

MINUTES OF THE **VIRTUAL** MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT OF WHITEINCH AND SCOTSTOUN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD HELD AT 6.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> MAY 2021

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Present : C Watson (Chairperson)  
C Ennemoser  
L Stevenson  
B MacDonald  
R Hunter  
L Mimmagh  
A Bruce  
R Carrigan

In attendance : I Morrison Chief Executive  
K Szulc HR & Support Services Officer (Minutes)  
A Reid Financial Services Manager  
J Gordon Property Services Manager  
K McQueen Deputy Chief Executive  
J Calderwood Housing Manager

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1. **APOLOGIES**

D Keaveney, and S Leighton who is on a leave of absence.

2. **CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS/COMMITTEE – STAFF NEWS**

Members were advised that B MacDonald has resigned from Committee over her concerns about the FCA requiring personal information. The Chief Executive (CE) read out her resignation letter – this will be a notifiable event. Thanks were given to B McDonald for all the years that she has participated on the Committee and gifts/flowers will follow. S Leighton has given birth to twins and the Association's congratulations will be passed on when appropriate. Jim Calderwood, Housing Manager (HM) retires mid-June. It was noted that the Spring Newsletter had gone out.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

4. **MINUTES OF MEETING OF 31<sup>st</sup> March & 7<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 were approved by R Carrigan and seconded by R Hunter.

The Property Services Manager (PSM) gave an update on Covid implications on the planned programme. There was no financial information available but there will be an evaluation next week with the QS keeping a close eye on it; no Covid related additional costs are anticipated but concerns are rising about a shortage of materials while the boiler manufacturer has issues directly relating to Covid. Our QS will only agree to justifiable costs if necessary and we would be made aware. A Committee Member suggested that any Covid costs in terms of social distancing should be kept separate so it does not become the norm. The PSM said that the QS will highlight any anomalies to us. The same Committee Member asked about renewables for the communal boiler system. The PSM said that a feasibility study has been carried out. The initial reaction is that it would be on the tight side cost-wise and the grant availability for this is not good. A future report will be prepared for Committee. The Committee Member said that kind of work would attract funding. The PSM said that the consultants who do the funding would be included in feedback.

The minutes of the meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> April were approved by R Hunter and seconded by C Ennemoser.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

6. **MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS, STAFFING SUBCOMMITTEE, 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

The Deputy Chief Executive (DCE) had summarised these at the last meeting. These were noted.

7. **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2021**

The Financial Services Manager (FSM) had provided Balance Sheet, Income & Expenditure Report, Variances, with narrative. A Committee Member asked if there was likely to be many changes in the final accounts. The FSM said yes, £500,000 of major renewal work to be capitalised, which consisted of boilers and CCG work as well as bathrooms and kitchens in voids. Depreciation will decrease on that. The operating capital will shift to between £1.35m and £1.4m surplus. We are meeting with the auditors tomorrow to access the pension portal as well as virtually viewing grant proof. We get payment from GCC and used to get a schedule of receipts. They stopped providing this two years ago so the auditors need to access the grant site for their testing. The pension's portal is likely to show a negative position. The FSM highlighted that on the on the papers issued, the balance sheet was out by £8 and he has corrected this. The Management Accounts to 31st March 2021 were approved by R Hunter and seconded by R Carrigan.

The FSM then summarised the Treasury Management Schedule and Covenant Compliance and these were approved by L Mimmagh and seconded by C Ennemoser.

The FSM advised that the audit had started last week. WSHA draft accounts have been given to RSM except for cash flow and pension statement as we are waiting for adjustment to come through. WSPM accounts have been finalised and sent to RSM – no feedback yet. WSES draft accounts have two changes totalling £711 adjustment. There is an issue with the furlough situation in terms of claims and the salary increases in April, as, apparently, the amount should have been based on March salaries. The amounts are not material but the auditors are being thorough. A Committee Member said that we want them to be thorough.

8. **ANNUAL RETURN ON THE CHARTER 2021**

The CE spoke to the Report and the circulated ARC form saying that the ARC was what was expected in line with quarterly KPI's. Covid had affected things, such as gas safety checks, but where this was the case the comments section clearly drew attention to this. A Committee Member was unsure of the figures on page 6 of the ARC in relation to the number of tenants surveyed; the CE pointed out that all of the sections added up to 332 but agreed that this was not always clear from the way the return was laid out. The Committee approved the ARC for submission by the CE.

9. **PROPOSED COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT**

The CE said that the report was hopefully self-explanatory and tied in with the current resignation. Currently there were only eight active members (with another on leave of absence) and issues would arise if we dropped below seven – the only business which could be conducted after two months was the recruitment of new members; thereafter business would cease until new this was done. Following an article in the newsletter, we have had one response and this will be followed up. Committee could then decide to co-opt, if they so wished. The recommendation is also to advertise, to ensure we

have sufficient members. The Committee agreed to this. A Committee Member used Partick as an example where their Committee had Members with professional skillsets and from various backgrounds and agreed that we should advertise widely. Another Committee Member agreed and said that there is space for both local and professional members. Another Committee Member suggested small businesses in the area could be an option bringing a different voice. The CE said that ideally, it would be local people or tenants with different backgrounds and other skillsets and that he would proceed with advertising. The Chair agreed to have his photograph on the website for Committee Recruitment.

10. **BAD DEBT PROVISION FOR 2020-2021**

The HM said that after review, there are some arrears that are unlikely to be recovered; £45k of former tenant arrears and £23k of current tenant arrears, with a bad debt provision of £68,361 approximately. There is an error on the date of the report, should say 2021/22 (current year), there are subsequent cases in current financial year, but not aware of any new cases. A Committee Member asked if the bad debt was likely to go up, to which the HM said that the furlough scheme perhaps disguised a lot and that people may struggle to pay going forward and that there could be difficulties in future years. The Committee approved the bad debt provision of £68,361.

11. **FORMER TENANT ARREARS: PROPOSED WRITE-OFF**

The HM said that there were sixty-five cases as at the year-end totalling £53k. Recovery is unlikely in nineteen of these cases (£15k) as they are untraceable or unable to pay. This forms part of the bad debt provision, which has just been approved. There are over 20 ongoing arrangements. There are a number of agencies working to trace those with no known address or no response. The Committee approved the proposed write-off.

12. **LETTING TARGETS 2021-2022**

The report and agenda should read 2021-2022, not 2020-2021. The HM said that GCC had asked us to let 60% of lets, net of any transfers to section 5. The proposal is to go with that which would give a working output of 20% transfers, then 48% section 5 and 32% housing list applicants. This would be reviewed constantly with GCC. A Committee Member asked if a housing list applicant who said they are homeless would count as section 5. The HM said that we take statutory section 5 homeless as well as homeless people on our list to take the weight off GCC, but we tend to signpost them to GCC. If we place a housing list homeless person in accommodation, it does not count towards target. GCC have struggled to meet 40% referrals, so whether they can meet 48% is perhaps questionable. A Committee Member asked who is being presented as section 5 from GCC. The HM said a variety of people, single persons, families, refugees, etc with a variety of circumstances of how they have become homeless. The system works out which flats go to which category, staff do not choose. If a house becomes available for section 5 and there is no referral available, we would offer it to housing list applicant then the next house that comes available for housing list would go to section 5. The Committee Member said that he was keen to see a reduction in homeless people, but wanted to know that they are not housed in the one location. The HM said that does not happen, as the system chooses the property and we try to match the person with the property. We tell GCC what properties we have available and would expect them not to send us, say, a six-person family if we only have two bedrooms available. All the RSL's feed into GCC to discuss issues in the form of a citywide lets community central monitor group.

13. **RECRUITMENT REPORT**

The DCE said that she was proposing an increase in notice period for new Executive Team Members resigning from organisation from four weeks to twelve weeks. She suggested that the offer to the new Director of Housing should have the twelve-week notice period included. It was asked if this was because we struggled to recruit a Repairs Officer last year but members were reminded that this was not the case but that a decision was made to delay the recruitment because of Covid. The Committee Member said that for general staff members, the four-week notice period does not give much time for recruitment and that there would generally be a gap between the leaver and the new starter. The DCE said that was normal across the board for EVH member organisations and would require Union consultation to change.

Committee then noted June Henderson, Repairs Assistant leaves on 4<sup>th</sup> June and the new Repairs Assistant, Lynne McManus starts on 1<sup>st</sup> June. Jim Calderwood, Housing Manager, retires on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, although his last day will be 18<sup>th</sup> June. One candidate for the Director of Housing Services was invited to second interview, a verbal offer has been made and accepted and announcement would be made once we have received signed acceptance. Start date will be early July.

#### 14. **REPORT ON SERVICE CHARGES**

A Committee Member had asked for this topic to be included on the Agenda. The FSM and HM had therefore put together a paper on WSHA's increased costs with a potential net value of last year. The Committee Member was very concerned about the situation and the feeling from their perspective was that there were full-rent payers angry about it. They had still paid the service charges even when their services had not been provided at times due to lockdown. There was a feeling that rent payers were being penalised for not receiving services and would be happier with a refund. Committee were reminded that there had been a rent freeze for two years and whilst the cost of these services had increased, overall rent had not and therefore WSHA has paid the net effect of service charges for everyone over two years, that is, there had been no increase passed on to tenants.

The Committee Member said, though, that the breakdown shows it went up and tenants' feelings are that they are paying for services that did not happen and they want a refund. The DCE said that if refunds were issued, Committee would have to establish the impact on the rent freeze of these costs and increased service charges. The rent and service charge are rolled together – there is no rise in the overall figure. The FSM said that the rent paid in 2019 is the same as rent paid in April 2021; it has not changed in two years, the cash value has not changed in this period. The HM said that many services are provided, such as welfare rights, money advice as well as estate services and all paid for by rent. The DCE said that if Committee had agreed to a refund of service charges, then potentially no rent freeze would have happened this year. The CE said that tenants have gained out of it over the two years; despite services being suspended for a while, emergency cover was still in place and there has been no charge this year for necessary additional bulk uplift services. He therefore suggested that perhaps a clear explanation should be published for tenants.

The Committee Member said that what we provide is amazing but is still concerned that people are angry. It was explained that it would be for Committee to consider any payback over the two years but if a refund had been issued tenants would have received a refund of £3 but an increase of £3.61. The Committee Member agreed that this needs to be explained to tenants. Another Committee Member said that the concern should be addressed with the tenants if they are upset, but agreed that it is a big benefit to tenants having the rent freeze for two years. It was asked if those unhappy tenants had complained to get a council tax refund too as most services from

other agencies had not offered Covid disruption refunds of any kind. The Committee Member who raised the subject understood that, but said that in terms of our tenants they believed that an explanation would be welcomed. The CE reiterated this would be looked at. The FSM said that if he were paying the same rent in April 2021 as he had been paying in April 2019, with an increase of services with the same service charge, he would not be concerned about the breakdown, he would be happy to not be paying more. The Committee Member said their concern was that it was not how people see it. It was therefore agreed we need to explain it better to tenants.

15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The HM said that Committee had approved the Arrears Policy in December and that there had been tenant consultation, initially on the website, then in newsletter – there had been no comments back. The recommendation is that the policy is approved; The Committee approved the new policy.

In response to a Committee Member's question about Whiteinch Library, the CE said that he had written to various elected members and Council officials and had received two responses back. There was also information on campaign's Facebook page.

16. **DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 was agreed, to discuss and approve Rent Restructure plans. Committee agreed that an invite to this meeting should be made to the new Director of Housing Services.