



**OBAN, LORN & THE ISLES
AREA COMMITTEE**

**Monday 5th September 2011
3pm
Menzies House, Oban,
Video Conference- Tiree**

Present

Mr George Farquhar **Chair** (GF)
Mr Alister MacIntyre **Vice Chair** (AMI)
Mr Andy Birnie (AB)
Mrs Lorraine Anne Drysdale (LD)
Mrs Marri Malloy
Ms Janet MacIntosh
Iona MacPhail, Regional Manger (IMP)
Collette Benham – Director Human Resources & Corporate Services (CB)
Amanda MacKenzie – Area Administration Officer (AMK)

1.	Apologies Mr Irvine Waugh, Councillor Roddy McCuish	Action
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting 1st July 2011 Were approved as an accurate record. Proposed AMI Seconded LAD Matters Arising – None	
3.	Declarations of Interest No conflict of interest	
4.	Correspondence	

	<p>AMK advised a letter has now been sent to MML to advise that that in accordance with the Association's Rules (Section 44.5.3) she can unfortunately no longer be a member of the Area Committee due to missing four consecutive meetings, without previously gaining special leave of absence. MML was advised that if circumstances change, to not hesitate to contact us and the opportunity was taken on behalf of the Area Committee to thank MML for the commitment that she has been able to give the Association.</p> <p>Committee Members agreed vacancy could be filled with one of the interested persons from July's AGM. MMA who was first runner up at the AGM ballot, will be contacted to see if she wishes to be co-opted onto Area Committee, if no longer interested, KW will be contacted.</p>	AMK
5.	<p>Chairs Report</p> <p>Two Board meetings to report on:</p> <p><u>Board Update – 7th July 2011</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive gave a presentation which covered the following points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CEO and Chair attended the SFHA conference at the end of June where 3 key priorities were agreed for Scottish RSL's- 1/ investment, affordability and borrowing powers 2/ welfare reform 3/ fuel poverty, sustainability and renewables. <p>Other issues:-</p> <p><u>Welfare reform proposals</u></p> <p>Housing Benefit to be abolished.</p> <p>Universal Credit will be the one single benefit with housing benefit included in it.</p> <p>Payments will be made direct to claimant</p> <p>Likely to be fixed rate, not taking into account actual rent charges</p> <p>Housing element will be linked to occupancy (exceptions for pensioners)</p> <p>The Welfare Reform Bill is currently in the House of Lords.</p> <p><u>Housing Summit</u></p> <p>Housing minister, Keith Brown due to speak at a the Housing Summit being held in Inveraray on 26th August. Stakeholders attending include RSL's, Politicians, Chambers of Commerce, Construction Industry reps etc.</p> <p><u>Meeting with Housing Convener – Councillor Currie</u></p> <p>A meeting took place with covered :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the use of the Strategic Housing Fund • the use of statutory powers re reluctant private owners in terms of common repairs • Investment reform • Homelessness • Welfare reform • Drug dealing & tenancy • Procurement. 	

OTHER ISSUES FROM PRESENTATION

- New Build site launches in Dunoon and Campbeltown and Lochgoilhead have taken place.
- Charitable status continues to be progressed

OTHER MATTERS

- The FISH project has brought in over £1.5 million pounds in unclaimed benefit for tenants in Argyll & Bute- over 1.3 million for ACHA tenants.
- The Board approved the Customer contact and feedback strategy
- The Board agreed that consultation regarding closing the Mull office can take place with tenants. The outcome of the consultation will be reported back to the Board for final decision.
- Good progress has been made on the Improvement Plan put into place following inspection by the Scottish Housing Regulator.
- The Board approved a new strategy to deal with the recovery of debts (not current tenant debts) owed to the Association on a pilot basis for the next 12 months.

Board update – 11 August 2011.

The Chief executive gave a presentation which covered the following points:-

- There will be a Housing Summit on 26th August which will be attended by Housing Minister, Keith Brown, Mike Russell MSP along with a number of other relevant dignitaries from the Council and ACHA. Key objective for the day is to agree on a strategy to tackle housing need in Argyll & Bute.
- Alastair has attended a number of Council Area Committees and has provided Councillors briefings on the work of ACHA.
- The refurbished properties at Millknowe, Campbeltown were opened on 29th July. ACHA will be working in partnership with Blue Triangle who have been let 4 properties at Millknowe for the purpose of providing support to young people.
- “All Pay” payment cards have been launched.
- The Scottish Government have confirmed the Association’s grant funding for the coming year.
- Scottish Federation of Housing Associations has expressed concern to the Government regarding regulation and cost to landlords in implementing the Social Housing Charter.

OTHER ISSUES FROM MEETING

- The area committee chairs attended a meeting with staff from Scottish Borders Housing Assoc in July to discuss how they organise committees etc. Committee members found the meeting, in general, quite interesting. It was noted that Geographically Scottish Borders were very different from our area and what works there will not necessarily work for us.
- The audit of ACHA’s final accounts for 2010/11 was presented to

	<p>the Board. It was noted that The Strathclyde Pension Fund was actually in surplus for the period- although this does not necessarily mean that the previous deficit has been eroded. There were no significant concerns with the details of the accounts and Nick Pollard commented that he felt that the audit process had improved from previous years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda Haig presented her monthly Investment update and advised that it is likely that the contact for Oban, Lorn and Isles will have to be retendered. Linda also reported that there have been a number of discussions with the Council regarding their right to use Repair Orders against owners who are holding up major repairs works. It is hoped that this will assist ACHA in progressing some areas of some major work. Linda confirmed that it is always ACHA's preference to work with owners on such matters rather than enforce any action against them. • The Board agreed that the Park Square Development in Campbeltown will be called "New Park Square"- this will be submitted to the Council's Planning Department for final approval. <p><u>OTHER MATTERS</u></p> <p>A report regarding progress on possible office accommodation, in a number of areas, was presented. Office accommodation options have been considered for six locations. The following was recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campbeltown – explore joint development with Kintyre Cultural Forum- approved • Helensburgh – develop detailed business case for conversion of Stuckleckie Road as office- approved • Dunoon – remain in existing office- approved • Mid Argyll – negotiate for more space with Council- approved • Bute – acquire hall and convert to office-approved <p>All options are dependent on suitable funding being available.</p> <p>AMI stated that it is unfortunate that we could be building more offices than houses. GF stated that the costs on a number of the office buildings currently being rented are very costly. Full long term financial costings are provided to Board members with comparisons over new builds and rentals prior to any decisions on the way forward are made. It was acknowledged that not enough housing is being built due to funding issues. IMP advised within Rothesay there is no demand for housing.</p>	
6.	<p>Tenants Panel Minutes</p> <p>Minutes noted.</p> <p>IMP advised that within the June minutes, it looked a very interesting information session from Linda Haig and advised that although some Area Committee Members are present at the Board and receive further updates, it could be beneficial to the Area Committee Members to receive information direct from I&R. Suggestions were of an annual visit, or reports from Board being circulated to non Board Members. IMP advised</p>	

	that this may be something that all Area Committees may wish to consider. CB advised in principle she didn't think that LH would be averse to an annual meeting with Committees. Discussions took place with regards to the recent press whereby contract for OLI had to be retendered – suggestions of works being split to smaller contracts.	
7.	Health & Safety Minutes Draft Minutes were not available at the time of papers being issued. Augusts Minutes will be carried forward to next Area Committee Meeting.	
8.	Review of Key Performance Indicators Pg 2 other issues – 3.1 - Eight members of staff trained as mediators, this is for neighbour complaints where it is hoped that low level neighbour complaints can be dealt with quickly and efficiently. 3.4 Clarity went live in July – IMP advised this is software for the Customer Service Centre to receive incoming calls and further advised of ACHA's new phone service, lync which allowed a number of benefits to staff. 3.6 Leadership Course – IMP advised that AMK has completed this course. IMP further advised that the course is ideal for staff that have been promoted to manager roles and is overseen by the Institute of Leadership and Management. Void Times – Islay 1 st for July with 4 days for turnaround. OLI 10 days. Emergency Repairs – 100% for both Islay and OLI. Urgent Repairs – Islay at 92.3% for July, which needs to be improved. Routine Repairs – 100% for July for all areas. Rent arrears – IMP highlighted Mid Argyll, whose figures to be 1 st in front of Islay is brilliant. Voids – LD asked why so many voids within Bute – IMP advised the imbalance of the number of properties available. Staff are currently looking into options with supported accommodation. IMP advised houses are available, but no demand and unfortunately there is not the work available in the area to attract applicants. Discussion arose on homeless applicants and what area choices they have – IMP advised that HP applicants have a choice of areas and most don't wish to move to Rothesay, IMP further advised that there is not a Homeless List for Rothesay. IMP advised Fyne Homes built a number of new buildings and received grant funding when demand wasn't there and believes the area has now been over developed. Award Winning, lovely looking, but no demand. Now Fyne Homes have shared Ownership flats which have been completely renovated, but unfortunately no interest. JMI advised 1 Rudha Cott still empty – IMP advised the house is let, but she is unable to disclose any further details on an individual's	

	<p>circumstances. IMP further advised that this isn't the forum to discuss anyone's needs.</p> <p>Heating at Rudha Cottages JMI advised very poor for elderly.</p> <p>Sewage tanks Rudha attached to Eventide Home septic tank. JMI advised nobody has looked into this. JMI advised spoke to someone in Campbeltown and was told nobody would touch it, nothing to do with them. JMI advised complaining about paying Argyll and Bute for the sewage tank to be emptied but it's not. IMP clarified that if you have a tank, you get a deduction in your council tax. IMP further clarified that ACHA empty sewage tanks for our properties and don't charge – IMP agreed that phoning Argyll & Bute in Campbeltown, that they don't have anything to do with the tank.</p> <p>IMP clarified the heating issues – electric storage heating at Rudha Cottages, IMP advised she appreciates JMI would prefer to renew it similar to most tenants. IMP further advised that there are delays in heating installations due to contractor issues throughout Argyll, not just Tiree.</p> <p>JMI advised wood pairings around Rudha Cottage properties – now repaired slightly, although other parts still crumbling. IMP advised she was aware some remedial works had been carried out to the fencing around Rudha.</p>	
9.	<p>Local Report</p> <p>McCaig Road playpark – new benches installed. IMP provided a background on the play park and works that have been carried out to the park and the pitch over the previous years. IMP advised the Community purchased the benches. ACHA have drained the playing field but it's not completely fixed the pitch. £10,000 funding which will be used to improve the pitch.</p> <p>JMI asked if the playpark in Tiree is ACHA or Argyll & Bute. IMP advised there was a real confusion initially after transfer, but that ACHA have ownership. JMI advised there is a number of repairs needing done. IMP advised that weekly inspections are carried out by a contractor – IMP advised she will contact JMI tomorrow to get the list of repairs required.</p> <p>Oban Bi-centennial – IMP advised ACHA invited to the Bi-centennial and staff were in the parade.</p> <p>Mull office – Moira McQueen will now work 2 days per week through flexible retirement. IMP advised that ACHA are currently carrying out consultation for the closure of the Mull office. Currently paying a rent in excess of £10,000 for one room. Moira is also a visiting officer, so is out of the office a large majority of the time. IMP advised only 100 houses in Mull, and two days is retrospective for that area. Consultation ended on Friday and the results will be passed to the Board.</p>	

	<p>Grass Cutting – clipping from the Oban Times which was also factually inaccurate, stating that residents will be responsible for new gardening bills IMP advised there has been no billing for this and no resident has paid a penny for it. IMP advised the service itself has been cut.</p> <p>Councillor Currie who resides in Islay is now the spokesperson for Housing.</p> <p>Police Raids – IMP advised spoke briefly at Area Committee previously. Cllr Roddy McCuish made a very clear stance in Oban Times stating anyone who has been convicted of drug dealing should not be given housing. IMP advised she felt RMC is articulating what the majority of people believe. IMP confirmed ACHA's stance to refuse to re-house convicted drug dealers. Chief Executive Response – Alastair requested legal advice and our Lawyers advised that potentially people who have been convicted of drug dealing could be classed as making themselves intentionally homeless. Discussions took place with regards to ACHA evicting and not re-housing but WHHA will re-house. It was agreed that with HomeArgyll in particular there should be a joint stance as per Roddys letter to the Oban Times.</p> <p>New rent payment method – IMP advised that Jolomo gave the picture for the payment card which is the Phone Box at Gott Bay, Tiree. IMP advised about 6000 cards were sent out for Rents and Insurance. Cards were being used throughout Argyll from the first week. In excess of £100 k of payments has come in through the payment cards. 1300 rent transactions and 295 insurance transactions. Also good to support local shops.</p> <p>ACHA's Army – IMP advised that local staff participated in Oban's Raft Race.</p> <p>Garden Winners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dunbeg – Mr & Mrs Coughlan, 10 Hillside, Dunbeg - cup presented at the Lorn Show • Appin/North Lorn – Ms M Watt, 8 Benmore View, North Connel • Dalmally – Morag Dougall, 13 Scott Terrace, Dalmally – cup presented at Dalmally Show • Oban in Bloom – Mr D Black, 13 Lorn Avenue (1st), J MacLean, 30 Longsdale (2nd), D Reid, 29 Hazeldean Crescent (3rd). • Mull – Mr & Mrs Ian Erskine, 17 Java Houses, Craignure & Mr Rayside Young, 6 Fountainhead, Craignure – Chief Executive presenting prizes week commencing 12th September. • Anne & Belle MacGilvray, 7 Mansefield Road, Port Ellen, who also won for 2010. <p>Dalmally Show – IMP, GF & LAD represented ACHA at Dalmally show. There was no charge for the show. IMP asked if the Committee would like to make a nominal donation. Agreed take an average and send to the Secretary. Church asked to pass on their thanks for Community Action</p>	<p>AMK</p>
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	Fund.	
10.	Fish Board Report for Information Circulated with Papers – No comments	
11.	Consultation on New Tenants Handbook Circulated with Papers. LAD requested – Page 25 – text – “If you have a chip pan fire...” – text, “do not pour water on it” should be in bold and upper case font. Page 47 – “Use of Common or Shared Parts” - Heater and Cookers should be underlined (half way through page). Page 51 – Pest Control – reference to “ACHA tenants have responsibility for the removal of pest infestations such as rodents, ants, fleas, wasps/bees etc from their home or garden” – Bees should not be included as they can’t be removed because they’re protected. Page 50 – Grass Cutting Service – Too specific with the “once a month”, not always so with the way the programme falls and could be open to complaints. Introduction – felt a bit messy too specific on issues that are further explained in detail further on.	
12.	Consultation on Low Demand Strategy Circulated with Papers – No comments. Members received stamped address envelopes if they wish to send comments directly to YL.	
13.	EMAP Report EMAP proposal for sign at Stanalane Play Park with picture that was selected by Members at previous meeting – approved by all. AB advised saddened to see about the ramp at Islay road going to Mull terrace – didn’t do the ramp. Raised it with the Community Council and ACHA. IMP will speak to Bill Anderson.	IMP
14.	AOCB Lawn mowing – LAD stated the grass for over 70’s is being done two monthly – gets cut at the beginning of the year when not required and then is cut when it’s really really long. LAD believes that it is programmed wrong for Appin where it is the end of May before cutting is required. IMP advised some areas are requesting programmes moved to earlier. GF advised he feels that they aren’t cutting the grass short enough, which means by the time they are due back again, the grass is really long and	

	asked if they could cut the grass shorter initially – IMP advised she will look into it, but is unsure if changes could be made for just one community.	IMP
15.	Date and Time of Next Meeting Monday 7 th November, 3pm, Menzies House, vc Tiree	