MINUTES OF THE 549TH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF WILLIAMSBURGH HOUSING ASSOCIATION, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 6PM (HYBRID)

PRESENT:	J. Scott	Chairperson
	M. Symons	
	R. Coelho	
	D. Eadie	
	C. Henry	
	Cllr. M. MacLaren	
	E. McDermott	
	O. Ikeh	
	G.L. John	
	L. Shields	
	T. Thomson	
IN ATTENDANCE:	J. Grant	Chief Executive Officer
	L. Ramsay	Head of Finance & Corporate Services
	L. Ferrie	Head of Housing
	L. Reynolds	Head of Property Services
	L. Fleeting	HR Manager

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1. (a) Apologies

Apologies were received from J. Kerr and F. Stewart (Committee members).

(b) Declarations of Interest

D. Eadie declared an interest in item 9 and would not participate in the item. Cllr. M. MacLaren declared an interest in Item 10 and would not participate in the item.

2. (a) Minutes of Management Committee Meeting: 24.07.24 (No.548)

The minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 24th July 2024 (No.548) were proposed correct, on a motion proposed by R. Coelho, seconded by D. Eadie.

(b) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Management Committee 2024

J. Grant outlined the required governance arrangements for the coming year and the need to elect office bearers. He advised that the Committee Succession plan had been previously approved and that this included office bearer roles. All members in the office bearer roles during 2023/24 confirmed that they wished to stand again. The following stood for election:

- J. Scott as Chairperson.
- D. Eadie as Vice Chairperson and Convenor of the Operations and Performance Sub Committee.
- M. Symons as the Convenor of the Finance, Audit and Corporate Services Sub Committee.

Individual membership of the two sub-committees was also agreed.

The Committee approved the election of those members standing for office and sub-committee membership, proposed by Cllr M. MacLaren, seconded by C. Henry.

4. Annual Returns

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 were 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 M. Symons, seconded by T. Thomson.

5. Policy Reviews

L. Fleeting presented the report, noting continuing progress on the comprehensive review of the Association's governance policies.

The Fraud policy had been updated and merged with the Anti-Bribery policy, therefore, making that policy obsolete.

The Membership Policy had been updated to demonstrate how we fulfil our commitment to have Shareholding membership in the Association. The revisions reflect the purpose and objectives of the organisation along with what business the membership can discuss and what decisions it can make.

5. Policy Reviews Contd.

A new Settlement Agreement policy was outlined, noting the requirement to have clear rules laid down to cover severance payments and agreements should a situation arise whereby the Committee needs to invoke this. Severance payments and agreements must be monitored and authorised by the Management Committee, to ensure that any payment represents value for money.

The Scheme of Delegation and Remits of the Management and Sub-Committees had received minor amendments to incorporate changes made by the policy reviews.

A member noted the financial limits included in the Scheme of Delegation relating to delegated authority for the approval of settlement agreements payments was different to that included in the policy. L. Fleeting noted this was an error and it would be amended.

A member highlighted that the legal fee covered by WHA for a staff member taking legal advice on a settlement agreement was too low. It should be increased to reflect the current legal price. L. Fleeting agreed to change the policy to adopt the current price.

A member asked why a Data Protection Impact Assessment had not been undertaken on the policies? L. Fleeting advised that this is because there are no changes to existing data sharing arrangements resulting from the policy reviews.

The Fraud and Membership policies were approved, the Settlement policy was approved (subject to amendments to legal fee and financial limit), the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation and the Committee remits were approved - proposed by C. Henry, seconded by R. Coelho.

6. Vision, Values and Tenant Priorities

J. Grant delivered a presentation outlining the proposed new WHA Vision and Values for the new Business Plan. This had been developed with staff consultation and from feedback from Committee members.

The Committee discussed the options and provided feedback on changes, particularly to further emphasise the focus on supporting communities and equalities. It was agreed that the changes would be incorporated and that a final decision would be agreed at the strategic planning day in January 2025, proposed by C. Henry, seconded by R. Coelho.

J. Grant provided an overview of the results of the tenant consultation on priorities. He explained that these would be used to help shape the focus of the new Business Plan. It was reassuring that the top priorities identified from the consultation generally aligned with WHA's direction.

6. Vision, Values and Tenant Priorities Contd.

A member welcomed the survey, noting it was important to understand what tenants wanted. Was there a risk that the survey did not capture some views? J. Grant advised that the survey was sent to all tenants and responses were received from around 20% of tenants. While this was a positive response rate, it is not statistically weighted so provides a general overview only.

The Committee welcomed the survey results and the re-assurance that tenant priorities were being considered in the development of the new Business Plan.

7. Governance Review Options

J. Grant presented the report, explaining that WHA had completed a range of activity since 2022 designed to strengthen its governance and ensure it continues to comply with the SHR's regulated standards. This included a new Committee structure, new report structure with more information, succession planning, policy reviews, assurance evidence and a range of new skills and experience derived from new Committee members. The Committee had also completed a more in-depth self-assessment of its performance, as part of the Annual Appraisal process. It is good practice to have external oversight of governance to provide reassurance and identify further areas for improvement. The report provided a range of options for consideration with varying scopes and approaches.

The Committee discussed the options and agreed to proceed by adding governance to the Internal Audit programme for 2025/26, proposed by Cllr. M. McLaren, seconded by E. McDermott.

8. IT Strategy

L. Ramsay presented the report**,** explaining that the new IT Strategy better aligns technology with our strategic objectives, manages risk, optimises resources, facilitates change, forms customer services delivery models and enhances communication and collaboration. Technology is evolving at a rapid pace bringing many opportunities to enhance our operations and deliver services in other ways, e.g. Digital and Artificial Intelligence platforms. Cybercrime is a growing problem, and the strategy supports robust defences to mitigate the risks. In order to deliver the ambitious strategy, which contains a range of significant projects, an additional permanent FTE post will be required. This will also enable the staff structure to form a project and helpdesk split, which will better protect resources to focus on delivering the projects.

The IT Strategy and the increase in the staffing establishment of 1 FTE were approved, proposed by D. Eadie, seconded by C. Henry.

9. Procurement of Internal Wall Insulation (IWI)

L. Reynolds presented the report, outlining the tender process used to secure a contractor to deliver a programme of insulation measures in tenanted homes. WHA Asset Management Strategy includes the installation of "low regret" building fabric component improvements which increase the energy efficiency of tenanted homes. The project to install IWI will be carried out within 30 flats in the east end of Paisley. Scottish Government grant funding was also secured to cover 50% of the project costs.

The recommendations were approved - to award the contract and progress the programme with Everwarm (Ltd) – proposed by J. Scott, seconded by C. Henry.

10. Chief Executive's Report

J. Grant presented the report, highlighting continuing risks in the reduction of Scottish Government financial support to the sector. Cuts to the affordable housing supply budget, used to grant fund new build homes, has now resulted in the Association being pushed back in priority for funding for any future new build projects. Grant funding for the purchase of existing homes has been deeply cut for Renfrewshire with no funds now expected to be made available to the Association this year. Grant funding for aids and adaptations had also not been received and there is a risk it will be cut or stopped altogether. As a result, the WHA programme has been paused to reduce financial risk. Finally, the proposed new ARC Key Performance Indicators have been published by the SHR for consultation. Work has begun to adapt our systems to collect and report on these new measures.

A member asked what will happen to the aids and adaptations service if no grant is provided? J. Grant advised that the policy will be reviewed as it is increasingly likely that a reduced grant or even no grant will be provided. This is disappointing and a further loading of new cost onto the Association, following a pattern of new obligations with high cost being introduced by the Scottish Government to the sector in recent years.

A member asked if the aids and adaptations service could be withdrawn if no funding was to be provided in the future? J. Grant advised it wasn't proposed to withdraw the service due to its importance in supporting tenants to remain in their home. However, the new policy would have to consider all options in the context of increasing demands on our services and reducing financial capacity to support them all. Removing the service would also risk legal challenge under equalities law.

10. Chief Executive's Report Contd.

A member asked if the reduced priority accorded to the Association for a future new build project could be changed? J. Grant advised that we have told Renfrewshire Council that we are reviewing our development strategy and will advise them once a new strategy is approved. It is likely that other future new build projects by other social landlords will also be increasingly at risk and may be postponed or stopped. This could result in further changes in the priority for grant funding over the medium term.

The Committee noted the report.

11. Minutes of Finance, Audit & Corporate Services Sub Committee Meeting 01.05.24 (No.8) & (b) Minutes of Operations and Performance Sub Committee Meeting 08.05.24 (No.7)

The Committee noted the minutes.

12. Any Other Business

(a) J. Scott reminded members of the need to timeously return signed copies of the corporate governance documents.

(b) J. Grant advised that the Committee's Strategic Planning Day would be provisionally booked for Friday, 17th January 2025 at the Glynhill hotel, Renfrew. The Committee's Christmas dinner would be booked for Thursday, 12th December 2024.

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 **Wednesday, 23rd October 2024 at 6.00pm, (Hybrid)**

CHAIRPERSON: **…….**

DATE: **…….**