

**GOVANHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY 2ND MARCH 2022 AT 6.30PM
ONLINE MEETING**

PRESENT: Annie Macfarlane (Chair)
Elizabeth Klein
Keith Kintrea
Iain Doherty
Wilma Logan
Jen Cassells
Audrey Flannnagan
Cheryl Miller (from Item 4)

IN ATTENDANCE: John Quinn, Director
Alison Kevan, Head of Corporate Services & HR (HCSHR)
Alan McDonald, Head of Development & Property Services (HDPS)
Claire McGraw, Head of Tenancy Services (HTS)
Nicki Bruce, Minutes

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from John McLardie, Ghazala Hakeem, Barbara Robertson and Mujeeb Ur-Rehman.

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of the Management Committee meetings held on 26th January 2022

On page 2 at the second last paragraph it refers to John Quinn submitting the rent increase information to GWSF but it should read 'in future years we will submit the rent increase information to GWSF.'

Following this change being made the minutes were proposed by Audrey Flannigan and seconded by Elizabeth Klein.

Matters Arising

200 Butterbiggins Road

Progress has been made in appointing a consultant architect for the project with the required indemnity insurance. A planning supervisor is being organised for the project and a fire engineer will be required to sign off the works and improvements.

Staffing Issues

It was advised confirmation of funding for the 5 affected roles has been received and once email confirmation is received their contracts will be issued.

Business Planning Session for Management Committee

It was advised it has been difficult to secure a date suitable for everyone in late March so further dates in April will be requested from Jim Harvey and circulated to Committee.

A Committee and Staff Planning Day was also suggested to ensure all points of view could be considered and it was suggested staff could be asked for comments in advance of the meeting with areas to be looked at during the session in break out groups.

It was further noted a joined session would be beneficial as there have been many staff changes and would be a good opportunity to build as an organisation.

4. Rent Increase and Rent Restructure

Rent Increase

The rent consultation was very successful with over 561 responses. There were 2 options given for the rent increase: 3.6% or 4.1% and the majority of responders (75%) selected 3.6%.

In relation to the financial considerations both rent increase options have been tested in terms of affordability and the Association can afford to apply the lower rent increase of 3.6%.

Consideration has been given to the affordability to tenants and the Association's rent is classed as affordable for most. The most 'at risk' group would be tenants on Universal Credit with a 2 bed property who would see 37% of their income going towards rent. The team will look to offer support to those affected.

In terms of the rent increase GWSF have reported other associations are applying between 1.5% and 5.2%.

Rent Restructure

It was noted the rent restructure had been delayed due to the pandemic and it was queried if the rent increase and restructure would happen at the same time as previously agreed and advised that it will.

It was noted the plan is to commence the process of the restructure in April 2023 which will allow time for the Association to communicate with tenants. It will also ensure there is clarity regarding the impact on rent and the adjustments in terms of the rent increase and restructure will occur at the same time which will be less confusing for tenants.

It was noted this would also be beneficial in terms of administration of the process.

It was advised there will be more 'winners than losers' in terms of the restructure with 70% of tenants seeing a decrease to their rent.

It was agreed the previous paper to Committee which provided the background for the rent restructure will be sent to Audrey and Cheryl.

The Management Committee approved the rent increase of 3.6% from April 2022.

The Management Committee approved the rent restructure process commencing in April 2023.

5. Annual Assurance Action Plan Update

The updated action plan was presented which highlights how the Association is progressing with the various regulatory standards which will be submitted to the SHR in October this year.

Regulatory Standard 2 Accountability was queried as the customer portal was originally scheduled for launch in the Summer of 2022 but is now listed as Autumn 2022. It was also noted it had been agreed Management Committee members who are tenants would be involved in the end user testing.

It was noted the launch date has been pushed back to Autumn due to delays caused by the pandemic.

It was queried why some of the text was highlighted in yellow as it wasn't clear what text was original and what had been amended.

It was also noted the cover report referred to Equalities being listed as No 17 in the action plan but the action plan lists it as No 15.

It was also queried if an edition number can be provided to ensure Committee are aware which version is being presented to them.

The comments were noted and the action plan will be updated to ensure the cover report and the action plan link to the correct numbers. Work will continue to gain further assurance on specific areas.

The Management Committee approved the action plan subject to the changes being made.

6. Covid Update

It was advised the report was written on the 21 February and there have been further updates since then. Guidance from the Scottish Government (SG) and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) continues to be followed in relation to ventilation and numbers permitted in the office at any one time.

Improvements are being made to systems regarding appointments and tenant access to the building.

The SG guidance regarding ventilation was updated at the end of January 2022 and the Association are working with John Gilbert Architects to look at the ventilation system in Samaritan House. They will be attending the office next week for a more detailed investigation as to what is required.

The window at Reception is now ready following alterations to allow it to be used as a drop in area for tenants. There is another option to use the first interview room as you enter the building as an alternative Reception area. The works for this are being instructed to amend it for use. The work does not require the involvement of building control so it can be altered quickly.

Changes will also be made to the janitor service to enable both janitors to access the building the same week rather than using cohort working. This will ensure the office can remain open for longer.

The Association are now at a stage where all staff who require to be in the office can be and it also assists in meeting tenant's needs.

Questions

The increase to heating costs may impact staff and they may wish to attend the office more frequently when the energy price rise is introduced and it was queried how the Association would accommodate this.

It was advised 38 members of staff can access the building each day and most are happy to continue with hybrid working but there are plans to issue a further staff survey in April when staff views may change. There may also be further changes to covid guidance which could affect how the Association can adapt.

It was also noted the Association was focusing on the how to open the Reception area of the offices for public access and how to future proof that area to comply with proposed new HSE ventilation guidance. The first stage is to ensure the Association can provide a level of customer interface and ensure it works well, then the issue of ventilation will be looked at in more detail.

Praise was given to the report and the particular focus being given to ventilation. In terms of Association operations it was queried if some areas of service were compromised by the adjustments made as a result of the pandemic or if there were some areas or tasks which were difficult to complete or not done as well.

It was advised this was not the case, especially now more staff were accessing the building. It was noted that some teams, such as the Rent Team, have reported the new system and methods of working which has been from home has proven to be more effective. In addition, all frontline staff have access to the building and it is now possible to bring in additional supplementary staff. Arrangements are also being made to allow the Trust team to work from the Workspaces.

The main issue at present is to get the appointment system in place for tenants using the Reception window previously mentioned.

In terms of Governance it was noted the number of Committee Members permitted to attend meetings in the building is still low and this needs to be resolved. Previously, an alternative venue had been mentioned and it was queried if this can be looked at again.

It was advised John and Alison are visiting Elim Church next week to check if this could be a suitable alternative venue for the committee meetings.

It was noted there is an increasing expectation for normal meetings to resume.

It was noted the health vulnerabilities of staff still had to be considered.

It was advised that once the interview rooms have been improved in the Reception area it will be possible to revert the Community Hall back to a meeting space. The area needs to be future proofed but it will be beneficial to have the hall back as a usable space. It won't have the same capacity as pre- covid but will offer more options in terms of a meeting space which the Association can control as a safe environment.

It was suggested the Association could look at a full energy survey of the building which could in turn reduce costs. It was noted some organisations offer free or minimal costing surveys to 3rd sector organisations.

It was advised this will be built into discussions with John Gilbert Architects.

The Management Committee noted the actions taken and plans outlined if the Covid Update Report.

7. Renewal of Office Emergency Lighting

It was advised that due to the age of the building the emergency lighting system now requires upgrades to remain compliant with fire safety regulations.

Two tender documents have been received for the upgrade works and the lowest of these is £40,759.55. The previous Head of Finance had included an allowance of £60k to the budget and the Trust will pay their share of the costs totalling £12k.

The anticipated start of the works will be early April/May.

It was queried if this work could clash with the ventilation works.

It was advised the preferred contractor is used to working around staff in the building and the height in the ceiling provides suitable space for this so it will not be an issue.

The Management Committee approved awarding the tender to SDA Facilities Management Property Maintenance at a cost of £40,759.55.

8. Factoring Appeal – Ref 91433

It was agreed the appeal will be heard at the end of the meeting.

9. Minutes of Sub Committees

There were no minutes of sub committees presented for information.

Update on Issues from Development & Property Sub Committee

L&D

It was advised the Association's contractor L&D who carry out adaptation works went into administration last week. There is no liability to the Association and the affected tenants have been contacted to update them. Another Association contractor, Mears, have a specialist team who deal with adaptations and they have been asked to provide costs for the 10 current jobs.

McGills

It was advised a meeting has been arranged with the Chief Executive and Operations Director to discuss the progress with the SW Govanhill works. There has been a reduction in works on MR4. There is also a meeting next week to discuss the Common Repairs contract. An update regarding the meetings will be provided at the Office Bearers meeting next week.

It was noted the delays on the McGills site were concerning and the situation did not appear to be improving. Concern was raised that the contractor may start to cut corners which would impact the Association's reputation.

It was advised the Association's team were being vigilant to ensure this was not the case and they are closely monitoring the situation. It was also advised that if the works were not correctly completed the Association would not pay for the works and the situation is being closely managed.

Cathcart Road Structural Strengthening Works

It was advised it may be possible to purchase one of the properties in one of the affected blocks. The proposed offer is £125k for a 2 bed 4 person flat and approval is being sought to progress.

It was queried if this was the only flat in the close which the Association did not yet own and confirmed it was.

It was confirmed that by purchasing this property it will provide the Association with more voting power which should assist with the progression of the project. It was also advised the project is 100% funded.

The Management Committee approved the purchase of the flat.

10. Report Back from Other Organisations

EVH

No update.

GWSF

Reports and information are circulated to the Management Committee.

SHARE

It was advised SHARE held a memorial event for their previous Director, Alan Ferguson, who sadly died during lockdown. Annie Macfarlane attended the event on behalf of the Association's Management Committee and was also attended by some staff. The event was well attended.

11. Documents for Formal Execution

None

12. Correspondence – For Information

Glasgow City IJB Strategic Plan Review 2022: Housing Contribution Statement

The document was shared and advised the Glasgow City Health & Social Care Partnership were seeking contributions by 31 March. It was advised the email and documents will be circulated to Committee for comment.

13. A.O.C.B

Week of Action

An update was given regarding the ongoing week of action in Govanhill arranged by Glasgow City Council. The Evening Times published an article about it on Saturday.

The Association also got involved along with two of the Association's contractors, John O Connor and Mears who both provided staff free of charge for the week to assist with clear ups in the back lanes. Association staff are also taking part in litter picking every day this week. To date 24 bin bags have been filled and 2 skips from 3 lanes.

It was queried which areas of Govanhill the action was taking place and if it stopped at Calder Street.

It was advised the main focus was the Enhanced Enforcement Area (EEA) covering 19 blocks as the bulk of the issues are found in this area.

It was suggested the correct process for disposing of rubbish should be included in the next newsletter as there are still issues and confusion with refuse.

It was noted GCC had a case to answer as they did not consult with tenants or local organisations prior to changing the services and they are now asking social housing to subsidise the costs of dealing with refuse in mixed tenure buildings. It was suggested it should be challenged organisationally.

It was further agreed the clean up was welcome in the area but the area selected was very limited geographically and the area as a whole requires this type of input. GCC should be enforced to carry out the duties they are responsible for.

It was advised that whilst GCC were focusing only on the EEA the Association's staff and contractors were not being limited to the 19 blocks and were identifying other areas requiring attention.

It was also noted there is a meeting minute from a recent meeting with GCC which states this clean up will not be a one off which is a positive.

It was noted the way GCC have handled the bulk uplift and standard charge and the expectation that tenants should cover the costs, especially in one of the most deprived areas in Glasgow is wrong. GCC are asking tenants to pay extra where the majority do not have access to a car and a community approach is missing from the closes.

It was suggested the changes in Rwanda could be a good example where they galvanised the community to take responsibility for their area and it has been extremely successful.

Census

It was noted the census is due on the 20 March 2022 and queried if the Association were encouraging tenants and the community to take part as the more people who get involved the better.

It was agreed this was an excellent idea and the Management Team will take this forward.

It was suggested it might be useful to link in with The Space or GCDT as much of the Roma and Slovakian community do not read or write and would be unable to complete the online form.

Changing Association Signatories

It was advised the Office Bearers have signed the documentation to change the signatories for the Charity Bank and Committee approval was now required due to staff changes at senior level.

The Management Committee approved the change of Association signatories for the Charity Bank.

It was also advised a similar process will be required for the HARP system which is the method the Association use to drawdown Scottish Government funding.

The Management Committee approved the change of Association signatories for the HARP system.

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) Enquiry Regarding ARC Submission

It was advised SHR contacted the Association regarding the measurements used to acquire the EESSH figures in relation to the SHQS which the Head of Development & Property Services has provided.

Elizabeth Klein and Keith Kintrea left the meeting at 8:08pm as they are members of the Development & Property Services Sub Committee which previously heard the appeal at the December meeting.

8. Factoring Appeal - Ref 91433

The HDPS advised the owner is requesting £500 in compensation as they state the contractor has not carried out the agreed works to the backcourt. It was advised the residents at this address have already received a refund for the missed contractor visits and it was noted that no other residents have complained.

For clarity it was advised the previous refund was made as it was not possible to demonstrate the work had been done due to Covid restrictions and it is believed they had attended but it was impossible to prove this.

The backcourt is very well maintained by the residents with some individuals keeping it as a garden. It was noted that if the contractor attends and the grass has been cut they will not cut the grass.

It was further advised the Development & Property Sub Committee could not demonstrate the need for the amount of £500 compensation in terms of the Associations governance.

The complaints procedure has reached its conclusion and the only stage left is the 1st Tier Tribunal.

It was noted that a resident's loss of time could not be compensated for and although no other residents complained it was queried if the Association had contacted any others or if it had been dealt with as an individual complaint.

It was advised residents had been contacted at the time of the refund to advise of the reason for the refund but the Factoring team did not receive anything further from the other residents.

It was noted the backcourt is to standard and the reason for the refund was the Association could not demonstrate the contractor had attended. Systems have since been updated to ensure the monitoring control measures are in place. The contractor's portal allows for information to be updated and this is used at properties with historical complaints.

It was queried why £500 was the figure the resident has requested in compensation and advised this has never been substantiated.

It was also queried that despite owners paying factoring charges they were still expected to carry out some work themselves and advised this was correct.

It was further noted that if a resident had purchased a strimmer for £60 they should have kept the receipt for it.

It was confirmed that the close were refunded for a missed visit by the contractor and the complainant has not complained prior to this issue.

A member advised there was a danger of setting a precedent and the owners have a responsibility to keep these areas clean and tidy. The residents have already been compensated for the missed service they paid for.

It was agreed that if this claim was paid it could open the floodgates to complaints of a similar nature.

If other residents in the close have not made similar complaints, then there is no case to answer and it was noted the figure of £500 did not appear to relate to anything and the resident making the complaint has not been employed to carry out this service.

The Management Committee agreed the owner should not be compensated £500 as they have already been refunded the costs of a missed contractor visit.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 13 April 2022 at 6:30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm