



## **MINUTE OF THE BOARD MEETING**

**30 August 2023**

**Present** R Hutton (Chair); I Crawford (Vice-Chair)

**MEMBERS**

A Clark; N Hicks; W Raeburn;

**CO-OPTEES**

R Elliott; D Todd

**C Ironside (Secretary)**

**In Attendance** A Hay; C Hughes; K Miller (Staff)

**L Fordyce (Observer)**

**S McKay (for Agenda Item 3)**

The meeting was held in person.

The meeting started at: 5.30 p.m.

**Apologies** G Kitchener; P Rowsby

**Leave of Absence** A Groat

## **ACTION**

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from G Kitchener and P Rowsby.

### **2 Declarations of Interest**

N Hicks Board Member and Treasurer of The Action Group  
R Hutton Employee of Harbour Homes

### **3 Govenda Demonstration**

S McKay gave members a demonstration of Govenda, outlining the main features of the system.

**S McKay left the meeting at 5.45 p.m.**

<b>4</b>	<b>Risk Management</b>	No issues to report.	
	<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>	No issues to report.	
	<b>Notifiable Events</b>	No issues to report.	
	<b>GDPR</b>	Members noted 2 breaches since the date of the last meeting, both involved use of email: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ An email intended for one of the Association's contractors was sent to a consultant in error. It included a tenant's details.</li><li>▪ An email issued to a group used an individual's private rather than business email address.</li></ul> Both cases were discussed with the DPO, who agreed that these were minor breaches and that they had been handled appropriately. The matter will be discussed at the staff meeting on 6 September 2023.	<b>CH</b>

**5 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 28 June 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2023 were approved as a true record, proposed by W Raeburn, and seconded by N Hicks.

**6 Matters Arising**

C Hughes confirmed that the eviction had taken place on 3 August 2023.

**7 Board Actions and Regulatory Standards from June 2023 Meeting**

Noted.

**8 Minutes of Sub Committee or Subsidiary Meetings**

**8 (i) Minute of Audit Committee Meeting held 21 June 2023**

Noted.

**8 (ii) Minute of MEAL Board Meeting held 22 June 2023**

Noted.

**9 Matters for Approval / Decision**

**9 (i) Confirmation of Association Register 2022/23**

C Ironside introduced the report that had been circulated previously, noting that this is a standard report that must be presented to the Board prior to AGM.

Following discussion members approved the report, proposed by A Clark, and seconded by N Hicks.

## **9 (ii) Annual Assurance Statement (Regulatory Self-Assessment)**

C Hughes introduced the report that had been circulated previously. She advised members that the Association has a programme in place to collect equalities data between September 2023 and March 2024, noting that this will then be done on an annual basis.

C Hughes drew members' attention to the information in the report regarding the issues where the Association is not fully compliant, noting that this has been reflected in the draft Annual Assurance Statement. She confirmed that the Association can contact the Regulator at any point in the year to advise of any changes to our position. As progress is made with the actions identified to address non-compliance and if members are subsequently assured that we do comply with requirement, we can advise the Regulator accordingly.

In response to a question from W Raeburn regarding the position with actions identified in respect of legionella and asbestos, A Hay confirmed that the policy and procedure for dealing with legionella are being prepared. Regarding asbestos, record flags are not yet on the housing database, however reports are available and being shared with contractors.

W Raeburn noted that there were no timescales included for the actions identified in respect of damp and mould. C Ironside confirmed that staff are due to meet imminently to discuss how and when these will be taken forward.

**CH**

In response to a question from W Raeburn regarding the long timescales for some of the actions, C Hughes confirmed that these were in relation to information about charter indicators to be included in tenant newsletters and were not material in terms of compliance.

Following discussion, members approved the recommendations of the report, and agreed that the Annual Assurance Statement be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator, proposed by A Clark, and seconded by W Raeburn.

**CH**

## **9 (iii) Whistleblowing Policy**

C Ironside introduced the report that had been circulated previously. She asked members to note that when the Preventing Bribery and Fraud Policy was reviewed, it had been suggested that the Whistleblowing

Policy should refer to Significant Performance Failures. Subsequently, the review of the Whistleblowing Policy identified that this is not relevant to the issues covered. The Whistleblowing Policy is an internal document that outlines how staff can raise issues of concern. C Ironside emphasised that the Procedures show a clear process for staff to use, including if they have concerns about the CEO or Chair.

CI

Following discussion, members approved the Policy, proposed by I Crawford and seconded by W Raeburn.

#### **9 (iv) Risk Management Strategy**

C Ironside introduced the report that had been circulated previously, asking members to note that no significant changes were proposed.

C Ironside advised members that the Risk Register is reviewed fortnightly by the Senior Management Team and considered by the Audit Committee and Board bi-annually. She confirmed that if any significant concerns were identified out with the reporting timescales, these would be brought to the Board's attention immediately.

C Ironside advised members that staff would be arranging to hold an information session for Board members on risk. This is likely to be prior to the November Board meeting and will be presented by TIAA, the Association's Internal Auditor.

CI/KM

Following discussion, members approved the Strategy, proposed by I Crawford and seconded by A Clark.

CI

#### **9 (v) Electrical and Fire Detection Systems – No Access Policies**

A Hay introduced the report that had been circulated, noting that solicitors T C Young and the SFHA issued guidance regarding forced access to carry out essential works on electrical and fire detection systems in May 2023. This clarified that it would be appropriate to force access for works to be carried out if there is in place a clear statement of process for doing so.

A Hay described the process that the Association will follow, asking members to note that we will try to link such works with gas servicing to minimise disruption for tenants.

A Hay highlighted that the process required to enable forced access means that timescales will be brought forward and this will result in increased costs.

In response to a question from R Elliott, A Hay confirmed that non-access can flag other potential issues. She advised that Property Services staff work closely with the Housing Officers to address any emerging issues.

I Crawford asked that the Board be provided with outcomes of the processes described.

Following discussion, members approved the Policy presented, proposed by D Todd, and seconded by R Elliot.

**AH**

## **10 Matters for Information**

### **10 (i) Treasury Management Annual Review**

K Miller confirmed that she and the Chair of the Audit Committee are reviewing the Treasury Management Policy and reporting format, this is likely to amend the format of the report presented.

In response to a question from N Hicks, K Miller confirmed that it is not a requirement to include the amount of interest paid and that this information is available in the annual accounts

In response to a question from W Raeburn, K Miller confirmed that the 'comfortable' level of cash retention for the Association is around £1m. The revised Policy is likely to include a minimum of £0.5m.

K Miller confirmed that the Association is currently cash-rich, but asked members to note that this position will change once the development had progressed further.

C Ironside advised members that it is proposed to hold a session on Finance for the Board, this is likely to be held in November at the same time as the SWOT/PESTLE review.

**CI/KM**

Members noted the report.

### **10 (ii) KPIs**

C Hughes highlighted that the length of time taken to re-let voids is still out with target. She noted that the new Property Services Manager is working closely with the Housing Manager and Novus to address this. A Hay asked members to note that the Association has seen a significant increase in the number of voids requiring clearance, with the number for the first quarter being greater than half that which occurred in the full year 2022/23.

C Ironside advised members that she, A Hay and the Property Services Manager met with the new Senior Manager Alex McDonald from Novus on 30 August 2023, making it clear what the Association's expectations are.

In response to a question from D Todd, A Hay confirmed that there are some concerns regarding the validity of data provided by Novus,

particularly in relation to cancellation of jobs, with Novus reporting only on the revised 'live' jobs. A Hay advised that the Property Services Manager has already picked up on this issue and is discussing his concerns with Novus.

In response to a question from N Hicks regarding the cost of performance regarding completion of routine repairs being significantly lower than target, A Hay confirmed that the new contract includes 4 categories of repair, and non urgent repairs have an 8 day or 30 day target. Staff are working with Novus to adjust reporting to more accurately reflect this.

C Ironside highlighted concerns regarding the information provided on customer satisfaction as the low response rate means that the figures are not statistically robust. (A Hay commented that the Association's gas contractor previously achieved good response rates to satisfaction surveys, however this dropped significantly when they changed to electronic surveys).

In response to a question from W Raeburn, C Hughes advised that the increase in arrears levels of those who pay rent is likely to be due to the impact of the current cost of living crisis. She confirmed that the Association continues to offer the welfare rights and energy advice services. The Association has also been successful in accessing further funding to help tenants; where previous awards have been targeted at those in receipt of benefits, the focus now will be on offering assistance to low-income families.

Following discussion, members noted the report.

#### **10 (iii) Complaints Monitoring Q1**

Members noted the report.

#### **10 (iv) Finance Update Q1**

A Clark highlighted several issues that he felt could improve the report in terms of meeting the needs of the Board, namely:

- Each appendix should be named;
- The report should show the variance between budget and actual surplus as a percentage to make it immediately obvious to the Board when there is a significant difference;
- Reference to covenants should include a brief explanation to ensure that all members understand the basis for the calculations and the implications of the final figures.

**KM**

K Miller agreed to make these adjustments to the report.

A Clark expressed concern as a charity trustee, that properties have been sold without formal reporting to the Board. C Ironside confirmed that staff have acted in accordance with the Association's Asset Management Strategy and that members have been made aware of the sales via the SMT report.

A Hay confirmed that there is a clear procedure in place to assess properties for sale, this involves both Property Services and Housing Management staff. She advised members that the outcome of this process in relation to one property was a decision to retain it.

**AH**

Following discussion, it was agreed that this issue will be considered in the review of the Asset Management Strategy due to take place by the end of March 2024. The review will take account of the Scottish Housing Regulator's and Charity Regulator's guidance on this matter.

Members noted the report.

**10 (v) Planned and Cyclical Maintenance Programme Update Q1**

In response to a question from W Raeburn, A Hay confirmed that the focus during the first quarter was aligning tenders, frameworks, etc. Several contracts will be starting in September and A Hay is confident that there will be progress by the end of the year.

A Hay highlighted that the biggest area of concern is the painterwork contract. There were delays in the previous year due to weather and this is now impacting on this year's programme. She noted that this is not a high-spend item.

A Hay asked members to note that the contract for gas upgrades has been adjusted to spread work over the whole year, this will be reflected in the mid-year budget review.

A Hay advised that she anticipates spend will be 80% to 85% of budget at year-end.

A Clark requested that future reports should include quarterly spend profiles. A Clark to meet with A Hay and C Ironside to discuss changes to the format of the report.

**AH/CI**

Members noted the report.

**10 (vi) Entitlement, Benefits and Payments Record 2022/23**

Members noted the report.

**10 (vii) Constitutional Compliance Checklist**

Members noted the report.

Prior to introducing the SMT report, the Chair advised that she had recently attended the funeral of a former Board member. Their grandson had expressed thanks to the Association for the support his grandfather had received and the Association's sympathetic approach to his grandfather's death. He was particularly grateful to the Retirement Housing Manager, Kasia Chentko. The Chair advised that the family's gratitude to the Association was also mentioned in the service.

#### **10 (viii) SMT Report**

A Clark expressed concern at the level of staff turnover and sickness absence. In view of general recruitment challenges he suggested that the Association might want to consider recruitment of school-leavers or offer apprenticeships.

C Ironside advised that the Association is currently not in a position to consider this option as it has insufficient resources to offer the level of support and training that would be required.

C Ironside confirmed that the issue of trainees/apprenticeships is included in the Activity Plan for ARCHIE and we may be able to consider this in the future.

In response to a question from R Elliott, C Ironside advised that overall the response to the survey was positive. She outlined the range of ways in which staff can express and receive appreciation.

C Ironside confirmed that she has attended each of the team meetings to discuss the outcomes of the survey. The issues that have been raised (for example, there are some concerns about communication between teams) will be considered at the staff conference being held on 5 September. The focus of the conference will be the Association's values and how we can act in accordance with them, even when things are not going smoothly.

Members note the report.

#### **11 Any Other Competent Business**

Members were advised of the current EVH consultation on salaries. C Ironside will circulate the relevant Board members and arrange an online meeting for this to be discussed. Response to the consultation is required by 28 September 2023.

#### **Date and time of next meetings:**

**AGM**                      **Wednesday 6 September at 6.00 p.m.**

**Board Meeting**                      **Wednesday 25 October 2023 at 5.30 p.m.**



**The meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.**