

West Granton Housing Co-operative Limited

Committee of Management

Minutes of Meeting – 11 September 2019

Present: Lorna Brown (Chairperson), Marilyn Dickson (Treasurer), Jim Hemphill (Vice Chair), George Thomson, Marlyn Sinclair, Fiona Marshall, Elizabeth Robertson, Joe Moir, George Nicol, Jon Douglas

In attendance: Larke Adger (CEO), Alan McKee (Depute CEO)

1) APOLOGIES

Jim Moir

2) MINUTES OF MEETING 14 August 2019 Minutes

approved.

3) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES None.

4) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST None.

5) FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

5a) Cash in the Bank – September 2019

Committee were advised that WGHC has £1,393,678.90 in the bank and were given the breakdown between the working accounts with RBS, Santander (95 day notice account) and Bank of Scotland (32 day notice account).

Committee noted the report.

5b) 2 Year renewal of IT Support Contract – Resource Telecom

Committee were advised that WGHC's contract with our IT support contractor, Resource Telecom has been renewed for a further 2 years at a cost of £2,694 per year. FM questioned why the costs were shown over a 3 year period – LA advised this was in line with Financial Regulations to check costs were under £25,000 and so CEO has the authorisation to procure without approval of Committee.

Resource Telecom have held their prices from the current year going forward.

Committee noted the report.

5c) Annual Return to the Financial Conduct Authority

Committee were advised that CEO has submitted an annual return declaring each of the Committee Members along with the objectives of the Co-op. Also submitted was a copy of our Audited Financial Statements and the Auditor's Management Letter.

Committee noted the report.

5d) Rent Increase Proposal and Tenant Consultation

The CEO confirmed propose that WGHC propose a rent increase of 2% to be put forward for tenant consultation.

The 2% figure is the Consumer Price Index (deemed to be the most accurate measure of inflation) as at the end of July, the latest figure available. WGHC increase rents by inflation only, whereas other landlords increase by inflation plus. The SHR is keen that rents do not increase higher than inflation, are affordable and comparable but also sufficient to keep the organisation viable.

Committee considered a projection of cashflow table showing that a 2% increase would be sufficient to cover costs for the year.

Committee then examined a graph from SFHA comparability tool highlighting comparability with other providers in the city. This showed, as an example, the rent for a two bedroom property across 16 landlords. The average rent was £89.16 against £81.88 for a WGHC property.

The affordability tool then showed income left over after rent is paid for those on a 'moderate' income. For a one-bed property, 23.3% of income is spent on rent and the tools shows that 23.8% would be deemed affordable. For a two bed property, rent would be less than 18.2% of income and for a 3 bed, the figure is 12.9% of income.

Committee were satisfied that rents would be

- Adequate to cover costs
- Comparable with those of other providers;
- Affordable for our tenants;

It was therefore proposed to consult on a rent increase of 2% meaning the average rent across all WGHC stock would be £86.43, an increase of £1.69.

Committee agreed to consult with all tenants on a 2% rent increase for 2020-21 before a final decision is taken in December 2019.

5e) Update on insurance claim against WGHC

Committee were reminded that in late 2018, a tenant made a claim against WGHC after tripping on a loose paving slab in their garden. Committee were advised of the latest report from our insurers which advised they had repudiated the claim on our behalf but that the claimant has 3 years during which to bring the case to court.

CEO advised she had advised SHR of the claim as a potential Notifiable Event (NE). SHR advised that it wasn't a NE but trusts that we have repaired the slab in question. SHR were advised that not only was the slab replaced but the entire path was relaid.

Committee noted the report

5f) Addition to the Approved Contractors List

The CEO sought permission to add Mauger-Thomson-Solo to the Approved Contractors List.

Annie Mauger, has provided a number of training sessions with Committee and also facilitated their Skills Audit Assessment and Strategy Day.

Members commented that Annie had provided effective and engaging training on a number of occasions.

Committee approved adding Mauger-Thomson-Solo Ltd to the WGHC Approved Contractors List.

6) GOVERNANCE

6a) Election of Officers

i) Chairperson

In accordance with the rules the first meeting of the Committee of Management after the AGM appoints one of its number as Chairperson. Lorna Brown was nominated and seconded. There were no other nominations.

Lorna Brown was elected Chairperson.

ii) Vice Chairperson

In accordance with our Governance Policy the Committee must appoint a Vice Chairperson who would deputise for the Chairperson in his or her absence. Jim Hemphill was nominated and seconded. There were no other nominations.

Jim Hemphill was appointed Vice-Chairperson.

iii) Treasurer

In accordance with our Governance Policy the Committee must appoint a Treasurer who has responsibilities as summarised in that policy. Marilyn Dickson was nominated and seconded. There were no other nominations.

Marilyn Dickson was appointed Treasurer.

6b) Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests Members

were asked to submit 2 signed forms:

- 1 Code of conduct
- 2 Declaration of Interests

All members present submitted these forms and would receive a copy for their records. Those members not present would be asked to sign both documents before the next Committee meeting. The CEO advised Committee that only those members who had signed the documents would be able to sit on the Committee and attend the next meeting.

Committee noted the report.

6c) Annual General Meeting

The AGM took place on Monday 2 September 2019 at the Prentice Centre.

Marilyn Dickson, George Nicol, Elizabeth Robertson and Fiona Marshall were reelected to Committee. There were no nominations. There were 8 members remaining in office: Lorna Brown, Jim Hemphill, Joe Moir, Donna Anderson, George Thomson, Jim Moir, Marlyn Sinclair and Jon Douglas.

The Committee of Management therefore continues with 12 members.

Auditors Alexander Sloan were re-appointed.

31 sole or first named joint members attended compared to 23 in 2018.

8 members were represented by proxy (last year: 11).

Attendance was 39 or 10.5% (last year: 34 or 9.1%). A quorum is 7.5% so it was achieved.

Ideas to encourage attendance will be discussed in the new financial year.

Committee noted the report

6d) Committee Training

It was noted that Committee had undertaken a high number of training sessions throughout the year. A summary of these sessions will be collated and circulated to members.

The only training Committee have not undergone is Health & Safety which is a requirement so the CEO will source a suitable trainer and come back to Committee to arrange a suitable date.

Members noted the report

6e) Revised Maintenance Policy

Committee were advised that the Maintenance Policy had been revised and updated. There were no major changes to highlight.

CEO did advise that all policies should include an Equalities Impact Assessment and she was working with a consultant on the issue. This may mean some further revisions to policies which may have to be re-submitted for approval.

Committee approved the Maintenance Policy

6f) 3 Revisions to the Tenancy Management Policy

- i) Decoration Vouchers

Authorities for approval to issue decoration vouchers to change to reflect current job titles and responsibilities.

Up to £500 – written authorisation to be signed by both the Tenancy Manager and Maintenance Manager

Between £500 and £750 – a countersignature of authorisation by the Depute CEO is required.

Over £750 – a countersignature of authorisation by the CEO is required.

Members were advised that Decoration Vouchers had been increasingly offered to incoming tenants as an alternative to painting the property a neutral Magnolia when void. This had the advantages of saving WGHC on void decoration costs and giving the incoming tenant more freedom to decide their own decoration scheme. WGHC would still re-decorate where a property was in particularly bad condition or where the incoming tenant is an older person, has an impairment or is a disabled person.

Committee approved the change to the Decoration Vouchers Authority in the Tenancy Management Policy

ii) Schedule of Authority

Section 11.2 of the Tenancy Management Policy outlines who has authority with regards to taking action against a tenant who has breached their tenancy agreement. It is proposed to revise the levels of authority in line with the current staff structure.

Committee approved the changes to the Schedule of Authority in Section 11.2 of Tenancy Management Policy

iii) Decision Review

Section 12 of the Tenancy Management Policy outlines how a tenant can appeal a decision made against them under the conditions of this policy. It is proposed that a process is put in place where the line manager can carry out a Decision Review. If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome of the review, this can then be escalated to the Appeals Stage.

Committee approved the insertion of a Decision Review Stage in Section 12 of the Tenancy Management Policy.

Committee approved the following revisions to the Tenancy Management Policy as proposed in this report:

- **Section 2.4 Decoration Vouchers and authority**
- **Section 11.2 Schedule of Authority**
- **Section 12 – to insert a section on Decision**

Review 6g) Draft Induction Policy for New Committee Members

Standard 1 of the Regulatory Framework requires an organisation to have an Induction Policy for new Committee members. Committee considered the draft policy produced by the CEO. Members commented it was a good idea and would help new members settle in.

Committee approved the Induction Policy

6h) Information Leaflet for new Committee Members

Standard 1 of the Regulatory Framework requires a social landlord to have information available for new Governing Body Members and a draft leaflet was considered by members.

Committee approved the Information Leaflet for new Committee Members

6i) Role Description for Committee Members

Standard 1 of the Regulatory Framework requires a social landlord to have a role description for Committee members. Committee considered the role description produced by the CEO and Annie Mauger Thomson.

Committee approved the Role Description for Committee Members

6j) Role Description for Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

Standard 1 of the Regulatory Framework requires a social landlord to have a role description for the Chair and Vice Chair. Committee considered the role descriptions produced by the CEO who based this on a SFHA publication. As this was produced by SFHA, it focusses heavily on Housing Associations rather than Co-operatives. The two types of organisations elect office bearers quite distinctly from each other. In clause 1.5 of the Vice Chairperson role description it states that 'when the Chair stands down, the Vice Chair..will be asked if they wish to stand... to become Chair'. This can put undue pressure on the Vice Chair to stand for Chair if they have no real wish to do so. It is not the way Co-op's operate and may come across as undemocratic. Committee may wish to consider removing this clause.

Committee approved the Role Descriptions for Chair & Vice Chair and asked that Clause 1.5 in the Vice Chair role description be removed.

6k) Assurance Statement Report No 1, 1A & 2

Following the two training sessions Committee had in February this year on the new Scottish Housing Regulator's New Regulatory Framework Standards, Financial and Governance Standards and the Annual Assurance Statement, The CEO again reminded members that each RSL must send into the Scottish Housing Regulator by the end of October an Assurance statement. The statement should be succinct.

This needs to be approved by the Committee. The statement will confirm that they have seen and considered reports and statements on self-assessment along with appropriate evidence to support the assurance in the Statement that:

- all relevant regulatory framework requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework;
- all relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- all relevant legislative duties
- the Standards of Governance and Financial Management

Report No 1 and 1A are declarations with a list of evidence, to Committee that the CEO believes WGHC is compliant with Regulatory Standard 1. Committee

discussed the reports and statements and in addition confirmed to all members present that they had led the Strategy Away Day in July 2019, identifying risks and deciding on the strategic direction and priorities for WGHC.

Report No 2 is a declaration to Committee that the CEO believes Standard 7 is not applicable to WGHC and Guidance states that if this standard is not applicable to the individual landlord, then it must state so in the final Assurance Statement.

Committee agreed they are satisfied they have considered appropriate evidence to support the CEO's declarations of compliance and approve that WGHC is compliant with Standards 1 and 7 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework.

6l) Further contact with the Scottish Housing Regulator

The Regulator responded to an update from the CEO on various improvement works within the organisation. They stated it was 'very useful to hear about the different progressions happening within West Granton'.

They went on to thank the CEO for feedback on our appointments system.

They also gave a reminder that we need to explain the appointments system to tenants in our Annual Report on the Charter and that they wish to see a copy of this.

Committee noted the report.

6m) Update from SHR-Appointment System

Following revised advice from the Regulator that WGHC do indeed have a repairs appointment system, the Regulator instructed WGHC:

1. To put a monitoring system in place to assess the performance of the contractor's in keeping their appointments with our tenants; and
2. To explain to its tenants in their Annual Report on the Charter why WGHC declared in their ARC why it did not have an appointments system, when by the SHR's definition, they do. The Regulator has asked to see a copy of this report when it is ready.

The CEO confirms that WGHC now have a monitoring system in place to assess the performance of the contractors in terms of them keeping appointments with our tenants. The Annual Report on the Charter will be put to Committee for their approval at the October meeting; the report will contain an explanation to tenants as aforementioned and as instructed by the SHR.

Committee noted the report.

6n) Membership Changes

Members noted that 2 new memberships had commenced since the last reports.

6o) Health & Safety Report

Committee noted that there have been no accidents or other incidents since the last Committee Meeting.

7) ASSET MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE 7a) Updates on Doors & Windows

Committee were advised there is only one property left to have its windows and doors replaced which is scheduled for the end of September. Thereafter the doors and windows replacement programme for Area 1 will be complete.

A budget of £1 million was estimated for these works. It is estimated the total cost will come in under £720,000 and a report will be issued in due course.

Responses from a tenants satisfaction survey are currently being received and collated. Early indications show a very high satisfaction level with only a couple of minor issues so far being reported.

A report will be issued in due course.

Committee noted the report.

7b) Stock Condition Survey Update

The Stock Condition Survey is being carried out by F3 Chartered Building Surveyors and began this week. LB asked about tenants unwilling to have the survey carried out in their home. It was confirmed it was each tenant's right to refuse access if they did not wish to participate. One member had already had a survey carried out and found the surveyors to be courteous and non-intrusive, carried ID and asked permission to take photographs as required for the survey.

The full survey report will be presented to Committee in due course.

Committee noted the report.

7c) Linked Smoke Alarms Work – Update

Committee were advised that the tender documents for these works are currently being worked on by F3 Chartered Building Surveyors. The invite to tender will go to market by being advertised on the Public Contract Scotland website. This will be a joint procurement exercise with Hunters Hall Housing Co-op. It is expected that works will begin on site around the end of November 2019. Committee will be given the final approval concerning the winning contractor. The CEO will keep Committee updated.

Committee noted the report.

8) HOUSING MANAGEMENT

8a) Universal Credit Mitigation Strategy

Committee were advised that the Welfare Reform Act of 2012 brought in the most radical reform of the Welfare State since it first began. This has significant implications for both tenants and landlords. WGHC are in the process of drawing up a mitigation plan to help deal with the most significant of the changes-the introduction and rollout of Universal Credit. The strategy will outline how WGHC will look to maximise both WGHC and tenant income, whilst trying to minimise tenant and WGHC debt. **Committee noted the report**

9) AOCB

- a) The CEO advised we had been approached by the Council North Office seeking assistance in clearing build ups of materials, debris etc over the forthcoming bonfire period. The Council had cleared a large amount of materials last year but they cannot afford to fund this on an ongoing basis (£30k + last year). WGHC will supply labour (through our cleaning contractor) for one day of their 9 day clear up operation.

Committee noted the report.

- b) Member JM advised that the landscaped area adjacent to the pathway leading into Granton Mains March was full of recycling type rubbish and that items were being dumped there on a regular basis. CEO stated staff she would look into who might be responsible and also have the area cleared.

Committee noted the report.

- c) Member ER stated that she had reported a minor repair to the exterior of her property and had called at the office to chase this up after a couple of weeks and felt frustrated at not knowing the status of the repair request. She was informed that the repair had been completed some time previously. ER asked if contractors could leave a card with the tenant to advise that an external repair had been completed. **Committee agreed that as service users, tenants should be advised when an external repair request has been carried out. The CEO agreed tenants would be advised about the completion of external repairs going forward.**

12) DATE OF NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY 9th October 2019

Committee Approved the next meeting would be Wednesday 9th October 2019

Signed: Redacted as it contains personal data
Date.....

Chairperson