

Minutes Confidential Strategic Board meeting

Date 29/03/2021
Time 16:00 - 17:35
Location Zoom
Chair Miss Helen Boath
Explanation Present:
Miss Helen Boath - Chair
Mrs Sandra Stock - Vice Chair
Mr Derek Adam - Board Member
Mr Martin Fleming - Board Member
Mrs Lynne Pascal - Board Member
Mr Colin Miller - Board Member
Mr Ron Eldridge - Board Member
Mrs Fiona Barr - Board Member
Mr Stephen Clark - Board Member

In attendance:

Mrs Nicki Donaldson - Chief Executive
Mr Derek Banks - Director of Finance and Governance, Company Secretary
Mrs Su Bramley - Director of Housing
Mrs Caroline O'Donnell - Director of Operations
Miss Laura Grieve - Secretariat
Mrs Esther Robertson - Observing potential Board member
Mr Brian Gallacher - Observing potential Board member

3pm - 3.45pm Customer Satisfaction Survey presentation

Presenter: Ms Lorna Shaw, Research Resource

1 Procedural

1.1 Welcome and apologies

Presenter: Helen Boath

Minutes

Miss Boath welcomed Mrs Esther Robertson and Mr Brian Gallacher to the Board meeting following the recent recruitment process. Miss Boath advised that they had joined the Board meeting in an observing capacity today and should they wish to join the Board they will be co-opted at the May Board meeting.

All Board members virtually introduced themselves to Mrs Robertson and Mr Gallacher.

Apologies were received from Mr Laurie Boles.

1.2 Declaration of Interest

Presenter: Helen Boath

1.3 Minute of the previous meeting

Presenter: Helen Boath

Minutes

There were no amendments to the previous meeting minute.

Agreed: The minutes from the previous meeting were unanimously approved.

1.4 Matters arising

Presenter: Helen Boath

Minutes

There were no matters arising.

1.5 Action points

Presenter: Nicki Donaldson

Minutes

There were no outstanding action points.

2 For Update

2.1 Chairperson's verbal report

Presenter: Helen Boath

Minutes

Appraisals

Miss Boath advised that Board appraisals will be taking place via ZOOM over the next two weeks and that she would encourage Board members to complete their Appraisal forms and send to Miss Grieve one week prior to their appraisal in order for herself and the Vice Chairperson to review.

Training

Miss Boath advised that during last year's appraisals, there were Board members who had requested training on the Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan (RRTP). We are looking to carry out this training week commencing 26 April 2021. Can Board members indicate to Miss Grieve, if they wish to receive this training and a preferred day that week in order to sign off the training plan.

G8 Chair's event

Miss Boath will be attending the next G8 Chair's event on the 26 April 2021 and Mrs Donaldson will be facilitating this on behalf of the G8 Chief Executives.

Board member Query

Miss Boath advised that a Board member had been in contact regarding the organisations Redundancy, Short Time Working and Lay Off Policy. This is included within the Colleague Strategy and will be picked up later in the year.

2.2

CONFIDENTIAL: Chief Executive's report

Presenter: Nicki Donaldson

2.1 COVID-19

Mrs Donaldson advised that we continue to monitor the ongoing situation and take appropriate action wheree required. Mrs Donaldson advised that an objective had been set for Mrs O'Donnell to update the Return to Work Action Plan to ensure that when the appropriate time comes that colleagues are returning to work in a controlled and phased manner.

3.1.1 Organisational Structure

Mrs Donaldson advised that the Colleague and Governance Committee (CGC) met on 26 March 2021 to discuss the proposed organisational change. Board members are asked to review the minutes on iBabs and hommolgate the minute or otherwise by Friday 2 April 2021 at the latest and if we do not hear back from Board members we will assume that the minute is approved.

3.3.1 Board Recruitment

Mrs Donaldson advised that she will be in touch with the new Board members regarding Board inductions and that Miss Grieve will be in contact to arrange dates.

3.2.4 Loan extension

Mr Banks will discuss this as part of the Business Plan report on the agenda.

3.3.2 Board Strategy Day

The Board are having their annual Strategy Day virtually on 21 April 2021 and a programme will follow shortly. Mrs Donaldson advised that Miss Grieve will be in contact with Board members to confirm arrangements. Mrs Donaldson confirmed that she will send Board members the Scottish Government final paper on Housing 2040 ahead of the Strategy Day. Board members are also required to carry out a Board self-assessment annually at the same time that Board member appraisals are undertaken and it was agreed with the Chair that this would be carried out at the end of the Board Strategy Day. (A)

3.4.6 Evictions

Mrs Donaldson advised that there has been a further extension to Government legislation on the ban of evictions during lockdown and Mrs Bramley is handling the current situation with a careful and cautious approach. A Board member asked about the current evictions situation and Mrs Bramley advised that she has seen a significant increase in arrears over £1,200 from tenants who are not usually in arrears. The problem that we have been facing is that on some occasions, there are a few tenants who have stopped engaging with us and we have been unable to make contact with them to either discuss the situation or offer guidance. Mrs Bramley added that we are in a more fortunate position than some RSLs as we carried out a lot of work to minimise rent arrears pre-lockdown.

3.4.9 Office workshop development

A Board member asked what the latest position was with the office extension. Mrs Donaldson advised that the tenders have been received but were far more expensive than the approved budget by the Board. The tenders received are ranging between [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Mrs Donaldson advised that she would not be seeking further Budget approval at this time. Mrs Donaldson confirmed that the Asset Manager is currently looking at alternative solutions to see if we can strip out some of the costs.

A Board member asked if we have received the latest Regulatory Engagement Plan and Mrs Donaldson confirmed that she had received this last week in draft format from the SHR but was asked

for it to remain confidential at this time. Mrs Donaldson expects the final version for publication will be available soon and Miss Grieve will circulate to Board members.

3.5.1 Trades Team

Mrs Donaldson advised that we were able to keep the trades team fully operational undertaking external environmental works. So far we have surveyed around 95% of our locations and have picked up around 200 external repairs and this work is receiving positive comments from tenants in the areas we are working in. It is hoped that we will be able to return to the Kitchens and Bathrooms programme next month.

Agreed: The Board noted the contents of the report.

The 2.3 Management Accounts for period ending 28 February 2021

Presenter: Derek Banks

Minutes

Mr Banks presented the management accounts for the period ending 28 February 2021.

The current lockdown restrictions have meant that no Major Component Repair (MCR) works, reactive repairs and some planned works has been permitted to be carried out in tenant properties during the latest restrictions and outstanding works will be carried over to the next year.

It has been confirmed that we will receive development grant funding, although cash will be in the next financial year.

Mr Banks invited questions from Board members at this stage.

A Board member asked about the (£267k) overspent on annual budget due to emergency re-roofing at Ochilview that was not carried out previously due to lockdown restrictions and Mr Banks confirmed that it was a roof replacement which had come to the end of its life and not a repair. Mr Banks added that the roofing programme is scheduled over a 30 year plan and on this occasion there was an emergency on the roof which meant we had to get works undertaken at that time.

A Board member asked about creditors and holiday pay from last years accounts. Mrs O'Donnell confirmed that colleagues have only

been allowed to carry over a maximum of 5 annual leave days to the following year. The Board member added that the surplus is more than what we had budgeted for at the start of the year and should we be doing something to reduce the impact of Covid on tenants. Mr Banks responded by saying that we have make a provision for the carry forward of works not completed in this financial year and at this stage it would be prudent to keep this within the organisation. Board members agreed to discuss more at the Strategic Away Day.

Agreed: The Board noted the contents of this report.

2.4 Performance Dashboard

Presenter: Derek Banks

Minutes

Mr Banks presented the Performance Dashboard for the period in 2020/21 to 28 February 2021 and advised that in general performance is improving with no areas of concern given the restrictions imposed during the year. Mr Banks invited questions from Board members.

A Board member asked how COVID-19 related absences are recorded and Mrs O'Donnell confirmed that these are recorded on the Cascade system as a sickness absence. The Board member asked if a line could be added to the performance dashboard to indicate separately the impact of Covid. Mr Banks confirmed that this could be added.

Agreed: The Board discussed the update and noted the performance.

3 For Approval

3.1 Draft Budget 2021/22

Presenter: Derek Banks

Minutes

Mr Banks advised that the draft budget for 2021/22 was presented to the Board for consideration and approval at the meeting of the 1 February 2021. At this meeting it was agreed that a review of the draft budget would take place in March 2021 because of the ongoing working restrictions. The latest report provides a

comparison between the two budgets and provides an explanation of the requested changes. The Business Leadership Team (BLT) has reviewed and recommended the revised budget to the Board.

The increase to the insulation programme utilises an existing contract that Fife Council (FC) controls and will avoid the costly requirement to tender ourselves in the future.

Mr Banks advised that the outcome of the Colleague and Governance Committee meeting and the outcome of the report discussed at the meeting has still to be reflected in the draft budget for 2021/22.

Mr Banks invited questions from Board members and no questions were received.

Agreed: The Board noted the budget assumptions and unanimously approved the draft budget for the financial year 2021/22.

3.2 **5 Year Financial Projections : SHR Regulatory Return & 30 year Business Plan**

Presenter: Derek Banks

Minutes

Mr Banks advised that the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) requires each registered social landlord (RSL) to provide certain information each year, including a Five Year Financial Projection (FYFP) online by 30 June. In addition to this statutory return the Association is required to submit its annual 30 year Business Plan to both the SHR, as part of our engagement plan, and the lenders. The current lenders require the plan to be submitted within 90 days of the year end, 28 June 2020. The Business Plan outlines the potential impact of the proposed new lending arrangements, which provides long dated debt at a low rate of interest increasing the availability of cash to increase developments.

Mr Banks invited questions from Board members.

A Board member commented that it is very positive to see the potential of new build developments and the pipeline of future sites.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. It was agreed that although there have not been

any confirmed, there are more development sites which are likely to be available and the demand for them is there.

A Board member also commented they thought that the development plan was ambitious and added that there is still work to be carried out to consider what we are building in terms of the right property and right location. A Board member also asked if we had the appropriate skills and capacity for this scale of development and Mrs Donaldson confirmed that she was making the necessary arrangements by the proposed structure changes. Board members asked for more time to discuss the Development plans and it was agreed that Mrs Donaldson would ensure that there was sufficient time for a development discussion at the Strategy Day in April 2021.

A Board member raised a query about the interest payable related to the refinancing costs and Mr Banks confirmed that he would check the Statement of Comprehensive Income and clarify with the Board member.

Agreed: The Board discussed the plan presented and unanimously agreed and approved the strategic direction.

3.3

Apprentice Strategy

Presenter: Caroline O'Donnell

Minutes

Mrs O'Donnell presented the Apprenticeship Strategy and advised that this relates directly to the Group's Colleague Strategy previously approved by the Board.

We, unfortunately, do not have the demand within the Group due to lack of turnover of colleagues, capacity nor the funding to have continued apprenticeships on a rolling year on year project but have set out in the Apprenticeship Strategy our ambition to have three apprentices by 2024.

Partnership links are in progress with Skills Development Scotland, however, not all qualifications are able to be provided via this route, and therefore, another partnership arrangement has been formed with Fife College in order to support further qualifications. Further relationships are being built with Skills Development Scotland in regards to funding.

Mrs O'Donnell invited questions from Board members and a Board member commented that we should not be focusing on creating full time positions for all apprenticeships at the end of their term and another Board member agreed. A Board member also asked about the Career Ready and Foundation Apprenticeship programme as they did not see a theme for the two and asked if we could do more for these. The same Board member also added that there was a spelling error on page 6 which should read 'colleagues by 2022'. It was agreed that Mrs O'Donnell would have a further discussion with the Board member outwith the Board meeting in order for the Board member to share their expertise in this particular area.

Agreed: The Board unanimously approved the Apprenticeship Strategy attached at Appendix one.

3.4

Governance Report

Presenter: Laura Grieve

Minutes

Miss Grieve presented the Governance Report which provides a six monthly update to Board members on relevant Governance arrangements. Miss Grieve asked Board members if there are any additional Governance related activities not on the report or action plan that Board members would like reported on please let her know and she will include these in the August Governance report.

3.1.2 Board Training Plan

The Chair has already highlighted that Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan (RRTP) training will be carried out week commencing 26 April and this will include the outstanding Procurement Principles and housing need and demand training elements. Miss Grieve will send out a doodle poll to Board members to seek their availability.

3.1.5 Board Challenges Survey

Miss Grieve carried out some research on Governance Challenges to gain an insight on what challenges other similar organisations are facing (particularly during COVID-19) and what is working well as good practice by inviting other SFHA Governance Forum members to complete a survey and our Internal Auditors, Azets. A total of nine responses have been received so far from the survey and some of the key results of the Governance challenges survey are detailed in the report.

3.4.2 Scottish Federation of Housing Associations Guidance

Miss Grieve was involved in an SFHA consultation group looking at existing SFHA governance guidance and the main purpose of the revisions was to demonstrate how the guidance updates are contributing to the evidence bank and to support the Assurance Statement and compliance with the regulatory standards. Board members are asked to consider and approve the updated guidance documents for use as supplementary guidance.

Miss Grieve invited questions from Board members and no questions were received.

Agreed: The Board noted the update of the Governance report and approved for adoption the following guidance:

- **Governing Body Members' Guide (Appendix three); and**
- **Governing Body Member Annual Appraisal (Appendix four) Guidance.**

4 For Noting

4.1 Colleague Strategy Position Statement

Presenter: Caroline O'Donnell

Minutes

Agreed: The Board noted the progress made on the Colleague Strategy 2020-2023.

4.2 For Homologation

4.2.1 Glen Albyn Contractor approval

Minutes

Agreed: The Board unanimously approved the Glen Albyn Contractor approval.

4.2.2 Policies for Approval

Minutes

Agreed: The Board unanimously approved the policies for approval.

4.2.3 Structure Report minutes

5 Other

Minutes

ZOOM Video Conferencing

It was discussed that a few Board members prefer using ZOOM rather than iBabs for virtual meetings and asked if this can be the consistent platform going forward. Mr Banks commented that there are certain benefits of using iBabs system such as Board members being able to vote during meetings. It was agreed that Miss Grieve would investigate further into if these benefits can be also be used when the video conferencing is not in use.

Tablet Devices

A Board member asked if there was any plans to replace old Board member iPads and Miss Grieve confirmed that we do have Samsung devices available and that she will email out Board members with further details.

5.1

AOCB

Date of next meeting:

Monday 24 May 2021 @ 4pm

iBabs