

ORKNEY HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED



Annual Report

2020-2021





New-build progress at The Crafty, Kirkwall

CHAIR'S REPORT

My second year as Chair has been beyond anything I could have imagined, when the coronavirus pandemic hit, it turned everything on its head. Thankfully we had recently reviewed our Business Continuity Plan, but



Fiona Lettice, Chair

I honestly don't think any amount of planning could have prepared us for the reality of living through a global pandemic. We have had to completely redesign our vital services, in order to maintain the health and safety of our tenants and staff, all of which had to happen at speed.

We have made the move, in many instances, from face-to-face contact to doing things digitally. The feedback we have received from staff and tenants has been very positive, though lessons will be learned and implemented. I was reassured to see the seamless transition from the usual office-based services to digital.

Throughout this time I saw staff going above and beyond their usual duties – helping tenants to arrange food deliveries or calling just to check they were managing ok, this really highlighted the level of dedication to reaching out and helping our community.

Committee meetings were attended virtually by members with everyone appearing on screen to allow us to continue our duties. Emergency COVID legislation was passed allowing us to have our first online AGM which

went without any glitches. Without doubt the most used phrase of the past year has been 'You're on mute'.

Although we faced some setbacks and delays, we were able to continue our development programme with 2 developments starting on site at The Crafty, Kirkwall and Kirk Park, Orphir. Which, as well as providing much needed homes in our community, also brought in significant funds to support local building firms.

In some ways the pandemic and leap to digital working allowed committee members and staff to attend and engage in training sessions in ways which had previously not been possible. Indeed, I found myself attending sessions with colleagues from as far south as the Borders right the way up to Shetland.

It was with huge pride we said farewell to Committee Member



Elaine Grieve

Elaine Grieve who stepped down from the Management Committee to focus on the highly esteemed role as Lord Lieutenant of Orkney. We wish her the utmost success with this position.

Finally, I would really just like to say a huge thank you to our committee members, tenants, staff and community for coming together and finding our way through this most difficult of times. Let hope for a more positive year to come.

Fiona Lettice, Chair

A great place to work

OUR PEOPLE

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and successive lockdowns, we remained open to help customers every day. "Open" looked a bit different, with minimal numbers of staff in the office undertaking essential services, and many of the team supporting tenants remotely through digital means and even old-fashioned phone calls! With assistance from our IT Consultants we were able to provide the infrastructure and equipment to enable all office based staff to work from home by the end of June.



2020-21 became the year we got very used to talking to **heads and shoulders** on screens with occasional children and pets joining in. There were even a few 'social' occasions attended virtually.

In August we said farewell to **Katherine Skea**, Finance Officer who, after over 24 years' service, decided it was time to hang up her calculator and retire. Unable to have the usual send off, a virtual presentation was held instead. **Angela Fitzpatrick**, our new Finance Officer joined us, following our first virtual recruitment in September, and is still looking forward to meeting all staff members when it is safe to do so.

Shannon Tait, Modern Apprentice, completed her qualifications and left in September to undertake a new challenge with another local employer, we wish her all the best for the future.

Like so many people, some staff had to juggle work with home schooling which proved challenging at times, including putting extra pressure on internet use!

We acknowledge that the past year has presented many challenges, particularly around mental health and wellbeing. Our staff have been looking at developing Workplace Wellbeing activities and support mechanisms.

After staff were provided with laptops to enable effective remote working we had a number of desktop PCs surplus to requirements, some of which were donated to local charities.

During the pandemic, staff who were at home were encouraged to participate in work related training. Staff embraced this opportunity and we are delighted to announce that over 240 courses were recorded during the year. These ranged from half hour awareness sessions to professional qualifications, covering a wide range of topics.



Katherine Skea



Angela Fitzpatrick

Our Committee Members also benefited from the wide variety of flexible on-line training opportunities available, spending an average of 22 hours each on training during the year. This included an on-line strategy event, followed by a virtual Christmas meal, bought locally, arranged and delivered by our festive helpers, and enjoyed by members in their own homes.



Cat Browne

With travel plans cancelled, our colleague **Cat Browne**, Finance and Asset Management Administrator, who had been set to take on the trip of a lifetime walking the foothills of the Himalayas to Everest Base Camp in October, found a novel way of replicating this. On 12th September Cat started to climb Wideford Hill (225m) until she had ascended the equivalent height of Everest (8848m). This entailed 40 trips up and down over 7 days. During the challenge she raised over £900 for local charities.

Christmas time was very different from previous years as there was no option for staff to get together and celebrate, we did enjoy an informal get together which included a festive quiz via Zoom.

We provided donations to **THAW** and **CAB** during the year, and worked in partnership with other charities such as **Orkney Foodbank, Orkney Charitable Trust, SCVO** and **the Hunter Foundation** – all to support our tenants through the pandemic.

Congratulations to Grant Campbell who received the Orkney Housing Association Carpentry & Joinery Award 2020 after being selected by his tutor at Orkney College.



Great customer service

Maintaining our properties

Like many other organisations, what we planned to do in 2020/21 was interrupted by the pandemic. We took a view that the most important focus was to keep tenants, staff, contractors and the community safe and supported. This meant that we paused some of the planned works which would have involved repeated or long periods of time inside properties. Door, window, kitchen and

heating replacements were postponed, and we focused on external painting and other works when and where it was safe to do so. All these works are now programmed to be undertaken over the following couple of years. Even in the strictest of lockdown times, we continued a full service of emergency and urgent repairs – delivering 100% of those within target times.

Tenants were very understanding and supportive of our approach to deferring non-urgent works until restrictions eased and it was safer for everyone to carry out the work. This obviously impacted on our performance figures regarding timescales. However, from around mid-June we were able to start undertaking repairs again and worked through the backlog of reported repairs, with the majority of these being completed by mid-August.

Supporting our tenants

2020/21 has proved to be a challenging time for everyone and we have worked extremely hard, focussing primarily on the needs of our residents. We feel we have delivered great services, unparalleled support and great outcomes for our communities.

Throughout the pandemic our Housing & Customer Services Team have been in regular direct contact with our tenants. In summer and winter, we had a focused series of contacts with all tenants, where we were successful in having conversations with 70% of our tenants. This contact was invaluable in shaping our approach towards tenancy sustainment.

Tenants have been offered a wide range of support such as financial, welfare and energy advice from our excellent Housing & Customer Services staff. In some cases, we have simply been a reassuring voice at the end of the phone during these difficult times.

Despite the various lockdown restrictions, we never once stopped providing much needed housing services to the Orkney community. We did this in a safe and secure way when many of our peers, locally and nationally, stopped for at least three months. In our view it was more important than ever that we provided safe, settled, secure and affordable housing. During the year the Association saw:

- **53 new tenancies**
(34 to OIC, 16 to OHAL Waiting List Applicants and 3 to OHAL Transfer Applicants)
- **11 households assisted into home ownership**

When the pandemic started, the Scottish Government advised all social landlords to focus on re-housing homeless applicants where possible. Accordingly, we offered nearly 95% of our available void properties to Orkney Islands Council in the first instance. We felt this was the right thing to do in the circumstances in order to help those most in need of safe, secure housing. As restrictions start to ease, discussions are under way with Orkney Islands Council about how we meet the housing need of those on the waiting list, transfer list and homeless applicants in a fair and equitable manner.

The pandemic required us to improve our online services and offer more digital options for customers engaging with us. Excellent contact was maintained through text, email & social media despite restrictions on face to face contact. We achieved a lot in the past year and continue to develop our digital services for tenants and residents. This will include exploring options for accessing individual data online and completing application forms relating to housing application and tenancy.

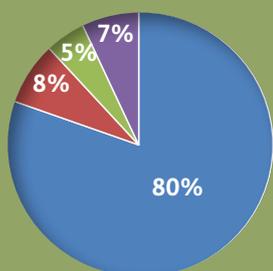


New-build progress at Kirk Park, Orphir

Rent Collection

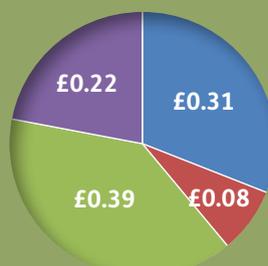
101.04% of annual rent receivable was collected during 2020/21 which is an increase from **98.5%** the previous year.

Rent arrears were closely monitored resulting in the exceptional low outcome of **3.90%** gross.



Where the money comes from:

- Rent
- Shared Ownership occupancy charge
- Services & factoring
- Other



Where the money goes (per £1 of rent):

- Cost of running the organisation
- Services & factoring
- Repairing & improving homes
- Net interest payable

A great contribution to our community

Development



The Crafty, Kirkwall – 12 amenity standard homes for rent

Demand for our quality, affordable housing in Orkney continues to remain high, and OHAL have a forward plan to maintain a development programme of new homes if at all possible.

We recognised that as the community and country re-opened, our projects would be an important part of economic recovery also. We worked hard to finalise and tender for two key development projects and were pleased to award 2 contracts to local building firms just as they re-opened in June 2020. These contracts represented a total of 20 houses with a combined contract value of over £3 million.



Kirk Park, Orphir – 8 homes for rent.

The Association joined the **White Ribbon Campaign** to promote speaking up to stop gender based domestic violence, as sadly, not everyone is fortunate to live in their home free from fear. Paul Scott, Head of Housing and Customer Services, signed the pledge alongside MSP Liam McArthur and local partners, Police Scotland, NHS Orkney & Fire Scotland, and Stephen Kemp on behalf of his businesses.



Orkney Care



and Repair

During the year 2020-2021, Orkney Care and Repair

continued to deliver services and support the most vulnerable in our community.

Throughout the pandemic and even during lockdown, the Care and Repair office was manned 5 days a week as normal, carrying out emergency and urgent repairs and hospital discharge cases for our OT colleagues in the Balfour.

Even at the height of lockdown, our handymen were carrying out work (in line with Government guidelines) to help our clients remain safe and living in their own homes.

Some of the types of work the Service carried out during lockdown were faults with loss of power, heating and boiler breakdowns, hot water issues, and problems with toilets and showers.

All non-urgent works were 'booked in' and completed as soon as guidelines allowed us to.

We also took the opportunity to 'check in' with some of our most vulnerable and regular clients to make sure they were safe and had everything they needed.

We even offered to deliver grocery shopping and we collected prescriptions from the chemist and delivered to our clients.

Once restrictions were lifted sufficiently, we were able to continue working with our contractors to deliver level access showers, ramps, rails and stairlifts to help clients be safe in their homes.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Data	Target	Actual	
Governance			
Staff absence	2.5% or less	4.54%	✗
Staff training	75% or more	84%	✓
Complaints response time	95% or more	94%	✗
Housing			
Rent arrears	4.5% or less	3.9%	✓
Re-let times (days)	12 days or less	8.1	✓
Satisfaction with re-let standards	90% or more	92%	✓
Anti-social behaviour resolved within target	90% or more	91.5%	✓
Finance			
Management and maintenance administration costs per unit	less than £1,510	£1,443	✓
Reactive maintenance costs per unit	less than £600	£469	✓
Interest cover	more than 110%	423%	✓
Debt to net worth	less than 40%	21%	✓
Properties			
Emergency repair response times	100%	100%	✓
Non-emergency repair response times	90% or more	86.36%	✗
Satisfaction with new homes	90%	75%	✗
Satisfaction with repairs service	95% or more	98.85%	✓
Compliance with Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH)	100%	95.52%	✗

SUMMARY FINANCES 2020/21

Income and Expenditure		
19/20		20/21
£'000		£'000
4,817	Income from lettings etc	5,197
396	Other income	356
11	Surplus on property sales	63
13	Investment income	5
(1,204)	Repairs and maintenance	(943)
(100)	Improvements & adaptations	(104)
(11)	Irrecoverable rents	(6)
(1,442)	Other operating costs	(1,356)
(672)	Mortgage interest etc	(605)
(1,010)	Property depreciation	(1,029)
798	Net surplus	1,578
645	Pension deficit adjustment	(623)
1,443	Surplus for year	955

Balance Sheet		
19/20		20/21
£'000		£'000
87,382	Housing properties etc	87,289
966	Net current assets	3,993
(60,880)	Capital grants	(61,214)
(18,191)	Long term loans	(19,346)
(26)	Pension deficit creditor	(516)
9,251	Net assets	10,206
9,251	Capital & reserves	10,206

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