



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF AYRSHIRE HOUSING ("the Company") HELD AT RAMADA JARVIS HOTEL, DALBLAIR ROAD AYR ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2006 AT 7:00 PM

Present: **Community Members**
James Ledgerwood (Chairperson)
Anne Cameron
Louise Laurie
John McKerchar
George McGeehan
Mary Graham

South Ayrshire Council – Represented By
John McDowall
Winifred Sloan
Arthur Spurling

Tenant Members
Linda Allison
Pearl Boyd
John Scott
John Bell
Zoe Sneddon
Catherine Gilmour
Kerry McCann
William Murphy
Mrs L Maguire
Mrs M Muir

In Attendance: Jim Whiston
Alan Park
David McGivern
Sharon Ritchie
Caroline Donald
Zoe McGrady
Rose Estelles
Voirrey Johnstone
Jim Sinclair

Apologies: Nick Larkin, Gordon Muir and Charles Donnelly

1. Notice

The Chair noted that a quorum was present.

2. Minutes

The Minutes were approved by John McKerchar and seconded by Provost Winifred Sloan.

3. Postal Ballot

The postal ballot, for the election of two Community Members was conducted with the single transferable voting system this year. Jim Sinclair, External Auditor, presented the results.

The successful candidates for the Community category were as follows: Louise Laurie and John McKerchar.

There being three candidates for the three vacancies in the Tenants category Linda Allison, Catherine Gilmour and Pearl Boyd were appointed without the need for a postal ballot this year.

4. Report by the Board

The Chair provided a brief of a busy and successful year for Ayrshire Housing, supported with an illustrative presentation of our recent developments, events and competitions.

Through our continuing development programme, we increased the value of our balance sheet by £7 millions to £25 millions. The Chair thanked Communities Scotland and South Ayrshire Council for their continued support. We are beginning to see the benefits of the Council's affordable housing policy in the increasing numbers of sites being acquired through planning agreements with house builders. We recently signed an agreement which will guarantee the provision of affordable housing in development of Ayr racecourse.

We have joined a club of 25 housing associations from across Scotland who exchange information on their relative performance. The Board are amongst the top performers in terms of most of the key target areas such as property turn-around times, administration cost control and arrears recovery. Graphs were shown to illustrate this.

Rent arrears, the housing management team has shown substantial progress in reducing the arrears levels by 50% over the past year.

The rent increase this year was pegged at 2.7%, well below the maximum allowed. It is also the third year running the lowest of any local authority or housing association in Ayrshire.

Some highlights over the year include the completion of 13 flats in Girvan's conservation area, the completion of three schemes made possible by the South Ayrshire Councils' affordable housing scheme, eight family homes completed at Baird Road, Monkton, the completion of a second development in Coylton, 24 houses have been provided at George Place in Greenan, and a 22 house development in Girvan.

The waiting list continues to grow, 120 households were accommodated from the list through South Ayrshire Council's nominations. 69 homeless households have also been accommodated. 3000 repair requests were responded to and South Ayrshire Council secured the reactive repair contract.

Ayrshire Initiatives now supports 10 staff, has developed a very successful training scheme linked to Ayrshire Housing's building programme. A community development programme at Lochside is being led by Louise Christie, Director, Ayrshire Initiatives.

The Chair thanked Sarah Douglas and Charles Donnelly who have decided to retire from the Board at this AGM. In particular, a special thanks to Charles Donnelly who has given many years of valuable service to the Board of Ayrshire Housing. The Chair wished them well in their future ventures.

5. Audit Report

Jim Sinclair, External Auditor at Armstrongs reported that the findings illustrated in the Audit Report, as per the statement on the Company's System of Internal Financial Control, was a true and accurate statement and are in accordance with guidance which does not contradict the governance.

6. Re-appoint Armstrongs as auditors

The motion to re-appoint Armstrongs as auditors was unanimously agreed.

7. General discussion

The Chair welcomed questions from the floor.

Cllr John McDowall asked what percentage of social housing would be allocated at the new development at Ayr Racecourse and what was the minimum number of rural houses being built in a year?

Jim Whiston stated that approximately 10% would be allocated based on land, number of plots and discussions with SAC.

For rural build there was no minimum number built in a year. Jim stated that factors such as planning consent, cost effectiveness to build less than 4 or 8 units, but as a housing association we will attempt to cater for all residents. The Chair reiterated that it is about the provision of social housing to all residents.

A tenant member enquired about the facility of a play area at George Place, Greenan. Jim confirmed that the obligation at this site was with McTaggart and Mickel and planning consent has been granted to erect a play area on the North boundary.

Provost Sloan took the opportunity to congratulate the Board and stated that the Accounts were full of good information and time should be taken to read them.

Cllr Arthur Spurling asked about training facilities such as apprenticeships, leading to fully qualified professionals.

Jim confirmed that a construction employment training programme with Ayrshire Initiatives delivered in conjunction with Ayrshire Housing currently provides employment and training opportunities for nine individuals with contractors delivering both new developments, maintenance and repairs work. Jim pointed out that these 9 individuals would not under normal employment circumstances be considered for such a placement based on background and references and although no guarantees can be given for full time employment we aim to use these individuals in future projects.

A tenant member enquired about our policy on vetting prospective tenants. David McGivern answered by stating that legislation prohibits us from accessing police records. We take up tenancy references; look at tenancy history and anti-social behaviour all of this is taken into consideration. David agreed that it is frustrating when a tenant becomes an issue after all the relevant checks are made.

Cllr Arthur Spurling asked why Earl Crescent/Earl Rise in Dundonald after 3/4years completion is undergoing redecoration, when Castleview in Dundonald which is older stock is not?

Jim replied that the standard of build was poor and the properties had not weathered well.

Jim confirmed that prior to handover a snagging list is provided for the contractor to rectify. When matters cannot be resolved to a satisfactory standard, legal steps are taken and ultimately the contractor would not be used again.

David McGivern contributed that external timber painter work is carried out after a minimum of 5 years on all our properties.

Cllr John McDowall asked about our allocation of homeless families. David McGivern confirmed 146 households were accommodated from our waiting list or through nominations by SAC and 69 homeless households via a section 5 referral. Pearl Boyd asked for clarification on the common housing register. Jim Whiston advised that this has not been progressed and is currently not a priority for South Ayrshire Council.

Anne Cameron, Community Member and member of the Treetops Tenants and Residents in Troon discussed the recent Housing Scotland Act and tenants right to form a Registered Tenant Organisation to carry out their own ideas for improving tenant participation in their area.

Jim Whiston agreed to circulate information in our Newsletter and he can be used as a point of contact in the first instance. Information packs were left with Jim.

There being no other business the Chair closed the formal business of the meeting.

Meeting closed 7:55pm

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Chairperson