

Agenda Strategic Board meeting

Date	20/03/2023
Time	16:00 - 18:00
Location	Zoom
Chair	Laurie Boles
Explanation	Present: Mrs Sandra Stock - Chair Mr Laurie Boles - Vice Chair (Chair for this meeting) Mr Derek Adam - Board Member Mrs Lynne Pascal - Board Member Mr Ron Eldridge - Board Member Mrs Fiona Barr - Board Member Mr Stephen Clark - Board Member Mr Brian Gallacher - Board Member Mr Brian Fisher - Co-opted Board Member Mr James Wilson - Co-opted Board Member Mr Chris Gray - Co-opted Board Member

In attendance:
Mrs Nicki Donaldson - Chief Executive (CE)
Mrs Beverley Graham - Director of Housing (DoH)
Mrs Caroline O'Donnell - Director of Operations (DoO)
Miss Laura Grieve - Chief Executive and Governance Assistant
(CEGA) Secretariat

1 Procedural

1.1 Welcome and apologies

Presenter: Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the Vice Chair would be taking the role of Chair for this meeting as she is having to leave the meeting after the approval items, therefore, the Chair advised that the decision papers would be taken first.

Apologies were received from Derek Banks, Rhodri Davies and Ricky McAulay.

1.2 Declaration of Interest

Presenter: Chair

The Chief Executive, Director of Operations, Director of Housing and Chief Executive and Governance Assistant declared an interest in the Cost of Living Review and it was agreed that they would leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion with the exception of the Chief Executive and Governance Assistant who would remain in the meeting to record the minute.

The Vice Chair joined the meeting at this time and took over the role of Chair.

1.3 Minute of the previous meeting

Presenter: Chair

Agreed: The minute of the previous meeting was unanimously approved.

2 For Approval

2.1 Draft Budget 2023/24

Presenter: Chief Executive

The Chief Executive advised that the Director of Finance, Governance and Assets was unable to attend the Board meeting due to a family bereavement.

The Chief Executive gave an overview of the draft budget and asked Board members if they had any questions related to the paper.

A Board member asked about the expected results of the stock condition survey and whether or not there would be enough in the budget to cover the costs. The Director of Housing confirmed that this is discussed with the Director of Finance, Governance and Assets as part of the Budget setting process and there are sufficient provisions in place.

Agreed: The Board noted the budget assumptions and approved the draft budget for the financial year 2023/24.

2.2 Cost of Living Review 2023/24

Presenter: Vice Chair

The Chief Executive, Director of Operations and Director of Housing all left the meeting at this point.

In the absence of the Director of Finance, Governance and Assets, the Vice Chair presented the cost of living review 2023/24 report.

The Terms and Conditions Working Group (TCWG) have received the final report from the consultant [REDACTED] and has fully considered the content and are making recommendations to the Board for their approval.

The Chair commented that the feedback from the TCWG was that the Cost of Living increase would be no higher than the rent increase and, therefore, proposed an increase of 5% to all salaries for all colleagues. This should also be applied to those colleagues who receive car allowances.

A Board member asked if the Cost of Living review will always be tied to the rent increase level and Board members discussed and agreed that they did not want this to be the case for future reviews.

The Vice Chair invited all Board members individually to confirm that they were happy with a 5% Cost of Living increase for all colleagues and to car allowances and the Board unanimously approved this.

Agreed: The Board noted the contents of this report and indicated an agreed cost of living increase of 5% for the financial year 2023/24.

2.3 CONFIDENTIAL: Matters arising

Presenter: Chair

Terms and Conditions Review Report

The Chair advised that following last week's Board meeting, the Business Leadership Team have now been briefed on what the next steps are and what is expected from them.

[REDACTED]

The Board agreed that Spence and Partners should draft the Business Case for Board approval. The Vice-Chair reiterated that the decision to leave the current pension scheme is not based on a cost-saving exercise but is the intention to de-scale the risk of the current pension scheme. The Board had agreed that they intended to put in place an alternative pension scheme above the industry average. The current economic conditions has meant that the cessation cost, and hence risk, has reduced materially making it the optimum time to withdraw from the Defined Benefit scheme. The Chair added that this message should be reinforced and that it is **not** a cost-saving exercise.

The Chief Executive, Director of Operations and Director of Housing all rejoined the meeting at this point.

3 **Action points**

Presenter: Chief Executive

Grant Funding for affordable housing

The Director of Housing provided an update and advised that we submitted applications for grant funding for 2 properties and received £40k and £30k.

There were no further updates to the action points.

3.1 **Legionella Control Policy**

Presenter: Vice Chair

The Vice Chair presented the report and advised that the policy on the Control of Legionella provides the Board with the assurance that there are satisfactory arrangements in place for managing Legionella legislation and regulations across the organisation.

The Vice Chair invited questions from the Board and Board members confirmed that they thought the policy was very comprehensive. It was discussed at the last Audit and Risk Committee that a member would like to see more Health and Safety reporting to Board and the Board member confirmed that they were satisfied with the update.

Agreed: The Board discussed and approved the Legionella Control Policy as attached at Appendix one.

The Chair left the meeting at this point.

4 **For Update**

4.1 **Chairperson's verbal report**

Presenter: Vice Chair

The Chair advised that there was nothing further to update the Board on that was not already on the agenda.

4.2 **Chief Executive's report**

Presenter: Chief Executive

The Chief Executive highlighted the following key areas:

First Minister of Scotland

The race for the appointment of a new First Minister is interesting as each candidate has different views on working relationships moving forward. Given the current relationship with the Green Party who have

significantly influenced the recent decisions on the rent freeze and possible future rent caps, for both private and social landlords, it will be interesting if this relationship will continue which may impact on housing associations moving forward.

Damp and Mould Briefing

Four of Scotland's leading housing organisations have jointly published a new briefing and is included at Appendix One of the report, on tackling damp and mould in the social housing sector.

A Board member asked to what extent are we proactively communicating with all our tenants. The Director of Operations confirmed that this is seen as a priority for the team and there are a number of initiatives we are undertaking to communicate with our tenants about damp and mould, including bulletins to tenants on what to do should they suspect damp and mould in their property.

Board Self-Assessment

The Board self-assessment is due to be completed at the May 2023 Board meeting and the results of this will be published in the August 2023 Governance Report. Linda Ewart, Governance Consultant, will be assisting the Chair in conducting the appraisals. The Chief Executive and Governance Assistant will be circulating appraisal documentation next week.

Glen Albyn launch

We are planning for a celebration to mark the official launch of our Glen Albyn development in June 2023 and further details will follow in due course.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for producing such a comprehensive report and there were no further questions.

Agreed: The Board noted the contents of the update report.

4.3 Management Accounts for period ending

Presenter: Vice Chair

The Vice Chair presented the management accounts for the period ending 31 January 2023 and advised that any questions that Board members may have can be sent to the Director of Finance, Governance and Assets and will be answered on his return. There were no questions received.

The Vice-Chair confirmed that overall the trend analysis of surplus has not changed much from both the revenue and cash side and there are no concerns about what is being reported.

Agreed: The Board noted the contents of the update report.

4.4 Performance Dashboard

Presenter: Director of Housing

The Director of Housing presented the report and advised that where we have seen any changes in performance we have spent time trying to understand where the issue is and trying to rectify the issue.

The number of arrears actions has increased significantly, indicating that the cost of living crisis may now be impacting on the ability of tenants to pay their rent. The housing team is actively engaging with tenants who become or may become in arrears using Rentsense. The bad debt provision for 2023/24 has been doubled to £200k in recognition of the potential issues.

The Board discussed the availability of the fuel poverty fund and the Director of Housing advised that there are measures in place for people who require additional support and we are monitoring the position closely.

The Director of Operations advised that there was a system issue with the non-recording of reappointed external works in December due to the freezing weather conditions. The winter months are always more challenging and weather conditions can result in failure to complete the job on the first visit. We now have a new system in place and should not have any of these issues going forward.

Agreed: The Board discussed the update and noted performance to 31 January 2023.

5 For Noting

5.1 Minutes for noting

5.1.1 Yourplace Meeting minutes

Agreed: The Board noted the Yourplace meeting minutes.

5.2 Minutes for homologation

5.2.1 Audit and Risk Committee minutes

Agreed: The Board homologated the Audit and Risk Committee minutes.

5.2.2 Terms and Conditions Working Group minutes

Agreed: The Board homologated the Terms and Conditions Working Group minutes.

6 Other

6.1 AOCB

A Board member provided an update to a recent Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) seminar on '*Governing Body Member assurance—putting safety first*' that they had attended which had been offered to all Board members.

The Board member commented that it was a very informative session and focused on some of the key Health and Safety areas where the Board should be focusing on and how the Board get assurance that these areas are being met. The Annual Assurance Statement is produced on the basis that we are satisfied that we comply in all these areas based on the evidence bank that is presented for assurance. The remit of the Audit and Risk Committee also covers reviewing the Health and Safety element in further detail.

The Director of Operations also confirmed that the Health and Safety Working Group meet regularly to discuss the Health and Safety dashboard and the Group reports monthly to the Health and Safety Committee and these minutes are presented to Board.

6.2 Date of next meeting

Monday 29 May @ 2.45pm (Board self assessment with Linda Ewart first followed by Board meeting at 4pm)
In person - Pitbauchlie House Hotel

The Board Self Assessment will also take place before the meeting with Linda Ewart, Governance Consultant and exact timings will be confirmed in due course.