

Cloch Housing Association

Minutes of the Board meeting held at 6pm on Tuesday 30 January 2024 via MS Teams/in the office

Board Present: Kelly Ferns (Chair), Ken Robertson (Vice Chair),
(via Teams) Eileen Tamburrini (Secretary), Eleanor Robertson
David Brown, Hristina Tarpanova, Jackie Smith,
Nicola McLachlan

Attending: Alana Durnin (CEO) – via Teams
(in the office Valerie Wilson (DCEO) – via Teams
& on Teams) Paul McColgan (Head of Property Services)
Michael Monaghan (Director of Customer Services & Communities)
Shonaid Musgrove (Corporate Services Officer, on Minutes) –Teams
Lorna Shaw, Research Resource
Laura Quinn ((Observing) – via Teams

| | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0. | Presentation by [REDACTED] |
| | <p>The meeting was advised that a presentation by consultant [REDACTED] on the Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSS) would start the proceedings.</p> <p>The consultant advised that a more detailed report will be available, but the key ARC (Annual Report on the Charter) results will be shown during this presentation and some other key elements. The main statistics were: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 870 interviews carried out between October and December 2023. This was a good, representative result to have taken place and provides the basis for a very robust report.• Overall satisfaction is at 93%. This is a really positive result as the Scottish average sits at 87% and Cloch is comfortably above this. Themes for those not satisfied links back to complaints mainly to do with repairs (e.g. poor experience of a repair service or quality of workmanship). This is not an uncommon theme.• 99.7% of tenants felt they were kept informed. This is a good, strong result as the Scottish average is 90%.• 99% of tenants felt they had the opportunity to participate. The majority indicated they were not interested in getting involved but were satisfied that they had the opportunity to do so.• 87% were satisfied with the last repairs they had carried out. Again, where there was dissatisfaction, this related to a repair not being resolved, quality of service and poor workmanship.• 89% were satisfied with the quality of their home. Most areas of dissatisfaction related to repairs or planned improvements not getting done as well as issues relating to heating homes including draughty windows or financial constraints. |

| | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% were satisfied that the Association contributed to the management of the neighbourhood they lived in. Another good result as the Scottish average is 84%. Where there was dissatisfaction related to ASB issues and common ground maintenance. • 91% felt the Association offered value for money which has been our highest result in recent years. Where there was dissatisfaction, some felt that rents were getting too expensive. • Most tenants preferred source of information was the quarterly newsletters, irrespective of the different age groups. Tenants at the younger end of the spectrum preferred digital communication. • 96% of tenants preferred method of contact was by the telephone. Again, younger groups preferred our digital platforms. Older groups indicated that they would like home visits. • 100% were satisfied with Cloch’s opening hours and 66% particularly liked the later opening to 6pm on a Thursday. 17% used the portal with a further 10% indicating that they would be interested in using it in the future. Again, younger age groups were the highest users of the portal. <p>The consultant advised that the area where the most dissatisfaction arose was around repairs services. Looking at affordability this was directed at tenants who paid full or partial rent themselves; not those on full housing benefits. 48% said they found it easy/fairly easy to afford the rent. 46% said they could heat their homes. 16% chose not to put the heating on as they could not afford to. Fuel bills was cited as the greatest financial concern at 43%.</p> <p>There were no areas of concern in respect to improvements, but the most commonly mentioned themes were generic comments on upgrading homes.</p> <p>The Board thanked the consultant for the presentation and were very pleased with the statistics that came out of the TSS. One Board member commented that the issue with repairs should improve drastically with the new portal and new contractors in place. They enquired if the Association had means to follow up on repairs where complaints had been logged. The HofPS advised that the system can tag a contractor to a specific job number, and this can be followed up. They also advised that the Team Leader would be assisting with collating data, and this should help too. The Association is seeing a good reduction in the number of complaints being logged.</p> <p>There were no other questions, and the consultant left the meeting at 6.30pm.</p> |
| 1. | <p>Apologies & Declarations</p> |
| | <p>Apologies had been received prior to the meeting [REDACTED] [REDACTED] No declarations of interest were noted.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed a potential new Board Member [REDACTED] to the meeting who would be observing the proceedings. [REDACTED] the new Director of Customer Service & Communities, was introduced to the meeting.</p> |
| 2. | <p>Minutes of Previous Meetings</p> |

| | |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.0 | <p><u>Minutes of the Board Meeting – 19 December 2023</u></p> <p>The Minutes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Chair enquired if the names of the sub-committee Chair/Vice Chair should be redacted in the minutes. The meeting discussed this and felt that, for continuity, the names should be kept declared.</p> <p>The CEO suggested that the Finance & Corporate Services Sub-Committee minutes are not published on the website, due to potential areas of confidentiality / sensitivity, however agendas would continue to be uploaded and if anyone wanted further information on a meeting, they could then contact the Association for this. The Board agreed with the suggested approach.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minutes of 19 December 2023 to be checked as one name may have been omitted that needs to be redacted. The CSO will check this prior to sending on for signature. • Minutes for the Finance & Corporate Services Sub Committee to be removed from the website. <p>RESOLUTION</p> <p>The Minutes were proposed, seconded, and approved as a true record.</p> |
| 2.1 | <p><u>Finance & Corporate Services Sub-Committee – 5 December 2023</u></p> <p>The Chair advised that these minutes had been sent out under separate cover and were for noting only at this stage. The points from it would be covered under AOCB later in the meeting.</p> |
| 3. | <p><u>Matters Arising & Outstanding Actions</u></p> <p>The CEO intimated that those in “green” were completed and would be removed from the document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications and HSE liaison to be considered for the new role of H&S Compliance Officer. The HofPS will take forward. • Structure Refresh – on track against the project plan, with compliance with all legalities supported by involved from HR consultant, EVH and the Union. • Annual Accounts – new component accounting spreadsheet nearly complete. Auditors have assisted with this. The service charge review will start in Q4. • Rent increase / rent and services charges being value for money – interim resource has been brought in to carry out this review. It is anticipated that this will be complete for the February 2024 meeting for presentation to Board. |
| | <p>ITEMS FOR APPROVAL</p> |
| 4. | <p>Policies</p> |

| | |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>4.1</p> | <p><u>Notifiable Events</u></p> <p>The CEO advised that this policy is reviewed annually, and a report is attached.</p> <p>The report detailed two notifiable events. One related to a payment to a former employee that was now closed and the second one related to the flooding event in 2023. This incident was still open.</p> <p>In terms of the policy changes, a Board member commented that it would be useful to have the changes highlighted across all the policies being presented (e.g. in yellow) to draw attention to the specific changes being proposed. It was noted some of the policies for review at the meeting didn't have the information highlighted. The CEO confirmed for future the Leadership Team would ensure all changes were colour coded.</p> <p>ACTION All changes being proposed in policies going forward should be highlighted for clarity.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The policy and report were proposed, seconded, and approved.</p> |
| <p>4.2</p> | <p><u>Treasury Management Policy</u></p> <p>The DCEO advised that this policy has been updated in line with new guidance from the CIPFA Code (2021) and the SFHA/DTP Treasury Management Guidance that came out in February 2022. These were fundamental changes to the policy and were highlighted in the appendix using a comparison table.</p> <p>The main change was the addition of the “golden rules” which would act as an early warning/detection system for the Board before any breach occurs. The Treasury Management Strategy will come to the Board annually for discussion and will be formally reported at the start of the financial year going forward.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The Board proposed, seconded, and approved the policy.</p> |
| <p>4.3</p> | <p><u>Procurement</u></p> <p>The HofPS advised that section 1.5 of the covering report highlighted what the proposed changes for consideration were. The internal audit had highlighted that this policy required to be reviewed. The HofPS apologised for the oversight as this policy had fallen out with the review timetable. However, it was not detrimental to the workings of the Association as all relevant practices were still being followed/adhered to.</p> |

| | |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>The HofPS stated that they have tried to simplify the legal jargon used for easier reading. Appendix 1 noted the financial levels changes that had been made as per the Financial Regulations policy.</p> <p>The Chair stated that one job title needed to be amended as it should read the “DCEO” and not the “Financial Director”.</p> <p>ACTION The HofPS to amend the job title as stated above before the document is uploaded onto the website.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The policy was proposed, seconded, and approved.</p> |
| 4.4 | <p><u>Privacy Notice – Board</u></p> <p>The DCEO advised that the changes made to this policy were very minor and had been highlighted.</p> <p>The Chair enquired if the sub-title should read “Board Privacy Notice” as opposed to “Management Committee Notice”. The DCEO would have this checked out but may link to the Association’s Rules which states “Management Committee”.</p> <p>ACTION The DCEO to check what the correct sub-title should be as stated above.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The policy was proposed, seconded, and approved.</p> |
| 5. | <p>Procurement Strategy</p> |
| | <p>The HofPS took the Board through the Procurement Strategy and apologised that the figure of £3.7m was missing from section 4.4 of the covering report. However, the figure was included in the actual strategy (section 2 – bottom of the table).</p> <p>The HofPS advised that the strategy provided the Association with the projected tender value for 2024/25. The strategy also looks at our “community benefits” and this will be reported annually going forward.</p> <p>The Chair intimated that the Association’s contractors have been very generous in the past and have donated many items including high-value iPads. The Chair enquired if this should be included in future reporting. The HofPS will check to see if this has been previously reported and if acknowledgement is made in our quarterly newsletters. It was agreed that the Association’s contractors needed to be thanked for this as it was a voluntary act on their part; not a compulsory one.</p> <p>ACTION The HofPS to report annually on what community benefits have taken place and ensure that contractors are being acknowledged for this (e.g. in our Newsletters).</p> |

RESOLUTION

The Board proposed, seconded, and approved the strategy.

6. Factoring Fee Increase 2024-25

The DCEO advised that the factoring fee increase is reviewed annually and usually mirrors the rent increase. They advised that a previous year's review highlighted that the resource was not being covered by existing fees and needed to be addressed. This resulted in a higher increase being administered, however this had been offset by the Association de-registered from VAT. This meant that owners no longer had to pay VAT on their bills /Cloch no longer required to submit VAT returns.

A 6.9% increase is being proposed for 2024/25. The number of hours that the finance team are investing in the service has reduced from what was budgeted before, and the staff feel the 6.9% contribution to administer the service is achievable in terms of the time and cost allocation.

A concern is that the Association is nearing the VAT threshold, and this would mean that Cloch would have to register for VAT again, which would put factoring fee costs up once more, (by 20%). However, there is differing opinions on whether factoring fees should be subject to VAT or not. The DCEO has contacted the SFHA forum for advice on this but has not received a response yet.

The DCEO intimated that re-introducing VAT would affect our IT services provided to Oak Tree Housing Association. This could increase costs to them quite considerably, (by adding 20%). The CEO advised that although this paper is specifically about factoring fees it has far more reaching implications (e.g. for our service to OTHA). The CEO stated that other solutions could be investigated associated with Shared Services, that does not attract VAT and more time is required to consider these further, in addition whether VAT should be incurred on the factoring admin fee.

A Board member enquired if the Association was getting close to the threshold. The DCEO replied that the threshold will be reached in March 2024 and that this is considered by looking at the past 12-months of activities on a rolling quarterly basis. The Board member asked if lowering the increase charge to 6% for factoring fees would help with this. The DCEO replied that it would not as it is linked directly to the IT services and value to OTHA, rather than the factoring fee. The DCEO advised that the Association could consider not charging the full 50% amount for IT staff costs to OTHA to keep under the VAT threshold.

The Chair felt that the Board required further clarity on this. The Chair felt that the Association needed the scope to deliver the IT services in the future and not just for OTHA but for other organisations. The Chair asked if a further report could be brought to the next Board meeting. The DCEO confirmed this would be possible, however may require to focus on a holding position to delay the VAT re-registration, giving the Association time to consider other possible solutions.

ACTION

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>The DCEO to investigate further the matter of VAT re-registration and whether any exemptions apply to the factoring admin fee / if there are other shared service contractual approaches that would not attract VAT and bring a report back to Board. For February's meeting this will be a holding position report / further report to the May meeting, due to timing of Board meetings.</p> <p>Notify owners about the situation and that VAT may have to be applied.</p> <p>RESOLUTION</p> <p>The Board approved the 6.9% uplift in the factoring fee charges for 2024/25 to be implemented on 1 April 2024.</p> |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>Pension Review</p> |
| | <p>The DCEO took the Board through the report and reminded them that approval to go out to a 75-day consultation had been given at the October Board meeting.</p> <p>The DCEO advised that 11 responses had been received which was about 30% of the staff total. They had initially felt a bit disappointed by the response, but it could also represent that staff are happy overall. The DCEO had advised staff they could email or come and have face-to-face talks on the pension consultation. Only 2 email enquiries were received, and no-one wanted a one-to-one meeting.</p> <p>The survey outcomes indicated that 100% of those respondents understood the reasons why the Association was closing the Defined Benefit scheme and switching to Defined Contribution scheme only. There would be a 3-year transition period with everyone eventually being on the 12% employer contribution thereafter.</p> <p>The CEO advised that they had asked for an additional idea to be considered. This was how the budget would look if the Association paid the 10% / employees had 3% minimal contribution aligning with those on the DB scheme from the beginning for those on the existing DC scheme. This was a change from the previous proposals and would increase the budget by a further £10.7k.</p> <p>The Chair intimated that the pension consultation had been a very complex process and the Pensions Group had worked hard to ensure equality and parity during it. The Chair also stated that the guidance had been to work within the existing budget but also consider those employees who were losing a substantial benefit. The Chair did not feel comfortable changing the existing proposal.</p> <p>The CEO accepted the rationale for the feedback and noted additional budget provision had already been approved by Board in terms of the proposed solution.</p> <p>A Board member commented that everyone should be incentivised to put as much as they possibly can into their pensions. They thought the Working Group had been very fair in all its deliberations during the process.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the Working Group's proposal had already increased the budget as much as they felt comfortable with to ensure that the DB members were not losing out.</p> |

| | |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>The CEO said that the DCEO had led the Working Group and credit was due to everyone on the hard work done to achieve this result. Having a balance of Board and staff members had worked extremely well and matters had been handled sensitively and carefully for such an emotive topic.</p> <p>ACTION The DCEO would submit the final proposal tomorrow now that the Board had given approval.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The original proposal was proposed, seconded, and approved.</p> |
| 8. | Global Action Plan (GAP) – Annual Assurance Action Plan |
| | <p>The CEO took the Board through the papers and advised that this process was like an internal audit type of project but on a larger scale, with Cloch receiving confirmation of being Compliant from the Scottish Housing Regulator. This was also an area that has recently being subject to an Internal Audit review and Substantial Assurance has been verbally confirmed which is a very positive and shows how thorough the Association has been in the approach taken in 2023 by the Gap Working Group. The areas where some actions are needed to enhance our approach is detailed in the GAP action plan.</p> <p>The Chair intimated that the GAP Working Group had worked very hard on this, but it had been a very informative and useful exercise. The CEO advised that this should not be such an onerous task next year, with all standards being reviewed in detail.</p> <p>A Board member suggested putting a percentage against tasks in the action plan (e.g. 80% complete) as a guide for quick reference. The CEO will discuss this with the LT.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See if a percentage can be inserted on in-progress activities. <p>RESOLUTION The GAP Action Plan was proposed, seconded, and approved.</p> |
| | ITEMS FOR NOTING |
| 9. | Tenant Satisfaction |
| | <p>The Chair advised that the presentation from the consultant had been very informative and was pleased to see improvement by the Association in many areas.</p> <p>The CEO stated that an Action Plan will be prepared from the results and customer insight, and this will likely be brought to the May Board meeting.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The Board noted the report.</p> |

| | |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | |
| 10. | Internal Audit |
| | <p>The CEO advised that the Association had received substantial assurance from the two areas reviewed in October and November 2023, with the reports attached. This should provide the Board with confidence that the Association was on-track with activities and approaches and that these had been tested by an external source. A couple of minor recommendations were made, and these are being taken forward.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The Board noted the report.</p> |
| | At this point in the proceedings the CEO asked ██████████ to leave the meeting; the time was 7.26pm. |
| 11. | Notifiable Events |
| | This section redacted in full. |
| 12. | Health & Safety |
| | <p>The DCEO intimated that there is usually very little to report on H&S but there have been 3 minor accidents this month. All were logged correctly in the Accident Book and actioned where applicable.</p> <p>A Board member enquired if the Association took account of “near-miss” incidents. The DCEO replied they did.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The Board noted the report.</p> |
| 13. | AOCB & Reflections |
| 13.1 | <p><u>CEO Appraisal</u></p> <p>The CEO advised that her appraisal had now been complete, carried out by the Chair. As part of the process there were agreed objectives for the CEO to move forward with. This will be uploaded onto the Board Portal. The CEO intimated that they had liked the 360° approach to the appraisal, working with ██████████ on it, and thought the feedback was particularly helpful. The CEO felt very supported by the Board and staff.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The Board noted the report.</p> |
| 13.2 | This section redacted in full. |
| 13.3 | <p><u>Internal Audit</u></p> <p>The CEO advised that during the internal audit it was noted that within the Whistleblowing policy the acronym OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator)</p> |

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>had been misspelt, and Audit Scotland should be replaced by internal audit. The CEO asked if Board gave permission for this to be changed without the need for the full policy to come to a Board meeting.</p> <p>ACTION The OSCR acronym to be amended and Audit Scotland to be replaced by Internal Audit in the Whistleblowing policy.</p> <p>RESOLUTION The Board gave approval for the above to be made without bringing back to a future meeting.</p> |
| | <p>There being no other business the meeting closed at 8pm.</p> |
| <p>14.</p> | <p>Date of Next Meeting – 13 February 2024</p> |