

**MINUTES OF THE 537<sup>TH</sup> MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF WILLIAMSBURGH HOUSING ASSOCIATION, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 29<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023 AT 6.00PM AT RALSTON HOUSE & ON TEAMS.**

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<b>PRESENT:</b>	J, Scott	Chairperson
	D. Eadie	
	M. Symons	
	C. Henry	
	A. Ballantine	
	E. McDermott	
	Cllr. M. MacLaren	
	J. Kerr	
	R. Coelho	Co-optee
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	J. Grant	Chief Executive Officer
	L. Ramsay	Head of Finance & Corporate Services
	L. Reynolds	Head of Property Services
	G. Scott	Head of Development

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**1. (a) Apologies**

Apologies were received from T. Thomson (Committee member).

**(b) Declarations of Interest**

J. Scott declared an interest in Item 3 and would not participate in the item.

Cllr. M. MacLaren declared an interest in item 6 and would not participate in the item.

J. Kerr declared an interest in item 8 and would leave the meeting for that item.

**2. (a) Minutes of Management Committee Meeting: 01.03.23 (No.536)**

The minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (No.536) were proposed correct, on a motion proposed by M. Symons, seconded by A. Ballantine.

**(b) Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **3. Board Minutes for Transfer of Subsidiary Company W.P.S. to W.H.A.**

L. Ramsay presented the item, noting that this was the format of legal minute recommended by our Legal Advisor, Harper MacLeod, to provide additional assurance on the transfer. This further supports Committee decisions made at meeting 536 confirming the termination of the Independence Agreement and Service Level Agreement between W.H.A. and W.P.S.

The Minute was approved, proposed by D. Eadie, seconded by Cllr. M. MacLaren.

### **4. Pension Review**

M. Symons presented the report in her role as Convenor of the Finance, Audit and Corporate Services sub-committee. The background to pension risk and previous pension reviews was outlined. Further information on the proposed content and timetable for staff engagement and consultation was outlined, along with the proposed remit for the Pensions Working Group.

A member thanked M. Symons and the sub-committee for their work in developing the pension review proposals.

A member noted that it was a challenging area for the Committee and staff but that it was the right time to conduct a review.

A member noted that consultation and information was key and was pleased to see the detail on the consultation process and the working group.

A member asked what information would be provided to staff and will they get generalised pensions information?

J. Grant advised that factual pension information would be provided to all staff but that this cannot creep into any form of pension advice. He also advised that Committee would have access to an independent pension advisor. This was because staff were conflicted, so would only be providing factual information, and could not answer any subjective pension questions from Committee members.

The recommendations were approved, proposed by D. Eadie, seconded by E. McDermott.

## **5. Business Plan Objectives 2023/24**

J. Grant presented the report, providing an overview of the achievements made in 2022/23 and the new strategic objectives developed at the Committee strategic planning day on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

A member asked if the EESSH2 target had now been published by the Scottish Government?

J. Grant advised that it is expected in the summer and that, following the stock survey and the current strategic asset management review, that W.H.A. was in a good position to move quickly to develop plans for EESSH2.

A member asked if, as part of the new Human Resources plan, that apprenticeships would be considered?

L. Ramsay advised that this was not being looked at in the short term, due to other priorities for HR action, but would be considered in the future.

A member asked if staff succession was part of the new HR plan?

L. Ramsay advised that it is in the plan, noting the challenges inherent in this for a small organisation and that it was important to avoid risks.

The recommendations were approved, proposed by J. Scott, seconded by D. Eadie.

## **6. Budget 2023/24 & 30 Year Plan**

L. Ramsay presented the report, outlining the key contextual aspects of rising costs, rental income assumptions, new build cost inflation, new costs expected for Net Zero investment and the confidence in the new asset and investment plans resulting from the new stock survey information. It was highlighted that continual stress testing of the financial plan is being undertaken. The plan remains fully funded from W.H.A. resources and does not assume any borrowing.

A member asked if rent increase assumptions could be adjusted in line with projected inflation before year 10, noting due consideration for rent affordability?

L. Ramsay advised that this will be included with the May financial projections update.

A member noted the desire to increase tenant participation activities and asked if staff capacity was to be increased for this?

## **6. Budget 2023/24 & 30 Year Plan Contd.**

J. Grant advised that more focus on tenant participation was in the plan and that the resourcing requirements would be included within a wider review of staffing capacity, because other reviews would be completed which also need to be considered at the same time.

A member asked if the bin management service incurred a separate service charge?

L. Ramsay advised that it currently did not but will be considered this year.

A member noted that charging for bin removal may result in customers not participating and a resultant increase in complaints and vermin.

J. Grant advised that there were good arguments for both options and the full ramifications would be considered before reaching a conclusion.

A member asked what was the new financial issue with the development programme at Cartha Crescent?

G. Scott advised that the planning conditions had attached a new, and never previously discussed with W.H.A., obligation to install a 165m path on land belonging to Renfrewshire Council. The path is to be fully street-lit and to have drainage, so it is expected to add a significant additional cost to the project. Discussions are continuing with Renfrewshire Council regarding this issue.

A member asked about the new investment plan items that have resulted from the new stock condition survey?

L. Reynolds advised that the new survey has identified some property elements that require an increased cyclical maintenance programme, for example rainwater goods, and that the planned upgrading of the replacement window programme to triple-glazing also has a large impact on future costs.

The recommendations were approved, proposed by M. Symons, seconded by D. Eadie.

## **7. Policy Review Programme**

J. Grant presented the summary review of the Whistleblowing Policy, noting its importance in fostering an ethical culture and its coverage of all employees, agency staff, Committee members and stakeholders working for or acting on behalf of Williamsburgh Housing Association.

## **7. Policy Review Programme Contd.**

L. Ramsay presented the summary review of the Risk Management policy explaining that it can broadly be defined as the process whereby W.H.A. can maximise its gains, its good performance, and the ability to achieve targets and minimise losses. The policy sets out Regulatory Compliance, 3 lines of defence models, Risk measurements and responsibilities. The policy was approved by Committee in March 2022, however, has had minor amendments to update for the recent data protection policies.

The recommendations were approved, proposed by J. Scott, seconded by Cllr. M. Maclaren.

## **8. Chief Executive's Report**

J. Kerr left the meeting for this item.

J. Grant presented the report, outlining the SHR Engagement Plan, progress on office refurbishment, pensions update and a procurement update for the responsive repairs service. He further advised on a new Committee membership application and a proposal to offer the King's Coronation public holiday to all staff. R. Coelho was also proposed to join the Management Committee as a Co-opted member, following a period as an observer.

J. Grant also advised Committee of the request to grant leave of absence, for personal reasons, to a Committee member.

The recommendations were approved, proposed by J. Scott, seconded by A. Ballantine.

## **9. Strategic Risk Management**

J. Kerr re-joined the meeting.

L. Ramsay presented the report, outlining the revised strategic risks following the Committee strategic away day on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023. Key risks and mitigations were explained, including inflationary cost increases, tenant safety, cybersecurity, unknown costs of Net Zero/EES2 standards and insurance market failure.

A member asked how many quotes were expected for the insurance renewal?

L. Ramsay explained at least one quote was expected and costs were also expected to significantly increase due to the lack of competition.

The recommendations were approved, proposed by M. Symons, seconded by R. Coelho.

## **10. Remit of the Operations and Performance Sub Committee**

J. Grant presented the report, noting that the transfer of the Factoring service from the former W.P.S. subsidiary to W.H.A. meant that W.H.A. Management Committee now had direct control of the service. It was proposed that the scrutiny of the Factoring service was delegated to the Operations and Performance Sub-Committee and the remit had been amended for this purpose.

The recommendation was approved, proposed by M. Symons, seconded by D. Eadie.

## **11. Election of Convenor for the Operations and Performance Sub Committee**

J. Grant advised that following the departure of the current Convenor of the Operations and Performance Sub Committee, a new Convenor required to be elected.

Following a discussion, D. Eadie was elected, proposed by M Symons, seconded by J. Scott.

J. Scott also joined the Operations and Performance Sub Committee and R. Coelho joined the Finance, Audit and Corporate Services Sub Committee.

## **12. Write-Off Report**

J. Grant presented the report, explaining the rationale for write off on bad debts and the processes followed before debt is considered irrecoverable.

A member congratulated the team on the rent arrears performance overall, particularly in the context of the cost of living crisis.

A member asked that thanks be passed back to welfare benefits staff for their excellent work in supporting tenants to pay their rent.

A member asked that the write-off process be considered for a future focus as part of the Assurance Statement risk review.

J, Grant confirmed that this would be considered.

The recommendation was approved, proposed by E. McDermott, seconded by M. Symons.

**13. Minute of the Finance, Audit and Corporate Services Sub Committee**

L. Ramsay presented the minute of the Finance, Audit and Corporate Services Sub Committee for information.

The Committee noted the minute.

**14. Equalities Plan Update**

J. Grant presented the report, highlighting promotion of a range of awareness and training events for staff.

The Committee noted the report.

**15. Any Other Business**

J. Grant advised that the annual appraisal process for Committee would be delivered throughout April.

The Committee offered its thanks to all staff for their commitment and achievements in 2022/23 and asked that this be communicated.

**16. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

J. Scott thanked everyone for their attendance and advised that the next scheduled meeting of Williamsburgh Housing Association's Management Committee would be held on **Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 6pm (Hybrid)**.

**CHAIRPERSON:** .....

**DATE:** .....