

**GOVANHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY 15th APRIL AT 2PM
ONLINE MEETING**

PRESENT: Annie Macfarlane (Chair)
Barbara Robertson
Keith Kintrea
Mujeeb Ur-Rehman
Ghazala Hakeem
Wilma Logan

IN ATTENDANCE: John Quinn, Director
Shannon Watson, Head of Finance & ICT (HF)
Alan McDonald, Head of Housing and Property Services (HHPS)
Alison Kevan, Head of Corporate Services & HR (HCSHR)
Liz Campbell, Minute Secretary

1. Apologies Iain Doherty, John McLardie, Robert Findlater, James White

2. Declarations of Interest

Barbara Robertson declared an interest at item no 7.

3. Minutes of Management Committee meeting held on 4th March 2020

The minutes were proposed by Keith Kintrea and seconded by Wilma Logan.

4. Covid-19 Update

This paper was introduced by the Director and was an overview of the steps taken by the Association and Govanhill Community Development Trust (GCDT) in response to the government guidelines.

The following points were highlighted:

- The office closed to the public on 17th March 2020 and has been open to staff for 2 hours twice a week to allow to access IT and for deliveries, collections etc.
- The management services and cleaning services to commercial workspaces at Dixon Road were also suspended. Only two tenants are deemed to provide essential work requiring access at this time.

- Provision has been made to meet the statutory requirements of emergency repairs.
- All major contract works have been stopped and sites made safe. The Development Team who were based on sites are now looking at other office work, including developing the asset management strategy and inputting data into the capita IT system to reinforce its value for the Service.
- GCDT staff have been at the forefront of delivering services to the community

Language Workers have been working to assist tenants and partner agencies with translation work and have been very busy during this period.

- GCDT staff are also helping to co-ordinate the mapping of food distribution in the area.

The Thriving Places Co-Ordinator has been compiling a resource map and looking at resilience funding that may become available. A message has been placed on the website to say that the Association is still open for business, albeit remotely, and staff have been signposting people to local resources.

- All staff have been provided with the facility to work from home and this has been a large logistical exercise for the Association and its staff.

Discussion with Committee Members. It was asked if the cover paper should have stated Govanhill Housing Association and Community Development Trust in the title.

A question was raised about the parameters of the financial implications of the pandemic. Eg rent struggles, increased contract costs. It was reported that it is still the intention for the draft budgets to be finalised in May, along with the business plan and that accounting for the potential financial impact of the pandemic is exercising the HF, but it is too early to accurately quantify this just now.

The HHPS reported that the main priority just now is to keep people safe and appendix 2 gives Housing Services Report on the response to Covid-19.

- Some people have refused access for planned works of Statutory Gas Safety Checks along with other works such as periodic electrical checks and upgrading smoke detector installations.
- There are still some questions on the statutory gas servicing targets.
- MEARS, City Technical Services and Latto Maintenance have been providing a full emergency repairs service.

It was asked if the demand for this was higher or lower than usual. It was reported that there are usually 10/15 emergency repair requests per day, but the average just now has been 6/8.

The recent fire in Pollokshields highlighted the need to ensure that closes are safe. To that end MEARS are being deployed – at cost rate – to check every close that is factored for safety checks. They are sanitising the common door handles and banisters and checking that there is no build-up of bulk waste and taking items to Shieldhall for disposal if required.

- Maintenance staff are still available by telephone for advice and are on site as required in relation to emergency inspections and incidents as warranted.
- Void repairs have been suspended but properties are being checked to ensure that they have not been broken into.
- The rent increase letters have been posted out ahead of schedule and Housing Benefit notified of changes.
- The Rent team and Welfare Rights team have been providing a supportive role and signposting those experiencing hardship to resources that are available to them. Support and a payment plan/recovery path are also discussed if someone is in touch to say they are struggling financially.
- Vulnerable and elderly tenants have been contacted by staff and that support has been very well received.
- Factoring Invoices have been issued.

It was asked if the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) would take the current events into consideration if targets were not met. It was reported that the Regulator has asked to be informed of anything that has not been completed and this week has requested a monthly report on key areas.

It was asked if there was an emergency could someone still be re-housed. It was reported that guidance had been given to suspend the usual letting process but there was capacity to move someone in an emergency.

Close cleaning and ground maintenance were halted at lockdown, but it is hoped that close cleaning will commence soon. Staff carrying out these tasks would be using the correct personal protective equipment to allow them to do so safely. The Association's close cleaning contractor has recommenced a touch surface clean in the closes where a close cleaning service is in place which includes door handles, banisters, push plates and door entry controls.

In closes we manage all are receiving a touch surface sanitisation clean once a week and those with a close cleaning service twice a week. In discussion it was noted that staff have come across some harrowing situations while supporting families.

Members' comments on this paper were that it was very well thought out and organised and thanks were given to staff for their extraordinary efforts.

5. Staffing Matters

The main purpose of this paper is to provide Committee with an update on the support provided to staff during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as information on the Government's Job Retention scheme.

The following points were highlighted:

- In section 2 of the report there is information on the temporary job retention scheme. Claims can be submitted from the end of April for employers to claim 80% of furloughed wages from the government scheme.
- Section 2.6 is highlighted as this applies to GCDT and SWG posts which are funded through grants. As a result, those staff cannot be furloughed.
- Section 2.9 EVH has advised that Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are able to make claims under furlough but have advised caution should be used to safeguard against too many staff being furloughed prior to confirmation that the virus has peaked. This is to mitigate against the risk that retained staff could then present themselves as absent due to sickness, resulting in staff shortages.
- Section 3.3 There is a process to be followed for furlough and appendix 1 has further information on this and the criteria we would use to determine who should be furloughed.
- 3.4 Equality and discrimination laws still apply. Staff who are in self-isolation or who have caring responsibilities can be furloughed.
- 3.6 Government and EVH guidance is that temporary contracts are continued where possible by an employer. It may be that these staff can be furloughed.
- 3.7 EVH have recommended that Associations pay the remaining 20% of furloughed employees wages for as long as they are able to do so.
- 3.9 sets out some of the roles that may be furloughed and reasoning behind that.

- 6.1 Changes in annual leave carry over times was highlighted. This will apply to a small number of staff.
- 7.1 Staff welfare – it was reported that line managers are in regular contact with staff. Mental Health First Aiders have also assisted some staff at this difficult time.
- 7.5 Some GCDT staff and Housing staff are dealing with particularly difficult issues currently. Time for Talking are providing additional support to those staff who have been dealing with issues such as organising funerals and repatriation of bodies.
- It was also reported that changes had been made to statutory sick pay and the employer can claim this from day 1 instead of day 4.

Discussion

In discussion it was asked if Reception staff duties have significantly decreased but it was reported that they are dealing with emails and are also working on invoice processing to ensure that contractor payments are made on schedule.

It was reported that the time is now approaching for discussions to take place with staff who are unable to maintain useful work streams from home.

It was asked if everyone needs to be furloughed at the same time or if it can be done in stages. It was confirmed that it can be done in stages.

The contents of the report and the workload for staff working from home were noted. Approval given for senior staff to discuss and agree appropriate furlough measures with staff in accordance with the criteria noted in the paper. It was also agreed that the Association meets the additional 20% of salaries for furloughed employees.

6. Special Item – Rent Increase

This item was to inform committee of discussions that had taken place and to confirm that the delay of the planned rent increase had been given careful consideration by Senior Management Team.

The Management Team have been looking at how the Association can help the community at this time. They have also looked at other Associations and sought advice on this matter. Postponing the planned rent increase was considered but after detailed discussions it was considered not beneficial to do so.

Tenants have been legally notified of the increase. If the increase was delayed it would have a significant impact on planned works. There were previous discussions about the impact a proposed new development could have on cash flow reserves and delaying the rent increase

would add to this. Delaying the rent increase could affect the financial viability of the Association. It was also reported that budgets would be finalised by the end of May and more information would be available then.

Overall feedback from tenants is that they have appreciated the support being offered by the Association at this time.

Support is in place for those struggling with rent payments during this time. Positive relationships with tenants mean that issues are being dealt with on a case by case basis and staff are working very hard to provide additional support.

It is expected that there will be a large increase in requested repairs once the lockdown restrictions have been lifted. This will incur additional expenditure for the Association.

Some component replacement works have been delayed. It is anticipated that once works commence the original costs will have increased due to market conditions.

The majority of committee members agreed with this decision. One member did not agree but was happy to accept the majority decision.

7. SW Govanhill Acquisition & Repair Programme Update – For Information

It was reported that all site works have been suspended.

A target of 78 acquisitions had been agreed with Development regeneration Services (DRS) at the beginning of this financial year. A total of 65 properties have been acquired. There are ongoing discussions with DRS regarding works continuing after the scheduled end of the programme in March 2021.

There have been ongoing incidents of anti-social behaviour in Annette Street but it would appear that this has improved recently, and Police have been responding quickly to reported incidents.

The remaining contents of the report were noted,

8. Report Back from Other Organisations Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH)

It is anticipated that the planned AGM will proceed but be an online meeting due to current restrictions. The annual conference has been cancelled.

Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations (GWSF)

The last meeting was cancelled so no updates to report.

SHARE

The AGM and all training have been cancelled. The Executive Committee continue to meet on an online basis.

SFHA, GWSF and Housing regulator have formed a Scottish Housing Resilience Group to provide advice on the Covid-19 situation.

9. Documents for Formal Execution – For Approval

Offer of grant in the sum of £2,244,314 from GCC DRS in respect of the development on the site of 159/161 Butterbiggins Road for 24 units of residential housing for social rent, dated 12th March 2020, and accepted by the Head of Finance & IT on 12th March 2020 in order to process front funded contract payments before year-end.

Revised Offer of Grant in the sum of £6,188,767.21 from GCC DRS in respect of SW Govanhill Property Acquisition & Repairs Programme 2019/20 dated 23rd March 2020 and accepted by Head of Finance & IT on 23rd March 2020 in order to process contract payments falling due before the year-end.

10. Correspondence – For Information

Letter to Jamieson Court Resident's Group

A response has been sent to Mrs Burns regarding this.

11. A.O.C.B

Committee confirmed that the remote meeting was conducted to the same standards as the usual face to face meeting and committee is still assured of the Association's capacity and ability to meet the standards set out on the Annual Assurance Statement. Agreement was given by all.

It was asked if planned meeting schedule would continue to be met by using online meeting tools. It was reported that it is hoped to continue with the planned schedule in this way.

It was asked if staff could be given a message of thanks from Committee members for their work and efforts made during the current situation as members are very impressed with the solutions that have been found in these challenging times.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 27th May 2020 at 2pm