

**MINUTES OF THE 540<sup>TH</sup> MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF WILLIAMSBURGH HOUSING ASSOCIATION, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 8.00PM AT GLYNHILL HOTEL, RENFREW & ON TEAMS.**

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**PRESENT:** J. Scott  
D. Eadie  
M. Symons  
C. Henry  
A. Ballantine  
E. McDermott  
Cllr. M. MacLaren  
J. Kerr  
T. Thomson  
R. Coelho

<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
	L. Ferrie	Head of Housing

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**1. (a) Apologies**

There were no apologies received.

**(b) Declarations of Interest**

Cllr. M. MacLaren declared an interest in item 11 and would not participate in the item.

**2. (a) Minutes of Management Committee Meeting: 26.07.23 (No.539)**

The minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023 (No.539) were proposed correct, on a motion proposed by T. Thomson, seconded by M. Symons.

**(b) Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **3. Management Committee 2023**

J. Grant outlined the required governance arrangements for the coming year and the need to elect office bearers. All members in the officer bearer roles during 2022/23 wished to stand again and no other members wished to stand. The following stood for election:

- John Scott as Chairperson.
- David Eadie as Vice Chairperson and Convenor of the Operations and Performance sub-committee.
- Margaret Symons as the Convenor of the Finance, Audit and Corporate services sub-committee.

The Committee approved the election of those members standing for office, proposed by Cllr M. MacLaren, seconded by A. Ballantine.

### **4. Annual Returns 2023**

L. Ramsay presented the report, noting that annual returns were due to be submitted to the SHR (for audited financial statements), OSCR, FCA and HMRC. All returns were in order and there are not expected to be any issues.

The recommendations were approved; to agree and submit the annual returns to the SHR, OSCR, FCA and HMRC; proposed by T. Thomson, seconded by E. McDermott.

### **5. Policy Review: Management Committee Expenses**

L. Ramsay presented the report, noting that the rolling review of all governance policies was nearing completion, and that only minor changes had been made to the Committee expenses policy. These were to update the payments in line with EVH levels for 2023/24.

The recommendations were approved; to approve the Management Committee Expenses Policy; proposed by M. Symons, seconded by D. Eadie.

## 6. In-House Estates Service

G. Scott presented the report, noting that as part of the organisational review of value for money, an opportunity to bring some services in-house had been identified. It was proposed that a pilot project for 2 years be implemented where void clearances/cleans, bin rotation, bulk uplift, play area cleaning, office refuse disposal and cleaning of the community flat would be delivered by a new staff team, managed by the current Estates Team.

The benefits of this approach had been identified as a significant annual cost saving and increased control of service quality. The risks had been mitigated by the intention to run it as a pilot project with temporary staff, capacity was in place to cover for absence/staff turnover using current staff and the necessary health and safety systems would be put in place. An implementation plan had been developed for a start to the new service in April 2024.

A member supported the proposal, noting that other social landlords were already doing this through estate caretaker services.

A member supported the proposal, thanking staff for seeking ways to deliver efficiencies and improve services for customers. The pilot project was also a sensible way to trial the service and manage risk.

A member supported the proposal and asked if the service will include clearing fly-tipping from W.H.A. land? G. Scott advised that it would, and this is a growing challenge and one which customers are keen to see quickly addressed.

A member thanked the team for bringing forward the proposal and asked if the bulk uplift service would incur a separate charge? G. Scott advised that this was not part of the pilot project initially, but the potential for charging for services would be a consideration going forward.

The recommendation was approved, to bring additional estate services in house from April 2024, proposed by M. Symons, seconded by J. Scott.

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

J. Grant presented the report. He advised that a meeting had been held with the SHR Regulation Manager. This had been a positive engagement with the Association providing updates on its activity and the SHR providing helpful updates on its current and future plans. The SHR had also published its Annual Report on the Charter which showed that the Association continues to perform well when compared to the sector's overall performance.

J. Grant presented the proposals from the review of the staffing establishment. This had identified the need for additional permanent and temporary posts. These were to boost our capacity to deliver service and value improvements in financial management, reactive repairs, tenant engagement and estate services. He further advised that changes to the continuous service and notice period practices were being proposed. These were to support succession planning and to bring the Association into line with other affiliate EVH members.

J. Grant highlighted the very successful "Meet the Committee" event held in August. This had generated 7 new membership applications and expressions of interest to join the Management Committee.

A member supported the additional staffing and welcomed the extra focus being placed on service improvements in tenant engagement. This was a key area to enable the Association to better understand what tenants wanted.

A member welcomed the increase in membership and the potential for new Committee members. Given the number of applications to join the Committee, would new members who wished to join the Committee be introduced in phases? J. Grant agreed that, following the normal interview processes, it would be necessary to introduce new members in phases. This was to ensure suitable induction capacity was in place and that new members would receive the necessary support.

The recommendations were approved; increase to total staff establishment, changes to continuity of service and notice periods, approval of all new membership applications; proposed by T. Thomson, seconded by J. Scott.

## **8. Value for Money (VfM) Strategy**

J. Grant presented the report, noting that it is a key strategic objective for the Association to develop a strategy to drive value for money throughout the business. The strategy has analysed current performance, compared to other similar organisations and included requirements of regulation. Key objectives and actions have been identified to be taken forward over the next 3 years.

The strategy has assessed generally good evidence to support that vfm is being delivered for tenants, but it has also identified areas where further improvements can be made. These relate to improved procurement and contract management, developing in-house services, improving processes and ICT capability, income maximisation and charging for services. Several activities are already underway, including new procurement efficiencies, service process reviews, a digital route-map plan in development and process changes to void management and arrears.

A member thanked the staff for producing the strategy and agreed it was an important focus for the Association. It is a key requirement to be able to report efficiencies to customers to show we are doing all we can to keep rents as low as possible.

A member agreed that it was necessary to consider charging for services, but this needs to be in the context of affordability. If some customers opt out, then it will create new challenges and recovery of debt also adds new costs.

A member asked if charges could be added to rents? J. Grant advised in some cases this was possible, but welfare benefit rules did not allow this in all cases.

A member supported the strategy and asked that it be included in the Committee's information file. This was a key strategy for the Association, and it was important for Committee members to keep this front and centre. J. Grant confirmed the strategy would be available to members and advised that efficiencies made would be reported to the FAC sub-committee.

The recommendation was approved; to approve the Value for Money strategy; proposed by Cllr M. MacLaren, seconded by A. Ballantine.

## **9. Procurement Planned Maintenance**

L. Reynolds presented the report, highlighting that the procurement process for the kitchen replacement programme has resulted in a preferred tender being identified from the I-FLAIR framework.

A member highlighted the variance of bids and asked if we were happy with the vfm? L. Reynolds advised that benchmark costs were higher than the preferred bidder so savings would be expected against assumed costs.

## 9. Procurement Planned Maintenance Contd.

A member noted that it was good to see the focus on procurement vfm and welcomed the continuing investment in homes.

The recommendations were approved; agree to accept the most economically advantageous tender and to instruct staff to proceed; proposed by E. McDermott, seconded by D. Eadie.

## 10. Assurance Statement: Self-assessment Review

J. Grant presented the report, outlining the rolling review of the evidence collected to support the continuing assurance against the required standards. No material non-compliance had been identified. Improvements continue to be made in the areas identified for focus.

The Management Committee noted the report.

## 11. New Build (Verbal update)

G. Scott provided an update on the new build programme. We are continuing to engage with Renfrewshire Council to seek an acceleration in its considerations of the Cartha Crescent planned development.

The Management Committee noted the update.

## 12. Any Other Business

J. Grant advised that analysis of the housing stock had been conducted to assess whether any RACC was present. No RACC has been identified. Survey work will be completed on 3 buildings as a precaution, but this is not expected to identify any RACC.

The Management Committee noted the update.

## 13. 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, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 6.00pm (TEAMS only)**

**CHAIRPERSON:** .....

**DATE:** .....