

EAST LOTHIAN HOUSING ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the **ELHA Board** was held on Thursday 26 March 2026 at 7.00pm, in the Hayman Room at ELHA Head Office, Haddington. Peter Ewart joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

Present:

Brian Logan	(5/5)	Eileen Shand	(4/5)
David Rose	(4/5)	Pamela Macleod	(4/5)
Maureen Batten	(4/5)	Andrew Philip	(4/5)
Peter Ewart	(3/5)		

In attendance:

- Martin Pollhammer, Chief Executive
- Karen Barry, Director of Housing & Customer Services
- Gary Alison, Director of Finance & Corporate Services
- Charlie Cooley, Director of R3 & Asset Management
- Eric Stoddart, Executive Support Officer (Minutes)

GENERAL

1. **Apologies**
Katrina Hamilton (3/5), Iain Atkinson (3/5), Alan Forsyth (2/5) & Paul Hillard (2/5).
2. **Declarations of Interest by ELHA Board Members**
It was noted that David Rose would not participate in the discussions at Agenda Item 7 on the Charitable Donations 2025/26 as he is a Trustee of the East Lothian Care & Repair Charitable Trust.
3. **Minutes of Meeting 19 February 2026**
The Minutes were **approved** by the ELHA Board. They were proposed by Pamela Macleod and seconded by David Rose.
4. **Action List**
The ELHA Board noted the report.
5. **Matters Arising**
There were no matters arising.

GOVERNANCE

6. **Secretary's Report**
The ELHA Board noted the Secretary's Report.

PRIORITY ITEMS**7. Charitable Donations 2025/26**

David Rose left the room (at 19:04) before this Agenda Item was discussed.

The Chief Executive advised that a conversation had been held with the Chair of the East Lothian Care & Repair Charitable Trust, and it appears the Trust may decide during the year to start to wind down their activities. However, it was felt that the Association should continue to make a charitable donation, although it was recognised this may be the last year this is done.

The Chair noted that in this discussion last year, there was talk of increasing the level of the donation (from £1,000), but in the present circumstances, it was felt better to leave the level as it is. The Chief Executive also highlighted that any increase in the level of donation would require a separate paper to be taken to the AGM to explain this.

Peter Ewart queried why the heading (under 2.0) referred to 'Proposed Donation 2024/25' and if it should instead be 2025/26.

The Chief Executive clarified this by explaining that whilst the donation is being made in 2025/26, the donation is in respect of the preceding year (permitted to expend up to 0.5% of the preceding year's audited accumulated surplus, to a maximum of £1000). As 0.5% of last year's (2024/25) accumulated surplus was £89k, the Association may donate £1,000 this financial year.

The ELHA Board **approved** a donation of £1,000 to the Care & Repair Charitable Trust during the year ending 31 March 2026.

David Rose re-joined the meeting (at 19:06).

POLICIES**8. Policy Review Summary**

The Chief Executive reminded everyone that in terms of the new Governance process that had been agreed, this update would provide a table setting out the policies reviewed by the Senior Management Team where they have Delegated Authority to undertake the review, since the last ELHA Board meeting.

The policies included in the current review are 'Pension Policy', 'Attendance & Absence Management Policy', 'Treasury Management Policy', and 'These Homes (Allocations) Policy'. The Chief Executive advised that there would normally be a period of five years between reviews. However, in the case of the 'These Homes (Allocation) Policy', this would still be coming back in 2027, but it was felt important to include the minor changes highlighted in the recent Internal Audit report.

9. **Authorisations and Standard Charges / Allowances**

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services introduced the proposed revisions to the Authorisations and Standard Charges / Allowances Policy.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services added that there were two key changes this time to highlight for possible discussion. These were:

- The recommendation from a recent payroll Internal Audit that the list of roles that qualify for a fixed annual allowance be reviewed and approved annually
- Changes to claiming of subsistence allowance (there will now be two options, to claim the flat rate and pay tax, or claim for expenses up to this amount (for business purposes))

It was also pointed out that in Appendix 6, there appeared to be some inconsistency around which staff receive Essential Car User allowances. It was noted that the current Senior IT Assistant is deemed an 'Essential Car User' but the Data & Technology Manager does not qualify.

The Chief Executive confirmed this had been rectified through the appointment process and the role of Data & Technology Manager will be an 'Essential Car User'.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services highlighted that there are some roles (the existing Corporate Services Manager and the Finance Manager) who are entitled to receive the 'Essential Car User' allowance, but are not paid it because neither of them currently drive.

Eileen Shand queried what was the level of take-up in respect of the 'Redecoration Allowance', and the Director of Housing & Customer Services explained that in most cases there is a tendency to take the option of 'Paint Packs, instead of the 'Redecoration Allowance'.

The ELHA Board **approved** the revised Authorisations and Standard Charges / Allowances Policy.

The Chief Executive provided a brief update on the use of Electric Vehicles (EVs) within the Association, following a presentation to staff at the recent Staff Away Day at Musselburgh Racecourse.

Early termination cover has been added to the EV package, and although perhaps not as a direct result, there has been a significant take-up of EVs (13 definite and one likely). To put this in context, around one-third of all staff now drive an EV.

Whilst an up-to-date figure on how many miles have been converted from fossil fuels to clean energy needs to be calculated, this is now likely to be approaching one million miles. An updated figure will be brought to the May 2026 ELHA Board meeting. In addition, the first lease renewals (after three years use) are starting to take place, which will increase this figure further.

10. Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy

The Chief Executive highlighted that the proposed changes follow the changes made to the Model Policy Document published by the SFHA. Whilst there is some general tidying up and updating undertaken, the substantive changes relate to how the award of large contracts are made under procurement legislation. The previous Model Policy conflicted with procurement regulations in that it may have excluded some bidders that under the terms of the procurement legislation would be entitled to bid for and secure such contracts.

ELHA rarely tenders such contracts, and when it does so, ensures compliance with procurement law and regulation, often by using external advisors to support the process. In practice, these changes are unlikely to have any significant material impact on the Association.

Whilst the Senior Management Team has delegated authority to approve minor changes to this Policy, it was felt that the ELHA Board should be asked to approve these changes given there are a large number of amendments, and also given the particular importance of this Policy within the overall regulatory framework.

The ELHA Board **approved** the revised Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy.

11. Procurement & Value for Money Strategy 2026/29

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services advised that the Board are being asked to approve the updated Strategy and Action Plan, not just the Action Plan as the paper suggests.

There was nothing to add to the paper, but to highlight that the Board have previously approved having such a strategy. Although technically one may not be required, from a Procurement Improvement perspective, the Board recognises the value in preparing one. It also provides evidence for continuous procurement improvement, which is a requirement for HAG funding.

The review of this Strategy has been undertaken five months early to move the review period cycle to just before the start of the next business planning year. This means that actions relating to the Strategy can be incorporated into the Business Plan.

The revised Strategy has been created from ongoing ambitions from the previous strategy, recommendations from the CIPP and building up a stronger procurement offering, all in line with the overall strategic ambitions.

The key changes in the Strategy to note are:

- Changes in Section 5 are updates to action recommendations from the last CIPP assessment
- The updated Actions Plan for 2026/27

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services indicated that following approval of this Strategy, the Procurement Policy will also be reviewed earlier than its planned August 2026 review date. There are no material changes expected to be made and the policy review framework allows the Senior Management Team to sign this off (with the ELHA Board notified when this is completed).

The ELHA Board **approved** the updated Action Plan for the Procurement & Value for Money Strategy.

12. **Landlords Safety Manual Policy Review**

The Director of R3 & Asset Management advised that the Landlords Facilities Health, Safety and Welfare Management System Control Manual (LSM) was initially developed in 2016, and made available to EVH Members. ELHA adopted this manual in 2025 and is working through it, to make this ELHA specific.

To ensure EVH members can demonstrate compliance with their Health, Safety and Welfare responsibilities, as both an employer and a landlord, the LSM has been introduced to deal specifically with facilities and compliance issues that landlords face.

The defined policies are intended to cover the basics of legal compliance and good practice. There are 31 topic related policies contained within Section 7 of the manual, most of these policies are Asset Management related topics, with the balance being Housing Management related topics.

These are new policies for ELHA; they have been reviewed and tweaked to be ELHA specific, however remain broadly in line with the EVH model template. EVH issues yearly amendments to the manual, this ensures the manual evolves and is kept up to date with current legislation and best practice.

The introduction of the various policies will be spread across ELHA Board meetings in March, May, August and September 2026.

The Director of R3 & Asset Management explained that new policies for the following topics were being brought to Board now for approval:

12.1 Electrical Safety Policy Document

The aim of this Policy is to ensure the effective inspection, maintenance and management of all electrical installations, fixtures and appliances within premises controlled by East Lothian Housing Association.

12.2 EPC Policy Document

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all relevant properties controlled by East Lothian Housing Association have a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

12.3 Fire Safety in Housing Stock and Common Areas Policy Document

The aim of this policy is to provide a robust fire safety framework which can be implemented to secure the safety and wellbeing of tenants, visitors and firefighters.

Pamela Macleod asked about safety checks for Air Source Heat Pumps and was advised that these would fall under the requirements of the Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR).

The Chair commented that it was appreciated that ELHA was already following these guidelines, but it was important to see this being properly documented within the Association's policies.

Eileen Shand raised two queries.

First of all, under Section 4.1 of the Electrical Safety Policy, it refers to visual inspections on all electrical appliances being carried out 'regularly', and Eileen wondered how frequent was 'regularly'. The Director of R3 & Asset Management advised that the current requirement is every 5 years. However, if legislation changes, or if something is picked up earlier, checks would be done sooner.

Secondly, under Section 8.1, Eileen noted that guidance was provided on the safe storage of electric scooters or e-bikes, especially in respect of the treatment of batteries, and wondered whether this extended to electric wheelchairs.

The Director of Housing & Customer Services noted that no electrical sockets were located in communal areas and she was not aware of any issues with charging items such as scooters, e-bikes or electric wheelchairs, which would not be expected to be stored in communal areas anyway.

The ELHA Board **approved** the following new Policy Documents:

- (a) Electrical Safety Policy;
- (b) EPC Policy; and
- (c) Fire Safety in Housing Stock and Common Areas Policy.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business, and the meeting closed at 7.33pm.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 28 May 2026 at ELHA Head Office, Haddington at 7.00pm.

**ADOPTION OF THESE MINUTES APPROVED AT THE MEETING ON
28 MAY 2026**

Signed

(Chair)