

LOCHABER HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING
HELD ON MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 14th November 2024

Present: Andrew Carr (Chair)
Rosemary Bridge
Di Alexander
John Cooney
Stewart Leitch
Cathy Osborn
May Tosh
Moira MacVicar
Nigel Paterson

In Attendance: Margaret Moynihan, Chief Executive
Jenny MacKay, Director of Customer Services
Sean Doherty, Director of Asset Management
Maureen Cameron, LCR Manager
Gary Hay, Director of Finance
Siobhan Toal, Customer Services Officer
Kim MacIsaac, Customer Services Officer
Alan Kennedy, Knowledge Part (part meeting)
Morven Taylor, CHT (part meeting)

At this point of the meeting the Chairperson advised the Board that due to commitments Councillor Sarah Fanet had resigned. The Board all **agreed** this was very regrettable and thanked Sarah for her time while a Board Member.

1. Apologies

No apologies had been received.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Declaration of Interest report was **approved**, and it was noted that Moira MacVicar would leave the meeting while Agenda item 14 was discussed and be invited to re-join when this item concluded.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 07th October 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 07th October 2024 were **approved**.

4. Matters Arising from the minutes of Meeting held on 07th October 2024

i. Business plan

The Chief Executive shared with the Board that the Business Plan had been sent out to our tenants for feedback and any proposed changes would be considered and the final report brought to the Board for approval at the December meeting.

ii. Submission of Annual Assurance Statement

The Director of Customer Services shared with the Board that the Annual Assurance Statement has been submitted.

iii. Notifiable Event

The Director of Customer Services confirmed that following the Board meeting in October the agreed notifiable event had been submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator who had subsequently confirmed there was no further action required.

iv. Recruitment

The Director of Customer Services confirmed that following a recruitment campaign we had appointed Isla Gray as Housing Services Manager. Isla will be joining the Association on the 06th January 2025.

5. Regulatory Standards – Demonstrating Compliance

The Board **noted** the Regulatory Standards.

6. Revised/New Policies

i. Freedom of Information

The Director of Customer Services presented to the Board the Freedom of Information Policy. The initial draft was prepared by Harper MacLeod and the policy had subsequently been reviewed and refreshed.

ii. Environmental Regulations

The Director of Customer Services presented to the Board the Environmental Regulations Policy which had also been drafted by Harper MacLeod, but had now been reviewed, and refreshed.

iii. Dignity At Work

The Director of Customer Services presented the revised Dignity at Work policy. The policy has been drafted by EVH and subsequently personalised by the Association. This policy includes the new legislation aimed at tackling workplace sexual harassment, as well as the changes placing mandatory duty on employers to set up preventative and reasonable steps against sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Board **noted** and **approved** all three revised policies.

7. Permission to evict.

The Board **discussed** and **approved** the eviction action for cases CA194 and CA195, noting action will not be taken against the tenants unless the payment/engagement arrangements are broken.

8. Board Meeting Dates 2025

The Board **noted** and **approved** the schedule of Board meeting dates for 2025, including the amended times proposed for the Audit, Risk and Governance and change of day for the Lochaber Care and Repair meetings. The Director of Customer Services confirmed that a copy of the revised dates would be circulated and saved in the Board section of TEAMS.

9. Vacant Property

The Director of Asset Management presented a report to the Board regarding a property in Kinlochleven which had become vacant recently. The property although not part of our disposal strategy did require an extensive number of renovations which produced a negative cash flow before taking account of the likely expenditure which would be required to get this to a net zero standard.

The Board **discussed the advantages and disadvantages of retaining this property** and **agreed** that sale was the best option.

10. Audit, Risk and Governance Sub-Committee Recommendations

i. Approve Draft Budget 2025/26

The Board **approved** the Initial Draft of the Budget for 2025/26.

ii. Approve Bad Debt Write-offs

The Board **approved** the Bad Debt Write-offs

iii. Approve LHA Quarterly Management Accounts to 30.09.2024.

The Board **approved** the LHA Quarterly Management Accounts.

iv. Internal Audit Report

The Board noted and **approved** the Internal Audit Report.

v. Note Quarterly Management Accounts to 30.09.2024 (A) LHAPS and (B) LCR

The Board **noted** the Quarterly Management Accounts for LHAPS and LCR.

vi. Note Covenant Report, Treasury Management Quarterly & Annual Update

The Board **noted** the Covenant Report, Treasury Management Quarterly Update and Annual Update.

vii. Note Quarterly Compliance Return

The Board **noted** the Quarterly Compliance Return.

viii. Risk Register

The Board **noted** the Risk Register and agreed the proposed changes suggested by the Audit, Risk and Governance sub-committee in relation to the Development Risk.

ix. Governance Review- Code of Conduct -Board and Staff

The Board **approved** the Codes of Conduct for Board and Staff members and the Protocol for a Breach for Board Members.

11. Out Of Hours Repairs Service update

The Chief Executive reminded the Board that following the withdrawal of The Highland Council from the call out service, we had been undergoing a 6-month trial with local contractors. This trial was now at an end, and we were looking to appoint GA Barnie, The Board were asked to note the details of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and agree to progress with this arrangement. It was also noted that having to work independently, rather than with the Highland Council meant there would be a significantly higher cost to the Association to provide this service to our tenants.

The Board **noted** the report and **approved** the appointment of GA Barnie as contractor for the Out of Hours service as per the SLA.

12. Maintenance and Estate Management Programme Update Quarter 2

The Director of Asset Management presented to the Board that the reactive budget was over for quarter two, however, adjustments would be made to other areas of the maintenance spend if necessary.

The Board **noted** the report.

13. Health and Safety of Properties - Update

The Board **noted** the report.

14. Development Report *The detail within this report has been deemed to be commercially sensitive and is therefore, not available to the public at this time*

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

The Director of Finance reported to the Board the current options available to us in relation to our development agency work.

It was **agreed** that a paper would be provided to the Board covering the discussions and seeking approval to progress this favoured option.

15. Performance

The Board **noted** the performance reports in relation to Housing Management, Asset Management, Complaints, GDPR, Tenant Participation, Tenant Engagement and Health & Safety.

16. Tenants Tri-Annual

Alan Kennedy from Knowledge Partnership presented to the Board the results from the recent Tri-Annual Survey. The survey took place between July and September predominantly by phone calls, with online options being provided to those who they had been unable to contact. There was a 51% response from tenants and 23% response from factored owners. The presentation covered all the indicators within the Annual Return on the Charter along with ancillary questions which had been agreed by the Association. Several of the results showed a drop from the previous survey 3 years ago and reasons for this were discussed. Alan Kennedy confirmed that Knowledge Partnership will also be hosting two in person focus groups and one online meeting later this month.

The Board **noted** the update.

17. ICT Strategy

The Director of Customer Services presented to the Board a report which detailed the actions progressed from our ICT Strategy. The Board noted that they would shortly be receiving a survey document regarding the use of LHA laptops.

The Board **noted** the update.

18. Tenant Engagement & Communications – quarter 3

The Board **noted** the update.

19. A.O.C.B

i. Christmas Lunch

The Board were reminded that the Christmas Lunch would follow the Board meeting on the 13th of December.

ii. Fort William Bid

The Chief Executive provided the Board with feedback from tenants in relation to participating in the Fort William Bid and agreed to abstain from the process.

iii. **Shiel Buses** *The detail within this report has been deemed to be commercially sensitive and is therefore, not available to the public at this time*

iv. NHS Lease

The Chief Executive provided the Board with information in relation to the lease arrangements we have with NHH for two properties. NHH had requested a further 5-year extension on the lease which is due to expire on 31st March 2025.

The Board **discussed** and **agreed**.