

## **PARAGON HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED**

Minutes of Management Committee meeting

Hybrid - Paragon Office / Online

25<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Present: A Anderson  
J Anderson (online)  
E Campbell  
B Lees (online)  
E McNie  
R Murray (online)  
M Richards (online)  
F Wallace  
S Robertson (co-optee)

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

### **GOVERNANCE / MINUTES ETC**

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

K Menzies  
F Speirs (SLA)  
C Munro (co-optee)

#### **2. COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEE**

S Robertson was welcomed back to the committee. S Robertson would like to join the HM&I sub committee – **agreed**.

#### **3. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

No changes

The time for the February meeting to be agreed. Our Data Protection Officer will be attendance to give committee an update.

#### **4. GOVERNANCE ITEMS**

**Attendance Register** - no issues

E Campbell has requested a special leave of absence from the end of February as she is travelling – **approved**.

**Register of Interests** – W Baxter declared an interest and took no part in the discussion. M Torrance advised that W Baxter's son works for a fencing company that Everwarm have sub contracted. ROI will be updated.

**Payments, Benefits & Entitlements** – A member of staff who is a tenant qualifies for assistance from the Warm Welcome Home fund. **Approved.**

*Note – R Murray joined the meeting.*

**4a. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

There were no other amendments to the minutes.

Proposed: A Anderson  
Seconded: E Campbell

***Minutes Approved.***

**4b. Matters Arising**

None

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**5a. PHA Route Map Progress**

The office is open Monday – Friday and staff continue to work between the office and home working.

We will look at a formal hybrid working policy from April.

**5b. Rent Increase Paper 2023/24**

The committee agreed at the last meeting to consult on a rent increase of 4%, 6% and 8%.

At that time we did not know what the Scottish Government's decision would be on a possible rent cap/freeze. However it has since been announced that this has been withdrawn.

Comparisons were made with similar sized / geographically close housing Associations' proposals.

Modelling had been carried out on each of the rent increase options and what this means for the association in terms on income and how this would affect the investment programme.

W Baxter advised that some contracts are coming to an end of their 5 year Framework agreement. Ewing Somerville Partnership are carrying out an exercise looking at current market conditions. Noted BCI indices 22%/ TPI 12.5%. Took mid-way point 15% increase on business plan investment cost but this may be lower/higher as there is still a great deal of uncertainty. Putting out works as frameworks to allow control of pace of the programme

Insurance premiums have increased significantly and this was discussed. Appears to be happening in sector generally.

There was discussion on keeping tenants informed on moving programme work and how the rent increase options affect programme work in the coming years.

M Thompson advised that programme option 1 is for planned works and works within the model. Covenants met.

Programme option 2 includes other works and will be difficult to work with if rent increase is below 6%. Cash position is healthy.

*Note – J Anderson joined the meeting.*

E Mathershaw presented information on the outcome of the tenant consultation. 83.47% favoured a 4% increase and 13.98% for a 6% increase. Noted tenant priorities – investment / affordability / repairs services high on list.

Noted the last full stock condition survey was carried out in September 2021 and no immediate issues were identified.

E Mathershaw advised how the association is dealing with damp/mould in properties. The Association has had procedures in place for a long time. This was outlined - Maintenance Officer will carry out an inspection and take readings which will be discussed with the tenant. Sometimes the maintenance officer will carry out a joint visit with the tenancy management officer to work with tenant jointly.

Management Team are recommending a rent increase for 2023/24 of 4% across all rents. Noted the challenges around this.

It was noted and discussed the Associations need to balance tenant affordability and the needs of the business.

***The management committee agreed a 4% rent increase for 2023/24.***

Service Charges –service charges will be calculated based on actual cost of previous year as noted in the report. ***Agreed.***

Lock Ups – It is recommended to increase lock up rents by 4%. ***The management committee agreed a 4% rent increase for lock ups for 2023/24.***

#### **5c. Development Programme**

A draft paper was presented at the November meeting.

The option of staged purchase versus turnkey purchase was discussed. There are capitalised interest issues involved with turnkey so costs higher but risk mitigated to some degree.

Link's Development Services arm is now set up as Curb Property Development albeit the agreement will be with Link Group.

The project is based on a design and build contract meeting the housing for variant needs.

Work has not started on site due to the increase in costs. These have been accounted for in modelling the project.

The total number of units on site is 30 with Paragon acquiring 6 terraced houses and 12 flats with a mix of 2 and 3 bed.

The aim is to directly factor for the PHA properties in the development.

It is recommended the association acquires the properties in a turnkey basis as this lowers the risk for the association.

The development will be funded through private finance and with HAG as detailed in the report. The facility is in place and will not require granting any further security.

Committee members are asked to approve commitment to the project with updates on legal matters going forward being provided. ***Committee members approved.***

#### **5d. Landscape Maintenance Arrangements**

M Torrance provided background to the landscape maintenance arrangements in Falkirk Council area that the council provide a service for. Noted that matter now appears to be settled. Situation will be monitored.

## **5e. KPI Report to Q3 2022/23**

E Mathershaw went through the housing management KPIs.

Additional points discussed:

- Emergency response times have increased because of issue in Dec CTS issues. Working with Everwarm. Hope to reinstate from 1 March.
- Reinstated settling in visits.
- Working on a postcard to send to tenants to emphasis what Paragon can do to help tenants – this will be targeted to tenants in arrears.

M Torrance went through the corporate KPIs. The full complaints report has been uploaded as part of the quarterly reports. Noted dashboard format with commentary on trends, learning etc. SPSO indicators included.

BBOOM – 8 properties purchased to date.

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

### **6a. Finance & General Sub Committee**

A meeting has to be arranged. Dates being circulated.

### **6b. F&GP Quarterly Reports Q3 2022/23**

These were covered as part of KPIs.

### **6c. Finance Update**

The third quarter management accounts will be ready for the next meeting.

### **6d. Pension Consultation Update**

M Thompson provided an update on some areas committee had asked for more information.

- Withdrawal cost – not got this figure
- Compensation – advice is not to do as a lump sum, but to do gradually.
- What other similar organisations do – from the information available looks like a lot of employers have a 10% employer contribution rate.

M Thompson and F Wallace have attended separate SHAPS workshops held. F Wallace will forward the slides from the session for M Binnie to distribute to committee.

The paper will be updated and a recommendation brought to the March committee meeting for consideration.

## **6e. Bank Signatories Update**

Following M Richards appointment as Treasurer it is proposed that he be added as an additional signatory on the organisation's bank accounts. The bank accounts are The Royal Bank of Scotland and Virgin Money. The relevant forms will need to be completed and signed by the Chair.

M Thompson is also to be added as a signatory to the Virgin Money account.

***Committee members approved the above resolution.***

## **6f. Equalities Update**

We are using the new form and have been collecting data from applicants and existing tenants.

M Torrance and E Mathershaw are meeting with Stewart Montgomery to discuss next steps on the action plan.

There will be training for management committee and staff.

## **7. HOUSING MANAGEMENT & INVESTMENT**

### **7a. Housing Management & Investment**

Members have been contacted to arrange a meeting in February and March.

### **7b. Arrears / Voids / Repairs Performance Reports**

The figures from the report were discussed as part of the KPIs.

There are a number of initiatives the association have in place to help tenants with the current cost of living crisis:

- Energy Action Scotland funding received to help new tenants
- SFHA funding received to help existing tenants
- EVH funding received to help those tenants with costs associated with their pets
- Meeting arranged with Kersiebank Community Project
- Winter hardship fund vouchers available for those tenants who meet the fuel poverty threshold (20% of income on energy costs)
- PHA is referring agency for emergency fuel fund immediate credit.

### **7c. Programme Report**

W Baxter went through the report.

EICRs – there are currently 11 properties outstanding. 9 due to no access. 2 due to other issues which are preventing the work being done and staff

are working with the tenants and other agencies to try and resolve the issues. W Baxter updated the SHR at the end of December and provide another update at the end of this month.

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

### **External Render Systems and Re-Roofing 14-18 Orkney Place, Hallglen & 80 Kerse Rd, Grangemouth**

W Baxter advised that he had uploaded the value for money report only recently received from Ewing Somerville Partnership QS.

There are ongoing issues with the water ingress at the site and temporary repairs have been carried out. Works to resolve the issues are a priority.

To allow members time to properly consider the report W Baxter will prepare the tender report and issue to committee members under rule 55 resolution.

## **9. AUDIT COMMITTEE**

### **9a. Audit Committee**

A meeting has to be arranged. Dates are being circulated.

### **9b. Internal Audit**

The programme was uploaded with dates of each audit. Reports will be made available when received.

## **10. HEALTH & SAFETY**

### **10a. Health & Safety Update**

A meeting has to be arranged.

EVH have issued the updates to the H&S manual which will be reviewed at the next meeting.

### **10b. STEPS Group Update**

A number of activities are ongoing:

- Wellbeing consultant – staff survey to be issued
- NHS Keepwell assessments for staff ongoing
- NHS Choose to Lose (weight management programme) – staff are starting a group to offer support and share ideas with each other.
- Overdose prevention training – staff attended this training delivered by the NHS.
- Steps on stress training – NHS are delivering this training for staff

- Ask/tell – training to be arranged with NHS for staff
- Breakfast club for staff organised until the end of February
- The Association has been asked to attend the SHARE conference to speak about the work we are doing around staff wellbeing.

## **11. REGULATORY ISSUES**

None - EICR progress reported earlier.

## **12. POLICY ISSUES**

### **12a. Policy Monitor**

**Noted**

### **12b. Data Subject Access Procedure**

The procedure was reviewed by our Data Protection Officer and no changes were proposed. ***Committee members agree to re-adopt the procedure.***

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

### **13a. Grangemouth Housing Masterplan**

Await date of the next meeting.

### **13b. Clackmannanshire Wellbeing Economy Anchor Partnership**

Await date of the next meeting.

## **14. TRAINING / INFORMATION / ADVICE**

### **14a. Annual Appraisal Report & Training Plans**

Members had agreed they would prefer one full day of training.

### **14b. Conference & Training Schedule**

SHARE e-learning – M Binnie will arrange for access for those that do not have it.

## **15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None

## **16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

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