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# Board of Management

Wednesday, 14th February 2024 9:30 am

Russell Square   |   Board of Management

## Attendees

#### Attended – Board Members

#### Jimmy Black (JB) in the Chair, Hazel Farquhar (HF), Jeanette Gaul (JG), Cheryl Glen (CG), Ian McDonald (IMCD), Linda McDonald (LMCD), Isobel McGarrol (IMCG), Stuart Storrie (SS) and Sheena Welsh (SW)

#### Attended – Staff

#### Gail Robertson, Chief Executive Officer (GR), Linlay Anderson, Director of Housing Services (LA), Kevin Lynch, Director of Asset Management (KL), Grant Miller, Finance Manager (GM) and Nicola McIntosh, Corporate Services Officer (NMC)

#### Did Not Attend

#### Arlene Grant, Craig Irvine and Fred Jack

## 1.0 Apologies, Conflict of Interests & Notifiable Events

Purpose - For Noting

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

Meeting commenced at 9.32am.

Apologies received from Craig Irvine and Fred Jack.

There are no notifiable events or declaration of interests from board members.

Conflict of interest on any item relating to salaries for staff.

Members accepted the resignation of Derek Hart. GR to send a formal response thanking him for his contributions to the board.

## 2.0 Minutes of Board Meeting 13th December 2023

Purpose - For Approval

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

Actions from December minutes complete, these were:
Provide a summary of the outstanding actions from Health & Safety report.
CEO Workplan with [REDACTED – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION] and signatories for relevant paperwork, HF signed before Christmas.

Item 16 AOB - amend typo 'inute' to minute.

Minutes were presented and approved as a correct record subject to minor typo.

## 3.0 Minutes of the Service Delivery Sub Committee 15th November 2023

Purpose - Instructions

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

Minutes were presented and approved as a correct record.

**4.0 [REDACTED – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION]**

## 5.0 Rent Consultation Response & Implementation

Purpose - For Approval

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

GR presented the Rent Consultation Response and Implementation Report, thanking Housing and Tenant Engagement staff for their efforts in completing this exercise, via meetings and door knocking. These efforts resulted in an 8% response rate.

Members noted that there was a strong link between rents and tenants getting a good maintenance service and heating, kitchens, bathrooms and windows upgrades. Questions within the survey mean that the Association now knows where the tenants want us to spend money on. GR noted that future rent conversations will be on whether this continues to be an option due to the net zero heating standard and the costs of meeting compliance on this.

Members were advise that where there is a comment that can be followed up and they have provided contact details, a response will be provided to them.

GR explained that figures have been provided from our peers, to try to give an idea of what they are charging.

The CEO advised that the draft budget has been prepared on the basis of a 7% rent increase being approved, however this is a decision for members to make.

JB asked if the Association should be worried that the tenants don't see FIT as a necessary item. IMCD feels the chart at no.2 is quite confusing to understand. GR advises if you look at the FIT against those tenants who use it will rank it high compared to those who haven't had to use the service.

LA feels the question 'Prioritising where to spend money' could be reviewed next year to make it clearer and simpler to understand.

SS wanted to remind all that 187 out of 2000+ tenants responses aren't necessarily the feelings of all as it is a relatively small number of tenants responses.

IMCD felt key responses related to the work of the energy advisor and would like future a summary report on value for money for this service provided for a future meeting. JB advised that members were all supportive of the FIT Team and Energy Advisor and wanted to ensure that this is being recognised. LA explained that not every tenants experience with the FIT team will always be positive as this is part of pre action requirements when a tenant is in rent arrears and possible legal action is pending.

JB advised that Angus Council were implementing a 6.7% rent increase, Dundee City Council -3.5%. Members felt that the Association have no option other than to go for 7% if AHA want to remain a developing association and continue to improve current stock and maintain services.

HF declared a conflict of interest in this discussion due to being a tenant member.

Members agree unanimously on the implementation of a 7% rent increase.

## 6.0 Draft Budget 24/25

Purpose - For Approval

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

GM presented the Draft Budget for 2024/25 advising that there were 2 versions of the report, based on [REDACTED – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION]

Members noted the assumptions of inflation at 5%, rent increase at 7% and [REDACTED – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION]. As-sumption of void and bad debts were set at 2% each. IMCD asked about bad level assumptions and if guid-ance on debt provision provided by CT last year had been included. GM advised this currently runs at around 1% but in the current climate it was sensible to err on the side of caution and have enough cover in place which has been provisioned for.

GM advised members of areas of significant expenditure including the Association's development pro-gramme, noting that AG had prepared this prior to going off.

SS asked why no additional rental income had been included for new developments through 2024/25. GR felt this was a sensible approach due to the potential unexpected delays in developments and as the devel-opment on site may not complete in the 24/25 fiscal year.

GM advised the CWM has figures in place for future budgets and planning.

IMCD noted that it would appear the comprehensive surplus of £250k in the current year is project-ed to be more than previously planned. Looking back at the costs from this year with cyclical repair IMCD asked if it was worthwhile committing this surplus to this budget heading for next year.

GM gave assurance that it is not at the stage where these budgets need more money as the budgets had already been revised and there was an element of costs against these budgets that should have been coded elsewhere. For 24/25 onwards finance staff and asset management staff will be analys-ing all codes in much more depth and this will improve the reporting. KL confirmed that due to costs and contractor issues some budgets have already been analysed and adjustments had been identi-fied.

KL advised that during monthly 1-2-1's, budgets are looked at to ensure there are no issues arising and so that we can accurately predict year end budgets.

GR advised that the Association are looking at the business planning model to take account of spend required for future years, including improvements and new build development. The SMT are speaking to Allia about our debt portfolio and when we need to bring in more money, refinancing etc

IMCD advised that the depreciation figures did not tally. GM confirmed there is a slight error that will be corrected. IMCD felt that the Clydesdale Bank loan has been an ongoing concern, and would like to repay this. IMCD asked if the Association were in a position to use our own resources to pay this instead of sourcing alternative funding. GR advises AHA could drawdown from the £16 million to repay the loan. A proposal with a range of options to be presented to FAR on 21st February on how to take this forward.

GR indicated that it would make sense to repay some of the existing debt if possible. Members agreed for this to be looked in to and brought back to a later meeting.

[REDACTED – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION]

Members commended all the work to bring the draft budget to the board.

Members noted and unanimously approved the budget which included [REDACTED – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION] and noted conflicts of interest from staff relating to salaries.

## 7.0 Health & Safety Report

Purpose - For Noting

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

JMCI attended to present the Health & Safety Report to the Board noting there were no accidents and incidents reported.

JMCI provided the outstanding items from the action plan to the board which detailed the reasons for items remaining incomplete.

IMCD feels a lot of work has been completed behind the scenes on the action plan as seen in the summary provided.

Members noted the contents of the report.

## 8.0 CEO Workplan

Purpose - For Noting

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

GR presented the CEO Workplan advising there is a summary of the plan and a status note attached.

GR explained that the Director of Asset Management and Capital Works Manager are working on a response to the Scottish Housing Net Zero Standard. JB would like to see AHA's response on consultation before it is submitted. Once this is complete, work will start on an asset management strategy day.

Members noted that the first staff member is completing Common Purpose leadership training next month. GR is looking in to coaching for other staff members.

People Management - GR and NMC met with AHA's HR specialist and sent over a suite of 22 amended HR policies for him to consider. This is with a view to have a streamlined Terms and Conditions document, taking out anything that is non contractual and putting it in a staff handbook. This makes changes to policy and practice much easier to deal with. GR noted are not using it as a way of reducing terms and conditions and staff would have full visibility of the changes.

IMCD asked if all people related items come to board. GR advises staffing report goes to FAR.

SS suggests having a workforce strategy given the age of staff to allow the association to succession plan for this. GR explained that we do have a workforce development policy that was previously approved, and this covers some of the succession issues relating to bringing in a younger workforce particularly with bringing in apprenticeships.

In relation to IT, GR advised that Shackleton, the Association's new IT providers have taken over from Kick ICT [REDACTED – CONFIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL INFORMATION]

GR advised the rent restructure is going well, explaining there will be 9 or 10 key areas that we will charge rent on. This will be reported back to the board later in the year once Arneill Johnston has worked on a new structure and a consultation exercise with tenants would follow.

Members noted and approved the contents of the report.

## 9.0 Q3 Complaints Report

Purpose - For Information

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

IMCG questioned why there were no learning outcomes detailed as she felt that there should be a lesson to be learnt if it is a valid complaint. LA agreed and will speak to the Senior Customer Services Officer about this.

LA explained the reason complaints have increased is due to contact logs being introduced.

Board members felt that this is a very important report and would like more detail and reasons the complaints were initiated included in future reports.

GR advised that this report will be looked at and brought back to the board with more detail.

Board members approved the contents of the report.

## 10.0 Board Appraisal Policy Review

Purpose - For Approval

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

GR presented the Board Appraisal Policy. Members noted that this takes account of the change to the model rules and the regulatory standards. This policy reflects our current practice.

Members noted and approved the policy.

Members confirmed they were happy to continue on with the meeting after 2 hours.

## 11.0 Draft Board Training Plan 2024

Purpose - For Approval

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

GR advised that members are required to complete 2 webinars prior to the Annual Appraisal process which will be around August time.

JB advises that he and HF have completed some and feels they meet the requirements of the Board.

GR indicated that following on from that, bitesize board training will commence in April on various items, including HR responsibilities for board members, GDPR/FOI and Cyber Security.

Members noted and approved the contents of the report.

## 12.0 AOB

Purpose - For Information

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

GR wanted to advise board members that Jack Nicoll - ex board member of 22 years, sadly passed away last month. GR to write an article to be included in the next newsletter.

External agency use of Russell Square - Arbroath Connections, a dementia care group would like to rent Russell Square for 3 days per week. Members noted that Russell Square is used a lot for board meetings, training and staff meetings. JB stated that if it can be used to allow board meetings to be unaffected then board members would be in favour of this.

Damp and mould update to Board on email from The Courier. KL explained that we first got notified of this issue in January 2023, with some remedial works being carried out then nothing was heard for almost a full calendar year.
KL advised this is a latent defect and has been passed back to Taylor Wimpey as this was an extremely concerning issue. A joint visit was carried out between AHA and Taylor Wimpey and we are now awaiting a response from them. KL advised he was updating the Board to make members aware we are doing as much as we can but it is likely to make the press.

Abertay/Santander Universities Placement submission - GR explained that AHA have been given an opportunity to submit an application to have a placement student for up to 95 hours to conduct a project for us. GR would be interested in obtaining someone with a business background with an interest in PR and branding.

Development Update: [REDACTED – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION]

JB provided an update on the meeting that he and GR had with DCC Housing convener Mark Flynn. This covered a large variety of issues and JB felt that this was important to continue to improve our relationship. GR advised that the SMT and JB were meeting with Michael Marra, MSP for North East Dundee the following day.

Meeting closed with thanks at 12.20pm.

## 13.0 Date of Next Meeting

Purpose - For Information

#### Minute by Nicola McIntosh

Wednesday 10th April 2024 at 9.30am.