

## Report from Chairperson

Achievements in 2018/19

### **GENERAL**

**Good evening everyone. My name is Ian Johnstone and I am the Chairperson of Paisley HA.**

This is my first AGM as the Chairperson of Paisley HA and my first report to you the members of the Association. I am pleased to say my first year as Chairperson has ran relatively smoothly but I have been on a steep learning curve. This is partly due to taking on this new responsibility but also the many changes that are currently part of the housing sector. I am always surprised by the fast pace of change in the sector and the many areas we require to be involved in one way or another.

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

Hot on the heels of GDPR in May 2018 we are now preparing to meet the Freedom of Information requirements in November 2019. Until now Housing Associations have not been required to meet FOI standards even although we often work within the spirit of the legislation. Preparation has been ongoing since the announcement earlier this year. Again this has been a particular focus of our Corporate Services Officer, Sandra Marshall. We are currently on track to be fully compliant by the deadline which is fast approaching. Despite one minor GDPR breach this year we have not had any other particular issues.

### **FIRE SAFETY**

We are now clear on the new fire safety regulations announced by the Scottish Government in February .

Again our Technical Manager, Elaine Thomson is fully briefed and already starting to plan and budget for this. Our current planned investment programme has incorporated the new fire safety requirements so we are confident about meeting the deadline for compliance in 2 years time. More on this later.

## **NEW REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

A further significant change this year was the review of the Regulatory Framework that RSL's operate under. This was published by the Scottish Housing Regulator in February and among the many changes is the requirement for the Association to produce its first Assurance Statement in October. The purpose of this Assurance Statement is for the Board to sign off that they have seen sufficient evidence throughout the year to state that the Association meets the rigorous standards of Governance & Financial Management and if not they have a plan in place to do so. I'm happy to say that again we are on track to being able to provide that Assurance. We will be publishing our first Annual Assurance Statement by 31<sup>st</sup> October on our website.

## **In our TECHNICAL SECTION**

Last year we spent a half a million pounds on providing an excellent repairs service to our tenants and owners. We are pleased that this sum is slightly down this year due to our ongoing investment in tenants' homes.

We also spent £1.22M on replacing boilers, windows, rewiring, new bathrooms and on our most significant investment this year -upgrading fire protection.

This is a 2-3 year programme for us to meet new legislation on fire detection across all our properties. But for older stock we are also fitting internal fire doors, and

upgrading flat front doors to provide 60 minute fire protection.

Community Benefits this year from our planned and cyclical framework has again been all about providing training and employment opportunities. Frews our Gas Contractor, McColls, who are doing our paint contract, and CCG have between them four apprentices all because of PHA's investment.

We were also successful in getting a Grant for £10,000 which will go towards creating a 'Click Zone' in our new office to help increase basic digital skills of our tenants and customers.

## **In our HOUSING SECTION**

Performance in Housing Management which covers allocating empty properties, rental income and dealing with neighbour nuisance complaints continues to be very good.

As well as managing tenancies we also provide support to our tenants when they need it and invite them to get involved through various events.

Last year our successful tenant events included

- Our Christmas party supported by Cash for Kids is now in it's 9<sup>th</sup> year
- Our Panto event for our more mature tenants
- Our popular Garden and balcony competition
- Our annual Summer Festival
- A Digital project to promote digital skills for people with health problems
- A small project supported by Renfrewshire Digiteers to help people prepare for Universal Credit by learning how to use the internet and email

## **WELFARE BENEFITS AND ENERGY ADVICE SERVICE**

Another really successful year from our Welfare Benefits Service gaining hundreds of thousands of pounds in back dated benefits. Our focus has been on Universal Credit, the biggest change to the Welfare Benefits system in many years.

We help our tenants through the whole process from advising & assisting on making UC claims, to managing it when it's in place.

### **In our FINANCE SECTION**

We continue to invest in our new Housing IT system CX, planned environmental works and our new office in Assurance House later this year.

During the year we procured planned maintenance contracts resulting in £1.7m spend in the year.

More specifically within the Finance department we have also procured new telecoms, postage and utility supplies contracts.

The current cash position is healthy at £5M in the bank.

We have plans to use this money over the next few years to be used toward planned investments, in particular on planned maintenance (specifically continuing our Bathrooms and replacement electrics as well as our Doors replacement contracts over the next 3 years)

### **IT**

During the year our IT Officer moved on but this gave our IT Assistant the opportunity to progress within the

Association and we plan to temporarily increase the team again for approximately 2 years with an additional IT Officer to assist specifically with the new housing management system.

Also during the last year we introduced our new website which we continue to develop to meet the updated requirements of Scottish Information Commissioner to make information easily available to customers via our website.

Going forward we wish to develop how we use our IT to assist our customers and assist our staff to work more effectively.

## **OUR WORK IN DEVELOPMENT**

Our work in Orchard Street/Causeyside Street to improve 5 closes is slowly progressing with up to 80% of residents agreeing to sell their properties to the Association. It's a slow and painstaking process.

We are also working to develop amenity and wheelchair adaptable property in Calside which will be 16 properties and 30 properties in partnership with Sanctuary HA in Glenburn. We are hoping to be on site with both these developments in March 2020.

We are keen to contribute to the Scottish Government's ambitious target of 50,000 new homes by 2021.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY**

Everyone here knows that it's not just the maintenance and improvement of housing that we are focussed on. We are also keen to ensure we provide attractive and safe neighbourhoods and communities. I'm delighted to have Duncan Clelland from our West End Environmental

Transformation Team here tonight to talk about how our work in this area is progressing.

## **COMPLAINTS**

I say this year on year with the genuine belief that Complaints are at the lowest level ever in the Association. However we have again improved from last year's figure with only 60 complaints received from Tenants and Owners throughout the year. I believe that it is a sign of our success that there are fewer areas that Tenants are unhappy about.

## **Tenant Satisfaction Survey**

We also carried out our 3 yearly Tenant Satisfaction Survey in July of this year. It is very satisfying to report that we are bucking the trend with our results which are extremely positive. The highlights of the report will be sent out to Tenants in October along with a copy of our Annual Report on the Charter. Again I am delighted to report that the Association has had it's most successful year yet scoring an A plus across all areas of the Charter. Both documents will be with you in October and on our website including a full report on the Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

## **STAFF NEWS**

As usual there have been lots of changes on our staff front with staff coming and going.

We have had 1 retirement, a number of temporary staff joining us for specific projects and 1 person moved to Stirling Council. We've also had 3 babies, a 50<sup>th</sup> and a double 60<sup>TH</sup> Birthday celebration.

Finally Congratulations to Annie McLaughlin who successfully completed her Masters in Housing.

## **FLAIR ACADEMY**

This year we have had great success with our FLAIR Academy. FLAIR Academy is a training Academy for new and potential Board members which combines training sessions with actual Board inter action. Launched last year we are now into the third Academy which has resulted in new Board members for all of the FLAIR Associations. Anyone interested please speak to Sandra here tonight.

## **NEW OFFICE & 64 ESPEDAIR STREET**

I've saved the best to last. We hope to move into our new Office in the Town Centre called Assurance House in October. Clarks Contracts are currently progressing the work with AHR our architects responsible for the design. It will be the best Xmas present to have a new office facility for Customers, Staff and Board to use. We also hope to be able to use the facility to offer better privacy and learning facilities for Tenants through a Community Hub. Our AGM next year will be in our new facility.

## **Board**

Finally thanks to all of the Board for their hard work throughout the year. I couldn't do my job without your support.

I'd like to give particular thanks to the Office Bearers, Jim Weir ( Vice Chair) and Eileen Graham (Secretary) for their continued support.

My thanks also goes to our previous Chairperson John Sweeney who retired both from our Board and a number of other public positions this year due to ill health.

But also for those who stay year on year to keep Paisley  
HA moving forward.  
Thanks and enjoy the rest of the AGM.