hebridean housing partnership

ITEM NO 3.1.1

HEBRIDEAN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP
Board Minutes of Meeting held in HHP Board Room, Stornoway, and remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 27 August 2024 at 5.30pm

PRELIMINARY ITEM	
ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES	
1	**Attendance & Apologies** **Attendees in Person** Gordon Macleod (Chair) Helen Mackenzie **Attendees via MS Teams** Iain M Macleod Fiona Macleod Calum Mackay Alison Maccorquodale **Apologies Received** Norman A Macdonald Thomas Howe **Apologies Not Received** Finlay Stewart Norman Macdonald **Staff & Consultants in Attendance** Dena Macleod (Chief Executive) Donald Macleod (Director of Finance & Corporate Services) John Maciver (Director of Operations) Michael Libby (Corporate Services Officer – Minute Taker) Iona France (Governance Officer) Joel Martin (Corporate Services Officer) Monika Fortagh (Debt Management Officer) Sawan Morrison (Development Manager) Kelda McMichael (Scottish Housing Regulator) Tracey Houston (Scottish Housing Regulator) Murray Smith (Scottish Housing Regulator) **In attendance for Public Items Only** Angus E MacNeil (Assets & Contracts Manager) James Morrison (Finance Manager) Angus Smith (Corporate Resources Manager) Katrina Rowlands (Service Development Manager) Laura Mackenzie (Tenant Engagement Officer) Donalda Mackinnon (Area Manager)
PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS	
2	**Declaration of Interest** **The Chair declared an interest in item 8.2** **Iain M Macleod declared an interest in item 9.2**
3.1	**Minute of Board Meeting 25 June 2024** **The minute of the Board meeting of 25 June 2024 was submitted and approved as a true and accurate record.**
3.2	**Action Sheet** The Chief Executive advised that a positive meeting took place with the Isle of Harris Distillery in relation to the proposed works at Scott Road. The Director of Operations further stated that next steps had been agreed with a hydrology study due to take place which was currently being tendered. **The Action Sheet was noted.**
4	**Date of Next Meeting** **The dates of the next meetings will be:** • **Wednesday 28 August 2024 (Post AGM); and**

	• **Tuesday 19 November 2024**
5	**Health & Safety** **Nothing to report.**
ITEMS FOR DECISION	
6.1	**Annual Assurance Statement** The Governance Officer presented the Annual Assurance Statement for consideration and approval prior to submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The Statement confirmed we complied with all regulatory requirements during the past year. The emphasis this year was on Tenant's Health and Safety and this was reflected in the statement. Helen Mackenzie queried if we use the points under CH4 in the Charter Performance as a checklist when reporting performance back to tenants, and if we review the requirements to ensure compliance. The Chief Executive advised that we are currently in the process of reviewing the requirements in preparation for our own Annual Report to tenants. **The Board:** **a) approved the Annual Assurance Statement; and** **b) noted the Annual Assurance Statement – Evidence Checklist.**
6.2	**Investment Programme** The Assets & Contracts Manager provided an update on the 2024/25 Investment Programme, advising the programme was progressing well with a number of contracts on site and we are in receipt of survey costs for other contracts. Following the unsuccessful grant claim from the Scottish Government for replacement of infra-red heating systems, the Assets and Contracts Manager asked the Board to approve the amended 5-Year Investment Programme detailing how funds would be allocated to the heating replacement. An update was provided with regards to Aids and Adaptations where the Scottish Government have yet to confirm the grant level for Aids & Adaptations in 2024/25 which has led to referrals being placed on a waiting list. However, each case is reviewed for urgency, and consideration would be given to progressing cases in the most serious situations e.g. bed blocking, ahead of grant application notification. Helen Mackenzie advised the Board that the issues surrounding Aids and Adaptations, specifically with regards to Scottish Government grants funding was discussed at the Development and Finance Committee meeting held on 26 August 2024. The Director of Operations informed the Board that the delay in grant decisions had been raised with the MSP who had written to the responsible Minister. **The Board:** **a) approved the revised Investment Programme 2024-2029;** **b) noted the progress on the 2024/25 Investment Programme; and** **c) noted that Aids & Adaptations referrals are being placed on a waiting list at present.**
6.3	**Management Report to 30 June 2024** The Finance Manager presented the Management Report for the month ended 30 June 2024. The report showed financial covenants will be met for the year ended 31 March 2025 with a headroom forecast of £410K. A larger than usual number of high value insurance repairs resulted in 50% of the budget being spent in the first quarter of the year. Whilst spend was expected to lower over the next few periods, it would be reviewed to ensure budget was available. The Resource Planning Assumption (RPA) confirmed by the Scottish Government was less than assumed in the development budget and there were delays getting on site with some projects. The plan has been revised with a reduction in the forecast of the Cost and Grant which was being requested for approval by the Board. Helen Mackenzie asked for the reason behind higher than expected insurance repair costs. The Finance Manager advised inclement weather and site access requirements was a driver behind the increased repair costs with many of them having come in below the excess level. Calum Mackay raised concerns in relation to the high spend on the repairs budget and the delay in Scottish Government grand funding being confirmed. **The Board:** **a) noted the Management Report at 30 June 2024 and revised forecast out turn at 31 March 2025; and**

	b) approved the virement of £2,879,104 from development costs and £2,708,675 from development grants to reserves.
6.4	**<u>Business Planning Timetable</u>** The Chief Executive presented the timetable for the annual review of the Business Plan 2024/25 to 2028/29. The Board were provided with an overview of the Business Plan Review process spanning October 2024 to March 2025 where the updated business plan would be presented for Board approval. Helen Mackenzie asked if there was any way in which consultations could allow tenants to be more involved, and whether presenting choices rather than simply percentage increase options would be more beneficial. The Service Development Manager advised that Tenant Events will be taking place in Uist and Barra and officers will be gauging the views of tenants on consultations and engagement. The Chief Executive commented that in previous years, consultations have included a narrative detailing what could be achieved in terms of improvements based on the rent levels and this is something which could be looked at again for future consultations. The Director of Operations advised that we are working with tenants to find out how they want to engage and what matters they would like prioritised. Fiona Macleod stated that although when consulting with tenants we should aspire to give them choice, we do need to be realistic on what can be provided and consult within limitations. Allison MacCorquodale commented that the way in which we consult with tenants and the methods used should be looked at, for example younger tenants may respond better to video content. The Chief Executive advised that discussions have taken place with regards to using video content for consultations as a way to extend our reach and encourage engagement. **The Board approved the Business Plan Timetable**

	POLICIES & STRATEGIES
7.1	**<u>Retirement Policy</u>** The Chief Executive advised that there has only been one change to the Retirement Policy, a reduction of the age at which the occupational pension scheme can be accessed from 60 to 55. **The Board noted the review of the Retirement Policy.**
7.2	**<u>Tenant Participation Strategy</u>** The Service Development Manager presented the Tenant Participation Strategy for 2024-2028 for approval. The previous Strategy was approved by Board in 2020 and has now undergone a full review. Following tenant feedback, there were no major changes to the aim and intentions of the strategy. An action plan was also provided to the Board, an update on which will be provided annually. Helen Mackenzie suggested that the strategy should include the wording "Actively provide opportunities for tenants to have a say and for their views to make a difference". Ms Mackenzie advised that this could be included under the aim "Working Together" or that it could be added to the strategy as a standalone aim. Ms Mackenzie further suggested that we should Introduce Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for monitoring the effectiveness of the Tenant Participation Strategy. This could include metrics such as the percentage of the action plan delivered, tenant satisfaction scores, and participation rates in decision-making processes. **The Board approved the Tenant Participation Strategy 2024-2028 for consultation with staff and tenants.**
7.3	**<u>Workforce Plan</u>** The Chief Executive presented a revamped workforce plan, focusing on the aging workforce, turnover rates, and strategic goals for staff development and retention. The following detail was provided: • **Average Age and Service:** The average age of the team is 48.6 years, and the average length of service is 11.1 years, indicating a mature and experienced workforce. • **Turnover and Salary:** The turnover is better than the national average, and the average salary is competitive, suggesting a stable and well-compensated workforce. • **Retirements:** There are retirements due within five years, highlighting the need for succession planning. • **Skills Gaps and Stock Increase:** The plan identifies skills gaps and considers the impact of an increasing stock on staff workload, especially in property management and tenant support. • **Apprenticeship Programme:** The possibility of expanding the apprenticeship programme to include more roles was discussed, aiming to address skills gaps and provide career opportunities. • **Pay and Benefits:** The board's commitment to maintaining competitive pay and benefits was reaffirmed, ensuring the organisation remains an attractive employer.

	Alison MacCorquodale expressed strong approval of the Workforce Plan, highlighting its comprehensive and rounded approach, and praised the plan for considering career paths and not just using apprenticeships to fill gaps. Helen Mackenzie commented that there may be a benefit to making the apprenticeship programme more flexible, allowing apprentices to experience working in various departments. Fiona Macleod advised that it would be helpful to know how we compare to other organisations in the Outer Hebrides and other RSL's nationally in terms of key statistics such as average age of staff and length of service. Fiona Macleod recalled a Community Planning checklist that was once in place which recorded tenant interactions to address broader needs beyond housing. The checklist facilitated cross-referrals among services like health and social care, potentially enhancing support for vulnerable tenants. The Director of Operations advised that the checklist highlighted by Fiona Macleod was no longer in use, despite this, we do work closely with partners and agencies such as Community Planning, TIG and social services. It was agreed following a suggestion from Fiona Macleod, the Personnel Working Group would review the Workforce Plan on a quarterly basis. **The Board:** **a) approved the Workforce Plan for consultation with staff and Unison; and** **b) if there are no material comments arising from the consultation, that the Workforce Plan be approved, otherwise a revised Strategy will be presented to the next meeting of the Board.**
MONITORING REPORTS	
8.1	**Quarterly Treasury Report to 30 June 2024** The Director of Finance & Corporate Services presented the Treasury management activities for the first quarter of 2024/25 and confirmed our cash balances were £10.846M, an increase of £1.272M compared to the previous quarter, in line with forecasts, primarily due to the development programme being funded through grants, and the timing of spend on our investment programme. All covenants were forecast to be complied with for 2024/25. **The Board noted the:** **a) quarterly report on the Analysis of Investment and Borrowing;** **b) outstanding loans at 30 June 2024 of £17M; and** **c) cash balance at 30 June 2024 of £10.846M.**
8.2	**Development Report** The Development Manager presented the Development Report with the following updates:

Project	Update
Blackwater	Contractor is still on schedule to complete 33 homes in October 2024.
Leverburgh	Work started on site in July 2024.
Barra Phase 2	One tender was received. Following negotiation with the contractor, the project has been submitted to Scottish Government and in view of the high cost will be subject to technical assessment.
Scott Road	Progress on submitting a planning application has been delayed following objections raised by Isle of Harris Distillery. The implications of this are being assessed and further consultations have been initiated.
Great Bernera	The acquisition of the site is making progress.

	Grimsay	A planning application is expected to be lodged in October.
	Melbost West	Plans are being amended and revised following further feedback from the Planning Service.
	Gravir, South Lochs	There is a change of landowner representation, and it is not clear as to whether this can be progressed at this stage.
	Seaview, Knock	We have received the final feasibility study for Seaview, Knock. Initial indications are positive on the land but construction costs are the main concern.

The Board noted the Development Report

8.3

Governance Report

The Governance Officer presented the Governance Report. The report confirmed compliance with rules 62 to 67 for the year ending 31st March. The Board was asked to approve donations totalling £6,000 to six charities, an increase from the usual £5,000 due to a charity being unable to accept funds the previous year.

The charities selected for donations were:

- Cobhair Bharraigh
- Eilean Siar Foodbank
- Western Isles Kidney Patients' Association
- Advocacy Western Isles (Speak Out Group)
- Eilidh Macleod Memorial Trust
- Share (South Uist & Eriskay)

Fiona Macleod commented on the importance of having charities from across the islands represented on the list of recipients.

The Board:

a) approved the 6 charities listed below to be proposed at the AGM on 28 August 2024:

- **Cobhair Bharraigh**
- **Eilean Siar Foodbank**
- **Western Isles Kidney Patients' Association**
- **Advocacy Western Isles (Speak Out Group)**
- **Eilidh Macleod Memorial Trust**
- **Share (South Uist & Eriskay)**

b) noted the Partnership has complied with Rules 62 to 67 for the year ended 31 March 2024 as detailed at Appendix 1;

c) noted the AGM arrangements for 2024: and

d) noted the review of the Corporate Registers.

8.4

Business Plan Monitoring Report

The Governance Officer presented the Business Plan Monitoring Report. The report provided an updated overview of our performance against our strategic goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) for the first quarter.

Arrears performance continued to be impacted by reporting issues and the unresolved Housing Benefit issues caused by the cyber-attack at CNES in November 2024.

	Some indicators showed relatively low figures, however, all were on target for completion by the end of the year. Helen Mackenzie asked if there was an increased risk due to Business Continuity being categorised as amber. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services advised that this was an area Internal Audit had recently reviewed. The findings included developing a testing plan which will be implemented. Fiona Macleod requested that narrative be included alongside each area in the report in order to give more detail on performance. **The Board noted the Business Plan Monitoring Report.**
MEETING GOES INTO PRIVATE SESSION	

Chairperson Mr Gordon Macleod

SIGNED ………………………………………………………

DATE ………………………………………………………