

Present: Kath Mands (Chair), Denis Brown, Paul Crichton and Alan Fraser. The following joined via Video Conferencing: Ian Byers, Andrew Black, Teresa Robertson and Vicki Cutler.

In Attendance: Barry Moore (CE), Marjorie Sloan (CSD and Secretary) via Video Conferencing and Roz Clark (CSO).

22/01/19 Apologies

Ron Neave (Vice-Chair)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

22/01/02 Declarations of Conflicting Interests

As a tenant, the Chair declared a conflict of interest in relation to the Annual Rent Review and stated that this would not affect her decision as she would make a decision based on what is in the best interests of the Association.

As an owner of a factored property, Denis declared a conflict of interest in relation to the Annual Rent Review, as the decision on the rent increase had a consequence on owners' charges, and stated that this would not affect his decision as he would make a decision based on what is in the best interests of the Association.

Board Meeting Reports

22/01/03 Minute of Committee Meeting 24 November 2021 and Tracker

The Chair asked for comments relating to the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2021. There were no amendments.

Approved. Proposed Vicki Cutler, Seconded Denis Brown.

The CSD talked through the tracker and reported that the items relating to the Mossgiel Development and Board Recruitment would be removed as they were now complete.

22/01/04 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

22/01/05 Chairs Actions/Decisions between meetings

The Chair presented the paper highlighting there had been no Chair's Actions since the last meeting. Board **noted** the report.

22/01/06 Annual Rent Review

The CE talked through the report giving an overview of the tenant consultation undertaken in relation to the proposed rent increases. He highlighted the table in the report at 2.6.1 which provided the percentage rent increases applied by other social landlords within the local area. He also highlighted the information provided by the Scottish Housing Network and Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. The CE gave an overview of paragraphs 4.1.1-4.1.3 in which the financial impact of an increase of 3.1%, 3.6% and 4.1% was provided. He explained that whilst tenants had been consulted on an increase of 3.1% or 4.1%, the introduction of a 3.6% increase could be justified based on the consultation responses received. He stressed that it was vitally important that the Association took into consideration the particularly difficult financial times ahead for tenants whilst balancing this against financial investment in housing stock. He highlighted that whilst the report included a recommendation the final decision was a decision for the Board.

There followed comprehensive discussion and financial analysis from both a tenant and Association perspective. The Board stressed that they are acutely aware of the difficulties facing tenants with the end of the Furlough Scheme and Universal Credit uplift, as well as ever increasing household and fuel costs. They were also cautious about increasing the rent too much, which could have a knock on effect on rent arrears. The Board also discussed the increased costs to the Association to carry out its maintenance programmes and the importance of ensuring the balance is right. The Board were also mindful that the Association had imposed a rent freeze in 2021 and it was suggested that when corresponding with tenants in relation to the rent increase this should be referred to.

The CE highlighted that as work was now progressing with the planned maintenance programme tenants would have a better understanding of where their money was being spent. He highlighted that tenants want to see a balance of new development as well as investment in their own properties.

Board suggested that the planned maintenance programme should be publicised. The CE explained that it was published on the Association's website. The Tenant Involvement Officer (TIO) was doing exactly that and was engaging with tenants as work progressed. He explained that this engagement would feed into future tenant satisfaction surveys.

Board **approved** an annual rent increase of 3.6% effective from 1 April 2022.

Board **noted** that as agreed at the Board Meeting on 24 November 2021 the approved rent increase would lead to the rent increase on eighteen properties being restricted on affordability grounds.

The CSD and CSO then left the meeting.

22/01/07 Annual Staff Salary Review 1 April 2022

Prior to presenting the report the CE referred to the Confidential Organisational Structure Report and highlighted the fact that the Association's staffing costs were significantly lower than similar organisations. The CE then discussed the additional information that had been requested by the Chair and provided to Members at the Meeting. The CE informed Members that unlike previous years, the information on what other RSLs, EVH and Local Government had decided was not available at the time of writing the report nor at the Meeting. The CE informed Members that all the information was relevant to the Board making a decision, for it is not one particular piece of information that should dictate the decision. In making a decision which complies with Regulatory Standard 3, and in particular Regulation Guidance 3.6, it is an exercise for the Board to take based on the facts and circumstances pertinent to the Association; as it is for other Association's to make a decision based on the particular facts and circumstances to their Associations.

Members referred to the information provided by way of this report and the information provided by way of the Confidential Organisational Structure Report and had an extensive debate on all the facts and circumstances pertinent to the Association. Members were very mindful of the impact the spiralling cost of inflation, the increase in fuel and the astronomical increase in energy costs will have on staff. In light of the fact that information was not available as to what other RSLs, EVH and Local Government have decided, Members decided to defer making this decision until the Board Meeting on 23 February 2022. Members also commented that what others decide would not dictate what they will decide, it would assist them in making a decision. The CE informed Members that he is doubtful that the information would be available by the 23 February 2022, however best endeavours would be made to obtain such information as a decision would have to be made at the Board Meeting.

Board **agreed** to defer the decision on the annual staff salary review until February 2022.

The CSD returned to the meeting.

22/01/08 Confidential Organisational Structure

The CE presented the report giving a comprehensive overview of the changes proposed. He emphasised that due to the financial investment the Association had made in its IT infrastructure, human resources would be moved from department to department and therefore all recruitment would be internal. He referred to the Association's organisation structure and staffing costs compared to similar organisations, which evidenced that the Association's structure was not as resourceful and hence the Association's staffing costs were significantly lower. With regard to the creation of the Income Team and the post of Income Team Leader, the CE stressed the importance of income collection to the Association and reminded Members that this was one of the ten serious and significant risk to the Association. The CE also commented that tenants faced many financial challenges and the Income Department would assist tenants with those challenges, as far as they reasonably could. Members were pleased to hear that assistance would be provided to tenants Board **agreed** the Organisational Structure changes as set out in the report.

The CSO returned to the meeting.

22/01/09 Bank Signatories

The Board discussed banking arrangements, the detail minute of which provides confidential information on the operation of the Association's bank accounts.

22/01/10 Corporate Governance Policy Review: Procedure for the Appraisal of the Chief Executive

The CE talked through the report highlighting that the Policy had been reviewed and updated with the assistance of the Chair. With regard to periodic reviews, the reviews would be carried out quarterly rather than six-monthly.

Board **approved** adoption of the revised Procedure for the Appraisal of the Chief Executive.

22/01/11 Corporate Governance Policy Review: Board Member Recruitment Policy

The CE talked through the report highlighting that the Policy had been reviewed and updated to provide clarification on who can be co-opted to the Board and to make reference to the updated Induction Policy and Procedure. There followed discussion on changes the Association was making to Policies and documentation to ensure they remained current with regards to equal opportunities, inclusion and diversity. This would include, in the right context, replacing any reference to him/her with they/their etc.

Board **approved** adoption of the revised Board Member Recruitment Policy.

22/01/12 Corporate Governance Policy Review: Board Member Induction Policy and Procedure

The CE talked through the report highlighting the Policy had been reviewed and updated.

Teresa gave an update on her induction to date highlighting that she had found the meetings to be very informative and most helpful.

Board **approved** adoption of the revised Board Member Induction Policy and Procedure.

22/01/13 Corporate Governance Policy Review: Board Member Appraisal Policy

The CE talked through the report highlighting that the Policy had been reviewed and updated. The Policy had a number of minor changes in terminology and it now reflected the EVH and SFHA guidance. The Chair discussed how beneficial the Appraisal process was to Members and the Association.

Board **approved** adoption of the revised Board Member Appraisal Policy.

22/01/14 Housing Policy Review: Rent Arrears Policy

The CE talked through the report on behalf of the Housing Manager. He highlighted that the Policy had last been approved in January 2017 and therefore was now due to be reviewed. He reported that following an Internal Audit recommendation a survey had been carried out in 2020. Board asked who had been consulted and the CE confirmed that tenants on the Register of Interested Tenants and a selection of tenants who had experienced rent arrears had been surveyed and the results were presented at Appendix 2 to the Report.

Board **approved** the revised Rent Arrears Policy.

22/01/15 Human Resources Policy Review: Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

The CSD talked through the report highlighting that the Policy had last been reviewed in August 2018 and therefore was now due to be reviewed.

The Board asked whether staff were faced with unacceptable behaviour often and the CE confirmed that it could happen relatively frequently, however staff were aware of the actions to be taken. He stressed that the Association took a firm stance on unacceptable behaviour and whilst there were levels of frustration which would be tolerated, staff were aware that they would be fully supported if action was needed.

Board **approved** adoption of the revised Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.

22/01/16 Human Resources Policy Review: Flexible Retirement Policy

The CSD talked through the report highlighting that the Policy had last been reviewed in January 2017 and therefore was now due to be reviewed. The CSD explained that the Policy had been updated for revised terminology and to include information relating to the newly introduced People's Pension Scheme following the closure of the Tayside Pension Scheme to new staff.

Board had asked for data on staff numbers who may fall into the Flexible Retirement category. The CSD confirmed that of the total staff number 46% were over the age of 55 and the full-time equivalent figure was 42%.

Board **approved** adoption of the revised Flexible Retirement Policy.

22/01/17 Share Update

The CSO presented the report. The CE highlighted that the previous Board Member who had resigned their Share Membership had sent a complimentary note referring to the progress the Association had made over the past few years.

Board **approved** the updates to the Share Membership Register.

ABERTAY HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Minutes of the Board Meeting

Wednesday 19 January 2022 17:00

22/01/18 AOB

The CE reported that the Asset Management and Development Committee Meeting currently planned for 26 January 2022 would be rescheduled to 27 April 2022. The meeting would cover one agenda item only and would provide Board Members with full statistical information for the financial year. The CSO would send an email confirming the cancellation of the meeting.

Meeting closed at 19:00hrs.