

PARAGON HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Minutes of Management Committee meeting
Online Video Conference Meeting
18 November 2020

Present: J Anderson
E Campbell
M Hesketh
L Hesketh (part of meeting)
K Menzies
M Richards
F Speirs
F Wallace
S Young

Staff: M Torrance
P Milne
E Mathershaw
W Baxter
M Binnie

GOVERNANCE / MINUTES ETC

1. APOLOGIES

R Murray
E McNie (SLA)
S Robertson (SLA)

2. COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEE

No changes

3. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CALENDAR

No changes

4. GOVERNANCE ITEMS

Attendance – It was noted that L McNie’s Special Leave of Absence (SLA) had been approved by committee under rule 55.

Membership - No membership applications or cancellations.

Sub Committee Chairs – each sub committee has met following the AGM and have elected a chair with the appointment subject to ratification of the committee.

- F&GP sub committee – F Wallace elected as Chair
- Audit sub committee – M Hesketh elected as Chair
- HM&I sub committee – M Hesketh elected as Chair
- H&S sub committee – M Richards elected as Chair

Committee members approve the appointments.

Payments, Benefit & Entitlements – M Binnie declared an interest and left the meeting. M Torrance advised that M Binnie's niece, Melissa McMenaman has submitted a housing application to the Association. This is for noting only at this stage.

M Binnie re-joined the meeting.

Register of Interests – No changes

Code of Conduct - No issues

Notifiable Events – No new notifiable events. Note decision taken under Rule 55 to approve L McNie's SLA.

SHR Monthly Covid Return – October return submitted to the SHR.

4a. Minutes of Previous Meeting 23rd October 2020

There were no amendments to the minutes.

Proposed: J Anderson

Seconded: M Richards

Minutes Approved

4b. Matters Arising

Matters substantive on the agenda

It was confirmed that feedback was provided to EVH re salaries following committee's decision at the October meeting. This was approved by the Chair.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

5a. PHA Route Map Progress

An update was provided. The office remains closed and we continue to deliver services remotely.

Note that Stirling going into Tier 4 will have implications for the Association as we have stock in Stirling and also staff who live in the area. The implications will need to be considered.

The cleaners have returned to work to clean the office after RAM carried and on site safety briefing.

Continue to update risk assessments.

A letter has been issued to all tenants within the Plean complex re the use of the communal areas and communal laundry facility. Posters have also been displayed throughout the complex on the Scottish Government's FACTs campaign.

5b. Mid-Year Financial Review / Q2 2020 Management Accounts /Treasury Management Strategy & Policy

P Milne advised that there is a lot of information involved in this item . She will present this and that a decision is not being asked from the committee today.

Management Accounts Q2 – issues to lenders on time.

Mid-Year Financial Review – budget approved in April due to covid. The reason rental income is down is we have bought three Bboom properties in the period. The budget assumed that more properties would be bought by the 30 September 2020 and we would receive rental income from these properties earlier in the period.

Other budgets are down and this is mainly due to covid. We have bought more in terms of technology this year again due to covid.

We do have enough capacity within the budget to absorb covid costs. The covid budget was not specifically included as part of the annual budget but was allowed in the business plan.

Implications on programme and reactive maintenance were discussed.

Noted covenant compliance being met.

Treasury Management Strategy & Policy – there are minor changes to propose to the policy . Noted current borrowing -one loan with the RBS and one bond with GBSH. Given current interest rates consideration required on deposits.

The policy required to be in line with the CIPFA code which applies to all public bodies. Given the scale of the organisation some areas of the Code are less relevant than to larger organisations . It was highlighted Committee

need to understand principles of treasury management and the risks involved.

£4m revolving credit facility with RBS – M Torrance and P Milne met with RBS and discussed the £4m revolving credit facility and have also sought legal advice. When refinancing was put in place in 2015 the £10m facility with RBS over 10 years included £6m drawn down in 2015 and £4m left to be drawn down if required. The option to draw down the £4m expires in December 2020. The Association currently has just over £8m in the bank. The strategy around the use of the facility was discussed. There is no immediate requirement to draw this. The Business plan shows no immediate need for the £4m but this does not take account of development or additional major repairs e.g. EESH2.

RBS have agreed to extend the draw down period by 1 year and we would need to pay £4k for an amendment to the loan agreement. P Milne has sought legal advice and it was confirmed there are no legal implications in doing this.

Covenant relaxation with RBS

The majority of covenants can be met comfortably but difficult to meet the interest covenant when there is big expenditure in a particular period e.g. major roofing. Pamela explained the workings of the Interest cover covenant. It looks at 'operating surplus' – how many times it covers the interest you pay. GBSH has the same covenant but it does not take account of major replacements. RBS reduce surplus by what is spent on improvement making it more difficult to adhere to.

There has been discussion with RBS on the treatment of expenditure on Fire and Carbon Monoxide Detector spend and will look at impact of covid. Discussions are ongoing to ensure clear understanding of the bank's position.

There was discussion on the implications.

Committee members are asked to think about this meantime and P Milne will come back to committee with a full paper for consideration after further discussions with RBS.

Committee members approved the management accounts.

5c. SHR Annual Assurance Statement (AAS)

All sub committees have met and went through the self-assurance toolkit in detail.

The SFHA toolkit has been updated to say if we are meeting the standards or not and included the links to the evidence and a review.

The conclusion from all sub committee's are that there are no material matters to report. There was discussion on compliance during Covid and actions taken noted. Progress has been reported to Management Committee. It was agreed to add a specific reference to this in the AAS in line with SFHA guidance

The AAS is to be submitted to the SHR by the 30th November.

Committee members approved the AAS to be submitted to the SHR. F Wallace will sign the AAS.

5d. Quarterly Reality Checks/Covid Feedback Survey

Following a large scale tenant survey in 2018/19 we engaged with Knowledge Partnership to undertake monthly reality checks to ask charter indicator questions to tenants. The report shows from October 2019 – September 2020 overall satisfaction levels have increased from 80% to 83% whilst satisfaction with opportunities to participate has increased by 9.5% to 79.5%.

This month Knowledge Partnership will focus on repairs.

Some areas of improvement have been discussed with the Tenant Scrutiny group re communication. The communication issues are relatively small in numbers but there is a theme.

5e. “Kickstart” Scheme – Work Experience Proposal

A paper had been issued with recommendations regarding involvement in the Kickstart Programme .

The Kickstart Scheme is a government employment project aimed at offering work experience to 16 to 24 year olds. Employers will receive a grant to employ people for 25 hours a week for 26 weeks at minimum wage rates and covers other employment costs and set up. Employers can offer more than the minimum wage and hours but must meet the associated costs.

The F&SP sub committee considered this at their September meeting and indicated they wished to support local communities at this difficult time and from this a speculative application was made to the Kickstart Programme making strong links to the digital inclusion initiatives that we hope to undertake. Members considered each recommendation in turn

Committee members are asked to consider if they wish to continue with the application or not – committee members agreed to continue.

Committee members are asked to decide on wage rates and terms & conditions of employment. There was discussion on wage rates and committee were of the opinion that the minimum wage is low and it was

suggested offering the 18 to 20 rate to the lower age group only (16-17 year old). **Committee members agreed to offer the 18 to 20 rate to the lower age group only to bring into line with the other age groups.**

It is hoped to have a placement by the end November/beginning of December.

It was recommended that The placement will not have a contract with full EVH T&C. There is another contract and M Torrance will take advice from EVH. **Committee members agreed to M Torrance seeking advice from EVH and agreeing the form of contract.**

Note – K Menzies left the meeting.

6. FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES

6a. Finance & General Purposes

The F&GP sub committee met on 12th November with the self-assurance toolkit being the main topic covered.

6b. Review of Schedule of Authorities

The Schedule of Authorities is updated to be explicit on who reports what to the SHR for Notifiable Events. The guidance has been followed but this ensures that it is specific in SOA. Committee members need to be clear if you have a notifiable event who reports it. J Anderson to be set up on the SHR portal. The changes to the SOA were agreed.

6c. Approval of Public Holidays 2021/22

Committee members approved the list issued.

Note – L Hesketh joined the meeting.

7. HOUSING MANAGEMENT & INVESTMENT

7a. Housing Management & Investment

The HM&I sub committee met on 17th November.

7b. Arrears/Voids/Repairs

Arrears – increase in arrears. It was noted there has been a positive impact on the way UC is paid with the Association now getting direct payments in real time.

Court Cases - several sisted cases pre-covid the court has asked the Association to continue to try to make contact with the tenant.

Voids – there has been an increase in the number of notices and abandonments and an increase in the poor state of repair properties are being left in. There are currently 18 properties under notice.

7c. Eviction Reports

None

7d. Programme Report

W Baxter had gone through the report in detail at the HM&I sub committee meeting and provided highlights to the report – committee members noted the report.

8. COST PLAN / TENDERS

8a. Gas Boiler Replacements/Systems & Heating Renewals

W Baxter went through the tender report and it was noticed that a page was missing from the report. He provided details of the project and tender ***W Baxter will issue the missing page to committee members and ask to approve under rule 55 – committee members agreed to this approach.***

9. AUDIT COMMITTEE

9a. Audit Committee

The audit sub committee met on 10th November and the focus was the self-assurance toolkit. There was consideration of the risk section and whistleblowing sections and evidence. The draft minutes of the meeting had been issued

An Internal audit is taking place week commencing 30th November covering Tenant Participation.

The internal audit programme is in place and details have been issued to Management Committee

The audit committee agreed their full work plan for the year and this is noted on the minutes.

There had been a discussion on training requirements and it was noted Henderson Loggie had been helpful in delivering training and M Torrance will find out “hot topics” they might suggest and arrange a session on the topic.

Noted P Milne and M Hesketh are attending a seminar on Public Sector Fraud on the 10th December.

10. HEALTH & SAFETY

10a. Health & Safety Update

The H&S sub committee met on the 13th November and the focus was on the compliance statement.

A H&S audit of office / staff H&S is due on 1st December but will need to be re-arranged due to being unable to gather all the evidence in time to supply electronically as still home working as default.

H&S inspection forms are now set up to be completed onsite then they automatically send back to appropriate people to action.

Daily and monthly office inspections are being carried out.

Staff surveys have been carried out following the DSE assessments.

Some risk assessments need updated.

Noted that information on a safety matter requested from a contractor .This does not affect tenants

10b. Healthy Working Lives

Due to have accreditation review around now but have not heard from HWL. M Torrance will contact them.

11. REGULATORY ISSUES

11a. No matters at this time - AAS statement at Item 7c

12. POLICY ISSUES

12a. Policy Monitor

To be updated

12b. Privacy Policy

Updated policy based on best practice recommended by our Data Protection Officer.

Committee members approve the Privacy Policy.

12c. Draft Risk Management Policy

Move to next meeting.

Freedom of Information Publication - It is proposed to update our Freedom Of Information Publications list to note that committee agenda and papers will be available on request. ***Committee members agreed to this.***

13. STRATEGY, POLICY, RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS

13a. Grangemouth Housing Masterplan

There has been discussion with local authorities over the years regarding strategic approach. There is a view that these need to be co-ordinated and senior staff are involved in discussion.

14. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

14a. Annual Appraisal Report & Training Plans

Suggested topics had been proposed and M Torrance will put a programme together and email to members.

Induction – agreed to meet half an hour before the next couple of committee meetings to cover the induction.

Standing orders suspended to carry on with the agenda – committee members agreed.

14b. Conference & Training Schedule

Committee agreed with the suggested on-line training topics and suggested adding in training on pensions.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is on Wednesday 9th December 2020.

Signed: Chairperson	
Date:	

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