

Minutes of West Whitlawburn Management Committee Meeting

Monday 29th November 2021 at 6:30pm

Whitlawburn Community Resource Centre

In attendance:

WWHC Committee:

A Anderson (AA), Chairperson	R Alexis (RA)	P Welsh (PW)
S Anderson (SA), Vice Chairperson	M Alcorn (MA)	D Murphy (DM)
A Duffin (AD), Secretary	F Rowan (FR)	

WWHC Staff:

S Marshall (Dir)
R Hosie (CSA) - Minutes

Other:

S McCready, Wylie & Bisset (Internal Auditor)

1. Apologies

E Kerr (EK), B McNicol (BMcN), H Anderson (HA)

2. Internal Audit Report – Equalities and Human Rights Wylie & Bisset

The Internal Auditor presented the Equalities and Human Rights internal audit report which provided an overall substantial level of assurance surrounding the arrangements in place at the Co-operative for promoting equalities and human rights in line with the Regulatory Standards of Governance & Financial Management. The review also considered the Co-operative's adherence with the Equality Act 2010 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010.

The internal auditor was also able to provide a substantial level of assurance surrounding the Co-operative's compliance with the guidance issued by the SFHA in August 2021 and confirm that the Co-operative are in the process of developing their Equality Strategy.

The report highlighted several areas of good practice and raised 6 recommendations for improvement. 1 recommendation was graded medium with 5 graded as low. A management response including details of responsibility and target completion has been provided for each recommendation. Progress will be reported to Management Committee and will be reviewed by the internal auditor.

The recommendations for improvement include:

- Inclusion of Equality and Diversity Clauses within all Policies;
- Completion of Gender and Ethnicity Analysis;
- Developing an Equalities Strategy;
- Developing an Equalities Action Plan;
- Updating the Co-operatives Guide to Information on their Website; and
- Inclusion of Equalities as a Standing Agenda Item for Management Committee Meetings.

The report confirmed that the internal auditor reviewed the Co-operative's Annual Assurance Statement submission for the period 2020 and the draft submission for 2021.

The Director provided a verbal update regarding actions taken since auditor's recommendations which include:

- WWHC staff have completed equalities training via *iHASCO* online platform.
- Housing Management staff will receive specific training on equalities data collection.

Management Committee noted that the Equalities and Human Rights Policy, Strategy and Action Plan are currently being reviewed and developed in line with guidance, with final approval by the Management Committee scheduled 24/01/2022 and implementation thereafter.

Internal Auditor left the meeting at 18:50.

3. Confidentiality

The Chairperson reminded the Committee of the importance of confidentiality.

4. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests at this meeting.

5. Equalities and Human Rights

This item is now a standing agenda item following the Internal Auditor's recommendation to consider any equality issue which may arise. Nothing raised at this meeting.

6. Previous Minutes

a) Management Committee meeting of 25th October 2021

The previous minutes were proposed by MA and seconded by RA and noted as an accurate record.

b) Signing of Minutes

The Chairperson will pass the signed minutes of the previous meeting to the Director for filing.

7. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

There were no matters arising.

Actions from Previous Meeting Report

Dir confirmed the FOISA refresher training was completed on 22/11/2021. Committee noted the progress with ongoing items.

8. Sub Committee Minutes and Referrals

None

9. Correspondence

Dir confirmed donations in current financial year.

Christmas vouchers proposed, number approximately 100.

Committee agreed a £10 voucher for each tenant 65+ years.

Committee considered the donation request from EVH for the Children's Hospice Appeal

Committee agreed a donation of £100.

10. Delegates Reports and Affiliated Organisation Information

a) Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH)

MA provided a summary of EVH meeting. Topics included the CPI figure for October 2021 and the change to 4.2% in November and salary negotiations. Committee noted the update and agreed to monitor the situation.

b) Glasgow West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations (GWSF)

AD advised of the Autumn member meeting held on 19/11/2021. Topics included social economics, digital inclusion and rent setting. Copies of the presentation is available at the Committees request. Committee noted the update.

c) Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA)

None

11. Governance and Assurance

a) Management Committee Training Plan

Committee noted progress. The training plan will be updated when Management Committee Appraisals are complete. Any training going forward will be organised in line with current Covid information and the potential risks of the new Omicron variant.

b) Notifiable Events

Dir advised the Covid impact on services notifiable event from March 2020 has now been closed by the SHR.

The prior year adjustment notifiable event has been submitted with initial clarification that there is no adverse effect on covenants. The SHR has not requested any further information at this point.

c) Schedule of External Submissions

Management Accounts have been submitted to the Co-op Bank. External submissions are up to date

d) Review of Rules

Rules have been submitted to the FCA. No contact made so far regarding any issues / requests for more information. Committee noted the update.

12. a) Management Committee post AGM paperwork

All paperwork received.

b) Management Committee Annual Appraisals

In progress.

c) Director Appraisal

The Chairperson and Secretary have completed the Director appraisal.

13. Regulation

No items at present.

14. Director Report and Targets

In relation to item 3 on Office/Concierge Operations, the report was written before omicron variant government guidance was updated.

WWHC staff have been reminded of the all of the current Covid protocols and are aware they must continue to comply. Monitoring of guidance is ongoing with adjustments as required.

IT support tender was issued on 29/11/2021 with a return date of 20/12/2021 at 12 noon. Presentation will be arranged thereafter.

Dir advised that WWHC have submitted an application for funding to support the provision of energy vouchers for prepayment meters to the Energy Redress Winter Energy Fund which would be positive news in light of cost of living increases and the winter season approaching. Also, WWHC is looking to access funding to support tenants/members who do not have prepayment meters.

The East Whitlawburn road construction and lockup demolition is underway with the licence agreement in place.

15. Property Services

a) Procurement

The Director referred to the report to update Committee on the position with regards to the Co-operative's maintenance contracts procurement and to seek approval to extend our existing contracts to end of 2022/23

The Co-operative was due to carry out re-procurement of the main maintenance contract with a target date of 1st April 2021 for commencing a new contract which was postponed due to the pandemic.

This year, Committee approved 1 year extensions to the lift maintenance and landscape maintenance contracts. In addition to the above, some of our smaller contracts are also due to be re-procured as noted in the report.

Property Services staff have recently had discussions with other RSL's and attended sessions hosted by GWSF where it was noted that costs have increased by more than 70% for procurement of services contracts that have been carried out in quarters 1 and 2 of 2021/22.

After an assessment of the current market conditions and initial discussions with our existing contractors, extension rates are more favourable than re-procurement of these contracts at this time. As detailed in the Budget and Rents 2022/23 report, we have proposed increases to the maintenance budgets based on these initial discussions with our services contractors.

Committee agreed to seek negotiated rates with our current contractors based on contract extensions to 31 st March 2023 with a further report in January 2022 confirming the extension rates for the above contracts.
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16. Tenancy Services

a) Arrears Monitoring Report

Committee noted the monitoring report showing a slight reduction from the previous month. Dir advised that WWHC staff are continuing to work on this priority area.

17. Corporate Services

a) Budget and Rents 2022/23

The Director presented the report to agree the 2022/23 draft budget and rent levels for tenant consultation with feedback and final decision at the January 2022 Management Committee meeting.

Rent Policy

The current policy uses an inflation factor based on RPI. Our long term financial projections use CPI.

- September 2021 CPI: 3.1% (RPI 4.9%)
- October 2021 CPI: 4.2% (RPI 6%)

Committee agreed that the rent policy is amended to use CPI inflation factor subject to tenant consultation.

Committee considered the draft income and expenditure budget with commentary on cost changes. Overall the budget has increased by 4.49% from 2021/22 levels with four rent increase options considered.

Committee noted the report information on affordability using the SFHA tool which considers rent charges and works by comparing different rents to moderate incomes within the local authority.

Committee noted the comparability information from GWSF's rent increase survey.

Committee noted the 30 year projections assumptions in the business plan are based on inflation plus 1% rent increases for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.

From the SHR published comparative rent information for 2020/21, WWHC 5 apartment rents are high comparative to Scottish averages, with a higher differential within WWHC stock.

The recommendation in the report states option C which should be option D.

Committee approved the income and expenditure budget set out in the report.

Committee agreed to consult on a 2.7% rent increase for 2022/23

Committee agreed that no rent increase is applied to the 5 x 5 apartments for 2022/23.

Committee agreed that lockup rents are increased in line with October CPI of 4.2%.

Consultation responses will be considered at the Management Committee meeting of January 2022 when the 2022/23 increase can be agreed. There will be further inflation information, rent comparative information and there may be further information on salary negotiations.

b) Management Accounts Q2

Dir referred to the management accounts report. Other income includes grant for energy vouchers and aerial income. Expenditure on other costs includes energy vouchers.

Interest receivable accumulated over 2 years from the Co-op bank. There is little interest earned going forward.

Operating costs summary includes separate information on Stage 3s under estate costs. Operating cost groupings details contingency repairs which includes spend on components which will be capitalised at the end of the financial year. Void costs have also increase due to Covid cleaning requirements.

To comply with the loan agreement, management accounts were submitted to the Co-op Bank by 25/11/2021. All covenants are covered and there are currently no areas of concern.

Committee noted the figures reported within the Management Accounts.

c) Pension Options Review

A key risk identified in the Business Plan which requires further independent analysis and information for Management Committee review, is WWHC pension provision options.

In order to progress this, both Chiene & Tait Financial Planning and EVH were contacted to provide proposals and costs to support this review. A short life working group with Committee and staff members will be established.

Committee approved the review process and instructed the support detailed.
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18. Health and Safety

Dir advised the internal H&S audits were completed w/c 22/11/2021.

The Health and Safety Committee meeting is taking place on 3/12/2021.

WWHC staff will complete the H&S inspections due to Covid restrictions.

19. Business Plan Review

The Director summarised the report. The management committee carried out a review of its business during November 2020 and the current Business Plan covers the period November 2020 to 2024 with interim reviews will take place annually, commencing in October.

The report details the review information and recommendations on updates.

Committee reviewed and confirmed WWHC vision and values.
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Committee reviewed and confirmed the updated comparative rent information.
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Committee reviewed and approved the updated performance and benchmarking information.

Committee approved the updated asset management information.

Committee approved the updated PEST and SWOT analyses and updated TOWS matrix.

Committee is reviewed and confirmed WWHC strategic objectives and delivery plan.

20. Policy Review

a) Standing Orders – Committee Structure

The Director presented the report which proposes amending the structure from 4 Sub committees to establishment of 2 Sub-Committees to which it has delegated authority for particular defined activities in specified areas.

- Performance, Assurance and Risk
- Staffing

The responsibilities are detailed in the remits and terms of reference. The Performance, Assurance and Risk Sub Committee will meet at least four times each year and will report on activities to the next meeting of the Management Committee. There is no change proposed to the agreed remit of the Staffing Sub Committee in the Standing Orders.

Committee approved the proposed Committee Structure and remits for inclusion in the Standing Orders Policy together with the Equalities clause, for implementation from Feb 2022.

b) Flexitime Policy

The Flexitime policy has been updated to include Time Off in Lieu (TOIL), there are no changes to core operating hours.

Committee approved the updated policy for implementation.

c) Privacy Policy

Committee noted the report acknowledging the changes in documentation to reflect UK as opposed to EU legislation.

Committee approved the updated policy amendments for implementation

d) Equalities Policy Clause

This addition to WWHC policy where it is found to be missing is from the recommendation of the Internal Auditor.

Committee approved the policy clause for inclusion.

21. East Whitlawburn

a) Legal Agreement

Committee noted that the Legal Agreement is progressing with solicitors.

b) Loan Finance

The update to the East Whitlawburn Development Strategy was agreed by Management Committee at the meeting held on 18th March 2021 which allowed the sign off acceptance and return of the Scottish Government offer of grant. This report included the updated projections with the additional 60 units having a positive impact on the 30-year projections.

The finance tenders were issued and the report, following assessment by FMD financial consultants, was considered by Management Committee.

Confidential information redacted.

Property handovers are scheduled to commence September 2022. Committee noted the property layout plan and the boundary between WWHC properties and SLC properties.

Committee considered the tender report and recommendation from FMD.

Committee agreed the recommendation that CAF Bank is selected as preferred funder on the basis of lower overall costs.

.c) Road Construction

Committee noted that the lock up demolition and road construction situated at Benmore Tower is in progress.

22. A.O.C.B.

No items.

23. Date and Time of Next Meeting – 24th January 2022 at 6:30pm

Location to be agreed depending on Covid guidance.

CSA left the meeting due to confidential items being discussed.

Closed Session - Confidential items

Meeting closed at 8.20 pm