

**Minutes of the Board Meeting held on  
Wednesday 20 January 2021 at 6pm  
via Zoom video conferencing**

**Present:**

S. Gaunt - Chairperson (SG)  
J. Ayorinde  
K. Barker  
K. Clayton  
A. Edgar  
M. Flaherty  
E. Gotowicz  
H. Gracie  
F. Koroma  
M. Overthrow  
M. Smith

**In Attendance:**

A. McKee, Chief Executive (AM)  
N. Logan, Finance Director (NL)  
J. Murray, Housing Services Director (JM)  
D. Weir, Technical Director (DW)  
M. Hutcheson, Corporate Services Manager (part meeting)  
P. Bridges, Corporate Services Officer (Minutes)

**Service Improvement Group:**

William Irvine (WI) (part meeting)  
Liz Rice (part meeting)  
Margaret Gibson (part meeting)

**1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest** (including agenda item to which this refers)

**Apologies:**

Apologies were **noted** on behalf of Board Member A. Loudon.

The Board agreed to extend P. McGinlay MBE's leave of absence until the end of March 2021.

**Declarations of Interest:**

M. Smith declared an interest in Agenda Item 6(3) and will leave the meeting while this item is discussed.

## 2. Chairperson's Introduction to 2021

SG advised that the first formal mention of coronavirus had been at the Board meeting on 18 March 2020, adding that at that point we had no idea that we would still be dealing with the restrictions caused by the pandemic almost a year later. SG was pleased to note that Glen Oaks (and the housing sector in general) continues to do a fantastic job during this extraordinary year when housing and communities have been more important than ever. The Scottish Government wrote to housing associations recently expressing their deep gratitude to everyone working across the housing sector.

Referring to the funding report prepared by the Community Initiatives Manager, the Chairperson hoped that everyone at Glen Oaks shares his pride in the level of support we have given our tenants during the coronavirus crisis. SG applauded the work done across the entire Association and thanked everyone for their commitment and hard work. SG advised that the Association's focus during the coming year will remain on the pandemic and our response to it which will require a huge amount of time, effort and resources. SG is confident that Glen Oaks will continue to perform well under the continuing difficult circumstances.

The Chairperson then spoke about the Association moving forward with other items, e.g. the new development in Arden. Glen Oaks will also be celebrating its 30th Anniversary this year and SG hoped that it would be possible to organise an event later in the year to mark this occasion and also to thank tenants and staff for their support during the pandemic.

## 3. COVID-19 Update - verbal report

AM thanked the Chairperson for his introduction and the Board for their support throughout what has been a difficult year. AM commented that we will all continue to work as a team to do our best for our tenants.

AM updated the Board on the following items:

- **Furlough:** due to the current closure of schools and nurseries, 3 members of staff (one from each department) who have young children are being furloughed on a part-time basis.
- **Office:** in order to minimise the number of staff going into the office, it has been agreed that the office would only be open to staff 2 days per week (Tuesdays and Fridays). A Senior Officer will be present on each of those days with only a small number of staff in the office, e.g. to process essential repairs or arrange viewings.
- **Cleaning Staff:** to minimise the risk to our cleaners, it has been agreed that they will clean the office every Monday when no other members of staff will be in the building.

- **Staff Wellbeing:** AM updated the Board on the renewed focus on staff wellbeing this year in response to the additional pressures caused by the pandemic. It has been a difficult time for our staff who are faced with the difficulties of continuing to support our tenants while working from home. We are offering free yoga classes to staff and looking at other wellbeing initiatives. EVH have been providing mindfulness sessions for staff and also have a dedicated mindfulness page on their website.

The Board **thanked** AM for the update, noting that it was good to see that the Association continues to support staff during this difficult time.

In response to queries from the Board about voids and Section 5 referrals, JM advised the following:

- The Association currently has 24 voids. The new build development had created a lot of voids due to the increased number of internal transfers. Housing staff are progressing viewings with the help of videos produced by Technical staff.
- Glen Oaks has received 44 referrals from Glasgow City Council (GCC). 34 offers were made and there were 10 refusals. GCC have thanked RSLs for helping with the homelessness situation during the pandemic. However, JM advised that the Association is not achieving the 80% target requested because we are not getting enough referrals.

**The Board agreed to take Agenda Item 6(1) next.**

## **6. Matters for Discussion / Decision**

### **(1) Service Improvement Group - Communication Report presentation**

The Chairperson welcomed the Service Improvement Group (SIG) members and the Corporate Services Manager, Martha Hutcheson (MH) to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

MH's report provided some background on the latest review carried out by the SIG. MH commented that when the SIG chose this subject to scrutinise they had no idea how important communication would become as a result of the coronavirus. The Board was very impressed that the SIG had managed to continue with their review during such a difficult period and had been able to amend their scrutiny plan to incorporate the impact of the pandemic on our communication with tenants.

MH introduced the SIG members in attendance and advised that Willie Irvine (WI), the Chairperson of the SIG, would present the findings of their recent review of Glen Oaks' communications.

**See Confidential Minute**

The Board was very impressed with the report produced by the SIG and thanked them for carrying out such a detailed review despite difficult circumstances during the past year. The Chairperson added that the SIG's passion and dedication to the project was evident in the report, the Action Plan and the presentation. The Board **agreed** to invite the SIG to attend a future Board meeting to update the Board on progress with the Action Plan.

### **The SIG members and MH left the meeting.**

#### **4. Minutes of previous Board Meetings**

(1) **Decisions taken between meetings** - *nothing to report.*

(2) **Board Meeting 25.11.20 & Confidential 25.11.20**

The Minutes were **approved** as an accurate record of the meeting.

(3) **Matters Arising/Tasks**

The Board **noted** the following:

**Page 2, Item 3(3) - Matters Arising Tasks:** With regard to the Review of Sub-Committee Performance, AM advised that he had received the draft reports from Olwyn Gaffney of SHARE. AM proposed that the reports should be sent to the relevant Sub-Committees for discussion/comment before being circulated to the Board. The Board **agreed** with this proposal.

**Page 6, Item 15 - Community Regeneration:** NL noted that Decision Time have advised that full access to the Sub-Committee papers can be arranged for all Board members after the Sub-Committee meeting has taken place. NL will arrange for this to be done.

**Page 7, Item 19(1) - AOCB:** HG confirmed that she is still not receiving meeting notification emails from EVH. AM will contact EVH and report back to HG.

#### **5. Minutes of Sub-Committees and other Meetings**

(1) **Housing, Technical and Health & Safety Sub-Committee 2.12.20**

The Board **noted** the Sub-Committee Minutes.

#### **6. Matters for Discussion / Decision**

(1) **Service Improvement Group - Communication Report presentation**

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

## (2) Rent Consultation

JM reported that the rent consultation took place from 2 December 2020 until 23 December 2020, adding that late responses received up until 11 January 2021 had also been included. The Association consulted tenants on a proposed increase of 1.6%. JM explained the communication methods used which included consulting tenants via Google forms, email, facebook, website and by post. We also published an article in the Winter newsletter.

The Board discussed the report and the feedback from tenants.

### **See Confidential Minute**

The Chairperson asked the Board to vote on the proposal to apply a rent increase of 1.6%.

- The Board **agreed** that the rent increase for 2021/22 will be **1.6%**.
- The Board **approved** the service charges as detailed in the report.
- The Board **approved** the proposal to retain the Management Fee applicable to Sharing Owners at the 2020/21 level.

## (3) Arden 7A & 7B Development

### **MS declared an interest in this item.**

AM proposed moving this item to the end of the agenda to allow MS to leave the meeting while the Board discusses the report. The Board **agreed** with this proposal.

## (4) Rechargeable Repairs: Write-Off Report

The Board **approved** the write-off of Rechargeable Repairs for the amount detailed in the report.

## (5) Former Tenant Arrears and Court Expenses: Write-Off Report

JM advised that the write-off of former tenant arrears and court expenses had been approved by the Housing, Technical and Health & Safety Sub-Committee at their meeting 2 December 2020. JM asked the Board to note that the amount approved by the Sub-Committee has now been reduced as explained in the report. The Board **ratified** the decision taken by the Sub-Committee to write-off the amount detailed in the report.

In response to a question from a Board member, JM advised that the Association had previously used tracing agencies to find former tenants but this had not been successful. A Board member advised that TC Young offers a track and trace service for housing associations. JM will look into this.

## **(6) Update regarding the G8 Benchmarking Group**

AM updated the Board on the G8 Group's virtual Annual Review event which had been attended by the CMT Team and the Chairperson. AM advised that one of the significant outcomes of the event was the useful addition of a Chairperson's Sub Group. The proposed remit for this new Sub Group had been included in the papers for this meeting. SG confirmed that the first meeting of the Chairperson's Sub Group will take place on Monday 25 January, adding that the main topic for the meeting will be Board recruitment and succession. AM also advised that the Association has agreed to take part in a series of training events being organised by the G8 Group in relation to carbon literacy and climate emergency. The Board **noted** the report.

## **(7) Board Training - verbal report**

AM apologised for not providing a written report for this item. AM noted that although the Board already has a busy schedule of meetings for this year, he was keen for the Board to agree on a couple of training topics that could be covered between now and June. AM proposed that any training sessions would take place on Wednesday evenings, starting at 6pm, using Zoom. The Board discussed the training needs highlighted in the Board Learning and Development Plan report produced by Olwyn Gaffney (SHARE) following last year's Board Appraisals. It was **agreed** that Equalities and Human Rights would be a good topic for the first training session.

AM reminded the Board that the Association can also book places for individual Board members on courses organised by SHARE. AM will circulate SHARE's Committee/Board Development calendar to the Board. A Board member recommended SHARE's online platform which they had found useful for developing their knowledge of the work of housing associations.

**See Confidential Minute**

## **7. Board Priorities**

- (1) Board Training**
- (2) Rent Harmonisation**
- (3) Succession Planning and Staff Resources**
- (4) Office / Community Hub**
- (5) Tenant Communication / Transparency**

On hold during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **8. Health & Safety**

The Board **noted** the report.

**See Confidential Minute**

## **9. Assurance Statement**

### **(1) Assurance Action Plan**

NL advised that several items included in the Action Plan will be progressed as part of the Business Plan review. These items include the production of a summary Business Plan and a commitment to publish additional information on the Association's website. NL noted that the Association is waiting for additional guidance with regard to Equalities and Human Rights. Staff will continue to work with the SIG on the Communication Strategy. The Board **noted** the Assurance Action Plan.

## **10. Risk Management**

NL advised that a couple of items on the Risk Register have been changed and asked the Board to note that EESSH2 has been added.

### **(i) Detailed Strategic Risk Register**

The Board **noted** the report.

### **(ii) Summary Strategic Risk Register**

The Board **noted** the report.

## **11. Notifiable Events - *nothing to report.***

## **12. Staffing**

***See Confidential Minute***

## **12. Membership - *nothing to report***

## **13. Use of Seal - *nothing to report***

## **15. Policy Review**

### **(1) Policy Register**

NL confirmed that the Policy Register is updated regularly and reported to every Board meeting. NL provided an update on the following:

- The review of the Gold Service policy is being progressed by the Value for Money Working Group.
- The review of the Rent Setting policy will be included in the Rent Restructure exercise.

With regard to the Freedom of Information policy, a Board member asked if the links included in the Guide to Information on the Association's website are being updated regularly or only when the policy is reviewed. NL confirmed that the information on the website is being updated on a continuous basis.

A Board member was concerned that the Freedom of Information policy review was overdue and asked if staff had received the updated guidance they were waiting for in order to carry out the review of the policy. NL will ask MH about this and report back to the next Board meeting. The Board **noted** the Policy Register.

## **16. Community Regeneration**

### **(1) Funding Report**

JM confirmed that the Association had made 15 funding applications since early last year and had been successful with 10 of those applications. JM advised that a lot of the work being done by the goConnect and Starting Out projects at the moment is around befriending (we are currently working with 2 befrienders) and making sure the digital devices the Association has been given are getting out to the tenants who need them. We have received around 40 devices from different funds so our key focus at the moment is to get them out to tenants and help them to get online. Our new Digital Inclusion Assistant has been helping to support tenants with this. We continue to offer financial inclusion and energy advice and staff are also trying to re-introduce as many classes as possible.

JM noted that tenants had appreciated the telephone calls made by goConnect/Starting Out staff during the pandemic, adding that there had been some positive comments about this from the tenants who provided feedback in the Rent Consultation exercise.

JM advised that she is a member of the G53 Together Group, adding that the Group recently had a presentation from the Centre for Civic Innovation who are looking to set up a social innovation community hub in the Greater Pollok area. The project will be looking at the bigger challenges and complex problems associated with the G53 area. JM is meeting with the project in the next few weeks because they are keen to find out more about our work in Pollok and Darnley. JM will update the Board on this project as it develops. JM advised that the Association had just received 10 devices from the G53 Group (for Pollok and Darnley tenants only) and a further 10 devices from DGtal-Mind, adding that staff will distribute all devices as soon as possible.

The Board **noted** the report and was very impressed with the level of funding achieved and the work being done by staff to support the Association's tenants during this difficult time.

### **(2) Workingrite Project Update**

AM was pleased to report that the Workingrite project has continued to support local young people throughout the pandemic. AM referred to the project's November 2020 progress update which advised that, at that time, five young people from Glen Oaks were on work placements with local employers. The Board **noted** the report.



17. **Matters for Information** - *nothing to report.*

18. **Report back from Meetings / Conferences attended** - *nothing to report.*

19. **Correspondence and Other Matters for Decision**

The Board **noted** the report.

20. **Any Other Competent Business**

(1) **See Confidential Minute**

(2) **Graffiti, Darnley:** DW will contact GCC with regard to this item.

(3) **Void Property, Darnley:** DW advised that City Building will remove the doors left in the garden of this property.

21. **Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next Board meeting will take place on **Wednesday 17 February 2021** at **6pm** via Zoom.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

**MS declared an interest in the final item for discussion and left the meeting prior to the consideration of this report.**

6. **Matters for Discussion / Decision**

(3) **Arden 7A & 7B Development**

**See Confidential Minute**