

Hillcrest Homes (Scotland) Limited Operations Sub Committee

Item 2.1

Minute of the meeting held Tuesday 13th May 2025
at 5.30pm, on MS Teams/HQ Board Room

Present:	P. Shepherd	(Chair, HQ)
	R. Burnett	(Teams)
In attendance:	M. Percival	(Director of Finance & Property, HQ)
	D. Milton	(Head of Development, HQ)
	D. Conway	(Head of Asset Management, HQ)
	C. Pickthall	(Head of Housing and Enterprises, HQ)
	R. Gray	(Housing Operations Manager, HQ)
	L. Davidson	(Board Services Officer, HQ)

Action by

1. **Introduction**

It was noted that the quorum for the meeting is 3 and as there were only 2 Sub Committee members in attendance, the agenda items requiring approval will be presented for ratification at the next Governing Body meeting on 20th May 2025. The items requiring approval are Items 5.2, 5.3 and 6.4. The Sub Committee members present agreed to proceed with the meeting on this basis.

1.1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from E. Jones, S. Qadar and D. Boyle.

1.2 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

2.1 **Minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2025 and matters arising**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

There were no matters arising.

3. **Business Matters**

3.1 Update on Activity Plan 2024-25

An update on the progress made against the activity plan objectives set was presented to the Sub Committee for information. Of the 10 key strategic priorities, 3 have been fully implemented, 2 are ongoing and 5 are carried forward to next year. The objectives carried forward to next year relate to the strategies which have been delayed pending approval of the overarching Corporate Strategy.

The Sub Committee noted the update provided and the progress made against the objectives set.

3.2 Tackling Poverty Together Action Plan Update

The Head of Housing and Enterprises presented the update on the refreshed action plan and the tenant consultation undertaken. Good progress has been made during 2024/25 on the objectives to help tackle poverty.

The Sub Committee noted the update against the action plan.

3.3 Net Zero Strategy Group Update

The bi-annual update on the activity of the recently formed Net Zero Strategy Group was presented to the Sub Committee for information. The development of the Net Zero Strategy is underway and is expected to be published in August 2025 following Governing Body approval in July.

The Sub Committee noted the report.

3.4 Retrofit Proposal

The Head of Asset Management presented the report on the multi-measure retrofit project in Stanley, Perthshire for 43 tenanted and 6 owner-occupied properties.

There was due diligence carried out on potential contractors for the project and one contractor was selected and estimated costs were provided, based on 50% Social Housing Net Zero Heat funding contribution and 50% Hillcrest contribution. However, the contractor has now indicated that the cost to provide these works will be higher than originally quoted, and the budgeted estimate and a funding application will not be submitted at this stage.

Hillcrest Maintenance are in the process of being upskilled to be accredited to fully deliver these works in-house or provide project management. Hillcrest Maintenance will become the principal contractor and alternative funding streams will be explored to deliver this project.

R. Burnett asked about the timescales for Hillcrest Maintenance to be accredited to deliver these works and the cost of works. To be fully accredited for all the works will take a bit of time, Maintenance is currently undergoing accreditation for solar PV's and more engineers are undertaking qualifications for installing / maintaining air

source heat pumps. Hillcrest Maintenance would become the main contractor and would be the project manager, sub contracting where necessary. It is expected that Maintenance will be able to deliver the project more in line with the original proposed contractor costs.

The Sub Committee noted the report, and further updates will be presented at future meetings.

4. Asset Management Operations Report

4.1 Asset Management Operations Report

The Head of Asset Management presented the quarterly report, highlighting the following:

- Spend in Q4 was a favourable variance and underspend of £159k.
- Tenant satisfaction remains high and above the 90% target and has increased to 96.89%.
- Emergency repairs time is better than the target of 4 hours, performing at 2 hours 43 minutes.
- Non-emergency repairs time is 8.33 days which exceeds the target of 7 days.
- No compliance issues – small number of properties will require forced access to gain entry to complete the necessary works.
- Continuing to proactively manage any risks associated with cladding and new assessment surveys are underway.
- Dampness, mould and condensation remains a high priority, and we are continuing to gather data to gain an understanding of how this affects our tenants and properties. A new Dampness, Mould and Condensation Policy was published in December 2024.
- Commercial properties – there are currently 3 vacant properties in Dundee.

The Sub Committee noted the following:

- *Performance against key indicators*
- *2024-25 spend to budget*
- *Commercial property overview*
- *Agency hostel overview*

4.2 Property Disposal Update

The Head of Asset Management presented the update on the property sales strategy. A total of 26 properties have been sold when vacant. There is currently 1 sale pending and a further property marketed for sale.

The Sub Committee noted the update on property sales to date.

4.3 Land Disposal

There have been 2 enquiries received from property owners wishing to purchase land bordering their properties. The Sub Committee recommended at the February 2025 meeting that the requirement for owners to demonstrate that relevant planning permission has been obtained has been removed from the requirement of the sale.

The Sub Committee agreed that due to the low value of the land disposals (£1,200 in total), this was approved by members present.

The Sub Committee approved the requests to the disposal of land. The funds received from the land sales will be allocated to future landscaping improvements within the respective developments.

5. Development

5.1 Development Report

The Head of Development presented the progress in deliver of the 3 year development programme. There are currently 22 developments on site. The performance of projects that are on site in respect of cost and time was noted by the Sub Committee, highlighting in particular the projects with a red or amber rating. An overview of the grant spend to date and defects were also noted by the Sub Committee.

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P. Shepherd requested that contractor names are added to the development projects with a red or amber rating to allow the Sub Committee to identify any potential contractor risks.

The Sub Committee noted the general progress in the delivery of the 3 year development programme, in particular the performance of projects that are on site in respect of cost and time.

5.2 Confidential Item

Minute removed due to commercially sensitive information.

5.3 Development Assumptions

The assumptions used in the financial appraisals of developments are reviewed on an annual basis by representatives of the Finance, Housing and Executive Leadership Teams. The following assumptions presented for approval relate to loan interest rate, maximum loan repayment period, annual management/maintenance cost per annum, and void and bad debts.

The Sub Committee members present were in general agreement of the recommended assumptions.

This item will be presented for approval at the Governing Body meeting on 20th May 2025.

6. Housing Management

6.1 Housing Management Key Performance Indicators

The Housing Operations Manager presented the Q4 key performance indicators against the target for 2024-25, highlighting the following:

- Void performance has met the target.
- Net arrears performance remains within target and exceeds the comparative quarter by 0.21%, financial year 2023-24.
- Rent collection continues to meet the target.
- Tenancies sustained for more than 12 months has met the target.

The Sub Committee noted the ambitious targets set and congratulated the team on the outstanding performance.

The Sub Committee noted the report.

6.2 Housing Management Update

The Housing Operations Manager presented the report on the key priority topics for tenants and Homes.

A new Income Advisor has been recruited to assist in facilitating the takeover of the fuel debts from Insite.

The Engagement Team are meeting with the Hillcrest Young Person's group to discuss ways to encourage more 16-25 year olds to join the feedback forum.

Financial gains from the Financial Wellbeing Team in Q4 was £113,402 and for the Hillcrest Energy Advice Team was £351,256. There were 11 applications made to the Hillcrest Foundation, of which 8 were successful and have been awarded funds to provide additional support for tenants.

The Sub Committee congratulated the team on the outstanding work carried out.

The Sub Committee noted the report.

6.3 Tenant Satisfaction Action Plan Update

There has been good progress made against the actions from the 2024 tenant satisfaction survey. Aberdeen tenants reported the lowest level of satisfaction and work has commenced on a targeted survey to our tenants in this area.

Hillcrest Maintenance have completed a trial for evening and weekend

appointments for gas servicing and non-emergency repairs and a report on its findings will be actioned.

A communication was sent to all tenants in February 2025 which resulted in 200 tenants signing up to the feedback forum, which now stands at 909 members.

The Sub Committee noted the report.

6.4 Domestic Abuse Policy

The revised Domestic Abuse Policy was presented, outlining the organisation's commitment to addressing and responding to domestic abuse affecting tenants and members of their household.

This item will be presented for approval at the Governing Body meeting on 20th May 2025.

7. Customer Services/Complaints

7.1 Customer Services Update

The Head of Housing presented the report on the performance of the Customer Services Team in Q4 with the following highlights:

- All KPIs met for internal repairs and housing general enquiries line.
- The number of calls for housing general enquiries is decreasing, with a decline in calls to the repairs team due to the favourable weather conditions. Additional analysis will be carried out to determine if there are other ways in which tenants are making contact.
- There are ongoing challenges with the out of hours service, with any national adverse weather affecting call volume. A review of the options for the out of hours service will be carried out.

The Sub Committee noted the report.

7.2 Complaints Update

A summary of the complaints performance for Q4 was presented to the Sub Committee.

Stage 1 complaints completed on time and average days to complete have decreased slightly compared to previous year. Housing complaints increased in Q4, with a reduction in Asset Management complaints and in Edinburgh. This is as a result of a number of works brought in-house to improve service and reduce complaints.

There were 4 stage 2 complaints in Q4, 2 upheld, 1 partially upheld and 1 not upheld. The learning outcomes and actions from the complaints will be taken forward.

There were 329 compliments logged for staff.

The Sub Committee noted the report.

8. Other Issues

8.1 A.O.C.B.

There was no other competent business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 9th September 2025

There being no other business the Chairperson thanked members
for their attendance and closed the meeting.

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