

MINUTES OF	:	Board of Management Meeting
TIME & DATE HELD	:	14th December 2021 at 6.00pm
DATE APPROVED	:	

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT	:	Ms Scoffield, Ms Thomson, Ms Battersby Ms Barbour, Mr Barclay, Mr Connor, Ms Johnston, Ms Kiernan, Mr McIntosh and Mr Robertson
APOLOGIES	:	Ms Barnes
STAFF PRESENT	:	Tony Teasdale, CEO Fiona Nicholl, Director of Finance & Corporate Services (DFCS)
IN ATTENDANCE	:	None

1. Introduction

Apologies were noted as indicated above.

2. Declarations of Interest

Ms Scoffield declared an interest in respect of Item 9.1.

3 Minutes for Information

The draft minutes of the following meetings were noted:

3.1 Housing & Community Services Committee - 23.11.21.

3.2 Audit and Corporate Committee - 30.11.21.

4. Minutes for Approval

4.1 Minutes for Approval

4.1.1 The draft confidential Minute of the Board of Management meeting held on 09.11.21 was **approved** as a correct record on a motion from Mr Barclay, seconded by Ms Battersby, subject to the removal of Mr McIntosh's name from the list of those present.

4.1.2 The draft non-confidential Minute of the Board of Management meeting held on 09.11.21 was **approved** as a correct record on a motion from Mr Barclay, seconded by Ms Kiernan.

4.2 Strategy Day 20.11.2021

The draft minute of the Strategy Day held on 20.11.21 was **approved** as a correct record on a motion from Ms Johnston, seconded by Mr Robertson.

5. Matters Arising

Members noted the content of the Schedule of Matters Arising from the meeting on 09.11.21 and other information provided at the meeting, as follows:

- *Council tax costs on empty properties:* The DFCS advised that investigation was ongoing regarding the £40k paid to the Council in the first 6 months of the year. £14k of this was due for long-term vacant properties at the Mansionhouse. There was a possibility that some of the remainder will be repaid by the Council. Full details to be provided in the next Management Accounts report.
- *Key governance documents for the subsidiaries:* The respective Intragroup Agreements and Service Sharing Agreements had been approved in-principle at the last meeting subject to final legal advice. The CEO reported that further written comments had been received from our lawyer that morning and this seemed unlikely to require any further significant changes. It was hoped that these documents would be able to be signed in advance of the next meeting.
- *Sub-Committees:* Members noted Mr McIntosh's interest in becoming a member of the Audit and Corporate meeting and **approved his appointment.**

6. Compliance and Safety Update

Members noted the content of the report. There was discussion about the recent need to provide the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) with amended information regarding the compliance of SHA properties with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). This had arisen after SHR had clarified the requirements in relation to energy efficiency.

As a result the Association's SHQS compliance level had reduced slightly from 92.8% of properties to 89.5%. In response to a member query the CEO gave an assurance that this would not mean extra cost to SHA as the required works were already planned to be carried out as part of our EESSH improvement programme.

7. CEO Progress Report

Members noted the content of the report.

The CEO gave an update on new working arrangements that had been introduced, since the issuing of the report, in light of recent concerns about the spread of the new Omicron variant and the Scottish Government's latest, renewed, advice that staff should work from home where possible. The following new measures had been introduced for the time being:

- All staff now required to do a lateral flow test each day before coming into the office/in the area (not just twice a week as before).

- The opportunity for service users to visit the office without a prior appointment and Covid screening temporarily suspended.
- A further review ongoing of departmental arrangements for staff to be in the office with a particular focus on avoiding concentrations of staff in parts of the office on particular days.

Members noted:

- The office closure arrangements over the Christmas/new year period and
- The package of various “festive cheer” items, that had been approved by the Office Bearers, to benefit our tenants and the local community including Christmas hampers to be distributed through the Pantry and also, directly by SHA, to recipients of the Retirement Housing Service and the selection boxes for children of SHA tenants.

It was also noted that the staff were being given an additional half day off on the 17th December in lieu of the fact that, once again, it would not be possible to hold a Christmas party. **The Chair proposed that a lunch be arranged for Board members in the New Year sometime and this was agreed.**

8. Review of Complaints Handling Procedure

Members noted the content of the report and the draft revised Complaints Procedure that had regard to the latest model procedure issued by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). After some questions **the Board approved the adoption of the revised Complaints handling procedure**, to be rolled out following staff training in the New Year.

9. Payments and Benefits Policy

9.1 Tenancy offer to a Board Member

Ms Scoffield stepped down from the Chair and left the meeting for this item. The Vice-Chair, Ms Thomson, took over the Chair.

The Board noted the content of the report which, in accordance with the requirements of the Payments and Benefits Policy, gave assurances that the proposed tenancy offer was in line with the Association’s Allocations Policy and that neither the Board member in question, or anyone connected with them, had had any involvement in the decision regarding the proposed allocation. **The Board approved that the offer of tenancy be made.**

9.2 Review of the Payments and Benefits Policy

Ms Scoffield returned to the meeting and resumed the Chair.

The Board noted the contents of the report and in particular that changes were being proposed to the existing policy to have regard to the latest Model Payments and Benefits Policy recently issued by the SFHA in consultation with the SHR.

Following questions **the Board approved the changes in-principle and agreed that a draft revised Policy be brought back for final approval to the January meeting.**

10. Annual Rent and Service charge review

The Board noted the content of the report which provided background on the Association's approach to the setting of rents and service charges. Other contextual information was also provided including about how our rents compare with those of other social landlords. A number of issues and proposals were also flagged up for initial consideration and feedback by Members as follows:

- a) That the overall increase in rents and service charge income for the coming year would need to be higher than in recent years due to the current levels of cost inflation being experienced and the needs of the Business Plan going forward. It was noted that:
- The latest (October) inflation figures were 4.2% (Consumer Price Index (CPI) measure) and 6% (Retail Price Index (RPI) measure).
 - Our 2020 Business Plan had projected that rents would need to rise by inflation plus 1.5% from April 2022.

Notwithstanding the above, having regard to the pressures on tenants' incomes, it was hoped to be able to restrict the rent increase to around 4% whilst still generating sufficient income to meet future investment requirements and meet loan covenants. In discussion however the DFCS acknowledged that inflation seemed likely to continue to increase in coming months and the draft budget had yet to be finalised.

- b) That it is recommend to tenants that we continue to provide the new, enhanced, bulk uplift service in 2022/23 and beyond but that an additional service charge (around £1.32 per month) be levied on the users of the service to pay for this.
- c) That differential rent rises be proposed as in the two previous years instead of a flat rate percentage increase across all of the stock. The aim of this would be to ensure that a higher burden of the overall rent increase required will be borne by those who currently pay significantly less than the average rent applicable for their property size/type. At the same time this should further reduce somewhat the existing anomalies within the rent structure in advance of the rent restructure and harmonisation exercise it was hoped to be able to take forward in the coming year.

Following questions and discussion **the Board approved these proposals in-principle and agreed that finalised proposals be brought back for consideration to the January meeting.**

11. Governance Issues

Members noted the content of the report and following discussion:

- a) **Approved the proposed enhancement to the standard report format** aimed at ensuring that when decisions are sought any potential implications for the following are always systematically highlighted in the report:
- Business Plan delivery
 - Legal/regulatory compliance
 - Compliance with our Rules
 - Service Delivery
 - Financial/other resource outlay
 - Health and safety
 - Equalities (with Equalities Impact Assessments to be included as required)
 - Other risk implications.
- b) **Agreed that a draft revised Policy Board Training and Development be brought to the next meeting for consideration.** One of the objectives will be to ensure that we have a planned and structured approach to training and development going forward to ensure that annually agreed training and development objectives are met and that best value is delivered through the training/conference budget.

Members were also reminded of the role of the Governance and Communication Officer in providing support in respect of Board training and development.

It was noted that an in-house event had been organised through SHARE on 1st February, as follows: *“Finance: questions you should be asking”*.

12. Membership Applications

The Board noted the content of the report and approved a membership application from a tenant.

13. Any Other business

There was none.

Minute prepared by Tony Teasdale, Chief Executive

SIGNED: DRAFT MINUTE

DATE: N/A