at home with...
fife housing group

Confidential Strategic Board meeting
Minutes

Date 26/05/2026

Time 15:00 - 18:00

Location Carnegie Conference and Events Centre, Dunfermline

Chair Brian Fisher

Explanation Present:
Mr Brian Fisher - Chair
Mr Rhodri Davies - Board Member
Mr Stephen Lynas - Board Member
Mrs Juliet Hamilton Lee - Board Member
Mr Andrew Wilson - Board Member
Ms Kathy Gourlay - Board Member
Ms Jayne Currie - Board Member
Mr David Reynolds – Co-opted Board Member
In attendance:
Mrs Nicki Donaldson - Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
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)
Mrs Christine Dolan - PA and Governance Officer (PAGO)
Mrs Linda Ewart (LE) – Governance Consultant

Board Effectiveness

Presenter: LE and Chair

The Chair welcomed LE to the meeting, who delivered the feedback from the Board Effectiveness surveys that were completed by Board members, as well as the Business Leadership Team (BLT).

While there were some frustrations noted, overall feedback was positive, and shows an improving and evolving journey by the Fife Housing Group (FHG) Board. It was noted that there is a greater depth of information available, Board reports provided are perceived to be more effective, leading to an increase in scrutiny.

More confidence in the Board was noted by the BLT, while Board members tended to be more self-critical.

The Board and BLT identified areas that have improved including the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) and Annual Assurance processes due to the additional sessions attended by Board members. There are also areas for improvement, including tenant engagement and Board response time to communications.

A Board member asked how the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) would measure tenant engagement. The DoH advised that FHG completes a Tenant Satisfaction Survey every two years. There is Resident Voices, who attends a Board meeting at least once per year, plus a full engagement calendar, which is presented to the Board. The DoH, therefore, believes that the SHR would be satisfied with tenant engagement. Board members are, however, encouraged to take part in tenant events, and the engagement calendar, which was previously posted via iBabs, will now be visible on Slack.

The CEO explained that the SHR would like to see a number of tenants at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), however, this is challenging to achieve, and is an ongoing discussion.

FHG Board Knowledge and Skill Assessment

The Chair presented a report on the Board Knowledge and Skills Assessment, which identified areas for development within the current Board and highlighted skills gaps requiring further recruitment.

It was noted that the Board currently has limited knowledge and experience in Human Resources (HR) and Finance, and the Chair is seeking to address this skills gap through the recruitment of an additional Board member.

There are currently no tenant members on the Board, and limited experience of holding a tenancy, however, the Board have all had discussions during the annual one-to-ones about the tenant journey.

The Chair encouraged Board members to use the Evidence Bank to familiarise themselves with the SHR regulations and the evidence that is available.

Currently, the Board has 11 members, of whom most are male. All the sub-committees are led by male convenors. The DoFGA also pointed out that there is no ethnic minority representation. The Chair agreed that there should be more diversity within the Board and sub-committees, however, the focus, for the time being, must be on having the correct skills, particularly around tenant engagement and the tenant journey.

The Chair highlighted the key actions:

- Additional Board recruitment to cover gaps in:
    - HR
    - Finance
    - Increased diversity
- Board development areas
    - Housing regulatory understanding
    - Understanding of the social housing sector, both locally and nationally
    - Tenant journey

Agreed: The Board agreed with the action points from the Board Knowledge and Skills Assessment Outcome.

Linda Ewart left the meeting at this point.

1 Procedural

1.1 Welcome and apologies

Presenter: Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received in advance from Ricky McAulay and Stephen Clark.

Andrew Wilson, Kathy Gourlay and Jayne Currie all joined the meeting virtually.

1.2 Membership Application

Presenter: PAGO

A membership application and £1 membership fee have been received from Mr David Reynolds, who has also applied to be a Board member.

The current membership total is 59.

Agreed: The Board approved the membership for Mr David Reynolds.

1.3 Co-option of Board Member

Presenter: Chair

Mr David Reynolds left the meeting at this point.

Mr David Reynolds has applied to be co-opted to the FHG Board, and has a strong housing management background, which will bring their knowledge and expertise to the current Board.

Agreed: The Board approved the co-option of Mr David Reynolds.

David Reynolds joined the meeting at this time.

1.4 Declaration of Interest

Presenter: Chair

There were no declarations of interest.

1.5 Minute of the previous meeting

Presenter: Chair

Agreed: The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

1.6 Matters arising

Presenter: Chair

There were no matters arising not already on the agenda.

1.7 Action points

Presenter: CEO

The CEO advised that the action points are now available to view via Slack, therefore, the layout is different to previous versions.

<u>AI Report</u>

Due to the volume of work with the new housing management system and also resources within the ICT team, this has been delayed. A new date will be scheduled.

The DoFGA advised that there will be an AI module within the new housing management system. FHG are also using ChatGPT and Co-Pilot.

<u>Property Sustainability</u>

A report will be provided to the Board at a later date.

Permanent Establishment of Income Maximisation Officer (IMO) and Tenancy Support Officer (TSO)
The DoH is currently compiling this report, which will be presented to the Board in August 2026.

Benchmarking Working Group
This area of work will be picked up with the Colleague and Governance Committee.

2 Chair Update

2.1 Chair's report

Presenter: Chair

CEO Annual Appraisal
The CEO's annual appraisal took place in April, and objectives will be finalised by the end of May 2026.

Board member One-to-Ones
All one-to-ones have now been completed, and summary documents have been issued via email. The Chair asked that the signed copies be returned as soon as possible.

Board Communications
The Chair reminded Board members of the importance of checking Slack for important updates, as well as items that require a response. Emails will be issued to FHG email addresses, but no reminders will be sent to personal email addresses.

Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) Website
Board members should have access to the members' section of the SFHA website. If this is not the case, Board members can contact the PAGO for assistance.

Board Development Plan
The Chair has allocated priorities to the Plan to ensure there are realistic timescales for each item.

Board Team Building
Following feedback received during the one-to-ones, the Chair suggested holding a Board event so everyone can get together in an informal environment.

A Board member suggested a meal with a guest speaker, and all agreed.

Agreed: Board members to put forward suggestions for a topic and/or guest speaker. Jayne Currie will organise the event.

A Board member asked how much access the Operational Leadership Team (OLT) have to the systems and reports used by the BLT.

The DoO advised that some of the reports presented to the Board are written by the OLT. As a small organisation, it is the general standard that OLT are involved in some capacity before presentation to the Board.

3 For Approval

3.1 SHR Loan Portfolio Annual Return

Presenter: DoFGA

The DoFGA presented the SHR Loan Portfolio Annual return and reminded Board members that the SHR requires each Registered Social Landlord (RSL) to submit this return by the end of June each year.

The main change from the previous year's return is the additional purchases by FHG Yourplace of £348,434.

The DoFGA highlighted that one loan finished halfway through the financial year, explaining the difference in the loan reference numbers within the report.

The £45million loan has been fully utilised, whilst the £10million Revolving Credit Facility (RCF) has not been used.

Agreed: The Board discussed and approved the SHR Loan Portfolio Annual Return.

3.2 Five-Year Financial Return and Business Plan

Presenter: DoFGA and CEO

The SHR required each Registered Social Landlord (RSL) to provide their Five-Year Financial Projection (FYFP) online by 31 May 2026.

The DoFGA highlighted significant differences to the 2025/26 return primarily due to increasing costs over the last six years, but also regulatory and legislative changes, both current and predicted.

The largest increase relates to maintenance, which has been increasing year on year since 2020 and is not expected to go back down. This is due to the increasing volume of repairs and also the cost of materials. The DoFGA noted that the condition of properties being vacated is significantly worse that they used to be.

The DoFGA recommends increasing rent from [redacted] from the years 2026/27 – 2030/31, to cover these rising costs. Additional lending will also be required as in previous business plans, however, the timing and amount has changed. Conversations with our lender, the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) have shown that there is scope to increase borrowing to the level indicated.

The SHR have never questioned our assumptions, and the business continues to be sustainable, which should provide comfort to the Board. The DoFGA suggests bringing forward the timing of the rent consultation and budgeting conversations to ensure rents are set to ensure that the business is viable and sustainable, and covering costs, including colleague cost-of-living increases.

Action: A Board member asked for a comparison between the budget versus actual spend for maintenance over the previous five years, and the DoFGA will provide this.

A Board member asked if there was anything that could be done legally regarding the property condition issues. The DoFGA explained that the Housing Officers complete regular Red Amber Green (RAG) visits, however, increasingly, properties are being returned in worse conditions than expected.

The DoH added that there has been a notable increase in mental health conditions. The Income Maximisation Officer and the Tenancy Support Officer are working with tenants who fall into this category, and there has been some improvement. There has been one case where we have been to court 10 times, but the Sheriff will not provide a decree.

Some tenants are also not informing FHG of property condition issues, which can make situations worsen over time.

A Board member requested a report outlining the savings achieved through previous recruitment activity and the reduction in the use of contractors for repairs.

ACTION: DoO to prepare a report detailing the financial savings realised by utilising internal colleagues for repair works rather than external contractors.

Board members discussed the difficulties around raising rent, particularly given the feedback about value for money within the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) submission. The DoFGA pointed out that FHG rent has been kept under inflation over the previous few years and that increases have been below peers, therefore, reducing the previous differences in rents, particularly on larger properties.

The Board discussed new development, and it was confirmed that new units would be additions to the stock, rather than replacements. Some older properties are costly maintain, however, the DoFGA confirmed that every property has a positive net present value (NPV) at the current time.

A Board member noted that Cost of Living (COL) increases are 2.5% throughout the life of the plan and asked, given the current economic climate, if this was realistic. The Board discussed the impact of increasing COL on the rent increases for tenants and agreed on the following COL increase assumptions:

[redacted]

Action: The DoFGA to amend the COL and rent assumptions and submit the FYFP to the SHR and our lenders, RBS, by 31 May 2026.

3.3 Strategic Risk Register

Presenter: DoFGA

The DoFGA presented the Strategic Risk Register and confirmed that there have been no changes to the risk scores, however, some amendments were made to the responsibilities. The ongoing international conflicts continue to be monitored, and risk scores will be amended as required.

A Board member queried whether the risk of material price increases should be included within the risk register. The DoO explained that, for most materials, the organisation is not restricted to a single supplier, allowing prices to be compared to secure the best value. In areas where there is a sole supplier arrangement, such as kitchens, the current contract is due to end shortly, enabling a new procurement process to be undertaken to achieve the best possible deal. It was also noted that the availability of storage space allows materials to be purchased in bulk where appropriate.

A Board member asked whether any of the current amber risks had a pathway to being reduced to green status, including the Sustainability Strategy. The DoFGA explained that there remains uncertainty around how stringent the sustainability guidelines will be. The Scottish Government would need to be mindful about the potential impact on social housing numbers if the criteria are unachievable, mainly because of the construction types within social housing. At present, FHG is taking a fabric-first approach, including the replacement of windows and doors, roofs and upgrading insulation in properties where required.

Agreed: The Board discussed and approved the Strategic Risk Register.

3.4 Annual Return on the Charter

Presenter: DoH

The DoH provided a full session on the ARC on 19 May 2026, and notes of this meeting have been published on Slack.

Following this session, the DoH amended the ARC to add commentary around the Right First Time figures, which saw a significant increase. The DoH also confirmed that the number of days for adaptations is measured as working days.

The DoH highlighted a reduction in the Value for Money indicator and explained that, as the next satisfaction survey is in 2027/28, this figure will remain static in the next ARC.

Comparison against peers can be completed when the figures are published by the Scottish Housing Network in June 2026.

Agreed: The Board discussed and approved the ARC, which will be submitted by the DoH by 31 May 2026.

3.5 Building Surveyor Resource

Presenter: DoO and DoFGA

The DoO and DoFGA presented the Building Surveyor Resource proposal, which recommends the establishment of two roles, one aligned with the Operations team and the other with the Asset teams.

Awaabs Law will be introduced in Scotland in October 2026 and will significantly increase the regulation of damp and mould for RSLs.

Currently, FHG uses a contractor to provide damp and mould surveys, and they then carry out the rectifying work, leading to concerns of a single point of failure. In addition, due to the number of pre and post-inspections required by legislation, there is not currently the resource to ensure these are completed.

Having an additional resource for the stock condition survey programme will improve the quality, consistency and coverage of the asset data across the housing portfolio. Ultimately, this should save money as render, fabric and insulation issues can be identified and added to the planned schedule of works.

These roles will ensure tighter compliance and better control over damp and mould, as well as overall property condition.

A Board member asked if the work was included within the budget and if this would be reallocated, and the DoFGA confirmed that it was and would be reallocated.

A Board member asked if the roles would be interchangeable and the DoO explained that initially the roles would be strictly for their own remit, however, the long-term plan would be that they could provide cover for each other if required.

The Board discussed the possibility of the roles being fixed-term contracts. The DoFGA and DoO advised that both are likely needed permanently, however, the structure of all teams is reviewed regularly.

A Board member asked if thought had been given to the use of sensors to identify issues with damp and mould. The DoO confirmed that sensors have been used in some properties, however, this can cause alarm to the tenants and does not always provide accurate information. They will continue to be used in problematic properties with long-term issues.

The Board discussed the savings in contractor costs, and the DoFGA explained that they erred on the cautious side, and that the Board might find savings to be higher than estimated in the proposal, based on other evidence of a similar approach adopted in other organisations.

A Board member asked if a target could be set for the roles, and the DoO agreed that this could be added as an objective.

Action: Add a 20% saving as an objective to the Damp and Mould Surveyors objective.

Agreed: The Board approved the establishment of two Building Surveyors within FHG:

- **Building Surveyor (Damp and Mould/Reactive Maintenance)**
- **Building Surveyor (Stock Condition/Asset Management)**

The Board approved the inclusion of the associated annual cost within the Business Plan from 2026/27 onwards.

The Board noted that the proposal represents a shift from a reactive, contractor-influenced model to a more structured, independent and intelligence-led approach to managing housing quality, compliance, and asset performance.

3.6 Colleague Strategy

Presenter: DoO

The DoO presented the updated Colleague Strategy, which will cover the period 2026- 2030. Within the strategy are four strategic themes, and built into what Investors in People (IIP) require to allow us to retain the platinum status.

Critical success factors are:

- Achieve and retain the platinum IIP status
- Better colleague retention and reduced short-term absences
- Growing internal succession planning
- Lower employer relations issues.

The Chair asked if the Board could have regular updates on the indicators, and the DoO advised that this is available through the ARC, and that the Colleague and Governance Committee will be regularly informed.

A Board member asked how FHG empower colleagues to influence decisions, and the DoO advised that this was a part of the Values programme. In addition, colleagues are asked when they join if they have anything they can contribute to make the organisation better. Lessons learned also form part of team meetings, where colleagues can discuss things that have gone well and areas of improvement.

Agreed: The Board discussed and approved the Colleague Strategy

4 For Update

4.1 CEO Report

Presenter: CEO

Fife Housing Association Alliance (FHAA)
The funding allocation for 2026/27 has been agreed by both Fife Council and FHAA following a meeting between the leader of the Council and the CEO and Chair of Kingdom Housing Association. This has meant that there is a shortfall in funding available to FHAA this year, and further negotiations are likely in future years.

The BLT have discussed the possibility of front-funding projects to ensure FHG are in a position to proceed with developments, should the opportunity arise. A report would be submitted to the Board for approval in advance of any projects to be taken forward.

Agreed: The Board noted the CEO report.

4.2 Management Accounts

Presenter: DoFGA

The DoFGA presented the Management Accounts to the end of March 2026 and highlighted that these are the unaudited accounts. Traditionally, there have been no changes to the audited figures.

Overall, there is a positive variance against the budget, and there is a £6million cash balance, although the DoFGA noted this included funding for the British Iron and Steel Federation (BISF) homes and the TSO.

The biggest variances are void maintenance, reactive maintenance, and damp and mould.

The DoFGA invited questions, and none were received.

Agreed: The Board noted the contents of the Management Accounts.

4.3 Performance Dashboard

Presenter: DoH

The DoH presented the Performance Dashboard in its new format and asked that Board members provide feedback on the layout.

The Performance Dashboard shows the completed document for the year 2025/26.

The DoH highlighted that, in the current format, the indicator shows a percentage for indicator 30, which the ARC reports as a number of houses, the DoH will amend the dashboard accordingly.

A Board member praised the clarity of the new format and the ease of use. They did ask that a RAG chart be added to the bottom of the spreadsheet, which the DoH will do for future reports.

Agreed: The Board noted the contents of the Performance Dashboard.

4.4 Housing Activities 2025/26

Presenter DoH

The DoH presented the Housing Activities report for 2025/26.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases have risen over the last 12 months, with 136 new reports and 10 carried forward from 2024/25. This is an increase of 103 from the previous reporting period.

Legal action is taken where required, and we have already started two eviction proceedings for 2026/27.

FHG have issued 112 energy vouchers as well as 69 retail vouchers to tenants, and 27 food bank referrals have been made within the period.

Resident Voices continue to meet monthly and will present to the Board at the August 2026 Board meeting. Almost all of the actions from their 2025 ASB Scrutiny Report have been applied, with the exception of the introduction of a dedicated ASB Officer. This has been fed back to Resident Voices.

Twenty-six organisations applied for the Giving Something Back awards in 2025, and FHG gave out a total of £20k. Applications have opened for this year's Giving Something Back awards. The event will take place in September 2026, and Board members are encouraged to attend.

The DoH invited questions, and none were received.

Agreed: The Board noted the Housing Activities update 2025/26.

4.5 **Audit & Risk**
Presenter: Audit and Risk Convenor

Cameron Boyd from TIAA presented the internal audit reports, including Tenant and Resident Safety and Budgetary Control. There were some medium risks identified under Tenant and Resident Safety, however, the Committee were reassured that BLT have these in hand.

Mr Boyd also presented the Follow-up Review and Internal Audit Annual Report for 2025/26.

The Committee reviewed the following items from the Evidence Bank and was satisfied with the information available:

- 1.8 Role descriptions for office-bearers
- 1.4 Financial planning process
- 4.15 Reports from 'tests' (of processes such as business continuity, emergency planning, etc)

The Convenor invited questions, and none were received.

Agreed: The Board noted the Audit and Risk Committee update.

5 **For Noting**
It was assumed that these papers had been read in advance, and they were not, therefore, outlined at the meeting.

5.1 **Operational Workplans Q4**

Agreed: The Board noted the Operational Workplans for Q4.

5.2 **Operational Workplans 2026/27**

Agreed: The Board noted the Operational Workplans for 2026/27.

5.3 **Minutes for Noting**
Yourplace Minutes

Agreed: The Board noted the Yourplace minutes from January 2026.

5.4 **For Homologation**

Housing Policy
Audit and Risk Committee Minutes

Agreed: The Housing Policy and the Audit and Risk Committee Minutes from January 2026 were homologated.

6 **Other**

6.1 **AOCB**

There was no other business discussed.

6.2 **Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 11 August 2026 at 3.30pm
Online via Teams