

**MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEST HIGHLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION, HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2008 AT 10.00 A.M. IN THE BOARD ROOM, CRANNOG LANE OBAN.**

**1.00 PRESENT**

**ACTION**

Kenneth MacColl (Chairperson)  
Murray Sim,  
Stuart Moir  
Councillor Gordon Chalmers  
Gwyneth Neal  
Margaret Smith  
Mary Morrison  
Duncan MacKenzie  
Cherilynn Duffield  
Ian Gillies

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Lesley McInnes, Chief Executive  
May Tosh, Corporate Services Manager

**2.00 APOLOGIES**

Tony Cave  
Elaine Robertson  
Barbara Milne  
Councillor Robin Currie

**3.00 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

Stuart Moir asked if the report on EVH could be taken under any other business. The Chief Executive had two items of other business – one relating to the biomass scheme at Glenshellach and the second in relation to information on evictions.

**Meeting**

**4.00 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5.00 CORPORATE SERVICES**

**5.01 Information for Rent Increase and Budget 2009/10**

The Corporate Services Manager presented the rent increase report and the budget. Firstly, the CSM explained that the budget was presented to illustrate what the expenditure levels would be for 2009/10. This was broadly taken from the Business Plan. The assumptions and information were carefully discussed by Committee.

On the rent increase then the proposal was 5.2% [October RPI + 1%]. It was noted that RPI would reduce in November and December but all were reminded that the Association historically have used the October RPI. There was discussion ranging from:

- **Affordability**

All round the table were conscious that it was a low wage area. The Chief Executive explained that this was certainly an issue but in terms of what people in the private sector were paying then it was true that mortgage interest was reducing but for new deals mortgages are only available for people who have a substantial deposit. The average rent was still below what people would pay in other sectors ie the private sector or by buying a property.

- **What other Association's are doing?**

The Chief Executive did not have knowledge of the whole sector but Lochaber were proposing a higher than RPI + 1% increase, FYNE had changed the way the pointing system worked which meant their increase would effectively be higher than RPI + 1% and Dunbritton were looking at an RPI + 1%.

- **What were the options available?**

There were limited options available to the Association at the present time. The Business Plan calculations are based on an RPI + 2% increase. However, given the environment and the threat of deflation the 1% increase will make a significant difference in the income levels. There was a need for the Association to take time out to revisit the rents in terms of pointing and to seriously look at affordability and work could start on this in the next year. However, this will send a signal to the lenders and other stakeholders about our seriousness in dealing with our cost structure.

In addition the Officers were recommending some additional pointing measures to deal with renewable energy like geo-thermal and solar power. The report explained

After discussion the Committee agreed to consult:

- on an RPI + 1% rent increase;
- capping the additional increase;
- additional points for solar and geothermal;
- service charges charged at cost

**MT**

This was proposed by Murray Sim and seconded by Duncan MacKenzie.

## **5.02 Committee Governance Development**

The Chief Executive introduced this report and explained this followed up on previous reports and a meeting with Carol Paton held in September. This work was extremely important as an area for risk for the Association was governance and committee development. The Chair felt this was an important development for the Committee as it moves to a more strategic way of working.

After discussion the Committee agreed to appoint Carol Paton, **LMcl** proposed by the Chair [Ken MacColl] and seconded by Murray Sim.

**ACTION**

### 5.03 Home Argyll

The Chief Executive introduced this report as a follow up to one that had been discussed at the Housing Management and Customer Services Meeting. She explained that there appeared to have been some misunderstanding of the report.

There was no change to Home Argyll all that was being asked was for formal approval to sign up to the partnership agreement. Some concerns expressed at the Committee were about the option of setting up a separate organisation. The report puts the situation in context. Stuart Moir explained that he was very unhappy at the thought of this becoming a bureaucratic, costly separate organisation. The Chief Executive reiterated that this was the most simple situation and was the least bureaucratic. She confirmed she had spoken with Tony Cave who was unable to attend this meeting but his points were raised and included below. Essentially this was simply a written agreement between the Associations so that there was a clear understanding of the principles of Home Argyll. The matter was further unpicked with the Chief Executive reassuring them that this did not mean a separate organisation and all decisions would still be taken by individual Associations.

The Committee suggested that the following points be made to the group:

- They wanted it to be quite clear that policy decisions and budgetary decisions remained with the individual RSL's;
- The issue of Steering Group Decision Making – it was felt worthy of making the point that votes should not be the norm. Just in a similar way that they are not the norm within other organisations. If there was voting all the time that would be an indication that the partnership was not working;
- In terms of the dispute resolution the Committee felt that it would be better to do this independently as opposed to through the Strategic Housing and Communities Forum.

LMcl

The Committee approved the report, proposed by Margaret Smith and seconded by Murray Sim.

### 5.04 Salary Negotiation 2009/10

This was discussed under Private and Confidential Business.

The Meeting

### 5.05 Update on Dunbeg

As at the previous meeting West Highland Rural Solutions had ceased working on Dunbeg due to the problems with the land. A meeting had been held with all partners which had been positive and a meeting had also been held with the private developer that had also been positive. It was noted that West Highland Rural Solutions would meet in the New Year to prepare a report for West Highland Housing Association.

CEO

ACTION

## **5.06 Public Holidays 2009/10 and Options for the Future**

The Committee discussed the public holidays and the options for changing the public holidays, save for Christmas, New Year and Easter, and adding these holidays to our holiday entitlement. This would mean the office would be open for an extra 6 days. The Committee broadly agreed the proposal although they were concerned about office cover. The Chief Executive confirmed this was always an issue with small staff groups but this was not a reason not to do this.

The Committee also considered closing the office for staff training for an hour on Wednesday. All thought this was a sensible suggestion particularly as the office no longer closed at 4pm.

The Committee approved:

- The public holidays included within the holiday entitlement;
- The office closing for an hour on Wednesday morning

**LMcl/CSM**

This was proposed by Gordon Chalmers and seconded by Murray Sim.

## **5.07 Biomass**

The Association circulated a late report and explained that the reason for this was giving the Committee the most up to date information on the biomass. This report followed on from previous reports that the Committee had considered all asking for payment of £46,000 to cover the deficit. There had been a general presentation by Vital on the 11<sup>th</sup> December.

Cheryl Duffield felt her questions had not been fully answered and she was still convinced her heating was expensive. The Chair, prompted by other Members, reminded Committee Members that the meeting was not about individual problems and it would probably be sensible if the two tenants from Glenshellach took no further part in the discussion in case there was a potential conflict.

The Committee were aware that the room for manoeuvre was limited and the problem needed addressed. It was agreed to pay the £46,000 and seek to recover this money from Vital through looking to extend the scheme to the hospital or making the scheme run more economically.

This was proposed by Murray Sim and seconded by Stuart Moir.

## **5.08 Evictions**

The Chief Executive reported on the need for approval for two evictions one on an island location and one in Oban. Both evictions would be at Court in January and had followed the rent policy and procedures. There was no reason to assume the Sheriff would not

agree this action. Committee asked about the level of arrears and whether there were any children involved. The Chief Executive

**ACTION**

explained that one arrear presently was £2320 and the other was £3050. Both were sole occupants of the property and housing benefit was not the cause of the arrear. The Committee were surprised at the size of the arrears but the Chief Executive explained that in one case this was due to a problem with the Court system and in the second case there had been a number of issues with Housing Benefit and also ensuring that the case was heard at Court. **CEO**

The Committee noted this.

**6.00 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**6.01 Management Committee held on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

These minutes were approved by Stuart Moir and seconded by Murray Sim.

**6.02 Health and Safety Sub Committee held on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

The minutes were proposed by Margaret Smith and seconded by Duncan MacKenzie.

In addition the Committee approved the policy on Drug and Alcohol Misuse that had been discussed in detail at the Health and Safety meeting.

**7.00 NEW MEMBERS**

There were no new Members since the last meeting.

**8.00 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

Dealt with under the main agenda.

**9.00 PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

**9.01 MINUTES OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2008**

These minutes were approved by Gwyneth Neal and seconded by Duncan MacKenzie.

**10.00 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

**The above Minutes were read and agreed as a true record of the meeting.**

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....

