

YORKHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD.

Minutes of Management Committee hybrid meeting held on Thursday 15 August 2024 at 18:00 in The Association's Office and via Zoom

Present: Y Alexis (Chair), W Docherty (Secretary), M Ralph (Treasurer), M Green, D de Croy, B Hanley (all in-person)

J Wilson (via Zoom)

Apologies: N McPherson, T Mallaghan (Chief Executive)

In Attendance: G Kennedy (Deputy Chief Executive), G Watson (Finance Manager), C Davidson (Governance Assistant, mins), J Alexander (Senior Statutory Auditor on behalf of Azets Audit Services (Via Zoom) – **Agenda Item 3 Only**)

Abbreviations:

CE	Chief Executive
DCE	Deputy Chief Executive
FM	Finance Manager
SMT	Senior Management Team
GA	Governance Assistant
JBG	Jobs and Business Glasgow

		Action
1.	<p><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and apologies were noted.</p> <p><i>The Chief Executive ('CE'), while due to attend this evening, was absent today. Therefore, some information from him was relayed to the Deputy Chief Executive ('DCE') to communicate to members.</i></p> <p>Meeting began at 18:00.</p>	
2.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest to note.</p>	
3.	<p><u>2023/24 Annual Accounts</u></p> <p>J Alexander presented to members the Association's audited financial statements for the year ending 31 March 2024 plus an audit management letter.</p>	

While members were free to ask any questions, some of the key points J Alexander noted were as follows:

- The auditors review Committee papers such as Management Accounts and Covenant Compliance to ensure consistency and accuracy, and that these reports ensure YHA is meeting regulatory requirements with regards to financial reports.
- The auditor statement on page 5 of the annual accounts would likely be subject to re-wording in the report's final draft, as a procurement exercise was undertaken in July for a new contract to carry out external audit services. The auditor advised that she will keep the Finance Manager ('**FM**') updated on this as needed.
- The auditor's opinion is that it is appropriate for the Association to continue operating on a 'going concern' basis. The auditor highlighted that this is the cleanest bill of financial health possible and will provide useful assurance that requirements are being met.
- Figures for the Association's Statement of Comprehensive Income are more or less in line with the figures the FM has been presenting Committee with throughout the year, but highlighted that some minor changes involving, for example, defined benefit pension schemes will likely be made. It was however noted that this is not an unusual occurrence as the information required to produce a final figure for this is often obtained relatively late on.
- The Association reports a slight deficit, but Committee were assured that this is a trend seen across the sector at the moment due to, for example, rising maintenance and staffing costs. The auditor mentioned that they are confident of a return to reporting a surplus in future and does not believe this deficit will cause alarm with Regulators.

FM

When members queried whether there was an error in the figures reported for re-evaluation of investment properties, the auditor clarified that the figures were correct, but that they had been formatted in a way that could be misleading. The Association will be issued with a fresh set of accounts shortly and this will be amended.

A member asked whether it is recommended for the Association to continue increasing rent to keep up with deficit costs - since this is the primary source of income – or whether reserves should be used to meet any shortfalls. The auditor advised that while in theory accounts should always be balanced, there can be one-off costs which may have to be met and which are difficult to foresee when planning budgets. The FM noted here the example of recent acquisition costs, which although grant funding will be received for, had to be front-funded at the time by the Association. It was advised then that rent should still be

increased in line with the approach deemed most suitable and not necessarily that which allows deficits to be clawed back. The auditor also noted that ideally reserves should not be used continually, as this makes it difficult to ever build them back up.

Members had no further questions and the item was approved.

The auditor will send a final draft to the FM and the usual arrangement for (re-)appointing auditors is to be put in place for September's AGM.

SMT

J Alexander was thanked by the Chair for her attendance, and left the meeting at 18:15.

4. **Minutes of Last Meeting**

Before reviewing the minutes, the Chair requested for all future papers to follow the same title format, i.e., the agenda item number should be in the same place at the top of all reports. It was agreed that this could be standardised in future.

Members also requested that if future papers are to be printed double-sided, there should still be a way of separating reports such as by placing a blank sheet between them.

GA

4.1 - Amendments

Members asked for consistency throughout meeting minutes in terms of titles and personnel, e.g., the previous meeting minutes listed job titles such as CE and DCE in the narrative but then individual initials such as TM and GK in the action column. It was agreed that this would be made standard going forward.

4.2 – Approval

The minutes were unanimously approved for signing.

4.3 – Matters Arising

Item 6 – Governance Review Update: A member wished to raise the proposal for the duties of Association Treasurer and Secretary to be formally transferred to staff, as they were concerned this may result in a loss of oversight by Committee in important affairs. The Chair was happy to open this topic up for discussion.

Another member pointed out that there had previously been consensus that many of the tasks assigned to these roles are already often carried out by staff in practice. With this in mind then, they felt that if these

roles were to be continued on by Committee, the role and remit document would need revision.

A third member mentioned that they felt the Chair and Vice-Chair should still have other office-bearers for support, albeit not necessarily a Treasurer or Secretary.

There was agreement that this decision was one for Committee to consider collectively, and discussion can be had once the final Governance Review report is ready.

The DCE clarified that while the Consultant conducting the Review suggested the option of presenting the report in chunks, Committee's preference was to see the final report in full.

The Chair and DCE sought to re-assure members that important matters such as finance continue to be overseen by senior staff and the Chair. The FM also highlighted the detailed level of auditing which the Association is subject to, and the various levels of delegated authority which are in place.

Item 8 – Loan Portfolio Return: the CE passed on via the DCE the meaning of some acronyms used within the report, which members were satisfied with.

The Chair liked a suggestion from a member that some other Associations use a 'jargon-buster' for papers which merit this.

Item 11 – SFHA Update: The DCE updated members that senior staff are currently exploring recruiting staff for admin assistance and estate management caretaking, via the Jobs and Business Glasgow ('JBG') employment scheme. A meeting was scheduled for Fri 16/8, where more information will be obtained for sharing with Committee.

DCE

A member suggested that a specific staff member could be assigned to ensure recruits are onboarded, trained and mentored correctly. The DCE added that recruits will also receive external mentoring from JBG.

On the topic of the previously discussed idea of a common housing register, the DCE updated that HomeMaster are currently obtaining specialised software for housing applications and suggested waiting until this is released before re-considering sharing information with other Associations. The DCE did add that YHA would still retain its own Allocations Policy, and agreed for Committee to be briefed on how any future systems to this end will work.

DCE

Item 12 – GWSF Update: The CE had attended the recent Summer Regeneration Conference, and some slides and presentations from this have been uploaded to the Committee portal for browsing.

Item 14 – AOCB - ARC Submissions: The CE advised members via the DCE that he will aim in future to present ARC Submissions to Committee for approval further away from the submission deadline itself going forward, although it was emphasised that the figures themselves cannot be changed.

Item 14 – AOCB – Analogue to Digital – The DCE updated that one of the Property Services Officers is aiming to obtain more quotes for this project, but has received one which looks satisfactory. Committee will be updated as this progresses.

5. Membership Applications/Cancellations

Members approved the membership report, which did not have any applications or cancellations to discuss.

The total membership therefore still stands at 104.

6. Chief Executive's Report

Report prepared by the CE to provide members with an update on the latest general situation both within a wider local and national housing context, as well as with the Association itself.

While the CE normally covers key points and opens the report up to members for questions, the DCE relayed some aspects of the report on his behalf, namely:

Item 2.2 – Despite a change in UK Government following an election, there does not appear to be much change regarding cuts to the Affordable Housing Supply Programme.

Item 2.3 – UK Government appears to proposing a public energy company be headquartered in Scotland.

Item 2.4 – A tender opening took place last week for the feasibility study regarding the Greenheat Retrofit Innovation Challenge at the retirement complex, and Lenlay Energy Consultants have emerged as the preferred bidder. If the proposed solution for replacing the heating system is innovative enough, the Association may receive funding.

Item 2.5 – Pre-start meetings have taken place ahead of the B&C Listed Window Replacement Project, and it is hoped that works will be

Again, as per the Rules, one third of members must retire ahead of the meeting although they are free to immediately re-stand for election and do not require to be nominated. The four longest-serving members since their last election to Committee all confirmed that they will resign and then re-stand.

Furthermore, the Rules require Committee to confirm the continued effectiveness of W Docherty since he has been serving for at least 9 continuous years and will be seeking re-election. Committee verified that W Docherty continues to be effective in his role.

There will therefore be 8 vacancies at the AGM. A letter will be circulated to members notifying them of arrangements, and this year an emphasis will be placed on seeking new female and/or working-age members to broaden the diversity profile of Committee, although all interested individuals remain welcome to stand. The DCE noted a member's suggestion that the letter could also request for BME individuals.

DCE

Members' attention was drawn to the Rule stipulating that membership of YHA may cease if someone fails to attend 5 consecutive AGMs (and without apologies or proxy vote). Currently there are 55 members who have technically already met this threshold, plus 3 more who will meet it if they do not attend this year. However, the DCE suggested that it would be best to enforce this from 2024 onwards, to avoid cancelling the memberships of people who may yet attend this year. The Chair agreed with this, and suggested writing to those affected to encourage attendance. Another member also suggested a piece in the next newsletter detailing what the AGM entails, which the DCE again noted.

DCE

Finally, Committee were given a proposed meeting schedule through to March 2025, to which there were no objections.

The proposed AGM arrangements were approved.

Policy Reviews

9.

Tenant Records and Confidentiality – it was proposed that this policy be fully discontinued, since the Association has more up-to-date policies that also deal with these matters (e.g., policies exist on Data Protection; Data Retention; Freedom of Information and Environmental Information), and the DCE stated that the intention is for these to also be amalgamated in future as part of the policy streamlining process.

Approved; Policy Discontinued.

Internet and Email – minor word changes concerning name of Software used.

Approved.

Allocations – Title changes to reflect the Housing Services Manager being re-graded to DCE.

For Section 13, 'Management Transfer' has been changed to 'Exceptional Circumstances' and is now to be initiated by a Housing Officer for approval from the DCE to maintain a 2-stage process.

Approved.

10. Landlord Health and Safety Update

Committee were presented with a newly drafted action plan to help the Association meet any areas of 'part-conformance' identified in a recent Landlord H&S audit.

There were no further questions or comments; contents noted.

11. External Audit Review and Tender Report

Report from the FM recommending Committee approve the re-appointment of Azets as the Association's external auditors (to be formally confirmed at the AGM), having gone through a tender process and conducted interviews with bidders.

The paper was appended by a tender report by Atkinson Partnerships, who assisted in the process.

When asked, the FM informed members that guidance for scoring answers during interviews with bidders is prescribed, and that the quality of answers accrues points totals to help reach an outcome. One member who took part in these interviews noted how beneficial they found it to be involved in this process.

Given that the external audit contract initially lasts until 2025 and then has an option to extend to 2029 at the Association's discretion, another member asked if this meant that it would be at Committee's discretion to extend or not. The FM advised that it would, because although there is no formal re-tendering process required, Committee will still receive a formal recommendation to (re-)appoint auditors at each AGM.

No further questions or comments. Approved.

12. SFHA, GWSF and EVH Updates

The Chair informed members that they had recently stood for the EVH Executive Committee at their AGM, but was not elected.

Another member who attended EVH's AGM updated members that the event also covered some possibly forthcoming employment law changes brought about by the newly-installed Labour UK Government. However, these changes are not live yet and so it is unknown how any changes will manifest. The Chair advised that they will try to re-obtain the papers from that evening and circulate to members.

13. AOCB

The DCE advised members that there are plans to use some Wednesday afternoon office closures to run some training sessions for Committee on some of the more operational tasks undertaken by staff (for example, processing a housing application, calculating ARC returns, etc.). It is intended that non-senior staff may help run these sessions in the first instance, and the DCE will look to collate some possible dates and put these out to members.

DCE

The DCE also informed members that the annual 'Scottish Housing Day' is on 18 September in the Overnewton Centre, and the theme this year will be 'Homes for Life'. It is likely then that Occupational Health, Emergency Services, Elderly Persons' charities etc. will be in attendance. The DCE liked some suggestions by members that included leaflet distribution or posters in closes to promote awareness.

No further business was discussed.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and input, and the meeting closed at 19:25.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: 26 September 2024 at 18:00 (provided AGM is quorate on 19 September 2024).

Signed as a Correct Document

..... Chairperson