

EAST LOTHIAN HOUSING ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the **Management Committee** was held on Saturday 25 November 2023 at 9.30am, at the Carberry Tower, Musselburgh.

Present:	Brian Logan	(2/2)	Alan Forsyth	(2/2)
	Iain Atkinson	(1/2)	Katrina Hamilton	(2/2)
	Joyce Bolan	(1/2)	Paul Hillard	(2/2)
	Jim Curran	(2/2)	Pamela Macleod	(2/2)
	Shirley Evans	(1/2)	David Rose	(2/2)
	Peter Ewart	(2/2)		

In attendance: Martin Pollhammer, Chief Executive
Gary Alison, Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Charlie Cooley, Director of R3 & Asset Management
Eric Stoddart, Executive Support Officer (Minutes)
Linda Ewart, Consultant

1.0 GENERAL**1.1 Apologies**

Eileen Shand (0/2), Graham Rattray (1/2) and Karen Barry, Director of Housing.

1.2 Declarations of Interest by Management Committee Members

There were no declarations of interest.

1.3 Minutes of Meeting 28 September 2023

The minutes were **approved** by the Management Committee. They were proposed by Katrina Hamilton and seconded by David Rose.

1.4 Action List

The Management Committee noted the report.

1.5 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

2.0 GOVERNANCE**2.1 Secretary's Report**

The Management Committee **approved** the cancellation of the Memberships noted at Section 1.0.

2.2 Management Committee Calendar 2024/25

The Management Committee **approved** the meeting dates for 2024/25.

2.3 Key Performance Indicators 2023/24

The Chief Executive indicated that overall, the performance was reasonable. Attendance at recent Management Committee meetings had been below target, but a good attendance today will improve the Year-to-Date figure.

Pamela Macleod felt the target figures for Bronze, Gold & Platinum Key Tenants were slightly confusing, and suggested this could be improved by adding 'greater than (>)' and 'less than (<)' figures next time to the targets.

The Management Committee noted the report.

3.0 PRIORITY ITEMS**3.1 Independent Review of ELHA Performance**

Linda Ewart introduced the performance review for 2022/23 and reminded Management Committee that a new set of benchmarking comparisons had been introduced for the 2021/22 performance review. This had been to provide a 'benchmarking group' that is more relevant to ELHA, its tenant profile and operating environment. The data is presented in a similar format to previous years, to aid the Management Committee's consideration and, as before, the year-on-year comparison period is three years.

In respect of the landlords selected under 'Neighbours' it is recognised that there are disparities, but these have been selected purely on a geographic basis. It is also acknowledged that Places for People Scotland (PFPS) are an outlier based on size, and this is likely to continue given they have an aggressive acquisition approach, in respect of taking over other housing associations. On that basis, consideration could be given to separating them out (along with East Lothian Council) as a neighbour, due to their size.

On a comparison basis, it should also be noted that Berwickshire Housing Association have performed poorly for a while, which slightly distorts comparisons. There have been developments at Berwickshire which may see improvements, however if these do not materially improve Berwickshire's performance, and their levels continue to be an outlier, consideration should be given to their removal for comparison purposes.

In comparison with National Trends, performance has remained fairly stable with improvement in some areas, and decline (albeit marginally) in others, and overall, there are no significant changes.

Tenant Satisfaction

The performance reported for ELHA is based on ELHA's last Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSS) carried out in 2022 (reported February 2023). This has been maintained against the previous 2019 results, although a decline in repairs satisfaction was noted, which was attributed to the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

Satisfaction with the overall service fell slightly, in keeping with post-pandemic sector trends, but ELHA's performance remains almost 4% above the Scottish average (compared to 4% below in 2019 and 6.5% above in 2022).

Whilst it was acknowledged that ELHA performance is very good at present, the Association should not rest on its laurels. There is a continuing downwards trend for overall satisfaction, but whilst the Scottish average for overall satisfaction has fallen by just over 2%, over the three years since 2021, ELHA's overall satisfaction fell by 4% over the same period. Therefore, as well as monitoring overall performance, it will also be necessary to keep an eye on the trends.

Jim Curran suggested that one factor to consider is that Housing Associations are getting more familiar with the ARC, especially the guidance, so that figures are becoming more accurate. Linda Ewart indicated that further changes are likely to be made to the ARC, so that whilst there may be more confidence with reporting on some aspects, there are always likely to be new areas added.

Quality and Maintenance

ELHA has restored compliance with SHQS to above average levels, following the implementation of a post-pandemic catch-up programme to renew EICRs in 2022/23: 93.6% compliance has been achieved (+50% compared to 2022) compared to the Scottish average of 79%. It is understood that a number of landlords continue to face challenges in respect of EICRs, mainly because of labour shortages.

ELHA's performance in respect of emergency repairs times has been maintained and remains significantly better than the Scottish average (1.3 hours compared to 4.2). ELHA's non-emergency repairs response times have improved significantly (from 7.6 days to 4.7 days), meaning that performance is now better than 2021 and in line with pre-pandemic levels. The national average has remained broadly static at 8.7.

In addition, ELHA's performance in completing repairs 'right first time' has continued to improve and is now 94.2% and is now only 1% behind the 2020 level. The 'gap' between ELHA's performance and the national average has widened and is now +c6% (+c3% in 2022). Overall, therefore, it looks like ELHA has managed to get back towards pre-pandemic performance levels, and there is a sense that ELHA has recovered ground more quickly than other Housing Associations.

The one area where ELHA performance is not as good, in terms of repairs, is the overall satisfaction by tenants with service. This is some 9% weaker than in 2020 and remains poorer than the Scottish average which has remained static. ELHA also remain behind the Peer Group, and East Lothian Council (ELC) in this respect.

This was found by Management Committee to be rather surprising, especially given the strong performance in completing repairs 'right first time', and it was suggested that this might be down to customer expectations.

The Chief Executive noted that there can be a difference between what a tenant expected, and what the tenant ordered. It was also noted that the new Director of R3 & Asset Management had only been fully in post for a few weeks, and this is something they are going to look at.

The Director of R3 & Asset Management agreed that the gap is likely to be around expectations, and the challenge is likely to be around obtaining a clear idea of what customers are looking for. Also that there could be a need to sharpen-up around follow-up work and communications, to better manage expectations.

Katrina Hamilton suggested whether some work could be undertaken to look at informing tenants of the work being done, especially in comparison to other housing providers, just to let them understand the context of the service they receive from ELHA.

The Director of R3 & Asset Management also highlighted that ELHA have a Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) and that there should be engagement with them to understand the drivers behind the tenant's service satisfaction levels.

The Chair summarised the position by acknowledging that overall, these are very positive results and congratulations should be passed to the staff team on achieving these.

The Management Committee noted the report.

4.0 POLICIES

4.1 Banking Policy Review

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services has reviewed this policy and considers that it is no longer required, as the policy is repeated within the Association's Financial Regulation.

The Management Committee **approved** removal of the Banking Policy, and the removal of the reference to this Policy in the Financial Regulations.

4.2 Provision of Agency Services Review

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services highlighted that the policy has been reviewed, and the changes proposed are just a refresh to bring it up to date. There were no specific changes that it was felt necessary to bring to the attention of Management Committee.

The Chair queried the narrative that had been included specifically referring to ensuring compliance with the Equalities and Diversity policy, and why there was not equivalent reference to any other policies. It was acknowledged that this had been primarily to reflect the spirit of delivery of the recently revised Equalities & Diversity Policy, but the Chief Executive agreed that there should be a consistent reference to other policies, and would review this going forward.

The Management Committee **approved** the revised Provision of Agency Services Policy.

4.3 HR Equality & Diversity Policy

The Chief Executive advised that the Association currently has an Equality & Diversity Policy, which details how the principles of Equality and Diversity will be applied in all activities that relate to our stakeholder. This policy was recently reviewed, and an outcome of the review was that there was a need for an HR specific Equality & Diversity policy.

A HR specific Equality & Diversity Policy has been drafted, using a combination of EVH's model policy, ACAS' model policy and guidance from the ACAS website, and this has now been reviewed at JCC as well. There were no further comments from the JCC meeting held on 22 November 2023.

The Management Committee **approved** the new HR Equality & Diversity Policy.

5.0 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

There were no items for discussion under Business Management.

6.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no further items to be raised under AOB, so the meeting was closed at 10:08 am.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 22 February 2024 at 7.00pm at ELHA Head Office, Haddington.

**ADOPTION OF THESE MINUTES APPROVED AT THE MEETING ON
22 FEBRUARY 2024**

Signed _____ (Chair)