

## PARAGON HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Minutes of Management Committee meeting

Online Video Conference Meeting

9<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Present: J Anderson  
A Anderson  
E Campbell  
B Lees  
E McNie  
K Menzies  
C Munro (co-optee)  
M Richards  
F Wallace

Staff: M Torrance  
E Mathershaw  
W Baxter  
M Thompson  
M Binnie

### GOVERNANCE / MINUTES ETC

#### 1. APOLOGIES

R Murray  
F Speirs

#### 2. COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEE

C Munro was welcomed to her first meeting as a co-optee to the Management Committee

M Richards had expressed an interest in taking on the role of Treasurer  
***Members agreed to the appointment. It was agreed that M Richards would be added as a bank signatory as part of the Treasurer role.***

#### 3. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CALENDAR

It was suggested moving the January meeting to Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January as this falls after the Scottish Governments announcement on rent capping. ***Committee members agreed.***

#### 4. GOVERNANCE ITEMS

M Torrance advised that F Speirs has requested a special leave of absence until February for personal reasons – ***committee members approved.***

It was noted that F Speirs was missed from the attendance on the minutes of the September meeting. The minutes will be amended to show her attendance.

##### **Membership Applications**

There were two membership applications considered for approval (details noted on the membership paper).

***The memberships were approved. The use of the seal was approved by the Management Committee.***

*Total number of members – 129*

##### **Notifiable Event**

The Annual Assurance Statement was loaded onto the SHR portal and a notifiable event was registered for non-compliance of EICRs not being completed in all properties. This was submitted on 25<sup>th</sup> October.

Since then out of the 67 properties reported as non-compliant we are down to 18 non-compliant.

Committee members commended staff for their work on this and asked for this to be passed onto staff concerned.

We will continue to update the SHR.

Our Annual Assurance Statement is published on our website and there is an explanation of the non compliance statement.

The SHR are looking for new recruits for their tenant panel. This will be advertised by the Association.

#### 5a. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022

There were no other amendments to the minutes.

Proposed: J Anderson

Seconded: M Richards

***Minutes Approved.***

## 5b. Matters Arising

8c Equalities Actions – Data collection is ongoing and a plan is in place with a consultant supporting us.

## 6. BUSINESS ITEMS

### 6a. PHA Route Map Progress

The office is open Monday-Friday from 9am-5pm and we continue to monitor staff absences.

### 6b Finance Mid-Year Review

M Thompson presented the Mid-Year Review presentation.

The actual figures and breakdown were uploaded to support the presentation.

There are no major changes proposed at this point.

Noted that for the Investment Programme there will be some movement /acceleration some works to maximise spend as some projects will have longer lead in times.

M Torrance advised that in addition to the Warm Welcome Home funding we have been awarded for new tenants, senior staff are recommending that £20k be used as a top up to fund for existing tenants. This will have a positive impact on assistance we can offer to tenants with the cost of living in general. It will reflect assistance provided through the Warm Welcome Home funding project. The initiative will help new tenants with many energy saving items e.g. thermal curtains, air fryers, duvets. Staff are able to give tenants practical assistance as well as signposting to other services. ***Committee members approved this allocation.***

E Mathershaw advised she has been working with our contractors to see if they can offer any support and the Valley Group have provided energy efficient light bulbs for void properties and a supply for existing tenants. The Bell Group are working with the HoME team providing paint to enable long term tenants to decorate their home.

Utility Aid are helping us to work produce an information sheet for perspective tenants to outline what the anticipated running costs for the property will be.

## **EVH Salary Ballot**

F Wallace advised that discussions have been held between EVH and Unite. The ballot paper and details had been circulated to members. EVH are now asking employers to vote. Paragon are full members of EVH.

*Staff declared and interest and left the meeting.*

Committee members discussed the proposal and agreed it is a fair approach in the current climate. ***Committee members agreed to submit the ballot in favour of the proposed settlement.***

*Staff returned to the meeting.*

F Wallace advised what committee members agreed to. M Torrance was instructed to return the ballot paper to EVH in favour of the proposal.

### **6c Development Proposal**

M Torrance advised that the paper is not complete and therefore not being put to committee. The costs have increased and need to be reviewed. The developer will absorb some of the costs and the Scottish Government has increased HAG as project will not finish until next year.

If the paper is finished and needs approved before the next meeting we can hold an online meeting to discuss this or cover under a rule 55.

The draft paper was uploaded and if any members have any comments on the draft paper they should feedback.

## **7. FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES SUB COMMITTEE**

### **7a. Finance & General Sub Committee**

The last meeting was held on 14<sup>th</sup> October and the draft minutes were previously issued.

The management accounts are completed and will be circulated. A F&GP sub committee meeting will be organised to go through the management accounts in detail.

## **8. HOUSING MANAGEMENT & INVESTMENT**

### **8a. Housing Management & Investment**

The last meeting was held on 11<sup>th</sup> October and the draft minutes were previously issued.

## **8b. Arrears / Voids / Repairs**

E Mathershaw advised there has not been a lot of change to figures previously reported since the last meeting two weeks ago.

Arrears did fall slightly in October. We are seeing tenants playing catch up with rent payment and we are working closely with tenants who engage with us. We are taking a proactive supportive approach while maintaining an enforcement approach where needed.

Repairs – Everwarm have done a good job catching up with voids. We are still reporting high relet days but we don't have a back log so the average number of days should come down. Backlog of reactive repairs coming down. We have reviewed outstanding works and will be writing to tenants with any outstanding jobs. We recently held joint toolbox talks with Everwarm staff and these were well received.

## **8c. Eviction Reports**

There were none for consideration.

## **8d. Programme Report**

W Baxter advised there has not been much change since the last report.

Gas - no failures.

EICRs - year 1 no failures. Will need to look at forced entry for those properties we have been unable to access.

BBOOMs – acquired 7 to date.

## **9. COST PLAN / TENDER APPROVALS**

### **9a. Planned Maintenance Tender Report 2022/23**

W Baxter went through the tender report.

The tender is for the 6 yearly planned maintenance cycle works – external work, clothes poles, fencing gates, hard landscaping etc. We will need to consult with residents in estates and owners of their liabilities.

***After consideration committee members approved the offer submitted by Everwarm as detailed on the tender report.***

A letter received from the Scottish Government on the EESSH2 review was uploaded for information. This has been put on hold while the review is underway which is expected to be completed by Sept 2023. This has an

impact on how we go forward with business plan and what works we do. We are doing things in the background e.g. PEAT, home analytics.

Everwarm have invited committee to their head office for a presentation on the PV battery back-up systems.

*Note – W Baxter left the meeting.*

## **10. AUDIT COMMITTEE**

### **10a. Audit Committee**

The last meeting was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and the minutes were previously issued.

### **10b. Internal Audit**

Committee agreed the internal audit programme at the last meeting and we have tentative dates for the audits to be done.

We have progressed on recommendations from the IT audit – Geofencing set up and 2 factor authentication set up for remote log in. We have also signed up for online cyber security training which will be compulsory training for all staff.

### **10c. Risk Report Q2 2022/23**

The register has been updated. The rent cap will have an impact on the risks and there are external factors outwith our control which are having an impact on risks.

There was discussion on the possibility of contacting local MSPs regarding the rent cap.

## **11. HEALTH & SAFETY**

### **11a. Health & Safety Workplace Committee**

A meeting has to be arranged.

### **11b. Health & Safety Stock Sub Committee**

A meeting has to be arranged to progress the handbook.

### **11c. STEPS Group Update**

As part of the feedback from staff on the latest Wellbeing Audit a number of initiatives have been put in place to support staff.

We have arranged with the NHS Keepwell team to carry out workplace health checks with staff at our office.

The NHS Steps on Stress course will be delivered over 3 sessions January to staff at our office.

## **12. REGULATORY ISSUES**

### **12a. SHR Annual Assurance Statement**

See item 4.

## **13. POLICY ISSUES**

### **13a. Policy Monitor**

Noted.

### **13b. Drug and Alcohol Policy**

There are no changes proposed.

***Committee members agreed to readopt the Drug & Alcohol policy.***

### **13c. Smoking Policy**

There are no changes proposed.

***Committee members agreed to readopt the Smoking policy.***

### **13d. Rent Arrears Prevention & Recovery Policy**

Members discussed the draft. There was consideration of delegating approval for the enforcement of decrees for repossession to the Director.

Note current practice. Members do not get any personal identifying information on cases. E Mathershaw has discussed with HM&I sub committee previously and members find it useful to see why cases are being taken for eviction.

We need to be mindful when considering the policy of changes in guidance as discussed at previous meeting – where we have worked with tenants to get cases sisted (basically a pause on legal proceedings) – sheriffs are now being advised not to sist and only to agree to a single continuation. This has not been tested because of the winter moratorium on evictions, but unlikely to have a major impact on the Association.

It was suggested a report is brought back to management committee on what cases have been taken through the court process and what impact it has had on rent levels.

***Committee members approved the Rent Arrears Prevention and Recovery policy and delegated authority was granted for the Housing Manager to take eviction reports to the Director for approval.***

### **13e. Rent Harmonisation Update & Rent Legislation Update**

E Mathershaw advised that at the December meeting Arneil Johnston will be attending to present the models they have been working on and to give an indication on how rent harmonisation will work.

If the Scottish Government announce they are looking at rent freeze/cap we are unlikely to be able to implement rent harmonisation at this time.

### **13f. Tenant Participation Strategy**

E Mathershaw requested that committee to approve the draft issued for consultation.

This has been kept as draft form after discussion with the tenant scrutiny group.

We are looking to put the strategy into a tenant friendly draft to help tenants to read it and engage.

Over the next couple of months there will be an opportunity for people to share their views on the draft strategy. It will go to tenant scrutiny panel next week and then wider consultation with partners. Aiming to ensure there are as many different ways to engage as possible.

***Committee members approved the draft for consultation.***

New charter published – SHR expect organisations to look at range of consultation methods not just digital methods.

### **13g. Financial Regulations**

The only change is to include the most recent SORP which was introduced after the last set of financial regulations were approved.

***Committee members approved the Financial Regulations.***



## **Pension Working Group**

M Thompson advised the working group had a few meetings and have updated the group remit with timings. M Richards and F Wallace are members of the working group.

### **14. STRATEGY, POLICY & RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS**

#### **14a. Grangemouth Housing Masterplan**

Ongoing discussions. Noted that will have to consider in light of current operating environment

#### **14b. Clackmannanshire Wellbeing Economy Anchor Partnership**

There have been no meetings held.

E Mathershaw attended a session at Clacks Council. There is an initiative called LENS2 where they have a small pot of money for community groups for projects that would be at the heart of the community. E Mathershaw is going to a session to see if the work we are doing could feed into this.

E Mathershaw is looking to see how we can assist Clacks Council in terms of shortage of homeless housing/refugee housing. Our vacancies are low and not the size required but we will have discussion with them to explore making a positive contribution.

### **15. TRAINING / INFORMATION / ADVICE**

#### **15a. Annual Appraisal Report & Training Plans**

All committee appraisals were completed prior to the AGM. From the findings the following actions were identified -

- Stock tour / induction to be organised – completed
- L McNie will do whistleblowing course- course details sourced
- M Richards will continue to do H&S sessions
- Options appraisal awareness session – M Torrance will arrange this
- Office bearer roles – this is F Wallace last year as chair therefore members will need to think if this is a role they would be interested in taking on.
- Finance in house sessions – good suggestion had been made by Sandy Young to take members through a set of Association accounts as a training exercise.
- Info session on role of tenant representative networks- June Anderson can assist
- Developing training for members on risk
- Session on appraisal form itself as it now requires review.

The report was previously issued and if anyone has any suggestions to feed back to M Torrance.

SHARE do housing associations in a nutshell session and we can sign members up for their e-learning. Members encouraged to identify what they wish to attend and these can be organised.

**15b. Committee Induction / Stock Tour**

M Torrance asked for feedback from the stock tour/induction. The new governance handbook has been completed and was issued on the day . Noted it is based on the SFHA model.

Feedback was positive, members enjoyed getting together and seeing some of the stock. It was suggested that as a follow up it would be good to revisit areas where work is planned to be done to see how the areas look after. This will be organised.

**15c. Conference & Training Schedule**

Noted.

**16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None

**17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022 in the afternoon in the office.

<b>Signed: Chairperson</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	