



Yorkhill Housing Association Management Committee Appraisal Feedback Report

May 2021

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Executive Summary

This Executive Summary lists the recommendations that arise from the Yorkhill Housing Association Management Committee Appraisal exercise carried out by SHARE.

The Committee members appear to be knowledgeable and working well together. This is reflected in the smaller number of recommendations made in this appraisal, compared to the previous one.

The recommendations below are not presented in any order of priority but as they emerged from the findings.

Recommendations

1. We **recommend** that the Committee discusses a shared vision and set of values for the Association, in conjunction with senior staff, and that there is agreement on how to communicate these to others.
2. We **recommend** that the Committee discusses and agrees what more it could do to stay up to date with the needs, views and priorities of tenants and other stakeholders.
3. We **recommend** that the Committee discusses and agrees how the priorities, needs and aspirations of tenants and others influence the plans, strategies and decisions of the Association.
4. We **recommend** that the Committee and Association work together on succession planning to ensure the future of the governing body.
5. We **recommend** that Committee members keep up to date with policy and practice, including what is happening in the wider sector, for example through briefings on specific topics.
6. We **recommend** that the Committee and Association agree a plan of Committee learning and development, based on discussions with members and taking account of the results of the appraisal exercise.

1. Background

SHARE was invited by Yorkhill Housing Association (HA) to carry out an independent appraisal with their Management Committee in early 2021. This is the third appraisal conducted by SHARE for the Association; the last one taking place in 2020.

Committee members taking part in 2021's appraisal were Malcolm Green (Chair), Colin Armstrong (Vice-Chair), Robert Winning (Secretary), Helene Fitzgerald (Treasurer), Paul Marsden, Gurmeet Mattu, Neil McPherson, William Docherty, Yvonne Alexis and Michael Harris.

Online appraisal survey questionnaires were distributed to Committee members in March 2021. Once the surveys were completed, follow-up one-to-one conversations were held with the two newest Committee members to allow them to talk about their responses to the survey in more detail and to ensure any additional views were taken into account. This feedback report gives the results of the appraisal process for the Committee collectively. Separate individual learning statements will be passed on to the two members who took part in the one-to-one conversations.

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) publishes annual reports on the performance of each of the housing associations in Scotland. In the SHR's published landlord reports for 2019/20, Yorkhill HA scored above the Scottish average in: overall service; the time taken to complete emergency and non-emergency repairs; the percentage of reactive repairs 'right first time'; the time taken to re-let homes; and the percentage of anti-social behavior cases resolved.

The Association scored slightly below the Scottish average in the following areas: keeping tenants informed; opportunities for tenants to participate; meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard; and tenant satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service.

1.1 Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management

Following a period of review and consultation, the SHR published its revised Regulatory Framework and associated statutory guidance¹ in 2019. This includes the requirement for all landlords to produce an Annual Assurance Statement to give governing bodies, tenants and other service users the confidence that the organisation is well-run. The Statements help landlords show they are meeting the standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter and, for registered social landlords (RSLs), the Standards of Governance and Financial Management. An SHR Engagement Plan will make it clearer to tenants and others what the SHR's regulatory view of each landlord is. The revised Standards also require RSLs to have an internal audit function in place and put more emphasis on induction and ongoing support for Board/Committee members. Yorkhill HA submitted its second Annual Assurance Statement to the SHR in November 2020 and has been deemed compliant.

Towards the end of 2018, the SHR reported on the key lessons it had identified from the use of statutory intervention in respect of 11 RSLs since 2014. Weak governance and a failure of

¹ <https://bit.ly/2NDuo1x>

leadership were highlighted, along with 10 common characteristics. These were included by SHARE in the previous appraisal report to Yorkhill HA, but are included again as a reminder.

Common characteristics of RSLs where the SHR has used statutory intervention powers²

Governing body members did not know what they did not know – they were not provided with, did not ask for, or failed to understand the information needed to carry out their role.

The governing body did not seek or receive appropriate assurance and did not effectively challenge senior officers.

A poor understanding of conflicts of interest and how to manage them.

Little encouragement or value placed on feedback from customers or staff.

A disregard of whistleblowing.

No internal audit function or poorly directed internal audit activity.

Governing body members in post for more than nine years and the RSL had not assessed their continuing effectiveness.

The senior officer had been in post for a long time.

A lack of transparency, including in its relationship with its lenders.

An inadequate system of internal control or senior management had over-ridden the system of internal control.

Good governance remains important for all RSLs, especially in light of the current challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. We hope this feedback report on the appraisal process will assist the Committee members of Yorkhill HA in their current and future work.

² <https://bit.ly/2LtCY1J>

2. Committee appraisal – SHARE’s approach

This section of the report sets out how the appraisal survey and one-to-one meetings were approached.

The Committee appraisal process included:

- Drafting the appraisal survey
- Briefing the Committee on the process
- Observation of a Management Committee meeting by SHARE
- Issuing the survey
- Undertaking one-to-one conversations with the two newest Committee members
- Analysing the findings from the survey, one-to-one conversations and observation of the Management Committee meeting
- Reporting back to the Committee through a written report and a suggested learning and development plan.

2.1 Survey

In March 2021, a link to the online survey was sent out by email to Committee members. A PDF version of the survey was also made available for those who preferred that method.

There were two main sections in the survey:

- Self-reflection on Committee involvement
- Self-assessment of skills, knowledge and specialisms.

There were also a small number of questions at the end of the survey asking for any comments on the content.

Throughout the report, anonymised quotes are used to illustrate responses to various questions.

2.2 Observation of Management Committee meeting

At the beginning of the appraisal process, SHARE’s Learning and Development Manager observed a meeting of the Committee, which took place over Zoom on 11 March. Four staff and seven Committee members were present at the meeting.

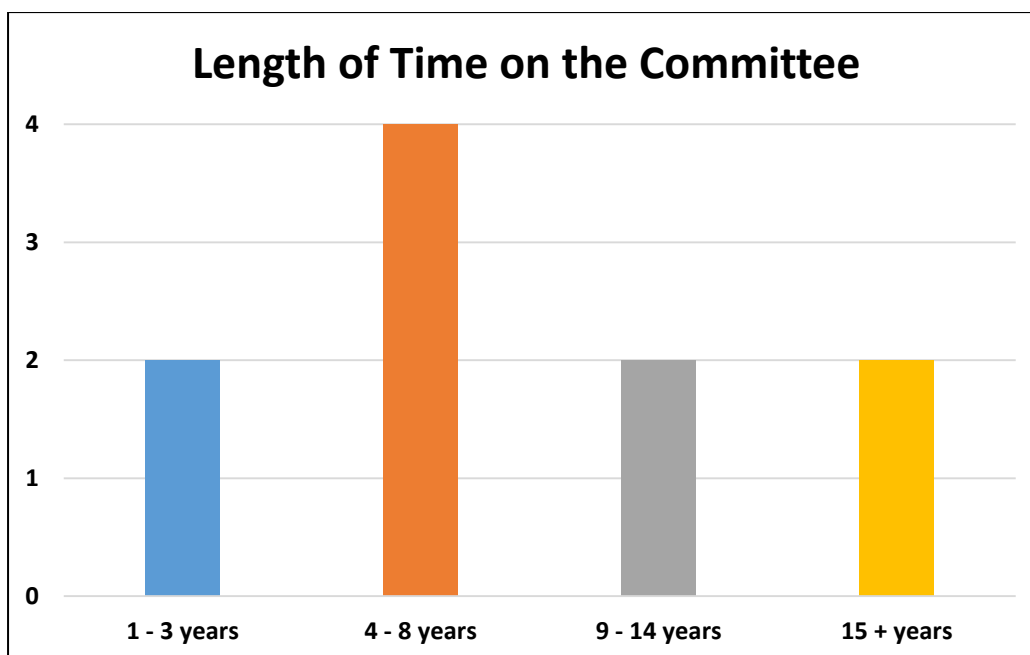
It was observed that the meeting was well-chaired, with a good level of discussion on all items. Topics covered included the review of IT, budget approval, review of policies and reports on factoring.

3. Self-reflection on Committee involvement

3.1 Length of time on Committee

The first question asked members how long they had served on the Committee. At the time of completing the appraisal survey, six out of 10 members had been on the Committee for eight years or less. In respect of the nine years set out in the SHR guidance, four Committee members are currently above that.

1-3 years	2
4-8 years	4
9-14 years	2
15+ years	2



3.2 Motivation, contribution and personal benefit

Self-reflection is critical to understanding our effectiveness, in whatever we do. In relation to Committee responsibilities, there are two questions which members should periodically ask themselves:

- Why am I on the Committee?
- What difference do I make?

The next set of questions in the survey was structured to give members the opportunity to reflect on why they had joined the Committee, the skills they brought and knowledge they have.

3.2.1 Motivation

Members were asked what motivated them to join the Committee. As can be seen below, the responses indicate a strong desire from members to contribute to the local community and to improve housing in the area.

Local control and accountability.

I had an interest in social housing and ensuring that affordable good quality housing was available. I completed a course with SHARE that gave me the confidence to become involved.

I was a tenant of Yorkhill Housing Association and was keen to get involved in the management process.

Interest in the sector from university. Know people on Committee. Used to live nearby. Giving something back.

I was invited to join by a member and as a resident felt it was important to contribute in some way.

I wanted to give something back to the community.

Interest in seeing the area's housing rehabilitated and maintained.

Help local community.

Community interest.

When asked about the highlights of being involved over the last 12 months, Committee members touched on a variety of areas. These included tackling the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, helping with pensions issues, involvement with the IT upgrade and, for the newest members, finding out how the Association and Committee operate.

Successfully moving to online participation and the continued ability of Yorkhill HA to provide a high quality service to tenants.

The decision not to increase rents due to the ongoing lockdown and the subsequent financial problems that this has caused many tenants.

The last 12 months have been particularly difficult due to issues around the Covid pandemic, and it has been good to see how well Yorkhill HA have adapted their practice to enable them to appropriately handle their duties and responsibilities.

I was specifically involved with helping to resolve the pension update just prior to lockdown, which was challenging but rewarding, and more recently I have had an overview of the process of updating the IT hardware/software for the organisation.

Dealing with the Covid pandemic and changes to working practices whilst delivering our core functions to a reasonably high level.

Finding out more about how the Association functions. Being on the Services and Maintenance Sub-Committee and contributing to discussions around the maintenance and upgrading of the housing stock.

Actively helping to make important decisions as part of a team.

Coping successfully with the challenge presented by Covid-19.

Zoom meetings.

Involved with IT upgrade.

3.2.2 Committee member induction

The current Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management are clear on the importance of effective induction and ongoing support, so that individual Committee members can continue to develop in their role, as shown by the extract below:

Standard 6 (para. 6.5) *“The RSL ensures that all new governing body members receive an **effective induction programme** to enable them to fully understand and exercise their governance responsibilities. Existing governing body members are given **ongoing support and training to gain, or refresh, skills and expertise** and sustain their continued effectiveness.”*

When asked the question ‘When you joined the Committee, did the induction process help you in your role?’, six of the 10 Committee members stated ‘Yes’ and the remaining four answered ‘No’. However, for members who have been on the Committee for a number of years, the induction may have been a less formal process.

The additional comments provided give more detail and, where there has been an induction, are positive.

No induction process then.

There was no formal process at the time, which is something that we have worked on. I await feedback from the latest members to see if it helped/worked.

Basic overview of roles and responsibilities.

None was given at that time.

It helped to give an indication of how much I would need to learn.

Yes, the then Housing Corporation solicitor held seven meetings with us to go through all the procedures involved in establishing Yorkhill HA.

There was no induction process.

I was given advice and an induction pack.

3.2.3 Effectiveness

Members were asked how effective they thought they were as individuals on the Management Committee. The comments show that Committee members overall feel confident about their skills. A few feel that they could be more effective, but this shows a helpful degree of self-reflection.

Keep up to date with training and read Scottish Housing news daily.

I feel I can make a positive contribution to the work of the Association.

I think I'm reasonably competent and willing to take on duties and responsibilities. If I have a point to raise, I'm happy to do so.

Reasonable, with areas to improve on.

I contribute to discussions regularly and in the main am confident with expressing my opinion.

Quite good.

I am still gaining confidence as a member but feel 100% that my role is as important as any other member.

I spend a great deal more time, both in reading and researching Committee papers and in attending training sessions, than I ever envisaged I would need or be able to do.

Average.

Will comment on issues affecting the community. I am not normally outspoken, unless I see issues.

3.2.4 Areas of interest

Committee members were asked to indicate any aspects of the Association's work that they were especially interested in. The table below shows the spread of interests across the Committee. Although 'customer satisfaction' was mentioned, there is no specific reference to tenant participation and involvement. This should be taken into consideration, as the Association's performance was below the Scottish average for some aspects of this in 2019/20.

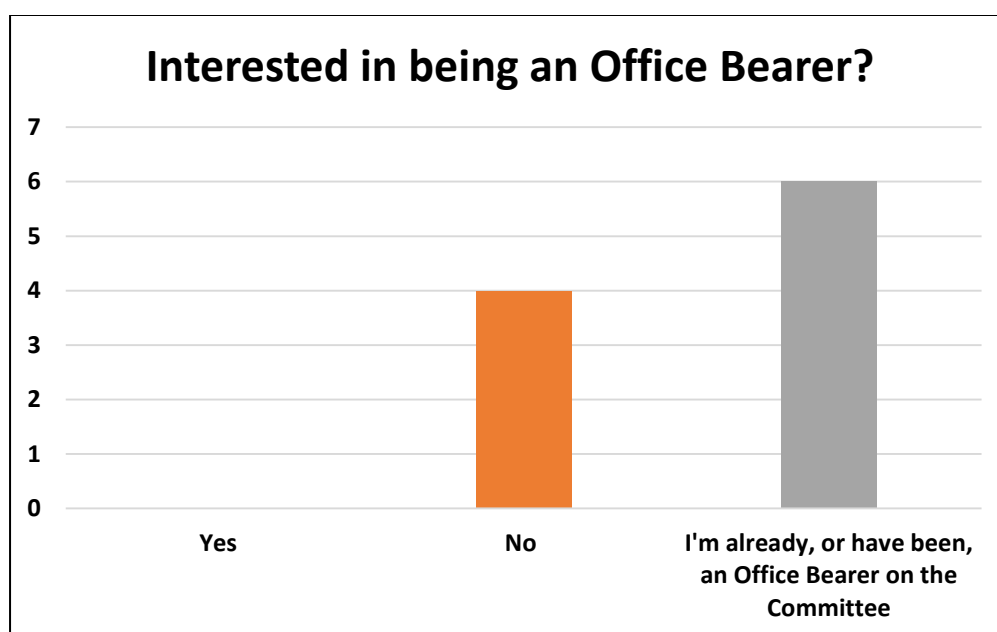
Area of interest	Number of Committee members
All	2
Repairs and maintenance	2
Governance	2
Communication	2
Customer satisfaction	1
Business planning	1
Finance	1

3.2.5 Being an Office Bearer

Committee members were asked whether they would like to be an Office Bearer in the future (such as Chair or Vice-Chair), assuming they were given the appropriate support and training.

Six Committee members indicated they were already, or have been, Office Bearers. The remaining four members indicated that they are not currently interested in taking on such a role. The main reason given for not wanting to take on this responsibility was the time required. One person did not feel comfortable about the profile of the role, being concerned about public speaking. Another felt that the role required a younger person.

These results are important for succession planning purposes. They should be considered so that appointment to Office Bearer roles can be arranged in sufficient time, and appropriate training and support put in place for any interested members.



3.2.6 Remaining on Committee

Committee members were also asked if they intended to step down from the Committee in the next one to three years. Two members answered 'No' to this question, two answered 'Yes' and six were 'Unsure'. As with the results on taking on an Office Bearer role, these responses should be taken into account when considering continuity of membership and succession planning. This is especially important given the high number of Committee members who are unsure about remaining on the Committee over the next few years.

3.2.7 Key roles and experience

Committee members were asked to give details of any previous roles and experience they had held (whether paid or voluntary), which they thought might assist them in their role as a Committee member. A summary showing the variety of skills and experience is given below, all of which should assist in their work with the Committee and Association:

- Local authority experience (as employee)
- Elected member (local authority Councillor)

- Voluntary sector management roles
- Training and development experience
- CAB experience
- Community arts background
- Repairs and maintenance
- Events and exhibition experience
- Business planning and finance roles/experience
- Governance – other Boards/Committees (a number of Committee members have this type of experience).

3.2.8 Level of knowledge

The appraisal survey includes specific questions covering knowledge and skills. The first of these asked members to indicate the level of knowledge they feel they have across a range of areas relevant to their role as a Committee member.

The options given for responses were:

- A lot of knowledge
- Some knowledge
- A little knowledge
- No knowledge.



The graph illustrates the responses for 'a lot of knowledge' and 'some knowledge'. It shows that, for all areas, more than half of Committee members feel they have 'a lot' or 'some' knowledge. The 'top four' of these were:

- Customer care and service delivery
- Governance
- Staff management
- Tenant participation and community engagement.

3.2.9 Level of skills/abilities

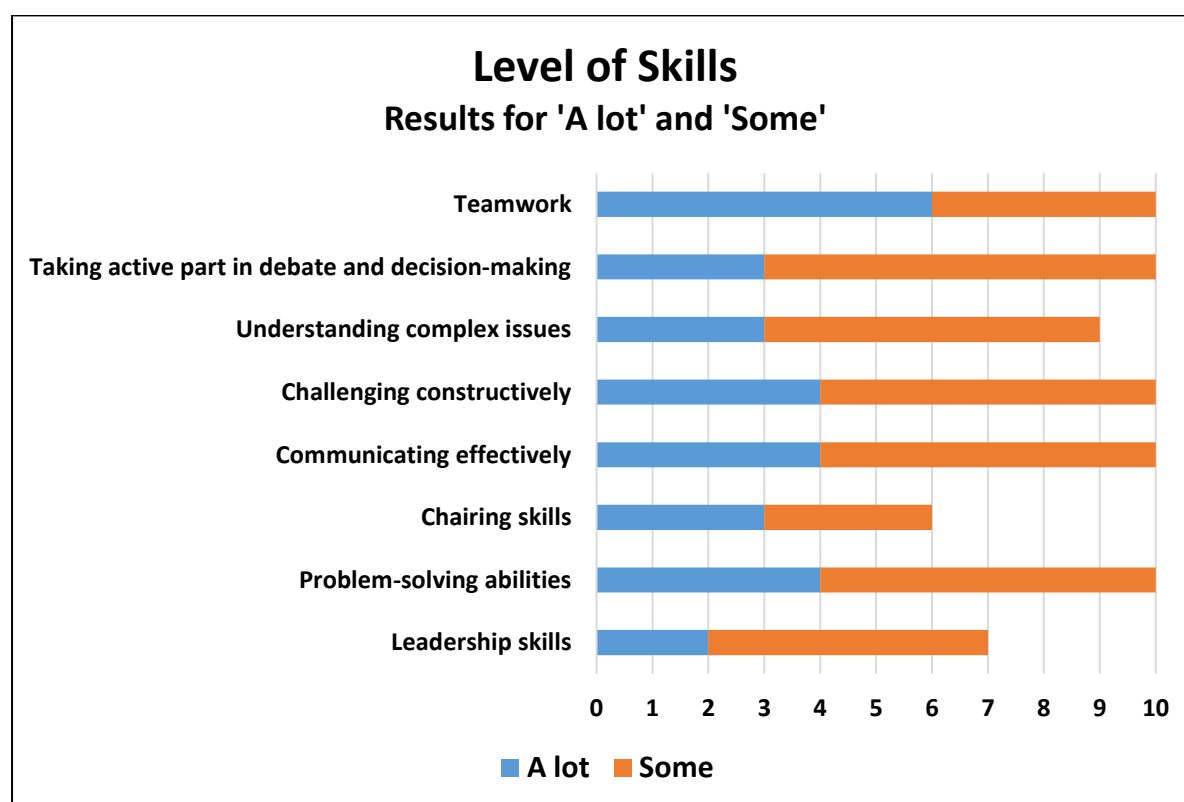
The second question asked members to indicate the level of skill they feel they have across a range of areas.

The options given for responses were:

- A lot of skill
- Some skill
- A little skill
- No skill.

The graph illustrates the responses for 'a lot of skill' and 'some skill'. It shows that, for all areas other than chairing skills and leadership, most Committee members responding feel they have 'a lot' or 'some' skill.

Some members may benefit from training in chairing, so that they feel more confident about this area. This may also help encourage Committee members to consider Office Bearer roles in the future.



3.2.10 Skills development

A follow-on question asked if there were any additional skills that Committee members thought would benefit them in their role on the Committee. These should be considered when drawing up future learning and development plans.

Specific areas where individual members felt they might benefit from learning and development are shown below. As can be seen, some members are open to regular updating, rather than training on any specific topic.

Update as required – Regulator, housing issues, finance.

I am open to any learning that would assist.

There are always new things to learn, and of course changes in law and practice, so a regular need for updating and building on existing skills. A bit more detail on asset management would be useful.

I feel working more closely with the Chair or getting a practical overview of what the staff do and have to cope with would be beneficial (although this is complex/impossible with the current working restrictions).

How the financing of the Association works. I am not naturally a numbers person and often feel I don't completely grasp the financial aspects.

I am very happy to continue to learn as I go. I sometimes find the training a bit overwhelming and find it easier to digest in practice.

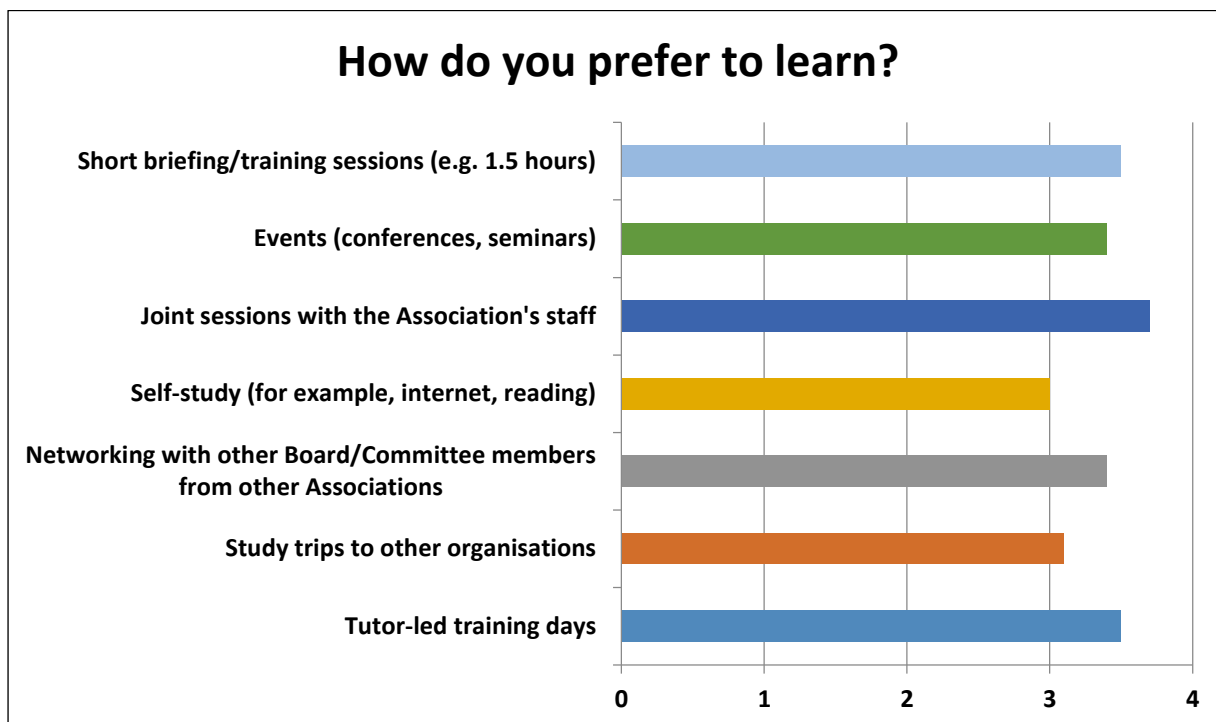
I have benefited greatly from SHARE training sessions, which I have attended regularly, and from conferences organised by both SHARE and SFHA. Yorkhill's Management Committee has also recently had externally-led sessions on health and safety.

3.2.11 Learning preferences

We each have preferred ways to learn. The responses to this question show that the Committee members' top preferences were:

- Joint sessions with the Association's staff
- Tutor-led training days
- Short training sessions.

The least preferred methods were self-study and study trips. Although not currently possible, it can be useful to meet others to discuss how challenges are tackled and successes built on. Overall, these results may help when considering a learning and development programme for the Committee.



3.2.12 Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

When asked 'Do you feel that the current Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on your role as a Management Committee member?', seven members stated 'Yes' and three answered 'No'.

The additional comments given by members are shown below and describe some of the constraints on the Committee during the last year, especially the inability to meet face to face, although most members appear to have adjusted to this.

Zoom meetings allow for the work of the Committee to be carried out, but inhibit open discussion.

We now attend meetings using Zoom. This means no time spent travelling, which is good, although it does mean no personal interaction with other Committee members.

It will be good to return to meeting people, although I can see the value of maintaining virtual meetings. Maybe a mix of the two would be a way forward.

Lack of oversight on the ground. Lack of informal communication that helps build teams and shares information.

Zoom is an effective way to conduct a meeting.

No in-person Management Committee meetings as having to do them on Zoom.

Very minimally but we did miss a few meetings.

After the first couple of months, we settled into the same routine as before. The staff have had to work from home, of course, but for Committee members I don't think there has been any disadvantage. Indeed, the saving in travelling time is a great advantage.

Lack of interaction.

4. Skills, knowledge and expertise

In the second section of the appraisal survey, Committee members were asked to rate their level of knowledge, skills or expertise and understanding in key areas covered by the SHR's new regulatory framework, set out in *Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland – Our Framework* (2019). The scores from collective responses are a useful way of gaining an overall picture of a Committee's areas of strength and those where more development is required.

The areas covered by this set of questions were:

1. Leading and directing the Association
2. Being open and accountable
3. Ensuring the financial well-being of the Association
4. Identifying and mitigating risk
5. Acting with honesty and integrity
6. Having the knowledge to be effective
7. Having the skills to be effective
8. Managing organisational change, acquisitions or disposals.

Committee members were asked to score themselves against statements using a rating scale of 1-4, as defined below.

1 – Strongly disagree	2 – Partly disagree	3 – Partly agree	4 – Strongly agree
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What is apparent from the responses to this part of the appraisal is Committee members' confidence in their knowledge, skills and understanding. None of the **average** scores for each statement fell below 2, with most falling between 3 and 4. This does mean, however, that some Committee members gave scores of 1 or 2 for certain areas. Suggestions for addressing these are given in the individual learning statements.

The remainder of this section of the report examines the responses in more detail and highlights areas where there may be potential for improvement.

4.1 Leading and directing the Association

Regulatory Standard 1

The governing body **leads and directs** the RSL to achieve **good outcomes for its tenants and other service users**.

Committee members were asked to score themselves against statements covering the areas set out in Regulatory Standard 1, which focuses on leading and directing the Association, while achieving good outcomes for tenants and others using services.

The Committee members' scores show that they appear to be especially confident in relation to:

- Understanding their collective responsibility in taking decisions
- Reaching decisions independently, based on the information and advice available.



Some members were less sure about being able to explain the Association's vision and values. This suggests that there is still work to be done on the Committee's understanding of the Association's vision and values, as well as members' ability to communicate these to tenants and others. We have therefore included a recommendation on this.

1. We **recommend** that the Committee discusses a shared vision and set of values for the Association, in conjunction with senior staff, and that there is agreement on how to communicate these to others.

4.2 Being open and accountable

Regulatory Standard 2

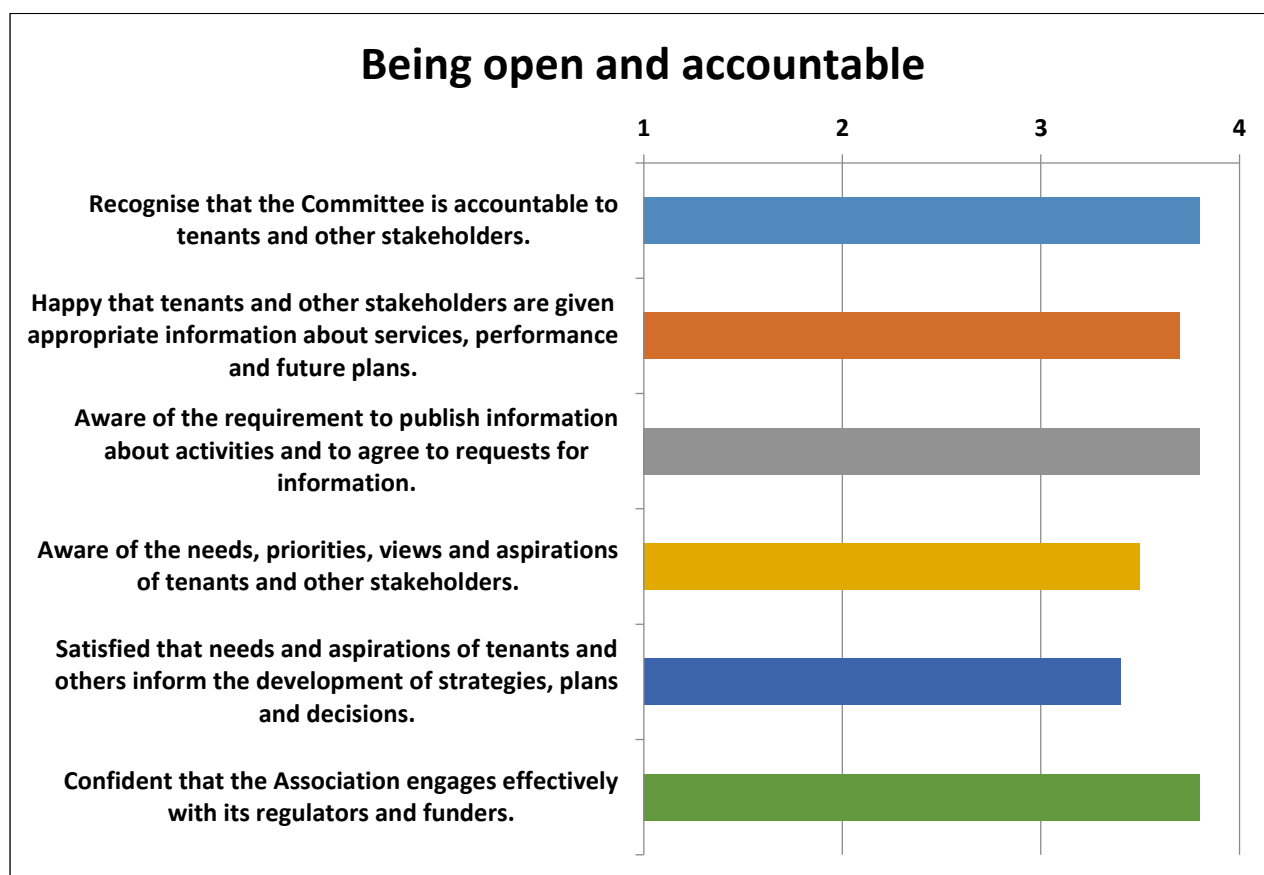
The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It **understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders**. And its **primary focus** is the **sustainable achievement of these priorities**.

Committee members were asked to score themselves against statements covering the areas set out in Regulatory Standard 2, which focuses on understanding and taking account of the needs and priorities of tenants, service users and stakeholders.

Based on their responses to the appraisal survey, Committee members exhibited a good understanding of most of their responsibilities related to this Standard. However, there were lower scores in relation to a couple of key areas:

- Aware of the views, needs and priorities of tenants and other stakeholders
- Satisfied that the needs and aspirations of tenants and others inform strategies and plans.

We have therefore included recommendations on these.



2. We **recommend** that the Committee discusses and agrees what more it could do to stay up to date with the needs, views and priorities of tenants and other stakeholders.
3. We **recommend** that the Committee discusses and agrees how the priorities, needs and aspirations of tenants and others influence the plans, strategies and decisions of the Association.

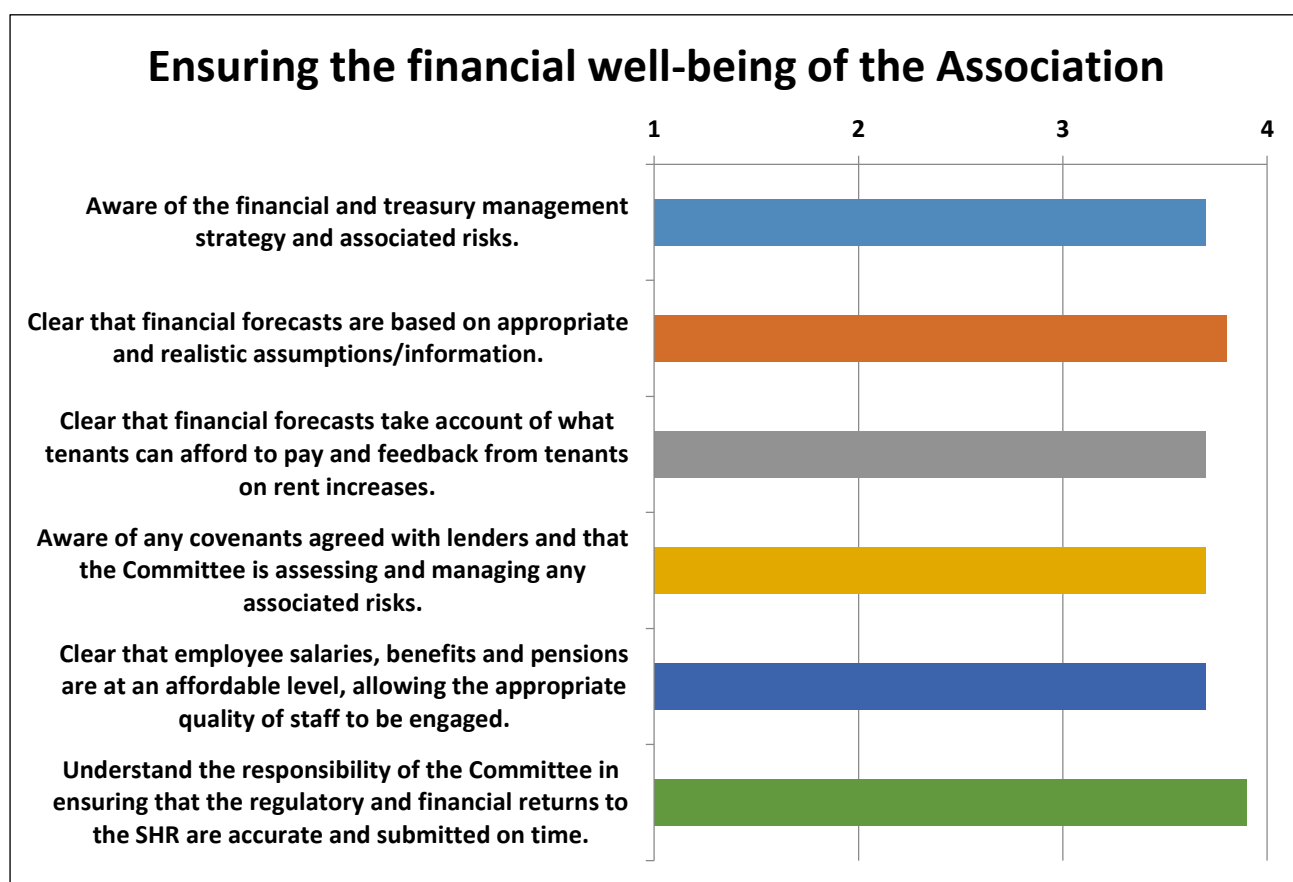
4.3 Ensuring financial well-being of the Association

Regulatory Standard 3

The RSL manages its resources to ensure its **financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level which tenants can afford.**

Committee members were asked to score themselves against statements covering the areas set out in Regulatory Standard 3, which focuses on financial well-being. This Standard includes the need to ensure that rents are being set at levels which are affordable to tenants. Another requirement is for Committees to be clear that staff salaries, benefits and pensions are at an affordable level for the Association.

Based on their responses to the appraisal survey, Committee members exhibited a good understanding of their responsibilities related to this Standard. There are therefore no recommendations linked to this Standard.



4.4 Identifying and mitigating risk

Regulatory Standard 4

The governing body bases its decisions on **good quality information and advice** and **identifies and mitigates risks** to the organisation's purpose.

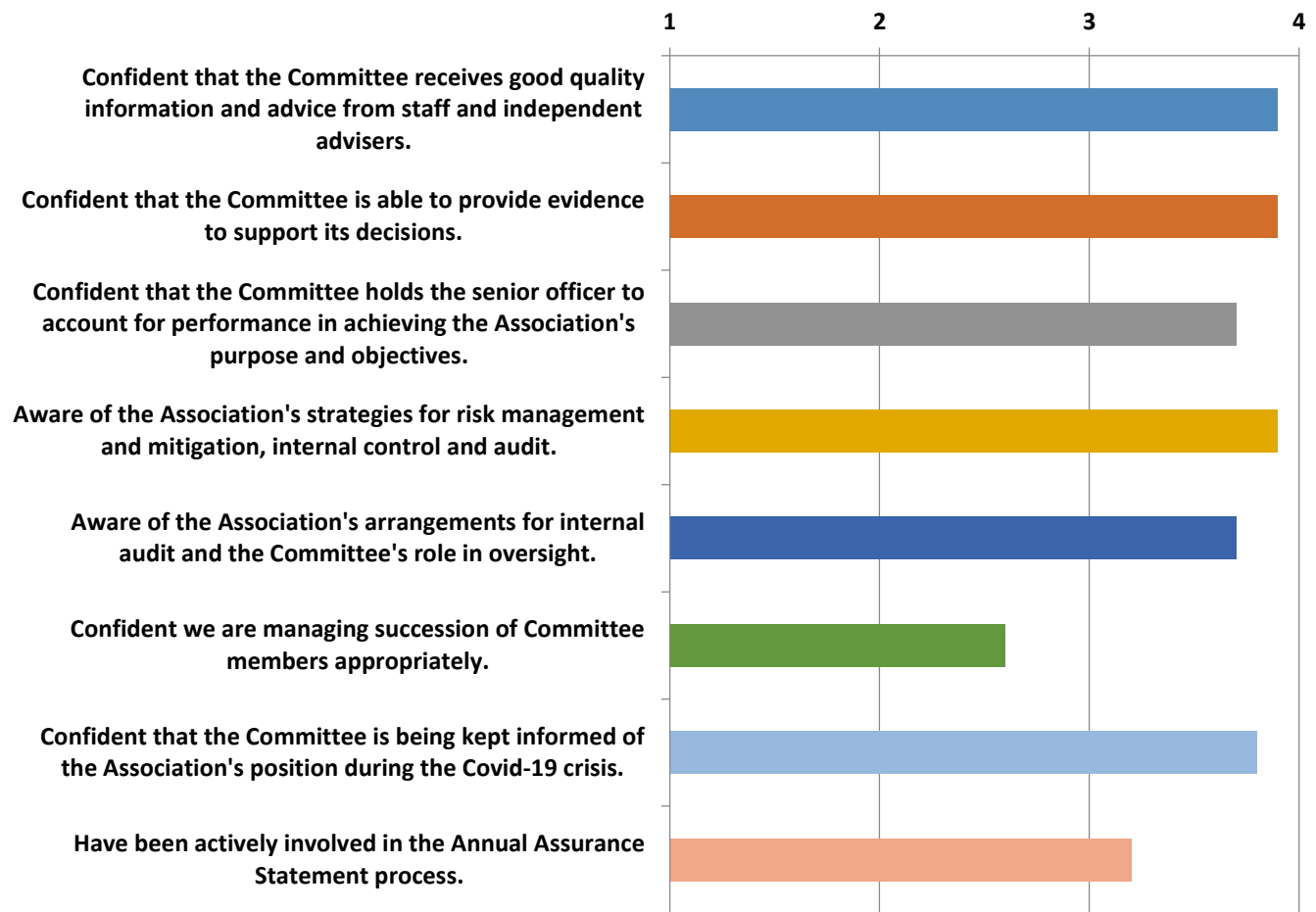
Understanding and managing risk is one of the key functions of any governing body. Committee members were asked to score themselves against statements covering the areas set out in Regulatory Standard 4, which focuses on identifying and mitigating risk.

Based on their responses to the appraisal survey, Committee members exhibited a good understanding of their responsibilities related to this Standard, except in the two areas below:

- Confidence in the management of the succession of Committee members
- Active involvement in the Annual Assurance Statement process.

The normal Annual Assurance Statement process may have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, so there is no recommendation on this. However, there is a recommendation on succession planning.

Identifying and mitigating risk



4. We **recommend** that the Committee and Association work together on succession planning to ensure the future of the governing body.

4.5 Acting with honesty and integrity

Regulatory Standard 5

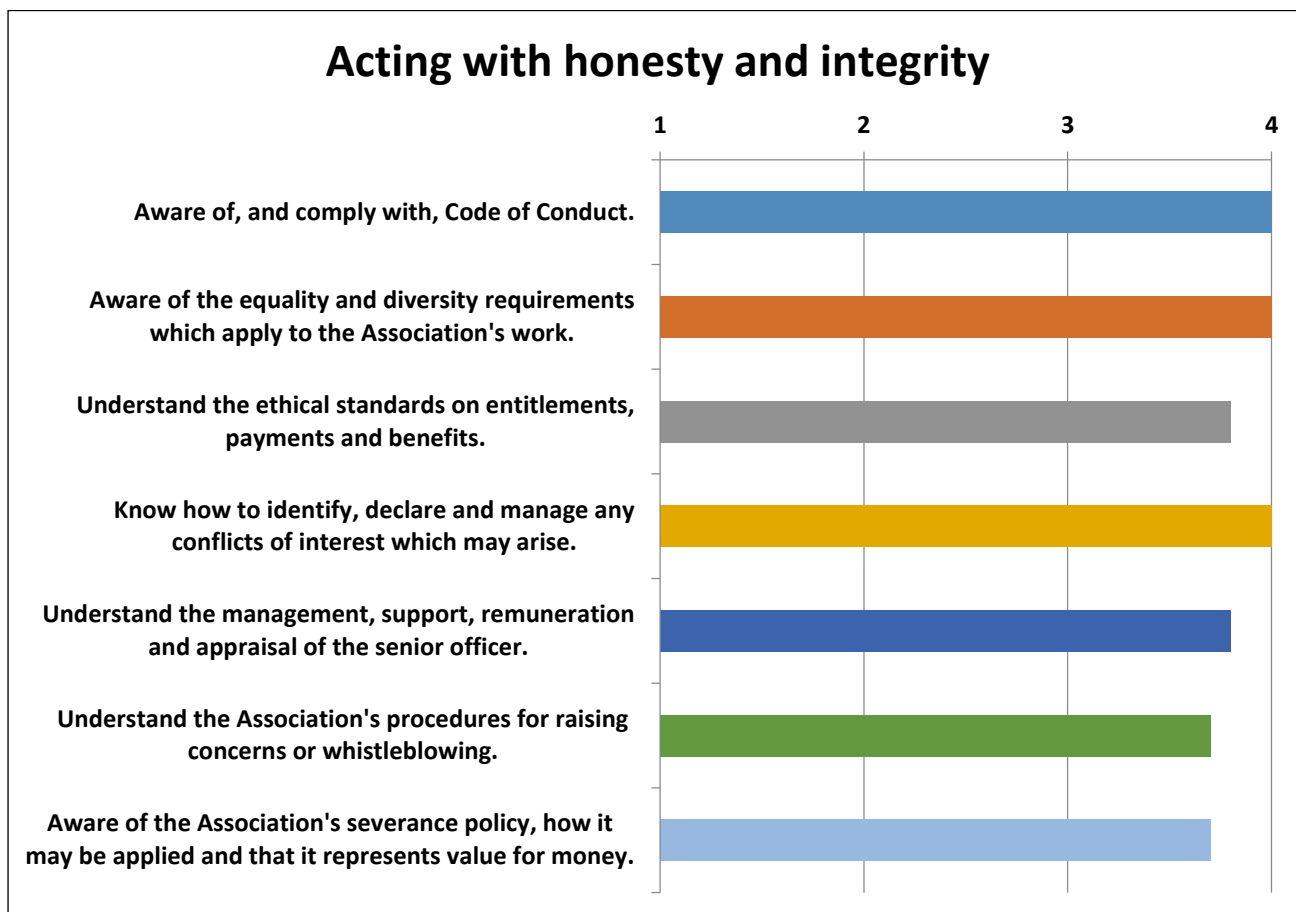
The RSL conducts its affairs with **honesty and integrity**.

Committee members were asked to score themselves against statements covering the areas set out in Regulatory Standard 5, which focuses on honesty and integrity. A newer area in the SHR's updated Regulatory Standards is the Association's severance policy (which should be approved by the Committee), how it may be applied and that it represents value for money.

Committee members scored themselves highly across all the statements linked to this Standard, especially:

- Awareness of, and compliance with, the Code of Conduct
- Awareness of equality and diversity requirements
- Knowing how to identify and declare conflicts of interest.

There are therefore no recommendations linked to this Standard.



4.6 Having the knowledge to be effective

Regulatory Standard 6

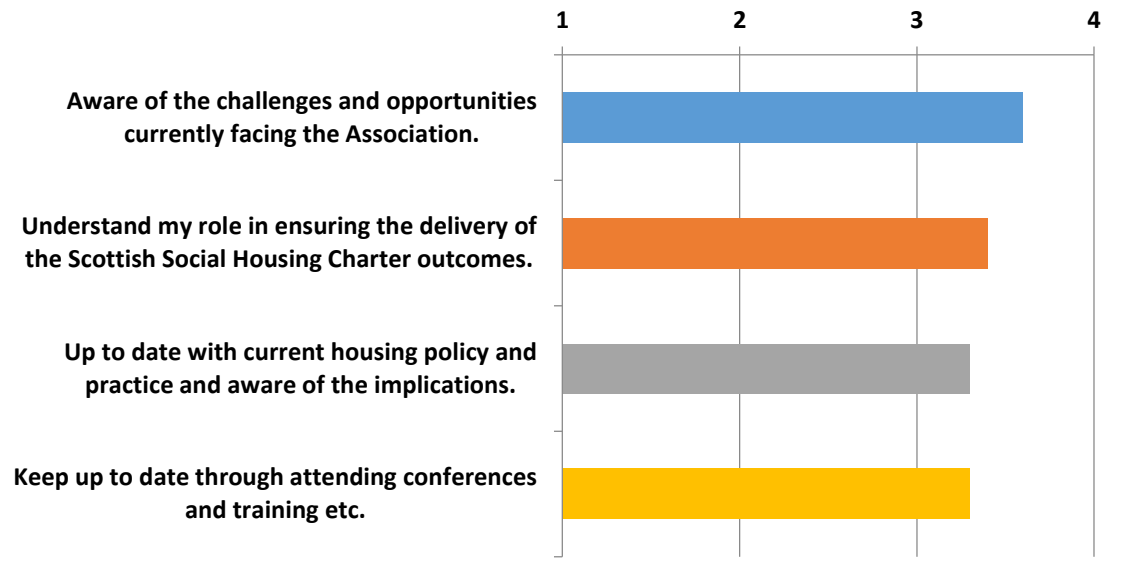
The governing body and senior staff have the **skills and knowledge they need to be effective**.

Committee members were asked to score themselves against statements covering the areas set out in Regulatory Standard 6, which focuses on skills and knowledge. This first set of statements focused on **knowledge**.

For all of the areas, four or five Committee members stated 'partly agree' for each of the statements given. Keeping up to date with policy and practice and attending conferences/training will have been impacted by the pandemic restrictions. Hopefully, this may begin to improve in the coming months.

Relevant recommendations for this Standard are set out below. The first of these encourages Committee members to stay up to date with what is happening in the housing sector and more widely, as well as how this impacts on the Association and their governance role.

Having the knowledge to be effective



5. We **recommend** that Committee members keep up to date with policy and practice, including what is happening in the wider sector, for example through briefings on specific topics.
6. We **recommend** that the Committee and Association agree a plan of Committee learning and development, based on discussions with members and taking account of the results of the appraisal exercise.

4.7 Having the skills to be effective

Regulatory Standard 6

The governing body and senior staff have the **skills and knowledge they need to be effective**.

Committee members were asked to score themselves against statements covering the areas set out in Regulatory Standard 6, which focuses on skills and knowledge. This second set of statements focused on **skills**.

The lowest scores in this area related to ongoing training and support, which will have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. Recommendations 5 and 6 are also applicable here, so there are no further recommendations linked to this Standard.

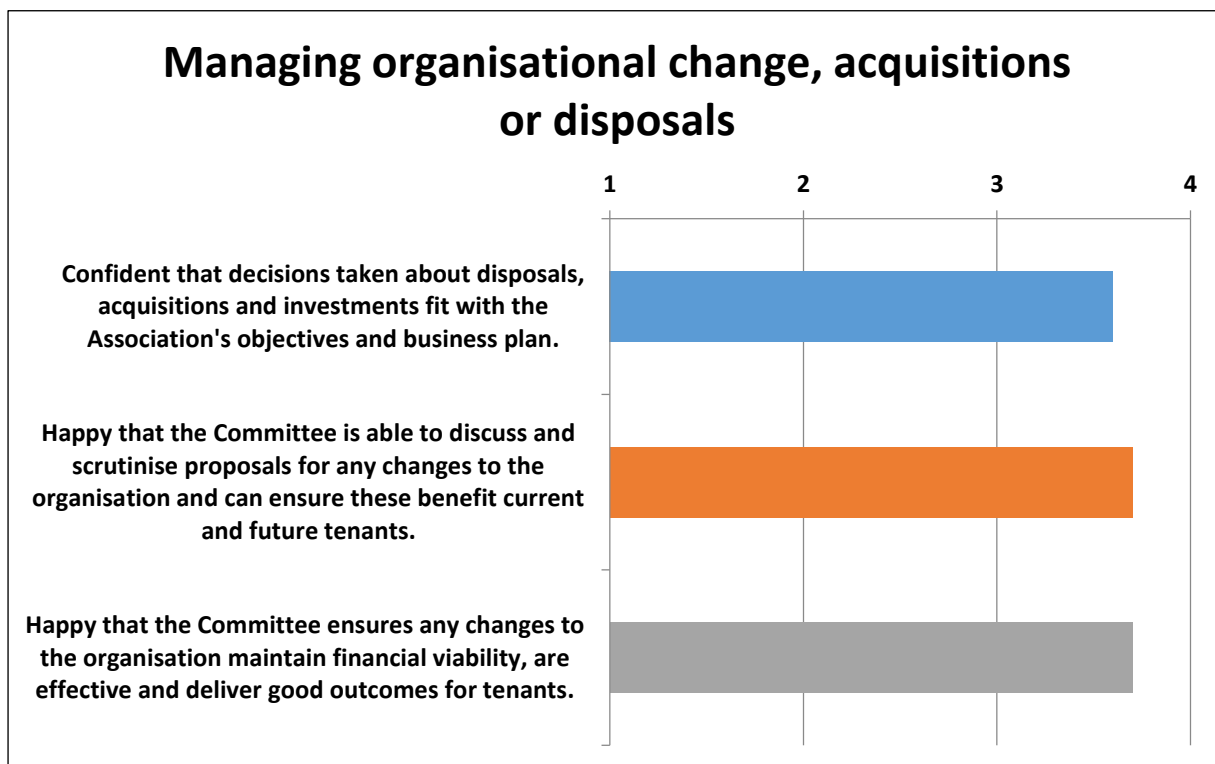


4.8 Managing organisational change, acquisitions or disposals

Regulatory Standard 7

The RSL ensures that **any organisational changes or disposals** it makes **safeguard the interests of, and benefit, current and future tenants.**

This Standard is aimed at RSLs considering organisational or constitutional changes, or acquisition or disposal of assets. Whether this is immediately applicable or not, it is still useful for Committee members to be aware of the SHR guidance.



Committee members seemed aware of the broad parameters of the core areas of this Standard. There are therefore no recommendations linked to this Standard.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the online survey and observation of a meeting show a Committee whose members are knowledgeable, experienced and committed to the work of the Association. As with the previous appraisal, there are a number of recommendations. However, there are fewer than last time, reflecting the progress that has been made over the last year.

The recommendations made in the Executive Summary cover collective development. In addition, SHARE will provide a suggested learning and development plan for the Committee to consider.

SHARE is pleased to have had this opportunity to work with the Chair and Management Committee and hopes this feedback report will assist the Committee members of Yorkhill HA in their continuing work as a governing body.