COMMITTEE MEMBERS HANDBOOK

LS/October 2009
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Welcome to Milnbank Housing Association!

As a new Committee Member the aim of this Handbook is to ensure that your settling-in period is as smooth as possible.

The Handbook has been designed to cover the basic general relevant issues which should help your knowledge of the housing association movement in general, how Milnbank Housing Association operates and, in particular, what your role as a Committee Member entails.
Section 2 - What Is A Housing Association?

2a) **What is a Housing Association?**

Housing Associations were introduced under The Housing Act 1974. Housing Associations are non-profit making voluntary organisations, which provide and manage houses. They primarily provide houses for rent, although Association’s also provide some housing for sale (IFS), part sale/rent (Shared Ownership) and Homestake.

2b) **Legal and Constitutional Status**

In order to become legal organisations, associations register:

- with the Registrar of Friendly Societies (now known as Financial Services Agency) under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965

and

- with The Scottish Housing Regulator (previously Communities Scotland)

To do this the organisation has to adopt a constitution known as Rules. To make life easier examples of “model” rules are available from Communities Scotland, Scottish Federation of Housing Association and National Federation of Housing Associations. The Association originally operated under the SFHA Model Rules (published in December 1998) which were since revised at the end of September 2003 at a Special General Meeting. These have subsequently been updated in June 2008 when the association became a registered charity.

The Rules set out the membership of the Association, how the Committee is elected; the conduct of meetings and the key responsibilities. A Rules Book is issued with each membership and it is important that each Committee Member is familiar with them. To register with The Scottish Housing Regulator other criteria must be met - for example, the Committee must have a level of expertise and must be in control of the Policy decisions. Once an Association is
registered there are certain obligations it must meet, for example, with regard to submitting its accounts to both the Financial Services Agency and The Scottish Housing Regulator.

After registration with Communities Scotland the Association is eligible to receive grants.

2c) **Finances**

A Housing Association’s money comes from 3 basic sources:

1. **Loans** - private funding from financial institutions like a Bank or Building Society which Association’s use to build or improve housing stock.

2. **Housing Association Grant (HAG)** - this is a capital grant paid by Communities Scotland which Association’s use to build or improve housing stock.

3. **Rental Income** - money paid by tenants either directly or through Housing Benefit. This is used to manage and maintain the housing stock.

2d) **The Scottish Housing Regulator**

The Scottish Housing Regulator is a statutory organisation which came into operation under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and prior to this the Scottish Housing Regulator was known as Communities Scotland, Scottish Homes, and prior to this as the Housing Corporation.

A major function of The Scottish Housing Regulator is to promote, fund and supervise Housing Associations.

The funding which The Scottish Housing Regulator makes available comes from Central Government and is distributed through The Scottish Housing Regulator regional offices. Expenditure is broken down into various categories, such as area renewal, community ownership, and low cost home ownership, housing for elderly or disabled tenants. Each year The Scottish Housing Regulator meet with association representatives to discuss their plans and then advise them of the sum of money which is likely to be available to them for development purposes.

In terms of supervision, The Scottish Housing Regulator review Associations annual audited accounts and annual returns, however their main method of supervision takes the form of a Performance Audit.

The main aims of this visit, which is carried out periodically to all Housing Association’s is to ensure that
* there is no threat to the interests of tenants and prospective tenants
* there is no risk to public investment; and
* the activities of the Association will not damage the image and good reputation of the voluntary housing movement

These aims are addressed by visiting Performance Auditors looking to ensure that the CONDUCT of the Association is satisfactory (i.e. the way in which the Association carries out its business should be appropriate as it is in receipt of public funds). The visit also looks to ensure that the Committee is in CONTROL of the Association’s work (i.e. meeting legal requirements, sound policies and practices and meeting financial constraints).

2e) **Housing Co-operatives**

A Housing Co-operative (Co-op) is in many respects very similar to a Housing Association. It is also a non-profit making landlord, provides housing for rent. The main difference is that in a Co-op, the only people who can be members are the tenants, and the tenants have to be members of the Co-op. The average Co-op will tend to be smaller than a Housing Association although there is considerable variety in size throughout.
3a) **Formation of Milnbank Housing Association**

Milnbank Housing Association was formally registered as a Housing Association in August 1975.

When a Housing Association is declared a Housing Action Area, a specified area of operation is agreed. Milnbank Housing Association’s boundary area covers Duke Street, Todd Street to the M8 and Castle Street at Duke Street. Within these boundaries, the Association owns and manages approximately 1,200 units within specified areas. To reflect development and new build outwith the above boundaries, the Association aims to expand our Area of Operation to include the Great Eastern Hotel and Todd Street New Build Development at a Special General Meeting in September 2003. (The undemoted map shows the current Area of Operation and the proposed area)
3b) **Area's of Operation**

For administration reference the Association is divided into 5 areas of operation which are:

1. **Roebank Street Area** - Harcourt Drive  
   Roebank Street  
   Ballindalloch Drive  
   Alexandra Park Street

2. **Coventry Drive Area** - Coventry Drive  
   Crinan Street  
   Culloden Street

3. **Cardross Street Area** - Cardross Street  
   Broompark Drive

4. **Cathedral Square Area** - Cathedral Square

5. **Walter Street** - Aberfeldy Street  
   Aberdour Street  
   Aberfoyle Street  
   Aitken Street  
   Appin Road  
   Walter Street  
   Appin Road New Build  
   Todd Street New Build  
  Corsock Street New Build

**Roebank Street Area** - is where the main office is located. The first rehabilitation work was carried out within this area which, consists of traditional tenemental property, with the exception of the office and 6 Shared Ownership flats which are New Build. Total stock managed in this area is 302 units.

**Coventry Drive Area** - the Association acquired this property from Scottish Homes through a stock transfer in February 1995. This stock consists of 90 managed units. 49 mainstream flats, 11 houses, and 30 sheltered units, and were built approximately 25 years ago.

**Cardross Street Area** - the Association acquired Cardross Street as an Action Area a few years after the Roebank Street Area. This stock is located behind the now demolished Duke Street Hospital and consists of traditional tenemental property. Total stock managed in this area is 140 units.

**Cathedral Square** - completed in October 1990, Cathedral Square was the Association’s first New Build project and consists of 20 units which largely cater for elderly residents. This project is located next to Glasgow Cathedral.
Walter Street Area - this is where the majority of the Association’s stock is located. The bulk of the property consists of traditional tenemental stock work commenced in January 1989 and was completed in December 1996. The Appin Road New Build site was completed in September 1998 and consists of flats, terraced houses, 2 wheelchair houses, semi-detached and 1 detached house, shared ownership and 3 special need flats which are leased to the Richmond Fellowship. The Todd Street New Build Development was completed in September 2004 and consists of 48 units similar to the Appin Road Development. The latest new build in this area is at the Corsock Street development which consists of 50 units and came off-site in January 2009. The total stock managed in this area is 658.

(3b) Strategic Objectives of the Association

MILNBank HOUSING ASSOCIATION

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Aim

The aim of Milnbank Housing Association is to satisfy the housing and related needs within its area of operation in terms of adequate provision and quality of services.

Objectives

The following objectives are designed to support the achievement of this aim:

- To develop strategies that will increase autonomy and make the Association self-reliant.
- To provide rented housing of the highest standard.
- To maintain affordable rent levels consistent with our tenants’ economic profile and ability to pay.
- To satisfy the housing needs of residents of Milnbank and make provision for people in the wider community seeking affordable rented accommodation through an ongoing development programme.
- To maintain the housing stock effectively within allowable expenditure, ensure all accommodation meets the Scottish Housing Qualification Standard (SHQS) and to improve the environment of Milnbank.
- To secure and retain sufficient stock in order to achieve the long term viability of the organisation.
- To vigorously promote tenure diversification to allow a balanced and stable community to be sustained.
- To provide, in a cost effective manner, comprehensive property management services that fully cater for the needs of tenants, owner-occupiers and other customers.
- To protect and sustain any investment, either public or private, which the Association receives.

- To lead in the social and economic regeneration of the Association’s area of operation, through promotion of and participation in, wider action initiatives.

- To ensure resident involvement in the Association’s activities wherever possible through a comprehensive tenant participation strategy.

- To develop partnerships with others to assist those with particular housing needs and to make an effective contribution to the reduction of homelessness.

- To establish financial and risk management regimes together with a robust internal planning framework that ensures the Association can meet its stated objectives.

- To achieve the Association’s aim through a commitment to the pursuit of excellence and continuous improvement in all the Association’s activities.
Section 4 –
The Role Of The Committee

4a) Governance Protocol for Committee Members

All Committee Members of Housing Associations are bound by the document, based upon SFHA guidance, Governance Protocols Appendix CH1). This document contains the Committee Members Code of Conduct which all members must agree to sign and adhere to.

As a Committee Member, even if you read very little else within this Handbook, please ensure that you read and understand the contents of this document!

4b) Standing Orders

These lay down guidelines as to how meetings should be run, including timetables, order of business, speaking through the chair, re-opening of old debates and previous decisions etc. Standing Orders are there to help the conduct of a meeting – they do not take the place of the Rule Book and can be suspended at any time.

4c) Management Committee

Each Housing Association is run by a Committee of Management elected by the members of the Association at the AGM. A copy of 2009 Committee Members is attached (Appendix CH2). The Committee members are volunteers and are not therefore paid for the time they spend on Association business, but can receive expenses in accordance with the Expenses Policy (Appendix CH3).

Two Committee Meetings are held every month, the 2nd Tuesday is the Services meeting with the general Management Committee meeting on the last Tuesday of the month. Meetings are normally held in the Association’s Community Hall and commence at 7pm. (Appendix CH
4) Documentation is distributed prior to each meeting via email. The powers and remits of these meetings are detailed in the Governance Protocols which are issued each year after the AGM.

A Management Committee is a corporate body. Committee Members as a group, but not as individuals, have a collective responsibility for the organisation and a collective power to make legally binding decisions on behalf of the Association. Management Committee Members must at all times work within their Delegated Authorities that are outlined in the above mentioned Governance Protocols document.

The Management Committee is also the public face of the Association and responsible for attracting and involving members at a local level as well as representing the organisation to external bodies.

4d) **Roles within the Management Committee**

**Office Bearers**

At the conclusion of each Annual General Meeting, the Management Committee will meet for the sole purpose of electing Office Bearers. The positions to be filled are:

- Chairperson
- Secretary
- Vice-Chairperson
- Treasurer

Nominations for these positions will be proposed and seconded by the Management Committee members. In situations where there is more than one nomination, Office Bearers will be elected by a majority of members present. Office Bearers must be elected Committee Members and cannot be co-optees of GCC representatives. The duties and responsibilities of the Chairperson (Rule 55) and Secretary (Rule 62) are set out in the Rules, but generally the Office Bearers will be controlled, supervised and instructed by the Management Committee.

a) **Chairperson** – The chairperson controls the meeting by ensuring that all business is conducted through the chair and only relevant business is discussed. The items discussed are as per the agenda and time constraints should be adhered to. The Chairperson has a casting vote in the event of a ballot being equal, normally in this case, the chairperson remains within the status quo.

b) **Vice Chairperson** – The Vice Chairperson is there to support the Chairperson and in his/her absence, take their duties of chairing the committee meeting.
c) Secretary - The Secretary is the named person as the association’s main contact and is responsible for ensuring that the association’s business is conducted in the correct fashion.

d) Treasurer - The treasurer is responsible for ensuring that the association’s finances are in order and that the organisation remains viable.

4e) The Committee in Control

It is crucial that the Management Committee are in control of the Association affairs as the Association must be accountable to its members on all issues. The key aspect of managing which the Committee should undertake include:-

(1) Planning: including the overall growth and activities of the organisation; specific projects and schemes; and staffing requirements.

(2) Policy Making: including types of housing need to be met; specification and standards of development; and how houses will be allocated.

(3) Monitoring: including receiving reports and records; making sure policies are working; and considering financial viability.

(4) Controlling: including reviewing policies; making key decisions; and supervising the work of staff.

4f) The Committee as Decision Makers

One of the main features of community ownership is the opportunity for residents to control policy decisions at a local level. It is therefore important that Committee Members try to find the right balance between participation and efficiency to ensure that the decision-making process does not become inflexible.

There are various ways a group can make a decision, however the Committee should always strive to make unanimous decisions or at least consensus decisions should be made whereby a course of action is identified which the members can support even if they do not totally agree with it.

It is important that all members have the opportunity to express their views and the Committee should, at all times, prevent the same small group of people dominating discussions.
4g) **The Committee as Policy Makers**

To allow the work of the Association to flow smoothly major decisions agreed are written in policy and procedure documents. This information helps people – the Management Committee who agree the contents and the staff who implement them – understand what the ground rules are. It makes it easier to achieve consistency in decision making.

At the beginning of each year a Policy Development and Review schedule is agreed and issued.

Owing to the volume it would not be prudent to enclose a copy of every policy with this Handbook. The undernoted summarises the Associations Policies, which are in operation.

**SUMMARY**

As a Committee Member of Milnbank Housing Association you are required to:

- attend meetings and contribute to them
- read agendas and papers before meetings
- speak through the Chair
- share the common interest of the rest of the Committee
- learn the business and observe the Code of Conduct at all times