to include applicants who previously resided in Shetland or who have a connection to Shetland.

Members felt this policy needed revising to having applicants living in Shetland but under certain specific circumstances, applicants living outside of Shetland would be considered. Members felt this policy needed more discussion and asked for it to be brought to the next meeting as an agenda point.

**9.1.8 Gaining Access to Properties for Maintenance Works**

Reviewed full policy and removed third visit from procedure. Remain in line with SFHA  
Gaining access to meet legislative requirements.  
Previously **APPROVED** in Item 9.1.

**APPROVED**

**9.1.9 Health & Safety Overarching Policy 2024-25 including 20241212 Signed H&S Policy Statement**

Annual review and signature from CEO and Chair.  
Previously **APPROVED** in Item 9.1.

**APPROVED**

**10 AOB**

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**11 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**11.1** Audit & Risk Sub-committee – **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025 @ 5:30pm**

**11.2** Finance Sub-committee – **Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025 @ 1pm**

**11.3** Management Committee – **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025 @ 6pm**

The meeting closed at 7:25pm

.....Chairman