

Management Committee Meeting

Wed 10 January 2024, 18:30 - 19:30

Zoom meeting

Attendees

Board members

- Erica Davidson (CEO)
 - Katie Devaney (Acting Chair)
 - William Stevenson (Secretary)
 - Lynsey Chrystal
 - Yvonne McDonald
 - Lawrence O'Neill
 - Peter Fennessey
 - Richard McLean
 - Dean Vinter
 - Peter French (Head of Property Services)
 - Steve Rolfe
 - Leanne Keegan
 - Heather Maitz
-
- Absent: Hilary Edgar (Submitted apologies)
 - Amy Sweeney (Apologies (on annual leave))

Meeting minutes

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Hilary Edgar. (Amy Sweeney on annual leave and Erica would be taking a minute of the meeting)

Erica informed the Committee that Rhona Polak had resigned her position on the Committee and also as Chair. [REDACTED]. Erica explained that Katie Devaney, Vice-Chairperson, had agreed to chair this meeting. This was approved by the Committee - proposed by Yvonne McDonald and seconded by Billy Stevenson

2. Disclosure of interest

None declared

3. Minutes of previous Management Committee Meeting 12th December 2023

These Minutes of the previous meeting will be presented for approval at Management Committee Meeting on 6th February 2024

4. Report on requirement for additional resources in Property Services Team.

Erica presented a report on the proposal for an additional Maintenance Administrative Assistant in the Property Services Section. This request for additional resources had come about following increased workload for the Section and precipitated by the end of the current property services apprentice two year appointment at the beginning of March 2024 - leaving the section without a full time administrative member of staff. (Meeting note - this report had previously gone to the December Committee meeting; however at that meeting the Committee felt that the report did not give enough factual evidence to support the creation of a new post within the organisation and the CEO had been asked to rewrite the report to give more supporting facts. This had been done and Erica went through the revised report in detail with the Committee.)

Within the report Erica went through the composition and duties of the Property Services Team. Erica explained that the Apprentice's post had been created in 2022 to give a young person in the local area a job and training opportunity as well as to assist with the increasing workload of the Property Services Team. Within her report Erica detailed how this additional workload had come about and also the improvements it was hoped to make within the team by having the additional supportive resource. These included dealing with increased Landlord Health and Safety Regulations, dealing with the backlog in the major component replacement programme which had been delayed during Covid, bringing the on-going stock condition surveys in-house as well as ensuring the on-going property EICRs are being kept within their five year time period. The latter SHQS requirement was introduced in 2020/21 and in Erica's view by itself requires an additional half-post going forward.

The options Erica offered were to (1) not fill the post (2) fill the post by taking on a new apprentice and (3) create the post of Maintenance Administrative

Assistant and offer it in the first instance to the newly qualified apprentice in post. Erica went through the benefits and risks of each option and concluded that the recommendation of the Management Team to the Committee was that we select option 3.

There was a great deal of discussion and questions asked about the information within the report as follows:-

Clarification was sought on information presented on the number of full time equivalent employees at Knowes and salary cost over turnover ratios. Erica had offered comparisons with other RSLs which showed that our staff ratio to turnover and staff numbers per stock levels were comparatively low compared to other RSLs of our size. It was pointed out by a member of the Committee that we were not comparing like with like as other RSLs carried out different activities and that was why staff numbers varied. Erica agreed that this was so but equally we could argue that other RSLs chose to employ staff members in areas, such as wider action projects, which did not generate much in the way of additional turnover but gave their community a great deal of benefits. Knowes could choose to put more resources into our core activities and this would have a positive effect on the services to our customers. Another Committee member also commented that comparing staff numbers across organisations could be fraught with difficulties in taking into account all the different activities RSLs carried out but staff costs/turnover and staff numbers/housing stock were acceptable benchmarking ratios to use for comparative purposes.

Erica also explained that in the last customer satisfaction survey satisfaction levels in repairs had fallen to 79% (pre-Covid levels were at 89%); however since the 2022 satisfaction levels were rising again to 83%. It was hoped that with this additional customer resource we could bring satisfaction levels up to pre-Covid levels again with the next year or so. A Committee member commented that this was the situation across the RSL sector with many associations reporting drops in Repairs satisfaction levels post Covid. It was asked when Knowes next satisfaction survey would be. Erica said the last survey had been in January 2022 and previously we had carried out surveys once every three years - however Erica was hoping to bring this forward and hold another survey in 2024.

Clarification was also sought from the committee regarding why we were bringing our stock condition survey in-house, did we not receive a good service

from the external consultants who were employed to carry out this work and would there be any savings from this?

Erica answered that information received from external consultants in the past only looked at a small sample of stock and this could lead to inaccuracies in projected data. There were benefits to bringing this in house as we can put in place a rolling programme of stock surveys each year and keep our asset management system updated by using a mobile device on site. It is unlikely that there would be savings from this if we were still to required to carry out an independent survey every five years. However if an external survey were not required then we would save the consultancy fee costs.

With regard to this another Committee mentioned that their RSL had been carrying out in-house stock condition surveys for a number of years now with every property in their organisation surveyed at least once every 10 years.

Peter also agreed that it would be very helpful to bring this function in-house as Knowes' staff were more knowledgeable about their own stock than external consultants and were suitable qualified to carry out condition surveys.

It was also asked - would the new Administrative Assistant role be expected to carry out stock condition surveys? Erica said no - it would be the Maintenance Officers. We had some additional resources here as in 2023 we had increased one post from three days per week to full time during the year and now for the first time had two full time Maintenance Officers. However the Administrative Assistant would provide support to the Maintenance officers in updating our asset management system.

The proposed maintenance spend of ██████ for next two years was also asked about - would this cause a breach of covenants. Erica explained that fortunately we had just paid off our existing loan term loan and had no covenants to adhere to. In 2024 we would be looking to borrow around ██████ for our new development but we would ensure whichever institution we agreed to borrow from would not put restrictive capital spend covenants in the loan agreement. We already had some indicative terms from ██████ and they have assured us that capital spend would not be added back into revenue for the interest rate cover covenant.

Concerns were also raised regarding the salary costs - if they were increased at this point then how would this affect later salary requests - if for example we did not get the funding for the Tenancy Sustainment post continuance - then could we afford the new maintenance assistant post as well as our contribution

towards the Tenancy Sustainment Post. Erica explained that this would need a separate discussion for another meeting. At the moment we were still hopeful grant would be available for this post.

The Chair explained that there had been two questions submitted by a Committee Member who was not able to attend this meeting. These were as follows:-

- *If the Management Committee agree the recommended option for a new post in Property Services and the current Apprentice gets a job externally before, or shortly after, being appointed, is the management team absolutely sure they will want to proceed in the same way i.e. to create a new post rather than appoint another Apprentice and work out a way of using existing staff resources to carry out the more complex tasks in the Maintenance Assistant job description?*
- *If the decision is made not to have a further Apprentice in the Property Services Team, is there scope to build a case for Knowes HA to take on an Apprentice in a different part of the organisation, to give another local person the opportunity to get training and employment experience?*

Erica explained that if the current newly qualified apprentice did not wish to take on the role of Maintenance Administrative Assistant or left after a short time, then we would be looking to advertise the post as a Grade 4 and not as an apprentice role. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]


[REDACTED]. However this does not rule out the possibility of employing another apprentice within the organisation at a later stage - but this would be another discussion for the Committee to have in the future. In response to a question - would we then be offering future apprentices a full time job within the organisation, Erica explained that no we would not automatically offer permanent jobs to new apprentices. It was understood by the Management Team that we could not always offer permanent employment to our apprentices.


Katie wound up the discussion at that point and asked for decisions on the Management Team Recommendations which were as follows:-


- *Create a full-time additional post with the Repairs team of Maintenance Administrative Assistant at EVH Grade 4*
- *Approve the awarding of this post to the current apprentice now coming to the end of the two years training. If the current apprentice does not wish to remain with Knowes HA then we should advertise the post.*

The Committee agreed to create the post of Maintenance Administrative Assistant at Grade 4 and offer the post to the existing apprentice, with a view to advertising the post if the existing apprentice did not accept the offer.

This was proposed by Heather Maitz and seconded by Richard McLean

 The Requirement for additional staff resources in Property Services Team.pdf



 KHA Maintenance Administrative Assistant Job Description.pdf



 KHA Maintenance Administrative Assistant person specification.pdf

5. A.O.B.

There were two items to discuss within A.O.B. as follows:-

The recent resignation of the Chair person. 


 Given this Erica asked that we appoint a new Chair at the February meeting and we would be looking for nominations from Committee members. Erica would be happy for interested candidates to contact her for an informal chat before the February meeting to discuss what was involved in being chair. In the meantime, as the organisation could not be without a Chair, Erica asked Katie if she would be willing to act as Chair until the February meeting. Katie confirmed that she would be able to do this and the Committee agreed to appoint Katie as the chair until the February Committee Meeting. Proposed by Billy and seconded by Lynsey.

Erica announced that the Head of Finance, , had let her know that he was leaving Knowes 






[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In the meantime as Erica had previously been Head of Finance for Knowes, Erica would take on the duties of the Head of Finance role and would be able to carry out the handover for the new candidate. Erica explained that she would be arranging an Employment sub committee meeting to discuss the post and the recruitment process.

Katie ended the meeting at this point and thanked everyone present for attending and for their contribution to the discussion.

6. Date of Next meeting - please note the date of next meeting is Tuesday 6th February 2024 - this meeting is to agree budgets and rent increase.