

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2023 at 6.30p.m.
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE ASSOCIATION'S OFFICES

1. SEDERUNT

PRESENT:	P. Waddell (Chairperson), D. Barnes, A. Cushingam, F. Lavery R. Hartness (Co-optee), c. Harvey – Zoom, D. McNulty – Zoom
IN ATTENDANCE:	K. Mollins – Director, J. Meechan – Interim Housing Manager N. Smith – Business Improvement Officer. F. Nicholl – FMD Finance
Apologies:	J. Gracey, M. Davidson, C. Cooper
Leave of absence:	None

2. MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

a) 25 October 2023

i) Minute

The minutes of the Management Committee meeting on 27 September 2023 were approved by D. Barnes and seconded by a. Cushingam.

ii) Matters Arising:

a) Page 7, Agenda Item 7 – Committee Performance Reviews

The Director confirmed the pro-formas for the annual Committee Performance Reviews would be issued to members this week for completion by 12 January 2024. The Chairperson, supported by SE Training will convene meetings with members in January / February 2024

b) Page 8, Agenda Item 8 – Business Plan Away Day

The Director advised he would convene a session with Committee on the development of the Governance Delivery Plan within the Operational Plan 2024-25, as well as cover the review of the Corporate Risk Register 2024-25.

There was discussion on the options and it was agreed the Director would e-mail all members to assess their availability and preferred venue for a session in February 2024

There were no matters arising.



b) Master Tracker

The Director presented the progress report on the Master Tracker from the meeting in September 2023 and advised there had been good progress with achievement of many tasks on the Master Tracker. He highlighted to the Management Committee progress with key tasks:

i. Deposit of Cash Reserves

All the information has been uploaded to Barclay's portal and the transaction should be completed in December 2023.

ii. Veranda Project

There has been slippage with the veranda project, specifically to arrange a meetings with Windoor and to develop the list of requirements to inform the design options. This is being progressed by the Director / Maintenance Manager with the aim to liaise with Windoor and present draft design options to the Committee in January 2024.

iii. Self Delivered Repairs Service

There is good progress to develop the in-house repairs service for a go live date of 4 March 2024. The key milestones are due for completion between December – March 2024.

The Management Committee raised the following queries or questions in relation to the Master Tracker.

- A Committee member asked about the reason for the delay in the development of the Veranda Project. The Director outlined the timeline following the Committee approval for the window design option in August, firstly for window to visit the offices and secondly the delay in developing the list of requirements.
- A Committee member asked if there were any other consultants we could use to develop the list of requirements. The Director advised he would liaise with Windoor and this could be attended to in-house.

The Committee noted the content of the report.

3. MEETING OF AUDIT & FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE – 20 NOVEMBER 2023

i) Minute

The minutes of Audit & Finance sub-Committee is for information only.



ii) Matters Arising:

a) Recommendations

The Director advised the Management Committee the Audit and Finance sub-Committee had made the following recommendations to the Management Committee:

- i) A budget of £30k for essential upgrade of the I.T servers and renewal of desktop computers;
- ii) A budget of £8.6k for the 'My Home' portal within our SDM housing system;

The Committee raised the following queries or questions in relation to the recommendations to create a budget for I.T upgrades and improvements

- A Committee member commented on the 'My Home' portal and had seen a demonstration at the SFHA Finance Conference and was impressed stating it would provide tenants with greater access to the service

The Committee approved the funding for inclusion in the Annual Budget 2023-24 for the upgrade and improvements to the IT systems and SDM Housing.

There were no other matters arising.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND NOTIFIABLE EVENTS

It was noted that Committee and staff will declare an interest as follows:

Staff Members would leave the meeting for agenda for the following agenda Items:

- Agenda Item 11 – Implementation of the Staff Structure.
- Agenda Item 16 – Staffing Matters

Notifiable Events - The Director confirmed there was one notifiable event on-going, which was the review of the Staff Structure.

5. HOUSING MANAGEMENT QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT- SEPTEMBER 2023

The Housing Manager presented her quarterly performance and progress report on the housing management service and highlighted the following:

- There was a slight increase in rent arrears, mainly due to a reduction in rent in Q2.
- The Income Maximise Strategy will be issued to the Committee in January 2024.

- The Factoring Written Statement of Service has been finalised in conjunction with our Solicitors and will be presented to the Committee in January 2024
- There has been a reduction in factoring arrears and the housing team are attending to 3 high arrears cases. The Allpay account for the Factoring service has been set up and payment cards will be issued to all factored owners,
- Void rent loss is generally within target, although the average time is 31 calendar days to re-let properties.
- There continues to be low level of anti-social behaviour complaints.
- There were 155 new cases to the welfare rights service with backdated benefits of £17,795 and financial gains of £124,370.
- The Wise Group supported 54 tenants with energy matters, specifically with fuel vouchers, meter changes and mentoring services.
- The report provided an overview of successful grant claims to support tenants and residents with the cost of living crisis. She stated there was a successful application from Cycling Scotland for new bikes, equipment and storage for ERA.
- The Housing Manager commented on the Welfare Reform Mitigation Plan and reaffirmed good progress with financial support service. She also highlighted the impending review of Allocation Policy.

The Committee raised the following queries or questions in relation to the quarterly performance report for the housing management service.

- A Committee member asked about the reasons for the high turnover of voids and average time to re-let. The Housing Manager advised there had been 6 voids due to the tenant being deceased and the policy allowed their family 2 weeks to clear the property, which impacted on performance.
- There was discussion about the Wise Group service and 5 tenants being declined for the Home Heating Support. It was highlighted by a member this could be due to criteria for this service. The Housing Manager will discuss this with the Wise Group.

The Committee noted the content of the report.

6. RENT, MANAGEMENT FEE & ESTATE SERVICE INCREASE 2024-25

The Housing Manager presented her report on the proposed increase to rent, factoring management fee and highlighted the following:

Rent

- The organisation has a duty to consult with tenants on any proposed rent increase with a notification period of 28 days and is also required to consult with factored owners in relation to management fees.



- In addition to the usual considerations such as business planning, the Housing Manager advised that there are other factors that require to be considered prior to taking a decision on any proposed increase:
 1. **Business Plan** includes provision for inflation plus 1% increase, which would be 5.6% based on October's inflation rate. The additional 1% was to fund improvements to tenants' homes across the 30 year plan.
 2. **Inflation:** Members were informed inflation was 4.6% in October 2023, but has been higher throughout the year. The business has seen rising costs in maintenance services and improvements, staff salaries,, etc associated with economic climate.
 3. **EVH salaries:** EVH and Unite are negotiating the staff salary increase for 2024-25.
 4. **Affordability:** The report showed the findings of the Residents Satisfaction where tenants' views on the affordability of rents had reduced to 43% in 2023 compared to 51% in 2019 finding it **easy** to afford. 97.3% of tenant stated their rent was affordable. The Housing Manager confirmed she will conduct a review of affordability in 2024-25.
 5. **Viability:** FMD have assessed various options of 5,6 and 7% increases aligned to inflation and expenditure in the Association. The report outlines the financial position of these increases, as well as lower increases of 3 and 4%, which would result in deficit years in the 30 year plan
 6. **Comparability** - The report compares our proposed rent increase to inform consultation with our tenants with neighbouring and sector associations. It is generally comparable, although at this stage many associations are currently presenting this information to their tenants.

Factoring Management Fee

- The Association provides a factoring management service to owner-occupiers, which covers staffing costs, accounting and invoicing, postage and stationery and property factoring registration costs.
- FMD have undertaken an assessment of our costs and there has been a historical shortfall in management costs charged to owner-occupiers.
- The report covers comparability of Management Fees with neighbouring association and the Association has the lowest fee.
- The proposed increase for 2024-25 is £9.50 per owner-occupier, which equates to a 8.5% increase.

Estate Management Services & Close Cleaning

- The Association provides a range of services for the upkeep and maintenance of backcourts, closes, common areas, which are recharged to owner-occupiers
- The increase is generally aligned to the staff salary increase due to the works being undertaken by the Estate Caretakers, although include other running costs.
- There are 3 charges to owners and the variances relate to stock type.
- The proposal is to consult on a 6% increase, which should cover the staff salary increase and other costs.

The Management Committee raised the following comments or questions:

- A Committee member asked about the chart on the average rent increases based on consultation options and highlighted some tenants will have a higher rent and increase. The Housing Manager agreed and stated this was a guide to show the Committee the level of monetary increase for each % option (5%, 6% & 7%)
- A Committee member referred to the affordability of the rent increase where tenants were on low incomes and were struggling with the cost of living, although also aware of the need for the Association to be financially viable.
- A Committee member highlighted that inflation was an average increase of a range of costs in the year and the Association's experience would vary depending on its costs e.g. staff salary increase, maintenance costs.
- There was discussion on the options that were aligned to the timescale for the replacement of property components. The Director confirmed this would be fully assessed from the findings of the stock condition survey and whether the costs could be funded within the 30 year plan for current replacement timescales for major repairs. The Association may have to vary the timescales, which would align to tenants' choice on the rent increase to fund major repairs
- A Committee member asked if the cost of the stock condition survey would reflect current and future costs for these works. The Director confirmed the company will include current market rates based on labour and material charges for each component, which will be uplifted based on assumptions of inflation.
- A Committee member asked when the consultation would be undertaken with tenants and owner-occupiers. The Housing Manager confirmed it would be undertaken in January 2022 with the final report presented to the Committee in February 2024.

After consideration, the Management Committee gave 'in principle' agreement for the following to inform consultation with tenants and owner-occupiers:

Tenants

- Proposed rent increase 2024-25 options 5%; 6% and 7%

Owner - Occupiers

- Proposed factoring management fee increase 2024-25: 8.5%
- Proposed increase on estates charge for 2024-25: 6%

7. RENT DECREE REPORT – TENANT REFERENCE 00134

The Housing Manager presented her report on the implementation of a rent decree against tenant number 00134 due to non-payment of rent and highlighted the following:

- Balance owing by tenant to end of October 2023 is £3,078



- The decree was awarded due to non-payment of rent and took account of our pre-action requirements to mitigate the action
- The Association secured a decree for non-payment of rent in 2022 against the tenant. At that time the tenant paid the arrears in full, but not court costs.
- An overview of the Eviction Ban, where the Association could not execute the decree until after 28 December 2023.
- Details of the legal action and advice from our Solicitors, where we were not advised we could have raised an Incidental Application to increase the amount owed from the initial notice to the court calling date. This prevented the enforcement of the decree at an earlier stage and increase rent arrears.

The Committee decided the tenant should be evicted due to non-payment of rent.

J. Meechan left the meeting

8. MAINTENANCE SERVICE QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT- SEPTEMBER 2023

The Director presented the Maintenance Manager's quarterly performance and progress report on the maintenance service and highlighted the following:

- Re-active repair spend was £31k underspent due to re-active repairs and stage 3 adaptations. The latter would be spent with claims from 2022-23;
- Cyclical spend for gas servicing, electrical inspections, gutter cleaning is generally on budget
- There is a £96K underspend in planned major repairs due to slippage in kitchens, bathrooms. The Association has developed the 'Easthall Standard' and a tender has been posted on PCS for the installation of kitchens and bathrooms.
- The repairs performance is good for emergency repairs at 92% complete on time, although there are challenges with non-emergencies due to the capacity of contractors. The performance of non-emergencies is 69% complete on time.
- All maintenance policies are up to date and the Asset Management Strategy will be developed following the assessment of the stock condition survey.

The Committee raised the following queries or questions in relation to the quarterly performance report for the maintenance service.

- The report to include:
 - Average response times for each category of work
 - Position statement on compliance works wither within the quarterly report or a separate report as outlined in the Annual Assurance Statement.

The Committee noted the content of the report.



9. REPORT ON MEMBERSHIP

The Business Improvement Officer presented her report and sought Committee approval for the memberships issued and cancelled.

- New Shares – Member Numbers 1496, 1497 and 1498
- Cancelled Shares – There were no cancelled shares

The Committee approved the report.

10. COMMITTEE SUCCESSION PLAN REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2023

The Director presented his report on progress against the Committee Succession Plan to September 2023 and highlighted the following:

- The progress to review its fully mutual status with the SGM and application made to the FCA register the new Rules in September 2023;
- The successful Committee mini-conference between 29 September – 1 October, which covered many areas of the Committee Training Plan
- Development of the Staff Structure Review sub-Committee.
- The recruitment of a new member at the AGM with the current membership being 10 members on the Management Committee.
- The Director proposed an advert be issued in the sector / community in January 2024 to recruit new members to the Management Committee

The Committee noted the content of the report

11. PROGRESS ON THE OPERATIONAL PLAN 2023-24 – SEPTEMBER 2023

The Director presented his report on progress against the Operational Plan 2023-24-September 2023 and outlined the following:

- There has been good progress against the work programme in quarter 2 as outlined in appendix 1. The main achievements in the period between July – September include the approval of the staff structure; progress to become a charitable housing association; review of governance, finance and service policies; review of the external audit contract; progress with the veranda project; and the development of the self delivered repairs service concept.
- Good progress in key areas of the performance scheduled (appendix 2), which were good performance in void management; low levels of anti-social behaviour; high tenancy sustainment; healthy financial position and loan covenant compliance..
- There are a few areas of slippage, these were review of policies; financial comparability and benchmarking; development of the arrears action plans.

- A few areas for improved performance included performance in compliance works to attend to EICR abeyances; and progress in cyclical and major repairs works.

The Committee raised the following queries or questions in relation to the Committee Succession Plan Report.

- A Committee member commented the report was comprehensive and clear on progress

The Committee noted the content of the report.

M. Finnie & J. Meechan left the meeting

13. COMMITTEE MINI-CONFERENCE – EVALUATION REPORT

The Director presented his report on the members' completed evaluation questionnaires on the Committee mini-conference, which covered the following:

- Members' views of individual training sessions, specifically scoring on the content and presentation, what they learned and what could have been improved;
- Members' views on the venue and service at the Holiday Inn;
- Member's views of the overall mini- conference
- The cost of the event, which averaged £662 per Committee member which is best value compared to sector conferences
- Members had a very positive response for the Mini-conference event to develop their knowledge, skills and team building with other members and the senior staff team.
- Members feel we should continue with the event in 2024, although another venue and date to suit all members.

:

The Committee raised the following queries or questions in relation to the Evaluation Report on the Committee Mini Conference.

- A Committee member referred to the positive and consistent feedback by members.
- The Committee commented on the need for a new venue and a review of the dates to maximise attendance at the conference.
- It was agreed a sub-group of P. Waddell and D. McNulty supported by N. Smith would meet in the New Year.

The Committee noted the content of the report.



14. REBRANDING OF EASTHALL PARK HOUSING ASSOCIATION

The Director referred to the achievement of becoming a charitable housing association and felt it was an opportunity to re-brand the Association.

The Committee raised the following queries or questions in relation to the proposed re-branding of the Association.

- A Committee member asked about the timescale for the re-branding and new logo. The Director confirmed he was keen to conclude this to inform new signage, merchandise, stationery and purchases associated with the charitable housing association status.

The Committee discussed the re-branding of the Association and delegated the Director to appoint a design company for a new logo and report to the Committee in Q4 of 2023-24.

15. HEALTH & SAFETY

The Director confirmed Health & Safety was a standing agenda item and there was no business for this meeting.

N. Smith left the meeting

10. IMPLEMENTATION OF STAFF STRUCTURE

a) Report on Progress Against Implementation Plan.

The Director presented his report on progress against the implementation plan to November 2023 and covered the following:

- An overview of the process and timeline for the review of the staff structure;
- The key areas of the Implementation Plan, which were:
 - The completion of new job descriptions and person specifications for each role in the staff structure,
 - The grading review exercise being conducted by EVH; which was completed on 17 November 2023
 - Consultation with staff affected by the review, which would recommence following the grading assessment by EVH and sign-off by the Staff Structure Review sub-Committee;
 - Recruitment of posts, which would commence in December 2023 with a phased approach; and
 - Communication with key stakeholders i.e. SHR, EVH, Unite and Staff.

The Director confirmed that the progress report would be issued to the SHR associated with the notifiable event for the Staff Structure Review.

The Committee noted the content of the report.

b) Minute of the Staff Structure Review Sub-Committee held on 27 November 2023

i. Minute

The minute of the Staff Structure Sub-Committee is for the Management Committee's information only.

ii. Matters Arising

- Grading of Posts

The Chairperson asked Committee to observe variations in the grading of posts by EVH compared to the Staff Structure Review Report. The Sub-Committee has proposed grades for posts to ensure best value, good recruitment outcomes, and development of roles.

The Management Committee discussed the grading of posts and were agreeable to the grading of posts

16. STAFFING MATTERS

a) Report on Flexible Working / Draft Flexible Working Policy

The Director presented his report on flexible working, which asked the Committee to consider for approval the EVH model policy on Flexible Working, as well as a pilot for hybrid working 1 day per week for a 12 month period

a) Flexible Working Policy

The Director presented the draft Flexible Working Policy and covered the following:

- The draft policy is based on EVH's model policy for members to ensure compliance with the legal framework on Flexible Working.
- Eligibility to apply for flexible working, although this will change with the new Flexible Working Regulations in 2024.
- Examples of flexible working arrangements.
- The procedure for attending to requests for flexible working.
- Responsibilities for employers and employees.



b) Pilot for Hybrid Working

The Director presented his report on a proposed pilot for hybrid working and covered the following:

- He referred to the Committee's decision on hybrid working in September 2023 to keep this under review to retain and recruit the best staff.
- He outlined the current interest in hybrid working within the staff team, where valued members had recently left the Association;
- He highlighted the impending recruitment to implement the staff structure and variances in applications to organisations operating hybrid working.
- The aim to be a landlord of choice, whilst ensuring a high quality and responsive service, which included set parameters for staff in the office; increased presence in the community and maintaining performance levels
- The advantages and disadvantages of hybrid working

The Committee raised the following comments and queries in relation to the Report and Draft Flexible Working Policy

- A Committee member commented on the importance of the Association being community based with a focus on our tenants and customers, although was open to new ways of working.
- A Committee spoke about the challenges associated with hybrid working e.g. communication and mental health. The Director advised the Committee he would discuss the communication with Stratiis in relation to the I.T improvements.
- There was discussion on the service arrangements for hybrid working options.

The Committee had a positive view of hybrid working and asked the Director to present a report on how this operate and monitored to ensure a high quality and responsive service to our tenants and customers, as well as meet the business needs.

b) Outcome of Staff Consultation

The Director confirmed he has consulted with staff on proposed changes to their terms and conditions i.e. the opportunity to work public holidays, except of the office is closed and a change to the calendar year for annual year.

The Director confirmed that all staff were agreeable to the proposed changes, which would be implemented as follows:

- Option to work on public holidays - 1 April 2024;
- Change to the calendar year for annual leave - 1 January 2025



The Committee raised the following comments and queries in relation to the outcome of staff consultation on the Terms & Conditions of Employment.

- A Committee asked how the Association will convert from the financial year to calendar year for annual leave. The Director confirmed the implementation date was January 2025, therefore staff would receive three quarters of their normal leave for the period April -December 2024 and then full entitlement for 2025.

The Committee agreed to the changes to the terms and conditions associated with working public holidays and the change to the calendar year for annual leave.

c) Report on Sickness Absence

The Director presented the bi-annual report on Sickness Absence and covered the following:

- The report outlined sickness absence by department and compared absence levels between 2023-24 and 2022-23;
- The % of sickness was 2.72% between April – September compared to 8.49% for the same period in in 2022-23;
- There were 29 days short term absence to September 2023 compared to September 2022 in 2022-23;
- There were no long term absences compared to 127 days to September 2022;
- 35% of staff had no absences; 71% of staff had an average of 2 days or less; and 29% had 3 or more days absence
- He highlighted a few areas for improvement in the management of sickness absence i..e improved reporting to staff to develop a positive culture; and a review of the Absence and Attendance Management Policy.

The Committee raised the following comments and queries in relation to the report on Sickness Absence:

- A Committee member asked if 2.72% of sickness absence was still high. The Director advised that 5% was generally seen as an acceptable level of absence and reaffirmed the significant improvement in attendance, which had a direct correlation with our improved performance and progress with the work programme.

The Committee noted the content of the report.



17. CORRESPONDENCE

a) EVH Member Details

The Director presented the E.V.H. schedule with information and contact details with the Association.

The Committee decided the Committee members who would be provided with information by EVH would be:

- P. Waddell - Chairperson
- D. Barnes – Vice Chairperson

There was no other correspondence.

18. CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

There was no confidential business

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Office Improvements

The Director presented a report on developing plans for improvements to the Association's office, specifically the reception and interview rooms.

He spoke about the current challenges with the office environment and proposed the appointment of an architect to develop plans and costings to relocate the reception area and provide new interview rooms and meeting space for our tenants.

The Committee raised the following comments and queries in relation to the report on Office improvements:

- A Committee member acknowledged the need for improvements to the Office, although highlighted the need for progress on planned major repairs to be undertaken to tenants' homes before these works were undertaken
- There was discussion on the current use of the room adjacent to the reception. The Director confirmed he had discussed this with ERA and they were agreeable to the proposed improvements.



- A Committee member asked the Director to clarify ownership of the room adjunct to the reception as it was historically used for the welfare rights service and the community bank. The Director will discuss this with ERA.

The Committee approved the recommendation to develop plans for office improvements and an allocation of £5k in the annual budget 2023-24

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Management Committee -

- Wednesday 31 January 2024 at 6.30p.m. on the Committee room in the Co-operative's office.

The Chairperson thanked members for their commitment and effort in the year and wished them a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Chairpersons Signature: _____

Date: _____