



Housing Co-op

sustaining and championing the co-operative way

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS  
THESE MINUTES OR ANY OTHER  
COMMITTEE RELATED MATTER,  
PLEASE CONTACT YOUR  
CHAIRPERSON,

LORNA BROWN [REDACTED]

## **West Granton Housing Co-operative Limited Committee of Management**

### **Minutes of Meeting – 11th December 2019**

**Present:** Lorna Brown (Chairperson), Marilyn Dickson (Treasurer),  
Fiona Marshall (Vice Chair), George Thompson, Elizabeth  
Robertson, Joe Moir, George Nicol, Donna Anderson

**In attendance:** Larke Adger (CEO) and Gordon Birrell from Chiene & Tait for  
Agenda Item 5B only.

#### **1) APOLOGIES**

**Pat Cordiner**

#### **2) MINUTES OF MEETING 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

**Minutes approved.**

#### **3) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

None.

#### **4) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**None.**

## FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

### 5a) Cash in the Bank – November 2019

Committee were advised that WGHC has £1,379,718 million 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) Staff Pensions- 2<sup>nd</sup> Decision Review

**Appendix 1 which was the SHAPS Evaluation for WGHC complemented this item.**

Gordon Birrell, Director from Chiene and Tait, attended the Committee Meeting and was present for this item. The CEO declared her interest in this item and left the meeting whilst Gordon and Committee commenced the presentation and advice session on Pensions.

Post meeting, Gordon Birrell advised the CEO in writing he had covered the following points with Committee:

- The main purpose of the Co-op and the interaction between this, the housing regulators views on both this and SHR remuneration statement
- The differences between defined benefit (being the benefits are defined but the cost is not and is an unknown liability to the association only quantified every three years at valuation) and defined contribution being the contributions are defined and this is where any liability ends for the Co-op.
- The impact on increasing liabilities if DB is continued and how this will impact on future deficit contributions as the share will increase on a like for like basis relative to an RSL who changes to DC and ceases to increase existing liabilities
- What has already been promised must be paid for
- The way the SHAPS is moving from predominantly DB to DC over a short period of time and how most associations have are addressing the same issues.
- The increasing costs for DB provision and 50/50 basis for increased rates temporarily was viewed as fair
- Options – either continue as present or look to switch to DC to remove future liability but not in a rushed manner

- DC contribution options and a suggestion to opt for a 2 for 1 basis with a maximum cap of 10% employer contribution subject to a minimum 5% (but no maximum) employee contribution and a minimum 6% employer contribution for a 3% employer which avoided any real barriers to join and also met with auto enrolment requirements. This was an accredited contributions rate.
- Finally to appreciate that pensions are an emotive subject when dealing with staff and to be mindful of this

On conclusion of Gordon's advice and presentation, the Chair invited the CEO to re-join the meeting.

The Chair confirmed to the CEO that Committee had noted and fully understood Gordon Birrell's advice and were now ready to review their November decision regarding WGHC's pension contributions for 2020/21.

**Committee agreed:**

- **WGHC will pay 50% of the increased contributions, whilst Staff will pay the remaining 50% for the financial year 2020/21. This 50/50 split is the same arrangement as is currently in place.**
- **Moving forward, WGHC will hold a Short Life Working Group with EVH arranged with EVH Director, Eamonn Connolly.**

### **5c) Staff Pensions- Short Life Working Group**

Before the SLWG have their first meeting, Committee were asked to decided if members should have a separate session with Chiene and Tait Pensions Consultant, Gordon Birrell.

**Committee agreed:**

- **They did not want to have a separate session before the SLWG considering how thorough Gordon Birrell had been at going through Item 5b with the at the meeting.**

### **5d) Annual Rent Increase 2020-21**

Committee considered a report about the feedback received from the proposed rent increase tenant consultation which ran from 23<sup>rd</sup> September to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019. 26 responses were received (response rate of 7%). Of the 26 responses received, 23 tenants had no objection and only 1 tenant was against the increase. 2 responses returned with comments not related to the increase.

**Committee agreed:**

- **that the rent increase for 2020-21 should be 2%.**

## 5e) Budget Year 1: 2020-21

Committee noted that the December Reports stated that the Budget Working Group was to meet on 9<sup>th</sup> December but due to staffing absences, this had changed to 16<sup>th</sup> December. The final draft will be presented to Committee together with a final draft of the Business Plan at the February 2020 Meeting.

## 5f) Tender for Upgrading Works – Linked Smoke Alarms

### Appendix 2 Tender Report for the Upgrading Works accompanied this item.

Committee were asked to look at the Tender Report prepared for WGHC by our Chartered Building Surveyor, David Bonar of F3.

WGHC and Hunters Hall Housing Co-op had joint procured and the project was placed on Public Contracts Scotland. The works for this tender comprised of upgrading the smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors for 187 WGHC properties. WGHC has 372 properties but 45 of these units (at the Forth Quarter) are already up to standard. Committee were asked to decide if they were happy to award the winning tendered a second phase of works to the remaining 140 properties, upon satisfactory completion and performance of the first phase.

Committee were advised that 7 tenders had been returned.

Les Graham (WGHC Maintenance Manager) and Stuart Orr (Hunters Hall Housing Co-op) and David Bonar of independently scored the quality assessment. Sally Orr of F3 independently scored the price.

The difference between the lowest and second lowest tender price was 3%. Prices ranged from £72,578K to £108,242k and this was shown on Page 3 of the Tender Report.

Final results show that R B Grant Ltd was the highest scoring organisation. Their quote for the tender was competitively priced and came in at the lowest of the 7 tenders at £72,578K.

Committee were advised that R B Grant Ltd had carried out similar works for Councils in Falkirk, Stirling, West Lothian, Angus and Fife Councils as well as Ore Valley, Ark and Link Housing Associations.

### Committee agreed:

- **to approve R B Grant Ltd to carry out the upgrading works for 187 WGHC properties and**
- **subject to a satisfactory completion of the above works that R B Grant Ltd be invited to carry out the upgrading works to the remaining 140 WGHC properties.**

## 5g) Scottish Government Interests Free Loan for Linked Smoke Alarm Works

Committee were advised registered social landlords can apply for a loan to cover the cost of buying and installing smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms to bring homes up to meet the standard when it comes into force on 1 February 2021. Loans are from the Scottish Government and will be interest-free and repayable across five years from the point of borrowing.

It is estimated the costs of these works to WGHC's properties will be approximately £146k. The closing date for the loan applications was 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

Under 8.4 of the WGHC Financial Regulations:

8.4. Committee approval is required for any borrowing. All borrowing and investments shall be in the name of WGHC and shall conform to any relevant regulatory requirements

Given the closing date was 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019, Committee were advised that the CEO had submitted an *incomplete* application form to the Scottish Government advising that a completed application and signed declaration requires approval from WGHC's Committee and their next meeting was not until 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019. The CEO has asked the Scottish Government if they would accept an incomplete application pending full approval from the Committee of Management. The signed declaration would then be sent to the Scottish Government on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

The Scottish Government has still to come back to the CEO to advise if they will allow this late submission.

The CEO advised Committee that the opportunity to secure an interest free loan with one repayment made each year for 5 years should be considered favourably and would certainly assist WGHC financially in terms of paying for these works over a longer period.

In addition, Committee were reminded that WGHC has only recently finished paying over £800k for the replacement of doors and windows in Area 1 so our cash balance this year had already been reduced considerably by this amount.

Finally, Committee were reminded there is no guarantee that the Scottish Government will accept the late submission, but the CEO advised it is certainly worth pursuing.

If approved by Committee, the CEO will report back at the February meeting if WGHC's late application has been accepted.

**Committee agreed:**

- **to approve that WGHC apply for an interest free loan from the Scottish Government up to the maximum of £150k to help WGHC spread the cost of the upgrading works over 5 years and**
- **to approve to delegate authority to the CEO to sign the declaration on the loan application form along with that of the Chair, Lorna Brown.**

## **6) Governance**

### **6a) Resignation of Committee Member**

**Committee noted that Marilyn Sinclair resigned from the WGHC Committee of Management on 21.11.19 for personal reasons and that the CEO had informed the Chair of this on 21.11.19 and updated the details on the SHR portal.**

### **6b) Draft Equality and Diversity Policy – Appendix 3**

Committee were asked to approved the new draft Equality and Diversity Policy as drawn up by joint working between Dr Stewart Montgomery and the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (GCIL) and WGHC. Committee were advised that WGHC were now implementing the Action Plan for WGHC's Equality and Diversity framework.

Committee were also advised that they would receive Equalities training from Dr Montgomery and GCIL in due course.

**Committee agreed:**

- **To approve WGHC's new Equality and Diversity Policy**

### 6c) Draft Settlements Policy – Appendix 4

As part of WGHC's ongoing self-assessment and the Scottish Housing Regulatory Framework, it is recognised that WGHC should have a Settlements Policy.

There is no reference to Settlements within the WGHC Staff Policy and ideally we should have a stand-alone Settlements Policy.

The CEO enclosed a draft Settlements Policy for Committee's consideration.

Once a valid settlement agreement has been signed, the employee will be unable to make an employment tribunal claim about any type of claim which is listed on the agreement.

#### **Committee agreed**

- **To approve the new Settlements Policy**

### 6d) CEO Appraisal

Members of the Staffing Sub Committee, in the presence of the full Committee, were asked to agree the date and time of Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019 at 12 Noon for the CEO's appraisal.

**The Staffing Sub agreed they were available for the above date and the full Committee approved this decision.**

### 6e) Staffing Update

Committee were reminded that this item is high confidential.

6ei) Committee were advised that the Tenancy Manager had gone off on planned sick leave on 28<sup>th</sup> November to have corrective surgery following an accident in August 2018 and would not be due to return to work until February/March 2020 and the Depute CEO is currently covering this post.

**Committee noted this report**

6eii) Committee were asked to consider a Settlement Proposal to end the contract of employment for [REDACTED]. Committee were advised:

Item 6eii) is redacted as it contains personal, sensitive and confidential information.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

a) [REDACTED]

b) [REDACTED]

c) [REDACTED]

d) [REDACTED]



[Redacted]

e) [Redacted]

f) [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

6eiii) Upgrading the Admin Assistant Post to EVH Grade 4

Committee were reminded that that the Administration Assistant, who was employed for a 12 month fixed period to cover maternity leave, resigned from her contract 5 months early. The Administration Assistant who was on maternity leave, had just handed in her resignation as she has decided not to return to work after having her baby.

WGHC had advertised the post in November 2019 but only attracted 5 applications, none of which were suitable for the post. The post was advertised as a Grade 3.

Following discussions with EVH, and looking at the Admin Assistant's job description, WGHC were advised by EVH this post should be advertised as a Grade 4 post. Only Committee of Management have the authority to approve this increase in grade. The CEO is therefore seeking Committee's approval to upgrade this post to Grade 4 and re-advertise.

**Committee agreed**

- **To approve the upgrading of the Administration Assistant Post from Grade 3 to Grade 4;**

6eiv) Recommendation to upgrade the Property Assistant from EVH Grade 4 to EVH Grade 5

Committee were advised that the Property Assistant is currently on EVH Grade 4. Over the past year, she has increasingly taken on more responsibility within her role and also covers, to a large extent, for the Maintenance Manager (EVH Grade 8) whilst he is on leave. At her appraisal this year, the Maintenance Manager and the Property Assistant discussed her current duties and responsibilities and compared them against her existing job description. There is a clear gap in the job the Property Assistant is performing when compared against her current job description and the EVH Grading Guidelines for a Grade 4.

Both the Maintenance Manager and the CEO have met to discuss the above variances and cross referenced these against the EVH Grading Guidelines. The outcome of this meeting is that the Property Assistant is now performing a role

more in line with EVH Grade 5. It therefore agreed between the Maintenance Manager and the CEO that it should be recommended that the Property Assistant is upgraded to EVH Grade 5 with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020. If this is approved, she will not be able to move up to the next point within the Grade 5 pay scale until April 2021.

#### **Committee agreed**

- **To approve the upgrading of the Property Assistant from EVH Grade 4 to EVH Grade 5 from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020.**

6ev) Annual Leave: CEO and Depute CEO

Committee were advised at the time of December 2019 report the Depute CEO still had 13 days annual leave to take. This amounts to 2 working weeks and 3 working days. The CEO has asked the Depute CEO to use this leave up between now and the end of the financial year (up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020).

At the time of this report, the CEO still has 21 annual leave days to take: this amounts to 4 weeks and 1 working day. However, it is highly unlikely that she will be able to take this between now and the end of the financial year; again due to ongoing staff absences.

The CEO's priority is to make sure that all staff, including the Depute CEO, are able to take their annual leave and prevent them carrying over annual leave in to the following year which would only compound the issue in to the next financial year.

WGHC is currently without three key staff members within the Housing Management Team. In addition, there are still a large amount of policies and governance reports and improvement works to be carried out and presented to Committee by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. After the December meeting there are only two Committee Meetings left this financial year.

Committee are therefore asked to acknowledge that the CEO will put to them an exceptional request for their permission and approval to be paid for the 4 weeks annual leave at the end of March 2020 to ensure that she does not carry forward any leave days in to 2020/21; this will allow the Depute CEO to take his annual leave and ensure there is continuity of leadership within the office and that WGHC's improvements and priorities are completed within the required timescales so as not to put the organisation at risk.

**Committee noted this report and acknowledged that the CEO will submit this exceptional request for their consideration at the February or March 2020 meeting.**

## 6f) Skills Report

**Presented by Annie Mauger-Thompson (WGHC's Governance Support Consultant for Committee)**

### Appendix 5

AMT presented her Skills Assessment Report of the WGHC Committee of Management.

At the end of her presentation Committee, AMT announced that she would, regrettably, be retiring from this post as she has just secured the new CEO post with SACRO. She would, however, carry out one training session with them in February 2020 before her departure.

#### Committee agreed

- **To note AMT's report of their Annual Skills Assessment**
- **To note that AMT would shortly be resigning from her post as their Governance Support Consultant. The Chair and Committee thanked AMT for all her work with them and wished her well for the future**
- **To have one final session with AMT in February before she takes up her new CEO role with SACRO in March 2020.**

Committee were advised that the 2020 Budgets, Benchmarks, Risk Register and Policy Revision Cycle still need to be added to the Plan. The budgets will only be added in once the Budget Working Group has met and finalised a proposed budget for Committee's approval in December 2019. This final draft will be presented to Committee in February 2020 for their final approval.

#### Committee approved:

- **That no further changes were to be made to the Risk Register at present and approved the register to be entered in to the 2020-23 Business Plan.**

## 6g) Governance Development Plans for 2020

**Presented by Annie Mauger-Thompson (WGHC's Governance Support Consultant for Committee)**

### 1. Introduction

West Granton Housing Cooperative's Management Committee have been working hard to develop their governance skills and capabilities to ensure that they are doing the best that they can for tenants, to meet regulatory requirements, and are in a good position for the future.

The Committee want to embed their governance development work and make arrangements for a number of annual activities to ensure that they continue to develop in skills and strategic thinking, monitor their performance and provide the best service for members and the required assurance for the Scottish Housing Regulator.

This report outlines a proposed plan for this work.

## 2. Governance development activities

WGHC requires several key outcomes and activities for the year. These are described below:

- An annual skills audit and development plan for the Committee
- An annual strategy day to ensure that the Committee are driving the strategic direction of the Cooperative and to facilitate business planning
- An annual development session to ensure that all Committee members are agreed about their role and purpose and to embed those values in new Committee members
- A facilitated session focused on the Annual Assurance statement required to be submitted to the Regulator.

## 3. Timetable

This proposed timeline assumes of the focus of activity for the Committee being around the time of changeover of membership and roles, business planning and reporting to the Regulator. The details of how this would work for 2020 are outlined in Section 4.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Activity</b>
September	AGM appoints new board members
October/November	Committee development session
January	Committee Skills appraisal
May	Strategy day
July/August	Regulation session to prepare for annual assurance statement

#### 4. 2020

The timetable proposes a skills audit in January, however, the 2019 skills audit will only be discussed and agreed at the meeting in December alongside a report on progress. There are no new Committee members at the moment, so for the time being the Committee could agree that the current skills assessment is still relevant until Committee members are embedded in their new roles.

If the Committee agree, the January development session is used as a facilitated time to take stock of the Committee's collective performance in 2019 and what is needed for the future overall, included development related to delivering the strategic plan and also succession planning for the future.

The outcome of this would be a short report outlining all of the good things that the Committee has achieved so far and a confirmation of the plan for the year.

**Written by:**

**Annie Mauger**

**December 2019**

**Committee agreed:**

- **Their governance timetable for 2020**
- **Their first session in February 2020 should focus on a performance review of Committee achievements in 2019 and their plans for the future.**
- **The CEO will liaise with AMT and propose dates/time to Committee for their consideration at the February meeting.**

#### **6K) Membership Changes**

There were no new commencements and one termination since the November reports.

**Committee noted the report.**

#### **6L) Health and Safety Report**

**Committee noted there had been no accidents or incidents since the October meeting.**

## 7. ASSET MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

### 7a) Linked Smoke Alarm Works

Committee were asked to refer back to Section 5f of these reports which provide a full update.

Under this section, Committee were reminded, that subject to their approval a pilot of works will take place in 1 WGHC property on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019 (which will be void) and then the programme is expected to roll out in January 2020.

Further updates will be given to Committee under this section in future reports.

**Committee noted the report**

## 8) HOUSING MANAGEMENT

### Rent Arrears

It was reported to Committee that Gross arrears (non technical) arrears are 1.19% against a benchmark of 1.30%.

Two arrears cases were upcoming with Court dates:

Case 1: Balance £1935.62 which calls on 13 December. The case has been continued on numerous occasions to date to monitor payments. Case likely to be sisted.

Case 2: Balance £1286.78 which calls on 14 February. The tenant has broken numerous arrangements in the last 12 months and has been advised we will not enter into further arrangements but to pay as much as possible before the case calls.

We have a small but increasing number of tenants claiming Universal Credit. Of the 16 currently showing as claiming UC on the DWP Portal, around half have an arrears balance.

## **Allocations**

At the time of the report we had 5 properties either void or about to become void.

We had exhausted our Internal Transfer list for 3 of these properties which will be now advertised through Edindex, on the Key to Choice website.

## **Antisocial Behaviour (ASB)**

We have one tenant who plead guilty to charges of Breach of the Peace and Possession of a Sword in the locality of his tenancy. He is due to be sentenced on 16 December and we are seeking legal advice on the avenues open to us in terms of him breaching his tenancy agreement. We may seek conversion to a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy as the chances of an eviction order being granted are slim. In the unlikely event the tenant receives a custodial sentence he has stated he will voluntarily terminate his tenancy. Committee will be kept updated.

**Committee noted the report.**

## **9) Donations & Sponsorships**

Committee were advised there was nothing to report in this section.

**Committee noted the report.**

## **10) AOCB**

10a) Committee were advised that the winners of the WGHC "Design a Christmas Card" competition were:

- 12 year old Chantelle Pettigrew and
- 2 year old Harper from the Prentice Community Centre Creche

**Committee noted this report**

10b) Committee were advised that member James Moir had resigned from Committee on 05.12.19 and that the Chair had already been advised. James Moir had retired for both personal and health reasons. The CEO informed Committee that WGHC's details on the SHR portal had been updated to reflect this change.

**Committee noted this report**



10c) Committee were advised that WGHC had received an application for co-option on to the Committee of Management from member/tenant Wendy Riordan. Committee discussed the application and unanimously agreed that Wendy should be allowed to become a co-opted member. The CEO took note and advised she would write out to Wendy Riordan advising and invite her to the February Meeting. In addition, the CEO confirmed she would update the SHR portal to reflect this change.

**Committee approved Wendy Riordan's application to become a co-opted member.**

**Item 10d) is redacted as it contains both personal and sensitive information.**

10d) 



**Committee decided unanimously to approve the new grade and instructed the CEO to upgrade the Assistant Housing EVH Grade 6 to Housing Officer EVH Grade 7 from 01.01.20.**

**11 ) DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday, 12th February 2020**

**Committee approved that the next meeting would be on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020.**

The following signature has been redacted as it is personal and confidential

Signed [REDACTED]

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> February

**Chairperson**