

The West of England Friends Housing Society
Minutes of the Board Meeting held Tuesday 19th November 2024 at 5pm at Avenue House

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| Present: <i>Board Members:</i> | Tim Wye (Chairperson) |
| | Andrew Lux, Steve O'Shea, Yasmin Pinks |
| <i>Avenue House:</i> | Caroline Cooper, Karen Parkin (minutes) |
| <i>Bishop Fleming:</i> | Claire Argrave |
| <i>Observer:</i> | Gill Fraser |

Prior to commencement of the meeting, the sad news that one of our Board Members Christopher Denman has passed away suddenly was broken. Our thoughts are with him, his family and his friends.

1. Moment of Silence

In accordance with our Quaker values, a moment of silence was taken prior to the meeting.

2. Apologies and welcome

Apologies received from Chris Szpojnarowicz and Jerry Oliver. Welcome to Gill Fraser who observed today with the view to becoming a Board Member, and welcome to Yasmin Pinks who we are pleased has decided to join us. Yasmin is currently co-opted onto the Board and will become a full member at the AGM.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the meeting held on 20th August 2024.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th August 2024 were agreed as being a true account of the meeting and therefore signed by the Chair.

4. Board Membership

Actions arising from previous meetings:

- *Circulate Board Member Advert to Board Members to share (Karen) – COMPLETED*
- *Send advert to Area Newsletter (Andrew) – COMPLETED*
- *Follow up on possibilities in mind (Christopher D) – unfortunately this did not come to anything.*

- Tim and Chris S are both coming to the end of their 6 years of service on the Board. Tim is happy to extend his Chair role beyond this – item to be added to the next agenda. **Action: Karen**

5. Board Structure and sub-committees.

Actions arising from previous meetings:

- *Reach out to residents with regards to developing and implementing Quaker values in Avenue House (Andrew / Tim) – not yet done. Yasmin & Andrew to pick this up. **Action: Yasmin & Andrew***

- *As Geralyn has now left the Board, her work around staff benefits needs picking up. Steve & Tim to discuss previous proposals with Caroline. **Action: Steve, Tim & Caroline.***

6. Financial Report by Bishop Fleming

Actions arising from previous meetings:

- Review split of expenditure between houses (Finance Sub-Committee) – carry forward to Budget Meeting
- Review vacancies allowance for next budget (Finance Sub-Committee) – carry forward to Budget Meeting
- Review reserves policy for next budget (Finance Sub-Committee) – carry forward to Budget Meeting
- Look into Natwest Deposit account (Karen / Tim) – other possibilities explored
- Refresh Shawbrook interest rates (Karen / Tim) – COMPLETED. Interest increased from 0.7% to 3.25%.
- Look into Cambridge & Counties account (Karen / Tim) – there is only a 5-year bond available to us. The Board decided this was not appropriate.
- Put more into Redwood Account (Karen / Tim) – cannot do until April (unless a 2nd 1 year bond is opened – need Board approval). Agreed to open a 2nd bond with £50k and move an extra £50k into the existing one in April. Also, to open both a 6-month and 12-month bond with Triodos and move £100k into each from our existing Triodos account. Review alternative banks in 6 months time.

Action: Karen

- Ask other Quaker organisations / charities who they bank with (Tim) – no luck with this as no one else spoken to has the problem of needing to split a large amount of reserves like we do.
 - Review requirement for Resident deposits (Tim / Caroline) – further discussion required.
 - Open deposit protection scheme (Karen) – not required as we do not offer Assured Shorthold Tenancies
 - Review outstanding development loan (Karen / Christopher D) – COMPLETED
 - Finalise energy accounts (Finance Sub-Committee) – gas contracts renewed for 1 year. Electricity contracts will need doing this month. Board happy for Karen, Caroline & Tim to sign off whatever renewal price is appropriate. **Action: Karen, Caroline, Tim**
- To the end of September, the accounts show a surplus of £80k. The reserves policy and occupancy levels are already due to be reviewed at the Budget Meeting, so also should be adding an allowance for short stay income (respite)
 - To the end of September, occupancy levels were at 25 permanent residents for Avenue House, 9 tenants in Kirwin House and 7 in Lansdowne House. This has since changed, which will be addressed in the Manager update.
 - The next budget will be set from 1st April 2025 therefore this year's set of accounts will be 15 months.

7. National Budget Reflections – what impact will this have on us?

An increase in National Insurance from 6th April, plus a reduction of the threshold at which it is paid, will mean approximately an extra £17k cost for The Society.

8. Verbal update from Manager including incident reporting.

Actions arising from previous meetings:

- Create a list of options regarding Occupational Sick Pay – Geraldyn's previous work on this to be picked up by Steve, Tim & Caroline.
- Circulate latest CQC report (Caroline) – COMPLETED

Avenue House

- We currently have 28 permanent residents, 2 of which are in hospital. This leaves 2 vacancies, one of which is currently covered by a respite stay. Following a Best Interests Meeting, it has been agreed that a dementia setting would be more appropriate for one resident, so they will soon be leaving.
- No accidents and 2 near-misses reported in the past month.
- Staffing:
 - We have been looking to providing sponsorship, however this requires an authorization officer and the dedication of a significant amount of time – with only one full time vacancy is this worth it?
 - One staff member has had their employment terminated due to high absence and non-communication.
 - One Senior Care Staff member is near to completing their Lead Practitioner qualification. It was agreed that a Care Supervisor role be created, as we do not want to lose them. Pay to be set between that of a Senior Care Assistant and Deputy Manager (salaried). Further discussion around Job Description required. **Action: Caroline & Tim**
 - Pay scales were discussed. In order to be more competitive, it was felt we need to be paying our care staff at least an extra 50 pence per hour, which would cost around £50k per year. Using some reserves to bring this increase in earlier was discussed and agreed. **Action: Caroline & Tim**
 - A complete restructure of the staff pay was suggested – to be discussed at the Budget Meeting. **Action: Budget Meeting**
- A recent Environmental Health Inspection has been carried out – we have retained our 5-star rating.
- Flu & Covid vaccines have been given to residents & staff.
- £1500 was agreed to fund a staff Christmas night out.
- Christmas Celebrations for residents and their relatives are being held on Thursday 12th December 6pm-8pm. It would be lovely if some Board Members could join.

Kirwin House

- A safeguarding referral was made in regard to the son of a tenant. This has been investigated and resolved.
- EPCs have been completed for all flats. All have been given a rating of D apart from Flat 10 which was given an E. This could be increased to D if insulation is put on either the sloping ceiling or flat roof.
- The Guest Room is becoming part of Flat 10 from 1st December, with increased rent.
- Flat 2 is currently vacant but tenancy is being taken over by a staff member of retirement age on 1st January.
- Flat 7 is currently vacant – we have looked at making this self-contained, however due to multiple difficulties this needs to remain a bedsit. This could potentially be made into a replacement Guest Room.
- A further flat will become vacant at the end of November.

Lansdowne House

- Due to one current vacancy and 2 sudden deaths, there are currently 3 vacancies in Lansdowne House. Some work will need to be carried out on 2 of these before they can be re-let.

9. Update from Relative Representative.

Actions arising from previous meetings:

- 'Managing Death' to be added to list of items for Relatives' Meeting – This is due to be discussed at the next meeting including information around the Gold Standards Framework.
- Progress in recruiting volunteers was discussed. There has been little interest. It was agreed that only one reference is required along with a cleared DBS.
- It was suggested that we ask local schools if any music students would like to come to practice their performance skills. Caroline to ask the activities coordinator to contact Cotham & Cathedral schools. **Action: Caroline**

10. Update from Tenant Representative

Unfortunately, due to the sad circumstances with Christopher, this item is cancelled until a replacement Tenant Representative is appointed.

11. Community Services

Actions arising from previous meetings:

- *Speak to Whiteladies Road Surgery re: Lunch Club (Caroline)*
- *Lunch Club advert to be put in Area Newsletter (Andrew)*
- It is clear that we cannot progress this forward without the investment of the time of an extra staff member. We could use some reserves to do this. Thoughts are welcome.

12. Housing Update

Actions arising from previous meetings:

- *Go through Ann Cornelious' suggestions about the future of housing. Set up Housing Working Group.*
- *Speak to other Quaker organisations about their Housing Status (Tim) – most spoken to that are in a similar situation as ours (minus the reserves) use Almshouse as their general model. Almshouses have no strict regulations or criteria for tenants.*
- *Speak to possible Housing Contact (Steve) – Steve's contact strongly believes there is no benefit to us being an RSL.*
- By 2030, all EPCs must be rated C and above. Some significant work will need to be done on the flats to achieve this. It was agreed that we pay to have a full survey carried out. **Action: Tim**

13. Business Risk Register

No changes.

14. Update on business plan.

The previously circulated plan was discussed – no actions.

15. Board Governance / update on Board Member visits.

Actions arising from previous meetings:

- *Catch up outstanding inspection visits.*

- Wellbeing to be added onto Staff supervisions and action points made clearer. Points to be separated out. (Caroline) - COMPLETED

| Month | Name | Sections to assess |
|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| January 2024 | Tomas Hazelle | S4, W3 |
| March 2024 | Chris Szpojnarowicz | R2, W5 |
| July 2024 | Tomas Hazelle | S3, E4 |
| September 2024 | Chris Szpojnarowicz | S2, S5 |
| December 2024 | Tim Wye | S6, E6 |
| January 2025 | Andrew Lux | S4, W3 |
| February 2025 | Chris Szpojnarowicz | R1, W4 |
| March 2025 | Jerry Oliver | R2, W5 |

- Feedback from recent visits was given by Andrew and Yasmin. No issues.
- Tim's position to be added to the Whistleblowing policy. **Action: Karen**

16. A.O.B.

- None raised.

17. Proposed dates for next meetings

Tuesday 18th February 2025 5pm

Tuesday 20th May 2025 5pm

AGM – August / September – TBC

Meeting Closed 6:50pm

Summary of action points:

| Action | By whom | By when |
|--|----------------|------------------------|
| Board Member terms coming to an end to be added as an item to the next meeting | Karen | Next Meeting |
| Reach out to residents about implementing Quaker Values in Avenue House | Next Meeting | Yasmin / Andrew |
| Discuss staff benefits | Next Meeting | Caroline / Steve / Tim |
| Review split of expenditure between houses | Budget Meeting | Finance Sub Committee |
| Review vacancies allowance | Budget Meeting | Finance Sub Committee |
| Review Reserves policy | Budget Meeting | Finance Sub Committee |
| Add short stay income to budget | Budget Meeting | Finance Sub Committee |
| Open bonds / transfer reserves as discussed | ASAP | Karen |
| Renew electricity contracts | ASAP | Karen / Tim / Caroline |

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| Devise Care Supervisor job description | ASAP | Caroline / Tim |
| Use reserves to implement care staff pay rise before April | ASAP | Caroline / Tim |
| Discuss complete restructuring of pay | Budget Meeting | Finance Sub Committee |
| Ask the activities coordinator to contact local schools | ASAP | Caroline |
| Arrange for full EPC survey to be carried out in Kirwin / Lansdowne | ASAP | Tim |
| Add Tim's position to Whistleblowing policy | ASAP | Karen |