

**LOCHABER HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING
HELD BY MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON THURSDAY 17th FEBRUARY 2022 AT 6.30PM**

Present: Rosemary Bridge
May Tosh
Jacqui Wight
Di Alexander
Jenni Hodgson
Denis Rixson
Andrew Carr (Chairperson)
Moira MacVicar

In attendance: Sean Doherty, Asset Manager
Margaret Moynihan, Chief Executive
Jenny MacKay, Customer Services Manager
Christine Morrison, Finance Coordinator
Brian Pearson, Housing Services Coordinator
Ronnie MacRae, CHT (Part Meeting)
Fiona Sorley, CHT (Part Meeting)

1. Apologies

Apologies have been received from Cameron Bauer.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Declaration of Interest report was **approved**, it was also **noted** that Denis Rixson would leave the meeting while the full Development report was discussed and be invited to re-join when this item was concluded.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 16th December 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2021 were **approved**.

4. Matters Arising from Minutes of Meeting held on 16th December 2021

(i) Housing Needs Report

The Chief Executive presented a progress report relating to the proposed Housing Needs Survey.

The working group together with Linda Ewart met in January to enable a draft brief to be produced.

The brief has now been circulated to the working group for comment and will be brought to the full Board in March, although it is anticipated that the working group may need to meet in advance of the meeting.

The Board **noted** the report.

(ii) Smoke Alarms – Shared Ownership Properties

The Asset Manager updated the board on the communications with our sharing owners regarding their responsibilities regarding the installation of smoke alarms including information provided by SFHA who had sought legal advice on this matter. The Asset Manager also reported that LHAPS had provided prices for installation of the smoke alarms should this service be required. Our insurance company have also been kept fully informed of all communications with our sharing owners including the legal advice from the SFHA.

(iii) Dynamis – Update on heating installations and solar panels

The Asset Manager updated the Board on the progress made by Dynamis whilst carrying out the installation of new heating system and PV Solar Panels.

The Board were informed that Dynamis had completed eighteen heating systems installations with minor works outstanding at some of the properties. Survey for the installs had recommenced with ten properties to complete over the next two weeks.

Solar PV installations have finished at various locations across Lochaber with a total of sixty installs completed with another three properties installed but waiting to get commissioned. Surveys have resumed and installations had resumed at the beginning of February.

The Board **noted** the update.

(iv) EVH Salaries Ballot

The Board were advised that EVH had not yet provided any further update to the pay negotiations. For the purpose of budgeting the October CPI figure of 4.2% has been assumed in the draft budget.

The Board **noted** the report.

5. Rent Review

The Housing Services Co-ordinator presented a report which outlined the consultation process that had taken place through a letter and leaflet issued to all tenants in December, as well as detailing the responses received from tenants. The report also provided information in relation to the affordability of the rent increases which were consulted on, confirming they met both the affordability test within our Rent Policy and the affordability tool available to us from SFHA. The report also provided information on the rent increases being proposed and/or agreed by other housing associations in the Highlands and Islands.

The Board were reminded that the decision had been made in December to deviate from our rent policy to also consult with tenants using the CPI figure from September (3.1%) plus 0.8% which gave an overall increase of 3.9%.

The Board considered the report noting that the majority who had responded had favoured the option of a 3.9% increase.

The Board **approved** a 3.9% rent increase for 22/23 which would be implemented from 1st April 2022.

6. Revised/New Policies

CCTV Policy

The Board **considered** and **approved** the CCTV policy for use at the Unit at Blar Mhor.

7. **Authority to Evict**

The Board **considered** and **approved** the eviction action for case CA179.

8. **Audit & Governance Sub-Committee Recommendations**

The Minutes of the Audit & Governance Sub-Committee meeting held on 18th November 2021 were approved.

- (i) The Board **noted** & **approved** the new process for measuring compliance against the Regulatory Standards.
- (ii) The Board **noted** and **approved** the Draft Budget for 22/23.
- (iii) The Board **approved** the Bad Debt Write off.
- (iv) The Board **approved** the LHA Quarterly Management Accounts to 31/12/2021.
- (v) The Board **approved** the update of authorised signatories.
- (vi) The Board **noted** the Annual Declarations of Interest report.
- (vii) The Board **noted** the Quarterly Management Accounts to 31/12/2021 for (A) LHAPS and (B) LCR.
- (viii) The Board **noted** the Covenant report and the Treasury Management Update.
- (ix) The Board **noted** the Quarterly Compliance Return.
- (x) The Audit & Governance Sub Chair explained that discussions at both Subsidiary Board meetings would require a slight reformatting of the register to encompass comments, the register would also be updated to include reference to the Lochaber Affordable Warmth scheme. The Board **noted** the Risk Register and subsequent actions.

9. **Maintenance & Estate Management Programme – update quarter three**

The Asset Manager presented the quarterly report detailing the maintenance and estate management programme for quarter three.

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

10. **Health & Safety of Properties**

The Asset Manager presented a new report to the Board which detailed our compliance with health and safety legislation for our properties.

The report would also allow the Board to have improved assurance that the Association was meeting the regulatory framework requirements.

The Board **noted** the report.

11. **Development Report**

Fiona Sorley and Ronnie MacRae of the Communities Housing Trust jointly presented the development report.

The focus for the CHT remained the sites at Tigh Aran, Strontian, Mallaig and Rankin Crescent. Ronnie detailed the progress on all four sites and explained that the CHT had gone to higher levels of authority to progress and was hopeful that we were now reaching conclusions on three of the four sites with the Mallaig site remaining problematic.

The CHT confirmed that our problems with development were not unique to the Association with others experiencing difficulties.

The consultation on the MPF4 – planning framework was welcomed, and it was hoped that “ground rules” for development could be fed in following recent experiences.

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

12. Performance

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

13. Tri-annual survey – interim report

The Housing Services Co-ordinator gave an interim report relating to the collection of data from our tenants during the Tri-annual survey.

The format for the process had changed with all staff contacting tenants, we had hoped to match the 56% return from 2019 and were currently sitting at a 49% return. Early indications had seen a small percentage drop in areas although this could be in part contributed to covid and rising costs.

The Board **noted** that a full detailed report will be presented in March.

14. SFHA Social Housing Fuel Fund

The Housing Services Co-ordinator presented a report which detailed our successful application to the SFHA Scottish Social Housing Fuel Support Fund for £40,700 and our priorities for the dissemination of the funds.

The Board **noted** the report.

15. Board Appraisal 2022

The Customer Services Manager advised the Board that we were about to commence the appraisal process which would follow the same process as last year, minus the observation of members at a Board meeting.

Following the collation of the data SHARE would present a report to the Board in May.

The Board **noted** the appraisal process for 2022

16. A.O.C.B

(i) Additional Board meeting

The Board **noted** that the next meeting will be held on the 17th of March and the agenda would include; the IT tender and the Housing Needs report and a report from LHAPS on increased costs.

(ii) In person Board meetings

The Board **agreed** that a return to in person meetings would be beneficial and officers would consider how this could be done with a possible first meeting in May.

(iii) EESSH versus Fuel Poverty

The Board had an open discussion around our commitment to the Carbon Neutral agenda and to supporting our tenants withstand the high cost of energy.

The Association has previously been removing fireplaces when a property is void, however we still had one hundred properties with coal fires. While removal supports the EESSH standard we know that tenants can source more affordable coal/wood to heat their homes.

The Board **agreed** to the Association should for the short term have a more flexible approach to the removal of fireplaces and would review a more detailed report on the subject at the Board meeting in May.