

EAST LOTHIAN HOUSING ASSOCIATION

A virtual meeting of the **Management Committee** was held on Thursday 27 May 2021 at 7.00pm, using Microsoft Teams

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|-----------------|---------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Present: | Peter Hayman | (5/5) | David Rose | (5/5) |
| | Joyce Bolan | (5/5) | Peter Ewart | (5/5) |
| | Brian Logan | (5/5) | Alan Forsyth | (5/5) |
| | Shirley Evans | (4/5) | Eileen Shand | (4/5) |

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**

Apologies were received from Jim Curran (4/5), & Iain Atkinson (4/5).

1.2 Declarations of Interest by Management Committee Members

There were no Declarations of Interest.

1.3 Minutes of Meeting 25 March 2021

The Minutes were **approved** by the Management Committee. They were proposed by Shirley Evans and seconded by David Rose.

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 report.

2.2 Key Performance Indicators 2020/21

The Chief Executive commented on areas where the Association have missed targets.

Unit Reactive Maintenance Costs is an area where there will be a range of results within the sector, depending on the terms of contracts different housing associations have. Some contractors have aggressively pursued their clients for additional payments during the pandemic, whereas other housing associations stopped placing work and so had reduced costs.

Other housing associations with fixed price maintenance contracts will have continued to make their fixed price payments, even where no maintenance has been undertaken, and so will have an out-turn in line with budgets. ELHA's figure is above budget because of the Lockdown Support Payments agreed with R3. Without these payments, performance would have been below target. This is therefore not of significant concern, and it is unlikely that ELHA's performance in this area will stick out particularly from the sector as a whole because of the range of issues affecting performance, and the variety of different contracts and approaches used in the sector.

Performance in relation to Gold and Platinum Key Tenant Scheme membership was not of concern as the focus in 2020/21 had switched to developing and promoting Bronze Key Tenant status, with great success. Once work to maximise take-up of Bronze Key Tenant status has been completed, new approaches to promoting Bronze to Gold upgrades will be developed.

The Management Committee noted the report for Information.

2.3 Management Committee Training Needs Analysis

The Chair advised that there had been a slight regression (in the average subject skill levels, and average individual skill levels) but commented that perhaps everyone had perhaps been a bit hard on themselves when recording their self-assessments this year. He also noted that conferences had not taken place, so it had been more difficult to keep up to date with developments in the sector.

It was recognised that it had been a challenging year, and that the proposed training for 2020/21 had not taken place due to Coronavirus restrictions. However, with the experience of successfully using Teams for meetings, it was felt there is now a place to obtain some training digitally via Teams, where the training could be recorded, and re-used later by others. This would also help address another issue, where there was not an ideal, or agreed slot for holding training, as those Management Committee Members who can't attend the original training slot, can access the recording after the event.

Joyce Bolan queried whether any news was available yet about the re-commencement of conferences, and the return to face-to-face events. Whilst there doesn't seem to be any immediate announcements about Conferences being held in Scotland, the Chief Executive noted that the CIH in England were holding their large national conference in September 2021, and David Rose added that EVH were looking to hold their annual conference around November 2022.

The Management Committee **approved** the Management Committee Training Needs Analysis.

3.0 PRIORITY ITEMS

3.1 Annual Return on the Charter (ARC)

The Chief Executive thanked those involved in the preparation of the ARC Return, and advised that an independent Performance Review to compare ELHA's performance with peers would take place later in the year.

After discussion of its content at the meeting, the Management Committee **approved** the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) and authorised the online submission of the ARC.

4.0 POLICIES

4.1 Management Committee Membership Policy Review

Brian Logan highlighted a few queries in respect of the paper.

Firstly, that the 'Method of Recruitment (Section 2.3)' should perhaps more reflect the current recruitment process, which has utilised holding more interviews, and setting up a specific Working Group to conduct this activity.

It was also queried whether it was still appropriate to refer to the 'information sheet provided to prospective Management Committee member' (Section 2.5), as this information was held on the website.

Finally, consideration should be given to whether there is a different way of trying to reflect Tenant representation (Section 2.6 – second bullet point).

The Chair agreed that Tenant representation is to be welcomed, but also that a skills-based evaluation needs to be applied to all prospective candidates.

The Chief Executive was in agreement with the comments on Sections 2.5 and 2.6 and offered to review and update these sections. However, he noted that he only had a peripheral role in the recruitment process and so was not really in a position to draft this section of the policy. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair would agree suitable new wording for these sections and bring this back for review and approval.

The Revised Policy was therefore not agreed, and it will be re-presented to the next Management Committee, taking into account the changes required.

4.2 Procurement Policy

The Chief Executive highlighted an amendment required to the Flow Chart, where one of 'No' Decision Boxes should show 'Yes'. This will be amended following this meeting. Despite this initial drafting error, it was felt that the Flow Chart will be the most useful part of the whole Policy document.

Peter Hayman highlighted some areas to consider in respect of the proposed policy.

Initially, there is a section of the Policy, where clarification is required, namely on Page 14 (paragraph 4), where the comments don't seem to make sense under the current wording.

The Chief Executive and the Director of Housing said that they would refer back to the relevant legislation, to ensure an accurate and comprehensible wording is applied, and the Chief Executive would report this minor change through the Action List at the next Management Committee meeting.

Peter Hayman also mentioned that on Page 16 (Section 9.1) it may be helpful to include in the policy somewhere, a definition of 'call-offs', to provide some clarity. This was agreed and will also be dealt with through the Action List.

Finally, on Page 17 (Section 10.0 – fourth bullet point) it was felt that the whole paragraph requires to be re-written, and properly punctuated. Again, this was agreed, and will be dealt with through the Action List.

Eileen Shand queried if it would be helpful to have a paragraph in the Policy, to explain the role of Management Committee. The Chief Executive noted that their role is to set the framework that the Association is to work within, adding that there is no specific role for Management Committee in the Tender process. However, this will now be clarified in the Policy.

A separate query was raised in reference to 'Value for Money'. The Chief Executive said that this would be addressed in the final Strategic Asset Management document. With the approval of several documents at the meeting, including the Procurement Policy, work on eight of the ten strands was now essentially complete. Work on the ninth strand, a new Stock Investment Strategy, was underway, and once this is complete, the final major piece of work in developing the overall Strategy is work on Value for Money.

Brian Logan questioned not the content, but the implications of the policy, and in particular, in terms of the contractual relationship ELHA has with R3, citing the development of Hardgate as an example.

The Chief Executive confirmed that he had recently asked Anderson Strathern for appropriate wording to describe the inter-group tendering exemptions, and that he would add this to the Policy.

The Chair questioned where the figure of £5k used in the Table on Page 15 (Section 8.0), had come from, and if this an internal ELHA figure. The Chief Executive confirmed it was an internal figure and was set at this level to encourage use of Quick Quote (QQ). It was felt this level was sufficient meantime, but the position would be monitored, and if Quick Quote became cumbersome, and difficult to use, then the level would be revisited. Using Quick Quote will ensure all appropriate audit trails and registers are automatically kept, so its use will be encouraged.

Subject to those changes agreed, the Management Committee **approved** the Procurement Policy.

4.3 **These Homes (Allocations) Policy Review**

The Director of Housing explained that the Management Committee had approved a final revision of the These Homes (Allocations) Policy at its February 2021 meeting. This Policy contained all the final agreed changes to the previous policy, as this allowed the new These Homes service to be introduced in March 2021.

However, as the changes made over the last year have been substantial, and have added to other changes made by various people over the years, the Policy itself needed a format and Plain English refresh to make it easier to read, understand and use. The Director of Housing thanked Peter Hayman for proof reading the final document prior to it being issued.

The Director of Housing said that she intended to run the final version past the Association's Solicitors (TC Young) to ensure the 'Plain English' version still met all legislative requirements. It was also noted that the section on 'Temporary Tenancies' (Section 1.4.11) required further updating.

Shirley Evans queried under 'Joint Tenancies' (Section 1.4.12), whether the first sentence alone was sufficient, and that the rest of the paragraph could be removed. Also, under 'Suspended Applications' (Section 4.1) it was recommended to ask TC Young to focus on this section.

The Director of Housing agreed to do this and will report back if any significant changes are recommended by TC Young.

The Chief Executive noted that the Association was keen to have this Policy added to the website, as it was a policy frequently referred to. However, the Director of Housing will confirm the position with TC Young, before anything is added online, but if no further material changes are required, it will be added to elha.com as soon as practically possible.

The Management Committee **approved** the These Homes (Allocations) Policy Review, subject to any significant issues raised by TC Young being brought back to Management Committee.

5.0 **BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

5.1 **Tenant Participation Annual Report**

The Chief Executive congratulated Claire McMillan on the report and also wanted to note the effort made by everyone else who had been involved in this work over the year. Because of the Association's unique position with so many paper-free tenants, the ability to communicate so effectively during the pandemic was felt to be quite unique.

Brian Logan referred to the Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) under Section 3.0, and wondered if it was possible to hear directly from TIG members about their scrutiny reports, perhaps at the Audit & Assurance meeting, or at Management Committee?

The Chief Executive advised that a report was normally provided to Audit & Assurance giving a response to the TIG Report, and the approach being taken by the Senior Management Team and TIG was similar to the Internal Audit approach, in that an initial report is prepared which Senior Management Team comment on before it is presented to Audit & Assurance Committee.

The Chair said that the Chair and/or Vice Chair, would be prepared to attend TIG, even if for just a part of their meeting, to provide the opportunity to hear directly from TIG members about Scrutiny Reports. The Director of Housing agreed to discuss this suggestion with the TIG.

The Management Committee noted the report for Information.

5.2 Housing First Pilot Project

The Director of Housing explained that this involved working in partnership with East Lothian Council, and would benefit ELHA by building relationships at all levels.

Also, as Housing First has never been used as a preventative solution in Scotland in this way before, this Pilot will break new ground. A Press Release (by East Lothian Council) is expected to be issued in the next few weeks.

The Management Committee noted the report for information.

6.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 26 August 2021 at ELHA Head Office, Haddington at 7.00pm.

**ADOPTION OF THESE MINUTES APPROVED AT THE MEETING ON
26 AUGUST 2021**

Signed *Peter Ewart* (Chair)