

Minutes Confidential Strategic Board meeting

Date	25/03/2025
Time	16:00 – 17:30
Location	Zoom
Chair	Brian Fisher
Explanation	Present: Mr Brian Fisher - Chair Mr Brian Gallacher - Vice Chair Mr Stephen Clark - Board Member Mr Rhodri Davies - Board Member Mr Ricky McAulay - Board Member Mr James Wilson – Board Member Mr Chris Gray - Board Member Ms Kirsty Noble - Board Member Mr Stephen Lynas - Board Member Mrs Juliet Hamilton Lee - Board Member In attendance: Mrs Nicki Donaldson - Chief Executive (CE) Mr Derek Banks - Director of Finance, Governance and Assets (DoFGA), Company Secretary 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 Mrs Christine Dolan – PA & Governance Officer (PAGO)

1 Procedural

1.1 Welcome and apologies

Presenter: Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including Mrs Christine Dolan who is replacing Miss Laura Grieve as the PA and Governance Officer.

1.2 Declaration of Interest

Presenter: Chair

The Business Leadership Team (BLT) declared an interest in the Budget 2025/26 report in terms of the Cost of Living award and it was agreed that they would leave the meeting during the

discussion and the CEGA and PAGO will remain in the meeting to record the minutes.

1.3 Minute of the previous meeting

Presenter: Chair

Section 3.1 Revolving Credit Facility should read £10m instead of £10.

A Board member asked if the Octopus Energy information provided by a Board member had been circulated to Board members and the CEGA confirmed that these had been uploaded to ibabs under the document section.

A Board member advised that they had circulated annotations and the CEGA acknowledged that these comments had been received.

Agreed: The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

1.4 Matters arising

Presenter: Chair

There were no matters arising that were not already on the agenda.

1.5 Action points

Presenter: Chief Executive

There were no further updates as the actions are not yet due.

2 For Update

2.1 Chairperson's report

Presenter: Chair

The Chair provided a written report and there were no questions.

5.2 Chief Executive's report

Presenter: Chief Executive

Engagement Plan

The Scottish Housing Regulator has advised that our engagement plan will be issued on 31 March 2025.

Internal Audit

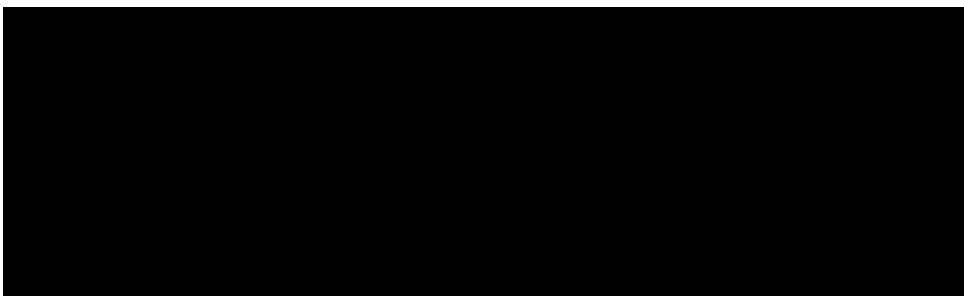
[REDACTED] We are in the process of reviewing the submission but it does perhaps indicate the market, as we understand other Associations have also had similar experiences. It may be worth considering, that if housing associations are not deemed profitable, then we may be able to enter into joint procurement with other Registered Social Landlords.

Glen Albyn, Kirkcaldy

The CE updated the Board on the ongoing discussion with the contractor regarding dampness and mould in one of the newly built properties.

Board Recruitment

[REDACTED] MacGregor Bond has been appointed to assist in the next round of board member recruitment. The Chair has signed off on an updated recruitment pack which includes a refresh of our video clip and this has been shared with the recruitment agency. The online application process using Networx is being revised to include a CV upload in place of the application form for any future recruitment.



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

5.3

Management Accounts

Presenter: Director of Finance, Governance and Assets

The DoFGA provided an update to the management accounts and advised that there continues to be a significant adverse variance trend for reactive, dampness and mould and void maintenance costs. We are reviewing the costs to identify if the variance has been caused, in part, by recent storm damage. The DoFGA commented that one fence repair had totalled over £12k and we were unable to recover any costs through insurance for fences that are over 10 years old. The DoFGA and DoO are working to establish the major contributing factors to the adverse variance and will report back to the Board if there are any significant changes to

the Budget for 2025/26. The Chair asked if the Board could be updated either way of the result.

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

5.4

16:37

Performance Dashboard

Presenter: Director of Housing

The DoH presented the performance dashboard and advised that performance has improved since the last reporting period and of the 46 indicators there is a significant amount that are improving. The DoH added that there are 6 new Anti-Social-Behaviour (ASB) cases which is regarded as high compared to previous months. Any delay in responding to these cases is largely as a result of being reliant on external agencies for providing information.

The Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) Working Group continue to monitor the performance targets and is looking at target setting for 2025/26.

A Board member asked if the DoH can match the key at the bottom of the page to the table and reflect the colour coding, which the DoO confirmed that they would amend.

The DoO indicated that an increase in the level of repairs resulted in an increase in void loss during the month.

A Board member asked what the main priorities for the next year would be and the DoO confirmed that this would be void loss and repairs completed right the first time.

The Board indicated that they would wish to review the dashboard targets once the ARC group had set the draft levels.

Mr Ricky McAulay joined the meeting at this time.

Agreed: The Board discussed this update and noted performance to 31 December 2024.

5.5

16:47

Store facilitator

Presenter: Director of Operations

The Board approved the recruitment of a store facilitator at their Board meeting held on 26 March 2024 following the new build of our store at the rear of Fife Housing Group's (FHG) main office. At the time the report identified a number of potential savings that would aim to be achieved through the recruitment.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with a six-month update on savings achieved between July 2024 to December 2024 and provide a potential overall saving per annum since the implementation of the Stores Facilitator.

The original report to the Board noted that overall total savings from managing stock internally equated into financial terms of around £49,596 per annum. From the six-month analysis, it is expected that actual savings per annum will be around £86,394.

The Board commented that it was a very positive statement and delivered business benefits.

The DoO added that in addition to the financial savings, there is also a reduction in fuel usage leading to lower carbon emissions

The DoO invited questions and none were received.

Agreed: The Board noted this update report.

5.6

16:57

Business Plan 2024-2029

Presenter: Chief Executive

The Chair left the meeting for a short period of time and the Vice Chair took over the meeting.

The Strategic Business Plan 2024-29 was approved by the Board in February 2024. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the narrative element of the Business Plan for year one. The financial element has yet to be updated and will follow the Board approval of the Draft Budget 2025/26 and the outcome of any decisions taken at the Board Development Session in March 2025.

The CE advised that there are a couple of items that are slightly behind schedule, however, these will not affect the overall achievement of the plan. The CE invited questions and a Board member commented that 'Deliver a refresher programme of training on our values and behaviours' was only ticked for 2024/25 but is this not something that we should be trying to achieve on an ongoing basis. The CE responded that at the time of writing the purpose was to give the action plan a kick start but this would be regarded as an ongoing item.

Agreed: The Board discussed this update report.

6 For Approval

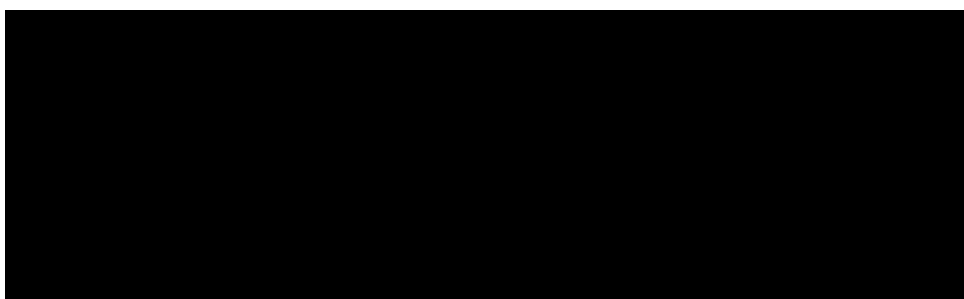
6.1 Draft Budget 2025/26

17:22

Presenter: Director of Finance, Governance and Assets

The DoFGA presented the report and advised that the draft budget for the financial year 2025/26 was presented to the Board for consideration and approval at the meeting held on 11 February 2025. At this meeting, it was agreed that a review of the draft budget would take place in March 2025 because of the uncertainty around some major expenditure lines e.g. void and reactive maintenance costs. This report provides a comparison between the two budgets and explains the requested changes, including the results of the Colleague Consultation Group (CCG) survey of colleagues in relation to the cost of living proposed change.

The DoFGA added that a revised stock condition survey has been partially completed and based on the results this has highlighted that there are a number of properties which require significant improvements. The DoFGA reminded the Board that he and the DoO are working to establish the major contributing factors to the adverse variance and will report back to the Board if there are any significant changes to the Budget for 2025/26.



The Business Plan currently assumes a 2.5% cost of living increase, however, external factors such as the rise of National Insurance, previous salary benchmarking exercise and the impact of strategic objectives were also considered.

The Chair rejoined the meeting at this time.

The Board discussed the report and commented that there is a concern that we have to change our assumption of what the true cost of voids is.

The CE, DoFGA, DoH and DoO left the meeting at this time.

There was a discussion about salary benchmarking and what rates of jobs people are doing and it is important to note that this is independent of the cost of living exercise. The Board want to control the finances and get value for money while achieving good outcomes for tenants. A Board member commented that there will be a further benchmarking review in 2027.

There was a discussion over the 2.5% that is suggested in the Business plan and the 2.8% recommended by the Scottish Government. Board members commented that there is resistance to deviating away from the Business Plan and creating issues.

Mr Stephen Clark joined the meeting at this time.



A Board member asked how the figures are converting in the Business Plan, what are the implications and particularly in relation the long term viability of the organisation.

Board members discussed that an 18% response rate from colleagues to provide their feedback was disappointing.

The Board agreed on a 3% cost of living increase and would like to understand more about the low engagement rate.

The CE, DoFGA, DoH and DoO rejoined the meeting at this time.

The Chair summarised the discussion and after much debate, the Board agreed on a 3% cost of living increase. The DoO commented that the Colleague Consultation Group (CCG) were also disappointed by the low response rate from colleagues.

The Chair asked the DoFGA to come back either way if there will be any further changes to the budget for 2025/26. The DoFGA added that if the change is under £50k then email approval will suffice, however, if it is over £50k then a Special Board Meeting (SBM) will be required to reach a decision.

Agreed: The Board noted the budget assumptions, decided on a 3% of cost of living increase to be applied to colleague salaries and approved the draft budget for the financial year 2025/26.

7 For Noting (NO ITEMS)

8 Other

8.1 AOCB

8.2 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 27 May 2025 @ 4 pm

Pitbauchlie House Hotel, Dunfermline