

MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEST HIGHLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION, HELD ON 28th MARCH 2008 AT 10.00 A.M. IN THE BOARD ROOM, CRANNOG LANE OBAN.

- 1.00 PRESENT** **ACTION**
Kenneth MacColl, Chair
Murray Sim
Mary Morrison
Duncan MacKenzie
Councillor Robin Currie
Elaine Robertson
Barbara Milne
Councillor Gordon Chalmers
- IN ATTENDANCE**
Lesley McInnes, Chief Executive
May Tosh, Corporate Services Manager
Gregor Cameron, Project Director
- 2.00 APOLOGIES**
Tony Cave
Stuart Moir
- 3.00 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**
The Chief Executive explained that there were a number of items that she wanted considered:
- Potential additional spend [report tabled]
 - Loan
 - Membership
 - Eviction
- 4.00 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
It was noted that the donation to the Oban Charitable Trust was being discussed and both Ken MacColl and Murray Sim were members of the Oban Charitable Trust.
- 5.00 CHIEF EXECUTIVE**
The Chief Executive asked the Committee to note her apologies for the last meeting where there was a fairly fraught discussion in relation to car parking. Her concern was to guide the Committee appropriately particularly with regard to this matter but it could have been handled more delicately.
- The Committee in response acknowledged the difficulties and appreciated the Chief Executive's explanation.
- 5.01 HAG Consultation**
The paper before the Committee was thoroughly discussed with the Committee keenly questioning the potential implications for development in this area. The Chief Executive explained that the SFHA had done much

work and they were showing that whilst HAG would reduce by around 10% private finance will increase by over 30%. This will have implications on rents and particularly affordability in this area. All accepted the need for efficiency but there were concerns about the overall effect this may have on future developments. It would mean that the procurement agenda was being pursued in a number of ways and the issue of lead developer could be pursued in this way as well.

**Chief
Executive**

The Committee agreed broad response provided by the Chief Executive.

5.02 Governance

The Chief Executive presented this report. This is the first time this has been presented in this format but was something that would be done from now on at the end of the financial year. It was purely to ensure that there was a clear and full record produced that the Committee and Staff could look at holistically at the end of the year. Some matters had been reported during the year.

A question was asked in relation to the repairs done for Committee Members. The Chief Executive explained that these were all done within responsive repairs and therefore no benefit could be seen to be accrued. These were simply noted for transparency.

The Committee noted this report.

5.03 Policy and Procedures Review

This was to continue our work on the development of our policies. It was noted that in some cases work was in line with the timetable but in the case of Development there were concerns expressed that the timetable had not been met. The Committee acknowledged that there had been substantial work but it was important that these were progressed. The Chief Executive agreed with the Committee and the policies that were outstanding would be discussed at the first sub-committees in May.

**Staff
Team**

The Committee noted this report.

5.04 Internal Management Plan

The Chief Executive presented the report. She noted that good progress had been made on many of the areas but there was still work to go. Last year due to timescales there had been limited involvement in formulating the plan and the Chief Executive was keen to ensure that everyone – staff and committee – had the opportunity to input. The Committee agreed that the evening of the 16th April would be an appropriate date. The Chief Executive agreed to send out some information on the Internal Management Planning pre the meeting.

**Staff and
Committee**

5.05 West Highland Rural Solutions

The Chief Executive explained that under Articles 9 and 10 of West Highland Rural Solutions, West Highland Housing Association has to formally approve new members. John McMillan and Murdoch Gatward had

been approached. John McMillan had agreed to serve and WHRS were hopeful that Murdoch would also serve. The Committee were aware of the importance of this and unanimously approved both people to serve on WHRS.

This was moved for approval by Murray Sim and seconded by Barbara Milne.

5.06 Membership

There was a verbal update to be given by the Chief Executive and there was also a report to be tabled at the meeting where Committee were asked to consider applications for membership.

On the report the Committee agree to both people becoming Members of the Association.

This was moved for approval by Murray Sim and seconded by Duncan Mackenzie.

As part of the verbal update the Chief Executive confirmed she was meeting both people who had been suggested for Committee Members. Both people had shown an interest and she was hopeful that they would be in attendance at the meeting in May. The Chief Executive also indicated that the two people who had just applied for membership – both tenants – had also expressed an interest. In terms of the general criteria then both fitted discussed at previous meetings. The Chief Executive would be meeting with them to ascertain interest. The Committee agreed that if they were interested they should be co-opted for the next meeting.

5.07 Additional Spend

The Chief Executive tabled a report on additional spend. The report explained that in discussions with Communities Scotland had suggested there would be more spend at the end of the financial year but the situation was very fluid and was changing on a day to day basis indeed the Association was speaking with CS today on this matter.

The main issue was that the Officers were asking the Association to agree to forward fund £850,000 of acquisitions with the money for these acquisitions either coming in pre the end of the financial year or in the financial year 2008/09. There was a risk but this was a containable risk given that the land could be resold. There was discussion particularly about the timing and in relation to risk but the Committee accepted that these actions would secure a strong land bank.

This was moved for approval by Elaine Robertson and seconded by Robin Currie.

6.00 CORPORATE SERVICES

6.01 Annual Budget 2008/09

The Corporate Services Manager presented the report on the budget. The main point to highlight was that for the first year the budget was showing a deficit due to the monies for planned maintenance. Other changes were reflected in the notes and were as much about the increase in the Association's properties over the past year. There were no surprises and the main areas were in line with what had been produced through the Association's Business Plan. The Committee asked about decreasing Committee Training particularly at a time that we were expanding the Committee. In response, this budget head had always been underspent but staff recognised the importance of this. The Committee also indicated their desire to return to the Chief Executive's idea of scrutinising areas of the budget over the financial year.

This was moved for approval by Barbara Milne and seconded by Duncan Mackenzie.

6.02 Charitable Donation

The Chair and Murray Sim declared an interest as they served on the Oban Charitable Trust.

The Committee considered the report and Elaine Robertson explained that her view was that the Association should continue with this work but seek to ensure that the good work was recognised. A donation of over £10,000 was substantial and whilst the Oban Charitable Trust should be commended equally the Association should receive credit.

**Corporate
Services
Manager**

The Committee agreed a donation of £10,500 and this was moved for approval by Duncan Mackenzie and seconded by Elaine Robertson.

6.03 Loan with the Dunfermline

The Corporate Services Manager explained that there were a number of small loans that required formal approval. The Committee had approved the Dunfermline for the Homestake properties and also as the lender for Tiree. It was recommended that the Association also include the two properties at Dalavich within this loan. The quotes from the Dunfermline were at + 0.38% above the margin which given the present climate was competitive.

This was moved for approval by Murray Sim and seconded by Barbara Milne.

7.00 HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

7.01 Car Parking

The Chair suggested that work was presently ongoing on this area. There was some other work that needed to be tidied up regarding signage and also there needed to be time given for the monitoring exercise presently being carried out by staff.

This was agreed by the Committee.

7.02 Mutual Exchange Policy

The Chief Executive presented the policy and the Committee unanimously approved the policy.

7.03 Eviction

The Chief Executive explained that there was a serious issue in respect of moving towards an eviction. A tenant had been convicted of drug dealing and there were rent arrears as well as issues in relation to the tenancy. It was rare but the Chief Executive was recommending that the Committee give approval to move for eviction given the very specific circumstances in relation to this. There was some discussion about the matter but the Committee accepted that there should be a zero tolerance approach to drug dealing particularly when it was serious enough to warrant a conviction of a jail sentence. The timescales were not necessarily going to be quick but the Chief Executive wanted freedom for Officers to deal with this matter as quickly as the law allowed.

**Housing
and
Customer
Services**

A further possible eviction was also recorded with a person, with the months rent, going to be in arrears of £885. Some questions were asked in relation to the circumstances and the Chief Executive explained that this person had previously been nearly evicted on several occasions for not paying rent. There was a pattern that the person paid at the last possible minute. The Association is chasing the person for outstanding court debt as well.

Duncan Mackenzie moved that these be approved with Mary Morrison seconding the motion.

8.00 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

8.01 Maintenance Programme

The Committee carefully considered the report. Obviously the emphasis was ensuring that the work started in the year and both High Street and Kiel Gardens appeared priorities. The Committee noted that the costs for Kiel Gardens had increased since the initial costs considered but this was due to including more work particularly window replacement. The Chief Executive demonstrated the rental capture for these properties and clearly both Kiel Gardens and High Street made a substantial contribution to the rental income.

**Technical
Services**

The Committee wanted to further consider Burnside, Connel – simply to ensure that there were no other options available. In respect of the properties in Luing the staff would return with a report dealing specifically with the issues in relation to these properties.

9.00 CORRESPONDENCE

9.01 Housing Matters

Attached to the papers were Stuart Maxwell's address to the CiH and also information on the new Housing Regulator.

9.02 Homestake Session

Anyone interested in attending this session on 25th April should contact Ruby Campbell.

10.00 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

10.01 Management Committee meeting held on 29th February 2008

The Minutes were proposed for approval by Murray Sim and seconded by Barbara Milne.

11.00 STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

I would like to confine this to a statement. I ask that members indulge me on this occasion

I can't and I won't limit discussion if that is what anyone wants but before anyone speaks out I warn that if we go down that route we will almost inevitably start a process that would end in disciplinary procedures and I am anxious not to go there.

At the last Management Committee Meeting we discussed an application to join this Committee. Discussion was fairly frank and the decision of the Committee was clearly not to accept this application.

The following week the person was in the office and discussing this matter with a member of staff. That staff member had not been at the meeting and knew nothing of what had happened at the meeting. It was clear that the person had information about the decision of the Committee and about some who had spoken in favour of his application and others who had spoken against.

I don't think I need spell out that it is absolutely essential that the deliberations of the Management Committee are confidential and that it is only in a state of mutual trust that the members of the Committee can operate effectively and with confidence.

The Committee all felt incidents of this type were regrettable and if issues of confidence were broken again then these should be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

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

Signed:

Date: