



GOVANHILL
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

**Committee Members'
Handbook August 2024**

Welcome to Govanhill Housing Association’s handbook for committee members

Inside, you will find information about your responsibilities as a committee member, as well as summaries of all of GhHA’s main policies and procedures on governance.

If there is anything in the handbook you would like more information about, please feel free to ask at any time.

<u>Contents</u>	page
1. Main responsibilities of the Management Committee	3
2. How to be an effective committee member	5
3. Making committee meetings count	7
4. Tips on asking questions about committee reports	9
5. GhHA’s Rules and other governance documents	11
6. Summary of the Code of Conduct for Committee Members	12
7. Confidentiality	15
8. Declarations of interests by committee members	16
9. Controls on payments and benefits to committee members, staff and people closely connected to them	19
10. “Whistleblowing” (concerns about wrongdoing)	23
11. Committee members’ expenses	25
Jargon Buster	26

CHAPTER 1

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Committee (MC) is GhHA's governing body. It is responsible for making sure that GhHA:

- Achieves its purpose and the overall strategy set by the MC
- Is accountable to our tenants, and that tenants receive high quality services that are good value for money
- Achieves high standards of governance and financial management, including staying solvent, meeting our obligations to funders, and making proper use of resources
- Meets all our legal and regulatory obligations.

In more detail ... six key responsibilities of the Management Committee

1. Setting and monitoring GhHA's overall strategy for the future

- For example, by approving the Business Plan, and
- Monitoring how the Business Plan is put into practice.

2. Approving the policy of GhHA

- The MC approves GhHA's major policies
- The MC can also decide to delegate some policy approvals to the appropriate sub-committee. Or the MC might ask a sub-committee to carry out the initial scrutiny of a policy, before it comes to the MC for formal approval.
- The MC makes decisions about any new activities GhHA might get involved in.
- The MC can also decide that some higher profile activities such as GhHA's role in South West Govanhill will be overseen by the MC, rather than delegated to a sub committee.

3. Making major financial decisions about the use of GhHA's resources

- The MC is responsible for GhHA's most important financial decisions, including:
 - Approving the annual budget and rent increase
 - Approving new loans taken by GhHA
 - Authorising contract acceptances for development projects

- The Finance and General Purposes supports the MC, by carrying out initial scrutiny of many aspects of GhHA's finances, before these are then presented to the MC for discussion and approval.

4. Overseeing the way the Association manages risk

- The MC does this by considering risks to GhHA's strategy when the Business Plan is approved, and obtaining assurance about how these will be managed
- The MC receives reports from the Audit and Risk Committee which monitors any changes in strategic risks and the management of risks
- The MC receives reports on business areas that have been classed as carrying higher than normal levels of risks.

5. Acting as the employer of GhHA's staff

- The MC is responsible for approving GhHA's arrangements for pay, conditions of service and pensions. Salary scales and terms and conditions are based on standard EVH arrangements.
- The Finance and General Purposes sub committee monitors employment-related matters on behalf of the MC, and has delegated authority to deal with a number of personnel decisions, for example staff re-gradings.

6. Performance monitoring

- The MC has ultimate responsibility for the quality of service tenants receive. In practice, sub committees carry out detailed monitoring on behalf of the MC.
- Almost all housing service delivery matters are delegated to staff, although the Housing Services sub committee decides on behalf of the MC whether GhHA should enforce decrees for eviction.

Who Does What?

- Responsibility for managing the organisation and service delivery, is delegated to the staff team under the leadership of the Director.
- GhHA's **Scheme of Delegated Authority** sets out what decisions must be made by the MC, and what decisions and activities the MC has delegated to the sub committees and staff team.
- Where responsibility is delegated to the staff team, the Management Committee will generally still receive regular reports on GhHA's performance.

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Committee members make decisions that affect the whole community and may involve large amounts of public money. The Standing Orders contain a formal description of your role. Following a few simple rules will help you to be effective and to make a difference in your role – something that every committee member wants to achieve.

1. Prepare for meetings

You should always read and think about the papers sent to you before you attend committee meetings. This will help you contribute at meetings and make sure your questions haven't already been answered in the reports. It can also help make meetings shorter and run better.

If committee members are not well prepared, there is a risk that too much time is spent making sure everyone understands what is in the reports, or that decisions just get nodded through.

The reports you receive should be clear and concise, and sent to you a week before the meeting. Be sure to speak up if you think reports are difficult to follow, or if you need any help understanding them. If you are having difficulty, the chances are that others are too.

2. Contribute at meetings

Everyone should try to contribute to discussions and decisions during committee meetings.

One of your main roles as a committee member is to hold GhHA's senior staff team to account in a constructive way. This isn't about deliberately looking for problem areas or being critical for its own sake. Instead, effective challenge involves:

- Making sure that there is a clear rationale for a proposal, consistent with GhHA's aims and objectives
- Asking for clarification where this is needed
- Seeking assurance that reports are based on good quality information
- Testing the assumptions on which a report or proposal is based.

3. Build up your knowledge and skills

If members don't keep their knowledge up to date, it's harder for the Committee to be in control of GhHA and to make decisions based on facts. Taking part in training and other learning activities will help you make better decisions as a committee member, and should be seen as an essential part of committee membership.

There are many ways of learning, and GhHA will ensure that committee members receive quality training and support.

4. Follow the Code of Conduct

GhHA's committee members need to meet high standards of personal conduct, to give tenants and the wider public confidence that we are a well-run and well-managed organisation.

The Code of Conduct sets out the main rules everyone is expected to follow. If a committee member commits a serious breach of the Code of Conduct, the Committee may instruct an investigation and vote to remove a committee member, if there has been a serious breach.

5. Attend regularly, and let us know about any absences from committee meetings

Following the discussions at meetings is harder for members who don't attend meetings regularly. To help you plan your attendance, GhHA will provide you with a committee calendar shortly after the AGM, including meeting dates for the next 12 months. **Please be sure to put the dates in your diary.**

If you can't attend a particular Management Committee or sub committee meeting, please contact the office so that your apologies can be noted.

If you are going to have problems attending meetings over a period of time (for example, due to ill health or family matters), please let the Chairperson or Director know, and they can pass on a **request for a leave of absence** – this needs to be approved by the Committee.

GhHA's Rules state that your committee membership will automatically end if you have missed four consecutive Management Committee meetings, unless you have been granted a leave of absence. GhHA will contact you before you have missed three meetings in a row, to remind you about the "four meetings rule" and to find out if you would like to make a request for a leave of absence.

CHAPTER 3

MAKING COMMITTEE MEETINGS COUNT

Signs of an effective committee	Signs that things could be better
Preparing for committee meetings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members are well-prepared for meetings • Reports are clear and concise and sent out on time • Members ask for clarification about anything they don't understand in reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all members have read their papers • Meetings take longer than they need to • Members suffer in silence if they don't understand a report
Meetings are orderly, run to time and give all committee members the chance to speak	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff member introductions are generally brief (<i>but major items may sometimes need a longer introduction or presentation</i>) • All committee members contribute to discussions over the course of the meeting • Committee members signal to the Chair that they would like to speak and wait for the Chair to ask them to speak • Staff members will answer any direct questions put to them, otherwise they will also speak through the Chair • For example, the Chair may ask staff to respond to the various points made, at the end of the committee's discussion • At the end of the discussion, everyone is clear what has been decided • Everyone respects the authority of the Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few members do most of the talking • Discussions dominated by staff members • Committee members who wanted to speak don't get the chance • Important decisions may be taken without proper discussion • Confusion, poor communication or conflict
Did we discuss the right things?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee spends most of its time on the major issues put before it • Committee always gives careful consideration to reports about strategic issues, performance and GhHA's finances • Committee gives clear guidance to senior staff on matters needing a committee decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee spends too much of its time on less important issues • Confusion, poor communication or conflict

Signs of an effective committee	Signs that things could be better
Did we deal appropriately with the business before us?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee members challenge and ask staff questions about reports. • For example, questions about risks (“what are the risks if we make this decision?”) or seeking assurance (“what is our legal advice about the recommendations in this report?”) • Committee members provide challenge in a constructive way • Good teamwork between committee members, and between committee and staff • The Chair sums up the discussion, and asks the Committee to endorse the recommendations from staff (which may be amended, to reflect the Committee’s discussion) • If the Committee’s discussion has been very lengthy and/or if committee members have expressed different views, the Chair may propose taking a vote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A committee which routinely “rubber stamps” staff recommendations on major issues, without proper discussion

The Management Committee should talk about the effectiveness of its meetings from time to time, to find out:

- How well members feel that the Committee is carrying out its job
- Whether anything could be improved
- What help or support committee members or staff might need, to make improvements.

GhHA will address this as part of the annual round of committee review meetings.

CHAPTER 4

ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMITTEE REPORTS

SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

The MC and sub-committees regularly receive reports from staff about strategic or policy decisions, or about GhHA's performance.

The following tips may help you home in on some of the main issues and feel confident about asking questions. You don't have to be an expert to ask a question.

Reports about Strategy or Policy Issues

While many of the questions the committee might ask will be based on the specific issue being discussed, there are a number of common themes that tend to apply across the board.

These are reflected in the following questions, which are typical of the kind of things the MC would want to be assured about.

You can use these questions in two ways. First, as a checklist of things to look out for when you are reading committee reports before a meeting. Second, as questions you might want to ask at the meeting itself.

- How does the report fit with the overall strategy in our Business Plan/or for this service?
- What will the benefits be for our tenants? Will there be any adverse effects on tenants?
- What are the risks of going ahead, or not going ahead?
- What are the most significant risks, and how would we manage these?
- What effect would this proposal have on our cashflow and our borrowing needs?
- Would this proposal have any impact on our covenants with GhHA's lenders?
- How could this proposal affect our reputation? Would it be positive or negative?
- What do the Association's partners think about our plans/or this proposal?
- Are there any aspects of the proposal our lenders or regulators might be concerned about?

Reports about Performance

Performance reports will usually compare current performance with the targets or key performance indicators the committee has set previously.

Where performance results are on track or better, this will generally just be noted without the need for questions. Remember to acknowledge good performance by staff – this is important!

If performance isn't meeting the targets set, asking some of the following questions can help the committee understand why.

The answers to these four questions are maybe the most important in helping the committee to decide whether there is a serious performance problem it needs to probe in more detail:

- What is the impact on tenants and the quality of our services?
- What level of customer complaints are we receiving about this service – are complaints increasing?
- Does our performance create any significant financial issues?
- Are we still meeting our legal obligations?

If the committee does want to probe more deeply, the following additional questions could be considered:

- What are the underlying reasons for the performance results that are being reported?
- Are any problems relatively new, or are they part of a trend over a longer period?
- What things are standing in the way of making improvements?
- What actions are being taken by staff to improve performance, and when can we expect to see results?
- How does GhHA's performance compare with other housing organisations that are similar to us?
- Do staff need the committee to make any decisions to support improvements?

CHAPTER 5

GhHA'S RULES AND OTHER GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

Policies and other documents can make governance seem complicated. In practice:

- The Rules are the foundation of GhHA's governance and must always be complied with. The Rules cannot be changed without the approval of GhHA's members.
- The Management Committee will approve a set of governance policies, to describe in more detail how the governance of GhHA will operate. The Committee has full authority to approve these policies, but must make sure the policies are consistent with the Rules.

The key governance documents for GhHA are shown below

STANDING ORDERS

- Procedures for how committee meetings are run
- Role and responsibilities of the MC and sub committees
- Role and responsibilities of GhHA's committee members and office bearers
- What office bearers and sub committees can do or decide, without prior approval by the MC

SCHEME OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY

- The MC delegates responsibility to sub committees or senior staff for agreed decisions/activities
- Sets out who can make different types of decisions
- Minutes and performance reports keep the MC informed about what has been done
- Helps prevent MC meetings getting bogged down in operational detail

RULES

- All of the MC's actions must be consistent with the Rules
- The MC can only change the Rules after approval from GhHA's members at a general meeting

The Rules cover things like:

- Membership of GhHA and voting at general meetings
- The size of the MC and quorum needed for meetings to go ahead
- Eligibility to become a committee member, and committee election procedures
- Broad powers of the MC and how it conducts its meetings

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Standards of personal conduct that all committee members must meet
- Allows for removing a committee member who breaches the Code

GOVERNANCE POLICIES

GhHA's governance policies include policies on:

- Committee members expenses
- Gifts and hospitality
- Declaration of interests
- Confidentiality
- Anti-bribery
- Whistleblowing
- Payments or benefits made by GhHA to employees, committee members and people closely connected to them

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Code of Conduct sets out the standards that all committee members must meet. You must provide a signed acceptance of the Code of Conduct, and alleged breaches may lead to an investigation and the removal of a committee member.

Some parts of the Code refer to people to whom a committee member is “closely connected”. More information about this is provided in the section on Declaring Interests.

Code of Conduct: Summary of Committee Members’ Obligations

Selflessness

1. Always act in GhHA’s best interests and uphold its objectives and values.
2. Accept shared responsibility for the MC’s decisions, even those you may personally disagree with. If you are unable to support in public a decision that the MC has properly reached, you should resign.
3. Never use your influence for personal gain or advantage, or for the benefit of someone to whom you are closely connected. Nor should you abuse your position to influence decisions that are the responsibility of staff.
4. Treat other committee members and staff and their opinions with respect. Always respect the authority of the chair in meetings.

Openness

5. Since GhHA is a charity, you must exercise reasonable skill and care in your role.
6. Make sure GhHA meets its legal obligations.
7. Adhere to the Scottish Housing Regulator’s standards and guidance on governance and other regulatory codes that apply to GhHA.
8. Respect confidentiality of information. If you are told that information is confidential, you must not discuss it or pass it on to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.
9. Help to make sure that GhHA provides tenants and others with information that they are entitled to receive.

Honesty

10. Uphold GhHA’s policies on equality and diversity, anti-bribery and whistleblowing.
11. If you are concerned about any suspected wrongdoing, you should report your concerns to the Chairperson or Director, as described in the whistleblowing policy.
12. Comply with GhHA’s policies and procedures regarding any personal use you make of the Association’s funds and resources.

Objectivity

13. Prepare for meetings by reading your papers. Attend meetings regularly and contribute constructively to proceedings.
14. Review information in reports critically and always take decisions in the best interests of GhHA, our tenants and service users and in accordance with the legal and regulatory requirements GhHA is required to meet.
15. Make your decisions independently, based on the available facts. If necessary, you should help to make sure that the MC requests and receives independent advice.
16. Help to make sure the MC's decisions consider risks, value for money and GhHA's financial well-being.
17. Attend relevant training sessions and events, so that you keep your knowledge and skills up to date and can make a good contribution as a committee member.

Integrity

18. Declare any personal, business and financial interests you have that could overlap or conflict with GhHA's work. This could also include the interests of your close relatives or others to whom you are closely connected. If you have a continuing personal interest that conflicts with our activities, you should resign.
19. Carry out your responsibilities in accordance with the role description for committee members in GhHA's Standing Orders.
20. Be aware of the controls on payments and benefits that may affect you and others to whom you are closely connected. Always follow GhHA's policy on these matters.
21. Get permission from the Director first, if you want to get one of GhHA's contractors or consultants to do work for you privately.
22. Don't accept any offers of gifts or hospitality, unless allowed by GhHA's policy. Always be aware that tenants and other people could see this as a way of trying to influence your decisions.

Accountability

23. Monitor GhHA's performance carefully, helping to identify and address any weaknesses or failures.
24. Take part in annual review meetings to discuss your own contribution to GhHA's work, and how the Committee as a whole is doing its job and how it can improve.
25. Don't speak or comment in public on our behalf unless you have received specific authority to do this.

Leadership

26. Be informed about the needs and views of GhHA's tenants and other customers, and help to make sure the MC's decisions take these into account.
27. Always act in a way that helps to preserve GhHA's good reputation.
28. Be a positive ambassador for GhHA – for example, if you are attending external meetings or conferences.
29. Don't criticise in public GhHA, other committee members or GhHA staff members. This covers all communication methods, including activities on social media, blogs and networking sites.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY OF GHHA'S POLICY ON CONFIDENTIALITY

The balance between openness and confidentiality

GhHA is accountable to tenants and other service users.

We do a number of things to make sure GhHA has an open approach to providing people with information. For example:

- We provide tenants with regular information about GhHA, its performance and its major decisions (for example in newsletters, annual review reports and letters)
- We actively promote resident consultation and participation
- We regularly deal with information requests from tenants and other people.

It is equally important that everyone (committee and staff) knows what type of information is confidential, and does not pass on such information to anyone who does not have a need or right to know it.

Confidentiality

If you are in any doubt about whether information is confidential, committee members should ask the Director for advice before passing on the information.

As a general rule, you should always treat the following types of information as confidential:

- Information about individuals (tenants, staff, other customers and committee members).
- Information about formal employment matters such as selection and recruitment, and grievance and disciplinary action.
- Any other information that the Committee has agreed is confidential or sensitive.
- Information about tenders or commercial contracts.

What if someone asks me for information?

As a committee member, other tenants may sometimes ask you for information.

If you are asked to comment on somebody's personal situation, you must **always** refer the person(s) to the office.

If you are asked for more general information about committee decisions, you can usually pass this on once the minutes of the relevant committee meeting have been approved. But, if you have been told that the information is confidential, you should not pass it on, and you should refer the person asking for information to the office.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY OF GhHA'S POLICY ON DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

The purpose of this Policy is to demonstrate there are no reasons that could affect a committee member's objectivity, or give others the impression that they may be acting for personal motives, or for the benefit of family, friends etc.

The Policy requires you to declare any personal, business or financial interests that could influence your actions or decisions as a GhHA committee member. We also ask you to declare any interests relating to people to whom you are closely connected, but only where these interests are directly relevant to GhHA's activities.

What kind of interests do I have to declare?

GhHA's Declaration of Interests form lists in full the various interests you should consider when making your declaration. These include:

Your own interests

- Being a tenant of GhHA, or seeking rehousing by GhHA
- Being a Director of GCDT
- Membership or directorships of other organisations that GhHA works with
- Financial or business interests in companies that do or may seek to do business with GhHA
- Ownership of land or property in our area
- Unresolved disputes with GhHA
- Elected membership of Glasgow City Council
- Personal relationships with other committee members or employees.

Interests of people to whom you are closely connected

- Being a GhHA tenant or service user, or seeking rehousing by GhHA
- Seeking to be employed by GhHA
- Principal proprietor/shareholder or senior manager of a profit-distributing company that we do business with, or that is on our approved list (this includes nominated sub-contractors)
- Are, or could become, involved in tendering for or the management of any contract for the provision of goods or services to GhHA

You should declare your interests in two ways

You should complete a declaration of interests form each year, and update this as soon as any changes occur. You should also notify the chairperson of the meeting, if you have an interest in any business to be discussed at a meeting of the MC or a sub-committee.

What happens if I declare an interest?

If you have a personal, financial or business interest relating to yourself or someone to whom you are closely connected, you cannot play any part in GhHA's decision-making. You must also leave any meeting at which this is discussed, while the remainder of the committee members reach a decision.

Committee members who are tenants or factored owners can take part in discussions at committee meetings and vote on all policy, financial and performance matters, but not matters that relate specifically to their own tenancy or factoring agreement or that of someone they are closely connected to.

If you have a major conflict of interests, the rest of the Committee may ask you to resign. For example, a committee member can never have a financial or business interest in any profit-distributing company that is seeking to enter into a business relationship with GhHA or GCDT.

What people are covered by the term “closely connected”?

This is covered in the Code of Conduct and includes the following people:

<p>1. Members of your household</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anyone who normally lives as part of your household (whether related to you or otherwise)• Those who are part of your household but work or study away from home	<p>We expect you to be aware of and declare any relevant actions of all people in your household. You must take steps to identify, declare and manage these.</p>
<p>2. Partner, Relatives and friends</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your partner (if not part of your household)• Your relatives and their partners• Your partner's close relatives (i.e. parent, child, brother or sister)• Your close friends• Anyone you are dependent upon or who is dependent upon you• Acquaintances (such as neighbours, someone you know socially or business contacts/associates)	<p>Where you have a close connection and are in regular contact with anyone within this group, we expect you to be aware of and declare any relevant actions. Under these circumstances, you must take steps to identify, declare and manage these actions.</p> <p>Where you do not have a close connection and regular contact with someone in this group, we do not expect you to be aware of or to go to unreasonable lengths to identify any relevant actions. However, if you happen to become aware of relevant actions by such individuals, then these should be declared and managed as soon as possible.</p>

For people to whom you may be closely connected:

- We do expect you to be familiar with the actions of **members of your household** and of people with whom you are in **close or regular contact**.
- We recognise that **you may not always be in close or regular contact** with everyone in the definition of “closely connected”.
- We do not expect you to go to **unreasonable lengths** to identify the actions or involvement of others, or to **conduct research** into the employment, business interests and other activities of all persons to whom you are closely connected.

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY OF GhHA'S POLICY ON PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS

Purpose of the Policy

This Policy is a requirement of GhHA's Rules and of our regulators. The Policy sets out controls that we will use if we are making payments and granting benefits to our people (this means **committee/ board members and employees** of GhHA and GCDT).

In some cases, controls also apply to **people who are closely connected** to a committee member or employee (this is defined in Chapter 8, on declarations of interest).

The aims of the Policy are:

- To prevent any preferential treatment for people associated with GhHA and GCDT
- To state clearly what payments and benefits are either allowed or never allowed
- To prevent our people and those closely connected to them from being unfairly disadvantaged in our housing and other decisions
- To promote community confidence that we make decisions openly and with integrity.

The main payments and benefits that are controlled under the Policy

- Payments made to committee and staff
- A tenancy to a house
- Work to houses, such as repairs, improvements and adaptations
- Discretionary payments relating to a tenancy (e.g. discretionary compensation paid to tenants in modernisation schemes, or redecoration allowances paid to new tenants)
- Staff recruitment
- Payments/benefits to staff that are not covered by their employment contract
- Payments to committee members (other than out of pocket expenses)
- Contracts between GhHA businesses that distribute their profits
- Purchase or sale of property owned by employees or committee members
- Private use of our contractors and suppliers by our people

A brief description of how the various types of payments and benefits are treated under the Policy is provided at the end of this section, under the heading "**What is allowed and what's not**".

Declarations of interest by committee and staff members (as described in detail in **Chapter 8** of this Guide) flag up cases where the Policy on Payments and Benefits may apply.

For example, a committee member notes on their declaration of interests form that:

- She is a board member of a local charity that GhHA may enter into a contract with.
- Her sister has recently applied to GhHA for a house.

In the first example, the Policy on Payments and Benefit **would not apply** since a charity does not distribute profits, and there would be no financial or personal benefit to the committee member if the contract with GhHA goes ahead.

In the second example, the Policy does apply. The committee member's sister can still be housed, but GhHA would need to follow special procedures, described in the Policy as "controls".

The controls applied by GhHA will vary depending on what type of payment or benefit is involved. Typically, the controls include:

- Ensuring that the relevant policies and procedures have been followed in full (for example, the committee member's sister can only be offered a house if her application has been assessed against the Allocations Policy and she has priority for rehousing)
- Seeking committee approval before we make a payment or grant a benefit
- Recording the payment or benefit in a Register that is open to public inspection.

Complying with the Policy: Top Tips

- Always be aware that the Policy **could** apply if you or someone closely connected to you is having dealings with GhHA or GCDT – such as applying for a job or a house, or selling your home to GhHA to carry out major repairs that you cannot afford to have done
- If this is the case, be sure to update your entry in the Register of Interests
- If you are unsure whether the Policy applies or how it might affect you or someone you are closely connected to, seek advice from the Director.
- Remember that the Policy applies across GhHA and GCDT, as if they were one organisation. So if you are a GhHA committee member, the Policy applies to any payment or benefit you may be seeking from GCDT, and vice versa.

PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS

WHAT IS ALLOWED, AND WHAT'S NOT?

1) TENANCIES OR SERVICE AGREEMENTS

Allowed, if our procedures are followed

- Granting a tenancy to a committee member, employee or someone closely connected to them, as long as they have priority under the Allocations Policy
- Carrying out repairs, improvements or adaptations to the home of a tenant who is a committee member or employee
- Discretionary payments relating to a tenancy (e.g. decoration allowances, discretionary disturbance payments) made to a tenant who is a committee member or employee.

2) PAYMENTS TO COMMITTEE AND STAFF

Not allowed

- ✘ Payment for being a committee member or for providing paid advice to us

Allowed, if our procedures are followed

- Out of pocket expenses, in line with our policy and procedures
- Costs relating to training events, conferences etc. where attendance is approved in advance and we pay the costs direct
- Costs associated with representing us at an awards ceremony or other special event (the MC must approve, and be satisfied about the need to attend and costs)

3) OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT

Not allowed

- ✘ Employing someone who is a committee or board member of the Association or GCDT, or someone who is closely connected to a serving committee or board member

Allowed, if our procedures are followed

- Offering a job to someone closely connected to an existing employee, as long as there has been an open recruitment process and no direct or indirect line management responsibility will be created

4) HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Not allowed

- ✘ Payments or benefits that are not provided for in a staff member's employment contract
- ✘ Making loans to employees, unless allowed for in the employment contract

Allowed, if our procedures are followed

- Redundancy payments that are provided for in a staff member's employment contract or under employment law
- Voluntary severance payments to employees outside their contract of employment, if our policy and procedures are followed (highly exceptional, and detailed conditions must be met)

6) SALE/PURCHASE/LEASING OF LAND OR PROPERTY

Not allowed (other than in very exceptional circumstances)

- ✘ Buying or selling land or property from/to someone who is (or has been in the last 12 months) a committee member or employee; or from/to someone who is closely connected to a current committee member or employee

Allowed, if our procedures are followed

- ✓ Low cost home ownership sales and leasing of commercial property to a committee member or employee, or to someone closely connected to them
- ✓ Mortgage to rent and the purchase of properties in a recognised repair or improvement scheme if the owner cannot afford the cost of the works.

7) CONTRACTS WITH BUSINESSES TRADING FOR PROFIT

Not allowed (in almost all cases)

- ✘ The Association or GCDT entering into a contract for goods or services with a **relevant business**

This refers to a business that distributes profits where a committee member, or someone closely connected to them, is a principal proprietor or shareholder or is directly involved in the management of the business

- ✘ A committee member or employee entering into **private arrangements for goods or services** with one of our contractors or suppliers, unless they have received prior permission from the Chairperson (committee members) or Director (staff).

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY OF GHHA'S POLICY ON "WHISTLEBLOWING"

Purpose of the Whistleblowing Policy

GhHA's policy allows any staff or committee member with serious concerns about possible wrongdoing within the organisation to report their concerns.

Who can report concerns under the Policy?

Staff or committee members. But remember that the law on whistleblowing covers employees only. GhHA (like most housing associations) also allows committee members to report serious concerns, as long as the concerns **cannot reasonably be raised** through our committee and office bearer structures.

What sort of wrongdoing can be reported and investigated?

GhHA does not set any limits on the types of suspected wrongdoing that can be reported. However, we will only assess allegations under the Whistleblowing Policy if the following conditions are met.

The person making the disclosure reasonably believes that:

- ❖ **One of the following types of wrongdoing has already taken place or is likely to occur:**
 - Criminal activity or offences (for example, abuse of vulnerable people and financial impropriety such as fraud, bribery or corruption)
 - Breach of a legal obligation (for example breach of a contract, unlawful discrimination or breach of any other legal duty)
 - A miscarriage of justice
 - Endangering of someone's health and safety
 - Damage to the environment
 - Deliberately covering up information in any of the above categories; **and**
- ❖ **The disclosure of the wrongdoing is in the public interest.**

"Reasonably believes" means that a person's concerns should be based on more than unsubstantiated opinion or rumour. The person raising concerns is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, but they should be able to demonstrate the grounds for their concerns and that these are reasonable.

"In the public interest" means that the concerns must affect others, such as tenants or employees. Personal grievances will not normally meet this test and so will generally be dealt with using GhHA's policies on grievance, dignity at work etc.

Making and Responding Concerns

The law allows employees to report their concerns to certain external regulatory bodies, and employees can do this without raising the matter internally, if they prefer to do this.

Concerns can be raised verbally and/or in writing, and will be subject to an initial review to decide the best course of action (for example, an internal investigation or referral to the Police if appropriate).

Outcomes from a whistleblowing complaints

Employees who use the whistleblowing policy have two main protections under the law:

- It is automatically unfair to dismiss an employee, if the reason or principal reason for the dismissal is that they have made a whistleblowing complaint
- It is unlawful to subject an employee or worker to a detriment because he/she has made a protected disclosure.

If an employee makes an allegation that is not subsequently confirmed, it is probable that no action will be taken against them if they had reasonable grounds for believing that the allegation was true. If this is not the case, we may take disciplinary action (up to and including dismissal) if we decide that an employee has made an allegation in bad faith (for example frivolously and/or maliciously or for personal gain).

Guidance for committee members

If a committee member chooses to report matters to the media without making any attempt to raise their concerns internally or to a listed external regulatory body, this will be deemed to be a serious breach of the Code of Conduct, unless the Management Committee is satisfied that it was reasonable for the member to adopt that course of action.

If a committee member is approached by a staff member expressing serious concerns:

- Remember that employees have a legal right to raise concerns without being victimised.
- Never ignore any concerns that are expressed to you concerning other committee members or staff. You must tell the Director and Chairperson immediately – making sure that the staff member or committee member knows you intend to do this.
- If the concerns are about the Director, tell the Chairperson who will seek external advice about dealing with the complaint. If the concerns are about the Chairperson tell the Director.
- If you are told about whistleblowing complaints in confidence, you must not breach that confidentiality.

CHAPTER 11

SUMMARY OF GHHA'S POLICY ON COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPENSES

When can you claim expenses?

You can claim expenses for attending MC or sub-committee meetings, or when you attend conferences, training, or other meetings on behalf of the Association.

You **can't** claim expenses for any items already included in the attendance fee for an event, if they have already been paid for by GhHA, or if they are provided free of charge.

What type of expenses can you claim?

a) Travel costs

Expenses can be claimed for standard class fares on public transport, taxi fares and car mileage. If you are using taxis or private cars, share your journey with other committee members if possible. You will be reimbursed for any fares you have paid, or you will be paid a standard mileage allowance if you have used your own car. Committee Members must use the Association's taxi account unless in exceptional circumstances such as attending Conferences outwith Glasgow, with previous notification and approval by Director or Corporate Services & HR Manager.

b) Accommodation, meals and overnight allowances

If you are attending a conference, the full cost of your accommodation and meals will be paid for in advance by GhHA where possible. If you do have to pay for any meals yourself, we will pay you a standard amount, based on how long you were away from home – so you do not have to provide a receipt for this. If you stay overnight at a residential conference, you will receive a standard amount to allow you to take part in social activities.

c) Care of Children and Other Dependent Relatives

You can claim expenses if you need to pay for a child or other relative to be looked after while you are attending committee meetings or carrying out other duties for GhHA. Further details are available in the Committee Member Expenses Policy.

d) Loss of earnings

You can receive payment for any earnings you lose, if you have to attend non-routine GhHA meetings. The full Expenses Policy provides more information about this.

How do you make an expenses claim?

With the exception of meals/overnight allowances or mileage claims, you must provide receipts for your expenses. Give your receipts to a member of staff, or fill in an expenses claim form which you can get from the office. Remember that it is a serious disciplinary offence to make a false claim for expenses, or to claim expenses you are not entitled to.

Jargon Buster

Abbreviations, words and phrases used in the Committee Members Handbook

	What it means
Auditors	Professional consultants who work for GhHA. The external auditors oversee GhHA's financial accounts. The internal auditors check that GhHA's policies and procedures are being put into practice correctly and effectively.
Budget	The document that sets out GhHA's income and expenditure for the coming year. The Management Committee approves the budget, and receives regular reports (the management accounts) on how actual income and expenditure compare with the budget.
Business Plan	GhHA's main planning document, setting out its aims and priorities for the next 3 years and including information about financial resources and possible risks. Also includes budgets and long-term financial projections.
Code of Conduct	A document that sets out the standards of conduct every committee member must follow. GhHA also has a code of conduct for staff members.
Collective responsibility	Once the Management Committee has made decisions, every committee member is equally responsible for sticking to those decisions.
Conflict of interests	A situation where a committee member's ability to be objective could be affected, because they have outside or personal interests in a matter being decided by GhHA.
Declaration of Interests	Management Committee and staff members must place on record whether they have any personal, business or financial interest that could affect their duties with GhHA. It may also be necessary to make a declaration relating to other people to whom the committee or staff member is closely connected.
Expenses	Money that committee members can claim, if they are out of pocket as a result of being a committee member.
Governance	The arrangements for leadership and control of GhHA. The Management Committee is responsible for the

governance of the Association, supported by the senior staff team.

Policy

A document that sets out the objectives and standards GhHA aims to meet, for a particular service or activity. GhHA has policies for all of its services and major activities. These are approved by the Management Committee and put into practice by the staff team.

Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management

Guidance published by the Scottish Housing Regulator, which all registered social landlords (RSLs) must meet. Due to be revised later in 2018.

Risk Management

The action GhHA takes to:

- Identify things that could go wrong, and the possible consequences
- Reduce or eliminate the likelihood or impact of things going wrong.

Overseeing strategic risks is a key part of the Management Committee's role.

Policy on Payments and Benefits

A policy that controls payments and benefits (such as tenancies, jobs or commercial contracts) to people who are committee members or employees, and people closely connected to them.

Scheme of Delegated Authority

A document included in GhHA's Standing Orders. It states what decision making powers the Management Committee has delegated to staff or to sub committees.

Solicitors

Legal advisers to GhHA

Standing Orders

A document that sets out the procedures to be followed at committee meetings, the remit of sub-committees, and the responsibilities of GhHA's office bearers.

Sub-committee

A committee set up by the Management Committee, with responsibility for agreed aspects of GhHA's affairs.

The Rules

GhHA's constitution.

Whistleblowing

A situation where somebody who is concerned about wrongdoing within an organisation reports their concerns.

A list of abbreviations that committee members might come across

AGM	Annual General Meeting
ARC	Annual Return on the Charter
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic (also “BAME” which stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic)
CCHA	Community Controlled Housing Association
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
DRS	Development and Regeneration Services
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EESH	Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing
EVH	Employers in Voluntary Housing
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GCC	Glasgow City Council
GCSS	Glasgow Community and Safety Services
GHA	Glasgow Housing Association
GoCA	Govanhill Community Action
GWSF	Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations
HB	Housing Benefit
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology (also “ICT” which stands for Information and Communications Technology)
JNC	Joint Negotiating Committee (collective bargaining between EVH and staff side)
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MC	Management Committee
NPRP	Notice of Proceedings for Recovery of Possession
QS	Quantity surveyor
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SCS	Stock Condition Survey
SG	Scottish Government

SFHA	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
SHARE	Scottish Housing Associations Resources for Education
SHIP	Strategic Housing and Investment Plan
SHQS	Scottish Housing Quality Standard
SSST	Short Scottish Secure Tenancy
SST	Scottish Secure Tenancy
TP	Tenant Participation
UC	Universal Credit