

**LOCHABER HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING
HELD ON MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 10TH
APRIL 2024 AT 6.30PM**

Present: Andrew Carr (Chairperson)
Di Alexander (Part Meeting)
John Cooney
Cathy Osborn
Rosemary Bridge
Moir MacVicar
Cllr Sarah Fanet
May Tosh
Stewart Leitch

In attendance: Margaret Moynihan, Chief Executive
Jenny MacKay, Director of Customer Services
Siobhan Toal, Customer Services Officer
Sean Doherty, Director of Asset Management
Maureen Cameron, LCR Manager
Brian Pearson, Housing Services Coordinator
Iain MacLeod, LHAPS Manager
Kim Stanton, Customer Services Officer
Fiona Sorley, CHT
David Smith, Accountant
Lorna Ravell, EVH (Part Meeting)

The Chairperson welcomed Lorna Ravell, EVH, who is in attendance to observe the meeting as part of the Board appraisal process.

1. Apologies

No apologies had been received.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Declaration of Interest report was **approved**, and it was also noted that Cllr Sarah Fanet would leave the meeting while Agenda Item 15 was discussed and be invited to re-join when this item concluded and that Di Alexander would leave the meeting while Agenda Item 9 was discussed and be invited to re-join when this item concluded.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 15th February 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15th February 2024 were **approved** with an amendment to be made to Agenda Item 10(ii), whereby it had been **agreed** that all Board members should be invited to the Audit, Risk & Governance Sub-Committee meeting in November for the annual budget discussions.

4. Matters Arising from Minutes of Meeting held on 15th February 2024

(i) Rent Consultation - Feedback

The Housing Services Co-Ordinator advised the Board that there were around 5 tenants who were unhappy with the rent increase, this was predominantly tenants

who thought that there had been insufficient expenditure on their properties, had outstanding repairs to be resolved or who expressed that in the current climate there should be no rent increase. The Chief Executive advised the Board that those tenants who contacted the office regarding the rent increase were invited into the office to discuss why increases in rent are applied and what considerations there are in the budget setting process.

The Board **noted** the update.

(ii) Local Letting Initiative Update

The Housing Services Co-Ordinator advised the Board that the Highland Housing Register Management Group (HHR) and Link Housing were both supportive of the Local Letting Initiative, Secondary Preference for the Upper Achintore development. The HHR group felt this fitted well with the Local Housing Strategy and the difficulties within the housing market in Lochaber. This will allow the process of allocating properties to progress.

The Board **noted** the verbal update.

(iii) EVH - Employers Ballot

The Chief Executive advised the Board that further to the report at the February meeting EVH had now confirmed 92% of full members were in favour of the proposed pay deal of 6% and that this increase will be on all salary points from 1st April.

The Board **noted** the update.

(iv) Fire Risk Assessments – Internal Audit

The Board were informed that the Chief Executive and Director of Asset Management met with Harper Macleod regarding Fire Risk Assessments for communal areas. It was advised that a letter would be sent by Harper MacLeod to the company who had not been able to provide us with the reports with the aim of recouping the fees paid.

The Board **noted** the verbal update.

5. Regulatory Standards – Demonstrating Compliance

The Board **noted** the compliance with Regulatory Standards report.

6. Regulatory Standards – Revisions to Framework, Status for 23/24 and process for Annual Assurance Statement 24/25

The Director of Customer Services presented a report to the Board, in which the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) confirmed we have retained the compliant status again this year.

The Board were also advised that the SHR had published the final version of the new Regulatory Framework in February which was effective from the 01st April 2024. The Board noted that the full framework document can be found within the Board Section of Teams.

The Director of Customer Services also advised the Board that the SFHA have now published their revised toolkit, and while it is familiar in terms of scope/content there

will be new self-assurance factors relating to the amendments of the SHR framework. The Board then discussed the self-assessment process for this year and agreed that a short-term working group of Board members and senior officers should be created to complete the in depth review of the framework using the SFHA toolkit, with the full Board able to review before formally discussing at our Board 'Away Day'. The Director of Customer Services will email all Board members looking for volunteers for the Working Group.

The Board **noted** our regulatory status and the amendments to the Regulation of Social Housing Scotland Framework and **approved** the process to produce our annual assurance statement for 2024.

7. **Revises/New Policies**

(i) Rent Arrears

The Rent Arrears Policy was **approved** but **noted** there would be further changes when the Housing Bill is released.

(ii) Dignity at Work

The Dignity at Work Policy was **approved** with the provision that the policy should be amended to include a sentence stating that staff members can contact another member of the Senior Management Team should the concern be about their Line Manager.

(iii) Flexible Working

The Flexible Working policy was **approved**.

(iv) Tenant Disrepair & Recharge

The Tenant Disrepair & Recharge Policy was **approved**.

(v) Voids & Property Standards Policy

The Voids & Property Standards Policy was **approved**.

8. **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion – Actions**

The Director of Customer Services informed the Board that the EDI Charter had been drafted and circulated to our Your Voice Group with the majority of responses giving approval to adopt the Charter. The Board then discussed the collection of tenant equalities data and how we would progress with collecting this data. It was **agreed** that the reservations the Board initially had regarding linking data remained and for the moment we should continue collecting anonymously.

The Board **considered** and **approved** the EDI Charter and the decision to continue to collect tenant data anonymously.

9. **Development**

Some detail within this report has been deemed to be commercially sensitive and is therefore, not available to the public at this time

Fiona Sorley also updated the Board on the site at Mallaig.

The Board were further advised of the status of the Glenkingie Terrace, Rankin Crescent and Glensheil developments.

The Board **discussed** the report at length and **noted** the update report. It was also **agreed** that further training would be sourced for the Board in relation to the development processes and risks.

10. CEO Appraisal Report

Please see separate confidential minute.

11. Scottish Housing Regulator – RAAC report

The Director of Asset Management presented a report to the Board informing them of the process taken in relation to the identification of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within LHA's housing stock and how this was evidenced. Within the report it was noted that no RAAC was identified in the properties and that this had duly been reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Board **considered** and **noted** the report.

12. Fire Risk Assessments – Communal Areas

The Director of Asset Management informed the Board that the fire risk assessments for communal areas have now been undertaken and received. A full report and action plan will be presented to the Board at the meeting in May.

The Board **noted** the verbal update.

13. Update of the Upper Achintore Development

The Board **noted** the update of the Upper Achintore development provided by the Chief Executive.

14. Update of Recruitment – Director of Finance

The Chief Executive advised the Board that LHA have successfully recruited the Director of Finance vacancy and the start date has been agreed as 29th April 2024.

The Board **noted** the update.

15. Out of Hours Emergency Repairs Service

Some detail within this report has been deemed to be commercially sensitive and is therefore, not available to the public at this time

The Chief Executive presented the report to the Board advising that the Highland Council have given notice of their withdrawal from the Service Level Agreement to provide our Out of Hours repairs service arrangement which has been in place since 2019.

The Board **discussed** and **noted** the report.

16. Budgets 24/25

(i) LCR

The Board **noted** the LCR draft budget and **noted** that there was still further work to be carried out before going back to the LCR Committee in May.

(ii) LHAPS

The Board **noted** the LHAPS draft budget and **noted** that there was still further work to be carried out before going back to the LHAPS Board in May.

17.

AOCB

(i) Insurance Costs 24/25

The Chief Executive advised the Board that as previously intimated, insurance costs for 2024/25 are significantly higher than previous years. It was advised that Richard MacDonald, Howden Insurance, will be holding an awareness session for the board before the May meeting.

The Board **noted** the update.

(ii) Jacob Green

The Director of Customer Services advised the Board that Jacob Green has, due to personal circumstances, tendered his registration. Jacob passed on his thanks to the Board for the leave of absence that was approved last year.

The Board **noted** the resignation of Jacob Green.

(iii) Consent Under EPB Policy

The Director of Customer Services presented a report to the Board in which the Board were asked to consider a request for the granting of a benefit under our EPB Policy. The Board were asked to approve the offer of tenancy as outlined in the report.

The Board **considered** and **approved** the report.

(iv) Confidential Item

Please see separate 2 separate confidential minutes.