



MINUTE OF THE BOARD MEETING

28 November 2018

Present: N Hicks (Chair); R Hutton (Vice-Chair)
A Clark; D McEwan; K McLeod; F Roslewski; C Tait; M Trant
G Russell (Secretary)

In attendance: C Hughes, A Hay, K Miller

Apologies: S Brydon
T Kelly (Leave of absence granted until January 2019)

ACTION

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from S Brydon and members noted that T Kelly was on leave of absence until January 2019.

2 Declarations of Interest

N Hicks – Board member and treasurer of The Action Group, and member of SHAPS Pensions Employers Committee
R Hutton – Employee of Port of Leith Housing Association. Through work, also has relationship with Lothian Gas, Mitie and Greenfingers.
D McEwan and C Tait – tenants of Manor Estates Housing Association
F Roslewski – receives factoring services from the Association

3 Risk Management Issues / Health & Safety Issues / Notifiable Events

G Russell advised there were no new issues to report and confirmed that there had been no further contact from either the Association's insurers or the litigant's solicitor in respect of the event reported previously.

4 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 31 October 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2018 were approved as a true record, proposed by C Tait and seconded by K McLeod.

5 Matters Arising

None.

6 Board Actions

Noted.

7 Minutes of Sub Committee or Subsidiary Meetings

7(i) MEAL Board Meeting 22 November 2018

D McEwan advised members that T Kelly had chaired the meeting in W McBeath's absence. He confirmed that those present were in agreement with the proposed changes to the intra-group agreement.

D McEwan asked members to note performance in respect of arrears and voids, commending staff for their work in this area.

Members noted the minute.

K Miller confirmed that the management accounts are presented to the MEAL Board on a quarterly basis.

MEHA/MEAL Revisions to Intra-Group Agreement

G Russell referred members to previous discussions regarding the proposed revised agreement, referring specifically to the issues in respect of length of tenure of chair, length of board membership and the impact of non-attendance on membership of the Board.

G Russell confirmed that the Association's Solicitor had advised that once adopted the revised agreement can be applied with immediate effect, noting the impact on the current Chair of the MEAL Board.

Members agreed that if the same rules are being applied to MEAL, members of the MEAL Board will have to take part in an appraisal process. **GR**

Following discussion, members approved the revised intra-group agreement.

The Chair agreed to contact the current Chair of MEAL to advise him of the situation. **NH**

8 Matters for Approval / Decision

8(i) Risk Management Update

G Russell introduced the report that had been circulated previously, highlighting the major risks that the Board requires to consider on a quarterly basis.

G Russell asked members to note that it had been highlighted that some of the critical issues included in the Business Continuity Policy should be included in the Risk Register and that this would be addressed at the next review.

GR

Following discussion, members approved the report.

8(ii) Business Continuity Review

G Russell introduced the report that had been circulated previously. Members noted that the Business Continuity Policy is supported by a number of detailed plans as to how potential issues may be addressed.

G Russell confirmed that a 'real' test of the plan relating to the impact of severe weather had taken place earlier in the year and agreed that there would be a further test of another of the contingency plans early in the New Year.

GR

Following discussion, members approved the report.

8(iii) Rent Policy Option – Consultation Response

K Miller introduced the report that had been circulated previously, noting in particular the tenant response to the consultation. The main changes proposed as a result of the consultation were highlighted:

- No additional points for gas central heating, but rather points reduced for no gas central heating;
- In respect of harmonisation, tenants were in favour of rent increases and decreases being applied at the same rate.

K Miller also advised that the leaflet issued had confirmed future consultation on service charges and the annual rent increase.

Following discussion regarding the issue of gas central heating, members voted in favour of this attribute being considered as the norm within the core points per property, with minus points being applied to those properties that do not have central heating.

With regard to proposals for harmonisation, members agreed that this would be at the rate of £10 per month for both rent increases and decreases.

Following discussion, members approved the Rent Setting Policy.

8(iv) Policies for Approval

Pets

C Hughes advised that there were few reposed changes to the existing Pets Policy. She confirmed that the Policy can be challenging to enforce in all cases, however it does give the Association a basis on which to take action, should any tenant be in breach of the Policy and be keeping pets that are causing problems.

Following discussion, members approved the Policy.

Voids

Members noted that this Policy involved both Neighbourhood Services and Asset Management and Repairs departments.

C Hughes confirmed that tenants had been consulted on the overall principles of the Policy but not the specifics of the proposed Exit Standard. It was suggested that there should be further consultation on this in the future, perhaps involving tenants in property inspections, however A Hay confirmed that this could be problematic in terms of insurance if the properties are considered unsafe.

CH

Following discussion, members approved the Policy.

Social Media

K Miller introduced the Policy and asked members to note a proposed change to paragraph 3.2 to refer to alternative means of communication for 'any customers who do not use social media'.

KM

It was also suggested that paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 should refer to 'social platforms' rather than specifically Facebook and Twitter to ensure that any future developments of other media are covered by the Policy.

KM

Following discussion, members approved the Policy, subject to the amendments noted above.

Delegation of Powers to Office Bearers and Senior Officials

G Russell advised members that this Policy is not yet due for review, however the revised document presented takes account of current consultation regarding the issue of notifiable events.

Members noted that although MEAL is not regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator, there is still a requirement to report relevant issues that affect the governance of either the Association or the subsidiary.

Following discussion, members approved the Policy.

8(v) Corporate Plan 2019 – 22

G Russell introduced the report that had been circulated previously.

Members requested that there be clarification that future new development is an ambition of the Board, whilst acknowledging the limits within which the Association is currently operating. It was agreed that this should be included as part of Objective 1.

Members noted that EESSH 2 is still subject to consultation and it was agreed that reference should simply be made to EESSH.

Members noted the reference to ‘neighbourhood’ within the document and were reassured that work in this area could be monitored through the ARC indicator that measures tenant satisfaction with their neighbourhood.¹

GR specifically sought members’ views on the section in relation to affordability. It was agreed that this section should include reference to the tenant consultation on the Rent Setting Policy and its influence on affordability. It was also agreed that there should be reference to the work that the Association is doing to mitigate issues re welfare reform.

With regard to the SWOT/PEST analysis, it was agreed that the three potential weaknesses relating to Board issues should be amalgamated into one.

Members noted that the Association’s Risk Register is due to be considered in detail at the January meeting of the Audit Committee and agreed that how this is referred to in the Corporate Plan should be agreed following that meeting.

All GR

8 (vi) Establishment of Federation of Independent Edinburgh RSLs

G Russell introduced the report that had been circulated previously regarding the establishment of ‘ARCHIE’.

Following discussion, members approved the recommendations of the report.

8 (vii) Granting of Servitude – Echline, South Queensferry

G Russell introduced the report that had been circulated previously, noting that this could potentially provide an opportunity in developing a relationship with a major builder.

¹ Members noted that the current indicator refers to “Satisfaction with Management of Neighbourhood’ but that from 2020 this will be ‘Satisfaction with Neighbourhood’.

Following discussion, members approved the granting of servitude, noting that all costs will be met by the builder.

8 (viii) Revised Board Meeting Schedule

G Russell introduced the report that had been circulated previously.

Following discussion, he agreed to consider a potential date for a Board Away Day and to look at whether this could incorporate a Board meeting.

GR

It was also suggested that tentative dates for Board member appraisals should be agreed.

GR

Noting that there would need to be a short Board meeting immediately following the AGM, G Russell also agreed to consider the start time of the AGM in order to ensure that there would be sufficient time for this to take place.

GR

8 (ix) Applications for Membership

G Russell advised members of 2 applications for membership, and confirmed that there was no reason for these to be rejected. Members approved the applications.

9 Matters for Information

9(i) EVH Salaries – Employers’ Consultation – Feedback Report

Noted.

9(ii) Pre-Budget 2019/20

Noted.

9(iii) Loan Renegotiation – Informal Discussion

G Russell advised members that the Association will be seeking to renegotiate loans early in 2019. He confirmed that he and K Miller met with Rathbones, who advised that in view of the current climate, it may be prudent to consider this at an earlier stage than previously planned.

G Russell confirmed that he and K Miller subsequently met with the Chair and the Chair of the Audit Committee to discuss potential options to take this forward. He sought and received permission from the Board to progress this matter with a view to reporting back to the Board in January 2019. It was agreed that proposals would be presented to the Audit Committee in January, if the information was available in time for that meeting.

GR/KM

10 Any Other Competent Business

(I) Mortgage to Rent Property – Rosyth

G Russell gave members details of a property in Rosyth that is due to become vacant. Members agreed that staff could consider disposal of the property once it is empty and available for inspection.

Following conclusion of the business of the meeting, A Hay gave a short presentation on the work of the Asset Management and Repairs Team.

11 Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 30 January 2019 at 5.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at: 8 pm