

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE HOUSING SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 20 APRIL 2021 AT 6.30 P.M. VIA VIDEO LINK.

<u>ACTION</u>		
	Present:	<p>Ms D. Smith Elected Member (Chairperson)</p> <p>Mr J. O'Donnell Elected Member</p> <p>Mrs L. Breeze Elected Member</p> <p>Mr P. Shiach Elected Member</p> <p>Mrs K. Tennant Elected Member</p> <p>Quorum required: 3 members (excluding co-opted) Quorum achieved: Yes</p>
	In Attendance:	<p>Mr J. Farrell Head of Housing Services</p> <p>Mr J. Devlin Acting Housing Services Manager</p>
	1. Apologies	Apologies were received from Cllr M. McNair, Mr J. Calderwood and Mrs K. Brown.
	2. Chairperson's Remarks	There were no Chairperson's remarks.
	3. Declaration of Interest	There were no declarations of interest.
	4. Business carried over from last meeting	There was no business carried over, with any updates contained in the reports presented.
	5. Correspondence	There was no correspondence
	6. Q4 2020/21 Void & Lettings Report (year-end report)	<p>Prior to presenting the report, the Head of Housing Services (HHS) advised that the year-end figures reported across all reports were subject to variation following our Annual Return on The Charter (ARC) audit process which is due to take place at the beginning of May. Any variances will be reported at the next available HSSC or Management Committee meeting.</p> <p>The Head of Housing Services and the Acting Housing Services Manager ran over the report circulated prior to the meeting, with the following points raised or noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that the time to re-let had increased greatly during quarter 4 and that this had been down to a number of factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A high number of void properties in the preceding months before the Christmas break in comparison to the preceding quarters. This placed a strain on allocation resources. The number of voids reduced during March.

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- The office being closed with no void works possible between the dates of 24 December 2020 and 6 January 2021 (14 days).
- The continuing pandemic lockdown restrictions meaning only one contractor at a time being allowed within void properties. We are actively looking at ways to allow more than one contractor at a time to carry out work as well as different methods of carrying out void works.
- Issues with power companies taking lengthy time to reset power meters left in debt by the outgoing tenants, meaning there was no power within the property to allow void works to take place for some significant periods of time. The company used made a decision not to prioritise void properties, despite having previously done so. We have started a new partnership with Utilita Energy, who have made a commitment that Void properties will be prioritised with a turnaround of 1.5 days. This should greatly improve performance in this area.
- The introduction of a new Housing System from the beginning of December 2020 involving staff training and new methods of working. This resulted in new procedures having to be developed and allocations processes being slower until staff got fully to grips with the system. This is now improved and allocations should be more efficient going into the first quarter of the new financial year.
- It was noted that despite the issues above, the average days to let did improve slightly from quarter 3 at 32.14 days, down from 32.40 days.
- A Committee member asked the Housing Services Manager (HSM) the reason why the debt in power meters was impacting so badly? The HSM advised that the companies were not prioritising void properties, despite having previously done so. As well as this, the lack of power means that little to no repair work is possible within the void property.

No further points were raised or noted.

7. Q4 2020/21 Allocations Report (year-end report)

The Head of Housing Services covered the report issued prior to the meeting, with the following points raised or noted:

- It was highlighted that the number of voids had increased significantly during Q4 and that this had negatively impacted the allocations process as detailed at point 6 above.
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns on letting performance was noted. We continue to try and mitigate this by amending working practice and procedures where possible.

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- It was highlighted that some Q4 data (non ARC data) is missing from the report. This is due to the new Housing system not yet having the capability to provide these figures. Discussions with the software provider are ongoing and this will be rectified as soon as possible.
- It was agreed to keep all letting targets the same for the year ahead, i.e. Waiting list 45%, Homeless 50% and Transfer 5%.
- An improvement of +5% was noted in the tenancy sustainment figures. Although too early to have made a major impact, it is hoped that this performance can be maintained or improved going forward following the employment of the Shared Tenancy Sustainment Officer.

No further questions or points were raised.

8. Q4 2020/21 Anti-social Behaviour & Estate Management Report

The Head of Housing Services ran through the report issued prior to the meeting, with no points raised or noted.

9. Q4 2020/21 Arrears Management Report

The Head of Housing Services ran over the report issued prior to the meeting, with the following points noted or raised:

- It was noted that gross arrears rose by 0.06% (£2,741) between December 2020 and March 2021. This continues to be in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated issues as noted within the report. Arrears are however increasing at a much slower rate than in the last quarter, where a rise of over c.£7k (0.15%) was seen.
- In terms of the year, arrears rose by a total of £22,526 (0.48%), which although a substantial increase, is not as large as the 1% plus figures expected from other RSL's through the Scottish Housing Regulator's monthly return. As a sector, RSL's have been hit hard by the pandemic in terms of tenants being unable or unwilling to pay. This is compounded by legal measures such as Notice of Proceedings (NOP's) continuing to have a six month lead in time instead of the 1 month prior to the pandemic.
- A Committee member asked whether or not NOP's were being served? It was confirmed that NOP's were still being served, but that their effectiveness was almost zero due to the long lead in period.
- Resources continue to be diverted into arrears management. There is no doubt though that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continues in hampering all landlords' abilities to manage rent arrears.

The remainder of the report was noted with no further questions asked. The policy was unanimously approved.

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ACTION**10. Q4 2020/21 Universal Credit Report**

The Head of Housing Services ran over the report issued prior to the meeting, with the following points noted or raised:

- It was noted that despite an increase in arrears during quarter 4, that the amount of Universal Credit (UC) arrears had fallen. Although the number of UC cases had risen by 7 cases during the quarter, arrears fell by £7,356, which is significant.
- The average UC arrears figure also decreased for the third quarter in succession, now standing at £574.59. This is pleasing as is the fact that the gap between average UC arrears and other arrears also shrank for the third quarter in a row to £114.32 during the same timeframe. If this continues a reduction in UC arrears may again be seen going forward.
- This all represents good news as UC arrears are dropping.

The remainder of the report was noted with no further questions asked.

11. Tenancy Sustainment Report

The Head of Housing Services ran over the report issued prior to the meeting, with the following points noted or raised:

- It was noted that this was a new report introduced following the employment of the Shared Tenancy Sustainment Officer and the Part Time Welfare Rights Officer in December 2020 and January 2021 respectively.
- It was highlighted that during the one quarter 470 tenants had received assistance, with £33,492 tenant income or assistance generated. Of this amount, we can demonstrate at least a gain of £5,625 for tenants in rental payments, which will have reduced the impact on the rent arrears during the quarter.

No further points were noted.

12. Policy Review – Abandoned Homes Policy

The Head of Housing Services ran over the policy issued prior to the meeting, with the following points noted or raised:

- It was noted that this was a minor review of an existing policy with no major changes to context other than incorporating Housing Services instead of Housing Management.

No further points were raised and the policy was unanimously approved.

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13. General Maintenance Report

The Acting Housing Services manager ran over the report issued prior to the meeting, with the following decisions made, points noted or raised:

- Stock Condition Surveys – It was noted that the survey instructed for 2020/21 was not able to commence due to lockdown restrictions. The HSM advised that a revised quote was obtained from the contractor to carry out both 2020-2021 & 2021-22 and requested that the quote be approved by the Sub-Committee. The quote of [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] was unanimously approved by the Sub-Committee.
- Procurement – Reactive Repairs Contractors; Tender documentation had been received and is currently being assessed by consultants. The contracts are due to start on 1st June 2021.

Tender documents are being finalised and are to be uploaded to Public Contract Scotland when finalised. Contracts on track to be awarded in June 2021.

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- First time central heating at Dumbarton Road –The Association is waiting on the results of LCITP funding application. Once received an update will be provided to the Management Committee.
- COVID-19 Update – The Association is running a reduced repairs service in line with government guidance. Only repairs deemed to be essential, as listed on Scottish Government website, are being carried out until lockdown restrictions are lifted. All non-essential repairs are being recorded on the Associations “Homemaster” system and are to be progressed from 26/04/2021.

- [REDACTED] – It was noted that [REDACTED] works identified will be completed by 18th May 2021.

- [REDACTED]

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- [REDACTED]
- Heat Meters – The Association will be submitting information to the regulatory body by September 2021 in order to confirm its position in relation to amended guidance of Heat Network (Metering and Billing) Regulations 2014.

The remainder of the report was noted, with no further points raised.

14. ARC Statistical Reports

The HSM reiterated that the year-end figures reported were subject to variation following our Annual Return on The Charter (ARC) audit process which is due to take place at the beginning of May. Any variances will be reported at the next available HSSC or Management Committee meeting.

The remainder of the report was noted with no questions asked

15. Cyclical & Major Repairs Reports

The Acting Housing Services Manager ran over the reports circulated prior to the meeting, with the following points raised or noted:

- It was highlighted that due to Covid-19 restrictions, major repair works had been largely affected. This has meant that most programmed works were halted. Restart meetings had been held and works that had been placed on hold due to lockdown restrictions will recommence on 26th April 2021.
- It was noted that cyclical works remain on target, with the exception of the gas safety check failures noted in the report caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown.

The remainder of the report was noted with no questions asked.

16. Carbon Management Report

The Housing Services Manager referred to the report distributed prior to the meeting and noted that due to COVID progress had slowed with regards to most targets set out within the report.

The remainder of the report was noted with no questions asked.

17. Contractors Performance Report

The Housing Services Manager referred to the report and noted those contractors for which performance had fallen below the 90% target. It was

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stated that performance had improved in quarter 4 due to the increased information submitted from contractors. The HSM informed the Sub-Committee that training for the contractors portal will be set up throughout May which will allow for live data to be provided in future reports.

The content of the report was noted by the sub-committee

18. Contract Register Report

The Housing Services Manager referred to the report distributed prior to the meeting and noted that the report would be a standard item for future meetings.

The content of the report was noted with no questions asked.

19. Asbestos Management Policy

The Acting Housing Services Manager ran over the policy issued prior to the meeting, with the following points noted or raised:

- It was noted that this was a minor review of an existing policy with no major changes to context other than incorporating Housing Services instead of Housing Management.

No further points were raised and the policy was unanimously approved.

20. Legionella Policy

The Acting Housing Services Manager ran over the policy issued prior to the meeting, with the following points noted or raised:

- It was noted that this was a minor review of an existing policy with no major changes to context other than incorporating Housing Services instead of Housing Management.

No further points were raised and the policy was unanimously approved.

21. Rechargeable Repairs Policy

The Acting Housing Services Manager ran over the policy issued prior to the meeting, with the following points noted or raised:

- It was noted that where there is a humanitarian concern or where a rechargeable repair would place a tenant into unacceptable financial hardship then the HoHS or HSM would be able to use their discretion taking into consideration all relevant circumstances to apply a partial or full credit.
- It was noted that this was a minor review of an existing policy with no major changes to context other than incorporating Housing Services instead of Housing Management.

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No further points were raised and the policy was unanimously approved.

22. Training Session – Questions to ask Housing Management

The Head of Housing Services ran over the feedback provided from the trainer following this recent HSSC training session.

There were only two very minor observations:

- A suggestion that some text be removed from reports, e.g. Head of Service comments and that these points become discussion points rather than contained with the reports.
- A traffic light guide in line with ARC performance be introduced to each report.

Following discussion, the HSSC decided that they were happy with the existing format of the reports and did not want to introduce these suggestions. It was felt that the inclusion of comments ensured that no potential discussion points were missed.

It was felt that a traffic light guide may be more suitable for the overall ARC performance report or comparison presented annually to the Management Committee

20. Agree Next Training Session

A further training topic will be agreed in advance of the next meeting, the date of which is to be confirmed in the new Committee year.

21. Date and Time of Next Meeting

To be confirmed as part of the 2021/22 Committee Meeting timetable following the summer AGM.

Meeting closed

APPROVED

PROPOSED

SECONDED

JF/JD 21/04/2021