

**MINUTES OF THE 6<sup>TH</sup> FINANCE, AUDIT & CORPORATE SERVICES (F.A.C.) SUB COMMITTEE MEETING OF WILLIAMSBURGH HOUSING ASSOCIATION, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2023 AT 6.00PM (HYBRID).**

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| <b>PRESENT:</b>       | M. Symons<br>J. Scott<br>Cllr. M. MacLaren<br>R. Coelho | Convenor  |
| <b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b> | L. Ramsay<br>L. Fleeting<br>H. Burns<br>J. Kelly        | Head of Finance & Corporate Services<br>HR Manager<br>Finance Officer<br>IT Manager |

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**1. (a) Apologies**

No apologies were given.

**(b) Declarations of Interest**

Cllr. M. MacLaren declared an interest in the items involving Renfrewshire Council and the Common Allocations Policy.

**2. (a) Minutes of the F.A.C. Meeting No.5: 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

The minutes of the Finance, Audit & Corporate Services Sub Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (No.5) were proposed correct, on a motion proposed by Cllr. M. MacLaren, seconded by R. Coelho.

**(b) Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**3. Financial Reports to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

L. Ramsay presented the report, noting that the performance for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter for the Income & Expenditure Account is broadly in line with budgeted expectations. Costs are slightly behind in Cyclical but this is offset by reactive and void costs.

L. Ramsay noted the continuation of last year's Planned maintenance programmes in Q2, however, the Windows programme has a budget of £0.9m with the first installs starting in December, therefore, spend will be later in the year.

L. Ramsay noted that the closing cash position, as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 was £10.6m.

L. Ramsay noted the Treasury deviation to Policy, and this is due to the opening of a new bank account with the Bank of Scotland ongoing compliance process. The opening pack with Santander has been completed and is now with their internal compliance section.

### **3. Financial Reports to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 Contd.**

Quarter 2 forecast with reactive spend is above budget and this is linked to costs associated with Voids where there is a lot of scrutiny happening within the Property Services team. A member queried if this is because of historical issues or cost increase. L. Ramsay confirmed it is both, invoices coming in late and costs have increased. There is a full audit ongoing, in relation to void repairs and L. Reynolds will provide an update at the next Operations & Performance Sub Committee meeting.

The works to reception costs have increased and is now included in the forecast which G. Scott will discuss with Management Committee.

The grant from the Government for buy-backs is 50% this year, therefore W.H.A. is bringing forward £100k from next year's budget to spend £200k in total before March 2024, for which the anticipation is around 7 additional properties.

L. Ramsay advised that this was not to ask for the go-ahead for projects but simply to acknowledge the amendments to the forecast. J. Scott proposed and Cllr. M. MacLaren seconded the Q2 Forecast to be the latest financial forecast for 2023/24.

### **4. Policy Review**

#### Equality and Diversity Policy

L. Fleeting presented the policy summarising that the Equality and Diversity Policy was on the schedule to be updated. The new policy outlines definitions per the Equality Act 2010, along with expectations of behaviour and indicates what staff, customers or Management Committee should do if they have a complaint which relates to Equality and Diversity.

#### Bullying and Harassment Policy

L. Fleeting presented the policy advising that it links to the Equality and Diversity Policy, in terms of establishing the difference between bullying and harassment. There are examples of behaviour which will not be tolerated as well as demonstrating that there is an expectation on all staff to call out behaviour that could be construed as bullying or harassment.

There is also clear guidance on how an individual can raise an issue with their line manager or an alternative safe person, within the organisation, to address the behaviour and decide on appropriate action.

#### Parental Leave Policy

L. Fleeting summarised that the Parental Leave procedures have always been part of the Conditions of Service. As part of the ongoing staff consultation via the forum, it has been agreed to remove elements of the terms and conditions to their own policy and have a summary within the Conditions of Service that highlights where to find more information on each section.

#### **4. Policy Review Contd.**

##### Parental Leave Policy Contd.

The Parental Leave policy is brief and essentially based on law with the added recommendation that if a manager is considering refusing a period of parental leave then they should speak with HR, in the first instance, to ensure we aren't open to any grievances or issues.

##### Paternity, Non-pregnant Parent and Co-adopter Policy

L. Fleeting proposed that the title of the former "Paternity Leave" section of the conditions of services are renamed in the new policy to create more inclusivity. L. Fleeting noted that there is a typing error in the third paragraph of the policy to state "non" pregnant parent which will be amended prior to publishing.

An amendment to former Terms and conditions the leave has been extended to be taken from within the first 8 weeks of a child being born or placed for adoption to 12 months in anticipation of the legislative changes being discussed for 2024. An additional amendment is to increase the pay to being two full weeks of contractual pay.

A member commented that they welcomed the addition of the inclusive language to policies.

##### W.H.A. Disaster Recovery and Incident Response Policy

J. Kelly joined the meeting at this point and summarised the amendments to the Disaster Recovery and Incident Response Policy advising the update is in relation to the move to the Cloud. Section 4.1 shows that we are now on the cloud with back ups being spread and every four hours. Estimate that we could be back up and running within 8 hours should we have a full failure with Appendix B showing a brief description of how the recovery would happen.

J. Scott asked if 9 is the highest rating when identifying risks and now that we are on the cloud have some reduced from 9 to 3 because we've mitigated the risks? J. Kelly confirmed this is correct.

Cllr. M. MacLaren asked if there's a catastrophic event where everything resets does this now fall to the IT provider? J. Kelly advised we would work together; Microsoft would deal with the physical equipment and that's where the risk has been transferred.

A member asked if there's a disaster recovery policy for other physical assets, for example if a house burned down. L. Ramsay confirmed that we have a procedure which has been recently reviewed. A member stated that the title of this policy was potentially confusing and suggested adding IT to the title to demonstrate the difference. This was agreed.

A member asked if we have a policy on WhatsApp retention. L. Ramsay advised that this is likely to be covered in the IT Acceptable Use Policy and will revert back. There has been previous instruction for staff not to hold any tenant data on their own personal phones or work WhatsApp.

#### **4. Policy Review Contd.**

All policies were approved, on a motion proposed by J. Scott and seconded by R. Coelho.

#### **9. Digital Road Map**

A change to the agenda, item 9 was discussed at this point. L. Ramsay advised that the IT team are spending the majority of their time on Cyber security and with the Digital Road Map we are looking at all systems to bring them up to date and improve our services to our customers. A meeting took place in June where the teams came up with a “wish list” for IT.

This Road Map has been built into our 30 year plan. Project 1 (Cloud project) is complete, Project 2 is the move to SharePoint and as part of this Project 3 Record management, ties to both GDPR and IT storage which the teams are now working on.

A member offered an observation about historical emails – what should committee members /staff be holding on to and how long for?

J. Kelly advised that 12 months is fairly standard for emails and L. Ramsay advised that we aren't introducing a blanket approach, but for staff they are working on moving data from emails to the correct location.

L. Ramsay summarised that all projects have a project owner. As part of the project, we will be seconding experienced staff and backfilling posts.

J. Kelly left the meeting at this point.

#### **5. Key Performance Indicators**

L. Ramsay presented the KPI report.

A Committee member queried the amber coding for the staff turnover. L. Fleeting advised this was due to being part way through the year and over 50% of the target.

Committee noted the content of the report.

#### **6. Data Protection Report**

This report was presented by L. Ramsay, who advised that the organisation is continuing with Records Management/Data Retention which staff are all involved in.

A member noted that the training received from [REDACTED] was well received.

Committee noted the content of the report.

## 7. Audit Report

L. Ramsay presented the Audit Report, reviewing the appendices which have been two audits within Housing. It was noted that Finance and Treasury Management training for Committee which was scheduled for November has been postponed.

L. Ramsay also noted that there will soon be a tender for a new Internal Auditor. A member asked if there were any concerns about the amount who will bid. L. Ramsay advised that there are less statutory restrictions on an internal auditor and they are more of a critical friend. There is not the restriction that we cannot appoint Alexander Sloan, therefore, they will be welcome to apply via the tender process.

A member asked for L. Ferrie to provide an update on the Allocations Policy to Committee for a deeper understanding. L. Ramsay advised that it's a Common Allocations Policy which is for Renfrewshire Council to review.

Committee noted the content of the report.

## 8. HR Report

L. Fleeting presented the HR Report, advising on the status of the current recruitment positions and updates on recent new starts to the Association. L. Fleeting advised of an amendment to the report as the candidate for the Tenant Participation Officer has now withdrawn. The post is being readvertised internally, as a secondment/development opportunity for staff.

L. Fleeting advised of an additional amendment that the 9<sup>th</sup> staff forum took place this week, where two policies were discussed as opposed to the anticipated five. This will delay the policies and Conditions of Service being presented to the Management Committee, which will now be in early 2024.

A Committee member asked if there is much debate at the staff forums. L. Fleeting advised that it is very much around the wording as opposed to any amendments which are happening and are generally an enhancement to current terms and conditions.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

## 10. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

## 11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

M. Symons thanked everyone for their attendance and advised that the next scheduled meeting of W.H.A.'s Finance, Audit & Corporate Services Sub Committee would be held on **Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 6pm (hybrid)**.

**CONVENOR:** .....

**DATE:** .....