

EAST LOTHIAN HOUSING ASSOCIATION

A virtual meeting of the **Management Committee** was held on Thursday 26 May 2022 at 7.00pm, using Microsoft Teams

Present:	Peter Hayman	(5/5)	David Rose	(4/5)
	Peter Ewart	(5/5)	Iain Atkinson	(4/5)
	Brian Logan	(4/5)	Alan Forsyth	(3/5)
	Shirley Evans	(4/5)	Joyce Bolan	(3/5)
	Jim Curran	(2/5)	Katrina Hamilton	(5/5)

In attendance: Paula Oliver, Director of Finance
Martin Pollhammer, Chief Executive
Duncan Mackay, Director of Asset Management
Karen Barry, Director of Housing.
Eric Stoddart, Executive Support Officer (Minutes)

1.0 GENERAL

1.1 Apologies

Eileen Shand (3/5), Pamela Macleod (4/5).

1.2 Declarations of Interest by Management Committee Members

There were no Declarations of Interest.

1.3 Minutes of Meeting 24 March 2022

The Minutes were **approved** by the Management Committee. They were proposed by Peter Hayman and seconded by Katrina Hamilton.

1.4 Action List

The Management Committee noted the report.

1.5 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

2.0 GOVERNANCE

2.1 Secretary's Report

The Management Committee noted the Secretary's Report as blank.

2.2 Key Performance Indicators 2021/22

The Chief Executive highlighted two areas, where the Association has missed targets.

Unit Reactive Maintenance Costs are £758 compared to the target of £683, but with a declining trend across the year. The main reasons for the overspend were the R3 Lockdown Support Fee for April 2021 and catchup works from the 2020/21 pandemic restrictions.

The Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs, has also been impacted due to the effects of Coronavirus, with labour resource issues being experienced by R3 throughout the fourth quarter.

The Chair also noted that although the Audit & Assurance Committee Attendance has narrowly missed the Annual Target, recent attendance levels at this, and also at Management Committee, have been very good, and it is hoped this can be maintained.

The Management Committee noted the report for information.

2.2 Management Committee Training Plan Update

The Chair reminded Management Committee that around a year ago, when the Succession Plan was being developed, it was highlighted that the existing categories of competence would be reviewed, and probably expanded. However, as the Training Plan analysis was completed earlier this year, this update comprises a catch-up with the additional categories being highlighted.

It is expected that the new categories will be the focus of training over the next 12 to 18 months, with particular emphasis on 'Understanding current government policy and support for homelessness', and 'Understanding of software applications and digital information systems'. The Association's IT provider (Waterstons) will probably be approached to run a training session later in the year, perhaps at the Management Committee Away Day in November 2022.

The Management Committee approved the updated Management Committee Training Plan for 2022/23.

Joyce Bolan requested that the software / digital training does not take place in November 2022, as she will be away on holiday at that time, and this was noted by the Chair.

3.0 PRIORITY ITEMS

3.1 Annual Return on the Charter

The Director of Housing advised that the Report provided a good background to, and details of, the proposed submission, and had no specific points that they wanted to raise.

The Chair raised a query in respect of Indicator 6 on Page 16, where the 'Percentage of stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) at the end of the reporting year' was 43.60%, but the next line showed the Percentage projected to the end of the next reporting year as being 97.40%, and wondered why the significant change.

The Chief Executive was able to explain that there are 32 ELHA properties that do not currently comply with the new standard for Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors, largely due to tenants not allowing access to have the work carried out. In addition, there are a further 691 ELHA properties that do not have a current Electrical Inspection Compliance Report (EICR).

These tests can take two and a half to three hours to complete and require access to every electric socket and light fitting in every room of the house. During the pandemic, it was not practical to ask tenants to allow access for, or ask staff to agree to, undertake these kinds of work.

The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) raised with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) how these issues should be reported in the ARC and has been advised that where works are planned and requiring tenant access, properties should be considered as 'in abeyance'. This means that they are not classed as failing the Standard, but equally they do not meet the Standard. This advice has been followed and an appropriate note added to the ARC. The SFHA further clarified with the SHR that although this is a significant change to the reported figures, this should not be considered a Notifiable Event.

The Chief Executive further explained that the percentage at the end of the reporting year (43.60%) reflects the properties in abeyance, whilst the percentage projected to the end of the next reporting year (97.40%), reflects the expected completion of the outstanding work.

Peter Hayman also queried Indicator C1.3.3 on Page3 and wondered whether the figure of 2.61% for 'the percentage of days lost through staff sickness absence in the reporting year' was rather on the low side, considering the pandemic.

The Chief Executive was able to provide re-assurance, in that reporting had shown that absence levels had been remarkably low during the pandemic, which was probably principally down to staff being able to work effectively from home.

The above points being satisfied, the Management Committee **approved** the Annual Return on the Charter for submission to The Scottish Housing Regulator.

3.2 Future Performance Benchmarking

The Chief Executive highlighted that whilst ELHA undertakes an Annual Independent Performance Evaluation against a range of comparable organisations, the Management Committee had asked Linda Ewart, at the most recent Evaluation in February 2022, to review the external organisations that ELHA performance is compared against.

After some discussion, Management Committee **approved** the selection of Waverley, Angus, Eildon, Loreburn, and Osprey, as potential comparison organisations.

In addition, it was agreed that East Lothian Council be removed from the 'neighbours' group (to be reported separately) and is replaced by Berwickshire.

4.0 POLICIES

4.1 These Homes (Allocations) Policy Review

The Director of Housing provided some background to the policy review, and it was noted that key changes to the Policy were approved by Management Committee in November 2020. Further changes were approved following a final revision of the Policy in February 2021, which took account of the Scottish Government Guidance 'Social Housing Allocations in Scotland: A Practice Guide'.

The Director of Housing explained that this current report enabled a review of how the changes were settling in after one year, prior to reverting to the usual five-year review cycle. The review has confirmed that the new Priority Pass system is operating as it should, however it has also highlighted that some further changes are required, mostly for clarification, but also because of a change in legislation to the Tolerable Standard.

It was highlighted that 'Local connection' is by far the most contentious part of the Policy, accounting for 31% of These Homes appeals received during the last year. A significant issue here is that the wording in the relative legislation -The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 – is open to interpretation by both applicants and staff. In light of this, and following advice from TC Young, the wording has been expanded to provide more clarity around the evidence required, and better definition of some terminology.

Shirley Evans welcomed the update to Section 1.4.9 on Page 7 of the Policy, around evidencing of offers of employment, and requested that something similar be added to the paragraph below.

The Management Committee **approved**:

- (a) The changes made to the These Homes (Allocations) Policy; and
- (b) Moving the Policy to a five yearly review cycle.

5.0 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

5.1 Tenant Participation Annual Report

The Director of Housing provided a brief overview of the work of the Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) and of the overall Tenant Participation Strategy.

There were no questions on the Report, and the Chair thanked the participants.

The Management Committee noted the report for information.

6.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 25 August 2022 at ELHA Head Office, Haddington at 7.00pm.

**ADOPTION OF THESE MINUTES APPROVED AT THE MEETING ON
25 AUGUST 2022**

Signed *Peter Ewart* (Chair)