



Board Meeting – 22 February 2017

Agenda Item: 3

Subject: Minute of Board Meeting 25 January 2017

Prepared by: Alan Park

Minute of the Board meeting held on Wednesday 25 January 2017 at 5.30pm in Main Street, Ayr

Present: **Tenant Members**
Liz Craig
Frances Maguire
Kenny George
Suzi Williamson
Georgina Dawson

South Ayrshire Council
No council representatives present

Community Members
Roy Martin (Chairperson)
Bobby Pyper
Sandy Paton
Simon Leslie

In attendance: Jim Whiston
Jacqueline Dunlop (until after items 6 (a) and (b))
Alan Park (Minutes)

Roy Martin welcomed two new community members, Sandy Paton and Bobby Pyper, who had agreed to be co-opted onto the Board to fill our two vacancies in the community category for the remainder of this session. Roy invited everyone to introduce themselves.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ian Cavana, William Grant, John Hampton and Rhonda Leith.

2. Declarations of Interest

Roy asked that any member with an interest in any agenda item declares that fact at the appropriate time during the meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2016 were accepted as a true record as proposed by Frances Maguire and seconded by Simon Leslie.

4. Matters arising

Jim updated the Board on the position with negotiations with South Ayrshire Women's Aid (SAWA) regarding the proposed leasing arrangements. Two properties have been withdrawn and returned to the general letting pool and one other is currently void. A deadline has been given to SAWA which will expire shortly and if no agreement has been reached by then this property will also be returned to the general letting pool.

In terms of the temporary furnished accommodation (provided to assist the Council with homeless provision) Jim reported that the council had approached us with a proposal to bring the arrangement to an end which is unfortunate as we have been involved in this provision since the formation of the company. We will hold discussions to establish if we can maintain the current arrangement and a further report will be made next month.¹

A report on the outcome of the rent consultation will be made to the February Board.²

Jim confirmed that retirement gifts have been organised for the recently retired members which will be accompanied by a letter of thanks from the Chairperson.

The Board noted the content of the paper.

6. (a) and (b) Money Advice Reports for quarters 2 and 3 2016/17

Roy invited Jacqueline to update the Board on progress on the money advice service.

Jacqueline explained that the Money Advice Service assists tenants to maximise their income and therefore the Income of Ayrshire Housing by accessing benefit entitlement, reducing expenditure and help with budgeting. This is done by identifying entitlements, assisting with form filling, disputes around benefits and appeals. Tenants are also helped to apply for any other funding and access to support due to financial hardship. Jacqueline added that tenants are facing more exceptional financial pressure than ever before due to the ongoing Welfare Reforms which commenced in 2010, resulting in the Welfare Reform Act, 2012.

Since the start of the Money Advice Service each year has seen different challenges for tenants and different types and levels of assistance required from money advice and housing officers.

¹ Jim/David to provide update on discussions with SAC regarding temporary furnished accommodation for February Board

² Jim to provide report on rent consultation for February Board

Jacqueline provided a summary of the what's happening next in 2017:

- Tax Credit and Universal credit limited to two children
- Tax credit family element to be reduced
- ESA work related activity component abolished
- Universal credit housing costs for claimants under 21 to be abolished

Jacqueline reported that Full Service Universal Credit will reach our area by February 2018. We have feedback from other full service areas indicating some issues which we may expect:

- UC claimants doubling in number when service goes full
- UC cases are time intensive to support
- Rent arrears collection becomes more difficult because of delays in payment and reduced payments
- IT systems are not coping with the payments made through UC
- UC will not talk to a tenant representative without the tenant
- Complex cases needing intensive face to face support
- High demand for digital support

Jacqueline further explained that by 2019 there will be a cap on the Housing Benefit at the shared accommodation local housing allowance rate for those under 35 on UC, or on Housing Benefit on a tenancy since April 2016.

In terms of mitigating the impact on our tenants Jacqueline explained that:

- All UC claimants have input from their housing officer to assist to keep them on track
- Tenants are identified and notified of changes that could affect them
- The introduction of a further Ayrshire Housing staff member for money advice
- The offering of digital training for tenants
- Increase face to face involvement with tenants to offer assistance
- Focus on budgeting and income maximisation

Roy thanked Jacqueline on behalf of the Board for all her hard work. Jacqueline left the meeting at this point.

5. Projects - business development

Jim updated the Board on the progress of the Kings Arms, Dailly project and the withdrawal of the lowest tenderer. Jim confirmed that the second placed contractor has been asked to look at their pricing levels and their report is awaited. Roy asked that in terms of risk management that we always ensure that we are in control in situations such as these. Jim will report further next month³.

In relation to Limonds Wynd Jim referred to the architect's report on the contractual position and explained the final outcome. Jim noted that despite the

³ Jim to update February Board on Kings Arms, Dailly

various issues the final overall spend was less than 1% in excess of the original contract sum.

Jim updated the Board on site finding after Liz Craig declared an interest and left the meeting temporarily. Liz then re-joined the meeting.

Jim noted the receipt of an offer of government grant for the acquisition of up to 18 properties on the open market, this target to be achieved by March 2019.

The Board agreed with Jim's advice that we do not pursue mid-market rent and the Corporate Plan will be adjusted accordingly.⁴

The Board noted the content of the paper.

6. Housing Management Activity

Jim reported on good performance generally and noted the hard work of the staff team.

Roy asked that the number of applicants on our waiting list be included in the report.⁵

The Board noted the report.

7. Property Maintenance Activity

Jim reported that performance overall is good with only Right First Time underperforming marginally.

Jim noted that the initial results from the tenant satisfaction survey, just completed, is that high levels of satisfaction are being indicated.

Jim reported that the improvement works at Rowan Road, Girvan will start in April.

The Board noted the report.

8. Financial Matters

Alan reported that the key financial indicators were all within target for the nine months to 31 December 2016.

8. (a) Management Accounts for the 9 months ended 31 December 2016

Alan reported on the management accounts for the 9 months to 31 December 2016 and confirmed that we have exceeded the budgeted surplus figure for this period. He also confirmed that the financial strength of the company remains strong and is expected to remain so. The detailed performance indicators are all within target and the loan covenants have been met.

⁴ Jim to amend Corporate Plan to reflect decision

⁵ Add waiting list numbers to Housing Management report

In response to a suggestion from Roy it was agreed that a summary confirming our financial status would be added to the key performance section to better inform Board members of any areas of financial health concern or otherwise.⁶

The Board approved the management accounts for the nine months ended 31 December 2016.

9. Marketing and Public Relations

Jim noted that he will write to the Chief Executive of SAC regarding council representation on our Board after the May elections.

Jim asked members to review their draft biographies on the new website and let him know of any changes required.

The Board noted the report.

9 (a) Minute of Community Grants Committee meeting held on 23 November 2016

This was noted.

Georgina Dawson reported that the operation of the Maybole OiR over 50's gardening project may not conform to our understanding of how it was to be run and promoted. Jim will make suitable enquiries.⁷

Kenny George asked that Jim makes contact with Barr Communities Store representatives to organise a PR event to allow Ayrshire Housing's support to be advertised.⁸

10. Operational Matters

The Board noted the paper.

10. (a) Governance Review

Jim reported that the Regulator has been appraised of progress with the governance review.

Caroline Donald to claim dates for individual review meetings which will inform this year's training plan.⁹

Roy has passed on to Jim guidance from the Institute of Directors which may be helpful in the scoping work that Jim will do with Rhonda.

The Board accepted the recommendations.

⁶ Alan to add appropriate summary to the key performance section of the finance paper

⁷ Jim to make enquiries regarding the operation of the Maybole OiR over 50's gardening project

⁸ Jim to organise a date for a PR event for Barr Community Store

⁹ Caroline to arrange dates and times for individual board member review meetings

10. (b) Minute of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 23 November 2016

The Board noted the Minute.

11. Any other business

Roy encouraged members to make full use of the half hour period at 5pm before each Board meeting to network with each other prior to the formal business commencing.

Document signed –

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2016.

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 7.30pm

Signed

Dated
