



## MINUTES OF BRIDGEWATER HOUSING ASSOCIATION BOARD MEETING

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024

**Time:** 5.30pm

**Venue:** BOARDROOM/TEAMS

### Sederunt:

Present	Apologies	In Attendance
John Paterson, Chair Suzanne Austin, Secretary Ken McIntosh Jim O'Neil Gavin Dayer Liz Bowden Ken Caldwell (part)	Alastair Morris  <u>Leave of Absence</u>  <u>Absent</u> Rab McNally	Andy Thomson, Chief Executive Steven Ferrie, Head of Property Services Ruth Brogan, Head of Housing Services Hazel Aitken, Head of Housing Services Leanne McGowan, Head of Finance Lesley Carr, Minute Taker  Derek Baker – Observer

### GOVERNANCE

Item	Details	Action
1.	<b>Welcome and Chairs remarks</b>	
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that members had received their papers on time and introduced Derek Baker to those present. Derek is attending this meeting as an observer with the possibility of becoming a Board Member. Everyone welcomed Derek to the Meeting.	
2.	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Apologies were received from <b>Alastair Morris</b> . ██ ██	
2.1	██ ██	
3.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	Members were invited to declare any interest in any of the items on the agenda, in terms of the Association's published policy.	

3.1	There was a general declaration of interest <b>NOTED</b> from tenant members, regarding the rent increase report and discussion due to take place later in the meeting.	
4.	<b>Minute of the Board Meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024</b>	
	Members were invited to consider the minute of the Board Meeting held on 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2024	
4.1	Members <b>APPROVED</b> the minutes as a correct record of the meeting as <b>PROPOSED</b> by Gavin Dayer and <b>SECONDED</b> by Suzanne Austin.	
5.	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
	<p>The CEO provided an update on the following matters arising as detailed within the report.</p> <p>Items updated included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [REDACTED]</li> <li>• Stock condition – the data refresh is still ongoing and will be complete in time for the next draft budget in January</li> <li>• Flair AGM – Suzanne Austin and Gavin Dayer attended the Flair AGM. Suzanne was elected as the Flair Spokesperson for the coming year.</li> <li>• Development – the provision on the £10K for future development will be covered in the draft budget which will also be discussed later in the meeting.</li> </ul>	
5.1	Members <b>NOTED</b> the update on the follow up actions from the previous meetings.	
<b>MATTERS FOR DECISION</b>		
6.	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Draft Budget</b>	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Head of Finance, the purpose of which was to provide the Board with a first draft budget for 2025/26 to enable the Board to consider the proposed rent increase consultation options of 3.5% and 4%.</p> <p>The HOF explained that there are some direct financial implications associated with the rent increase assumptions for 2025-26 and these are detailed in the Rent Consultation Options 2025-26 report at item 7 on the agenda.</p> <p>The draft budget has been prepared based on a 3.5% increase on rents (garage rental increase 3.7%), managed property income and owners' management fees. Service charge income has been matched to the related budgeted expenditure. The budgeted surplus is £307k and the main assumptions are detailed within the report and were outlined by the HOF.</p> <p>The CEO explained that he had received a number of questions from a Board member prior to the meeting and confirmed that these have all been answered by the HOF during her presentation of the budget.</p> <p>The CEO explained that this is effectively a one year budget and the only unknown</p>	

	<p>is the material costs and he informed Board that the HOF and the HOPS have carried out a lot of work. The HOF explained that there were a lot of contingencies added in the past and we have tried to move away from this and have stripped the budget back to basics and started from scratch. The additional use of the modules within SDM will allow us to track the budget easier going forward.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>The member was satisfied with the responses to their questions and is now confident that this is a good budget based on the explanations and information provided.</p> <p>A member inquired whether the HOF is confident that the budget is linked to the risk statements. The HOF confirmed that she is happy now that we have stripped everything back and is content with what is contained in the budget. The CEO noted that although not noted specifically in the main part of the report the main risks are noted in the executive summary and these are considered when budget setting as a matter of course.</p> <p>A member asked the HOF for an explanation on how to identify the years within the report and was happy with the explanation provided.</p> <p>A member requested an explanation as to why there were both staff costs for training and conferences within the management expenses, the HOF explained that these had previously been detailed together and they appear as separate items now. The HOF also explained that the consultancy costs have also been removed from the professional fees, and that the component replacements appear in the net property value.</p> <p>The CEO explained that the Budget should be considered alongside the Rent Increase report which is the next item on the agenda.</p>	
6.1	<p>Following full discussion on the Draft Budget and full consideration of the information provided within the Rent Increase Consultation Options and Garage Rents Reports, members <b>APPROVED</b> the draft budget as <b>PROPOSED</b> by Jim O’Neil and <b>SECONDED</b> by Suzanne Austin.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Rent Increase Consultation Options + Garage Rents</b></p>	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the CEO, HOHS and HOF, the purpose of which was for the Board to consider the first draft budget and the recommendation to consult with tenants on two options for the proposed rent increase:  Option 1- 3.5%.  Option 2 – 4.0%</p> <p>Garages Rent Increase - 3.7%</p> <p>The HOH explained that the increase for managed properties service charges will be presented to the Board at their meeting in January.</p> <p>It is proposed that the content of this report should be considered along with the draft budget so that a decision on rent increase proposal can be made with viability</p>	

issues fully covered.

Tenants on the Board have a potential conflict of interest but are asked to be objective and consider the factors outlined in this report from a strategic point of view in determining a suitable increase amount to be implemented from 1st April 2025. The future viability/existence of the Association is at risk should Board not implement an appropriate rent increase.

To enable the rent consultation process the Board must assess the impact that differing levels of rent increases will have on the overall finances of BHA.

The purpose of this report is to present rent increase proposal to Board and for Board to approve consultation with tenants on the proposed increases and approve the suggested service charge approach or make further suggestions. Please refer to the 1st draft budget which is also being presented at tonight's meeting.

The HOH explained that historically, all rents and service charges were charged to the rent accounts on the 29<sup>th</sup> of the month (in advance for the coming month). Accounts should be paid in advance on or before the 28<sup>th</sup> of the month. In March 2024 internal accounting changes were carried out to charge rents on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. This meant that payments made up to and including the 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous month could be taken into account. This was a technical change only and tenants were not asked to make any changes to their payment methods or dates. However, the Rent Policy is being reviewed and the proposal is to change the debit date to the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. If approved, an addendum will be issued to all Scottish Secure Tenants to advise them of the changes from 1st April 2025. All tenants (including garages, leaseholders etc) will be notified as part of the Rent Increase Notification process in February 2025.

A member stated that we are not legally obliged to set the management fee for managed properties in line with the rent increase and the CEO confirmed that these charges currently charged only covers staff time for the staff that we provide and this is the only part that we are increasing. The HSCO is currently reviewing the charges and we hope to have a better idea of how much it actually costs for us to manage these properties by next year.

A member commented that if we are providing tenants with an option of either 3.5% or 4% then would it not be obvious that the smaller percentage would be more favourable. The CEO explained that this is why it is important to outline the additional services we will be able to provide by charging the additional 0.5% and he believes that by giving the 2 options we may receive a higher response than we have in the past. The CEO clarified that although the additional 0.5% will not generate a huge amount of money, it will allow us to implement a hardship fund and front fund a small amount of adaptations.

A member commented that should the Association agree on the higher amount then the 0.5% increase will have a compound impact to the rent increase going forward. The CEO noted that this is correct and the two funds would remain in the budget going forward unless Board agreed to specifically remove these items in future years.

A member questioned the lay out of the report and recalled that comparisons with

	<p>other LHA were provided in last year's report. The HOH explained that as all HA are currently consulting on their increase, comparison figures will not be available at this time, however, these will be included in the final Rent Increase report which will be presented to the Board at their meeting in January.</p> <p>A member asked whether we would be providing people with the option to take part in a telephone consultation as they have done in the past, the HOH said that this can be added depending on the initial response we receive. A prize draw will be introduced to hopefully encourage participation in the consultation.</p>	
<p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p> <p>7.4</p> <p>7.5</p> <p>7.6</p>	<p>Following full discussion:-</p> <p>Following significant discussion around the options provided and these implications, Board <b>APPROVED</b> to carry out consultation on two options for a rent increase of 3.5% or 4.0% in line with our proposed budget.</p> <p>Board <b>CONSIDERED</b> and <b>APPROVED</b> the proposal to increase the garage rents by 3.7% (October's RPI+1% as per policy)</p> <p>Board <b>CONSIDERED</b> and <b>APPROVED</b> the proposal to increase managed property/shared housing management fees in line with the final rent increase approved.</p> <p>Board <b>APPROVED</b> the proposal to increase service charges in line with costs, where this is not possible service charges will be increased by the same rate as the rent increase either 3.5% or 4.0%.</p> <p>Board <b>APPROVED</b> the proposals for consulting with tenants and conducting the survey in-house.</p> <p>Board <b>APPROVED</b> changing the rent debit date from 29th of the month to 1st of the month.</p> <p>As <b>PROPOSED</b> by Ken Caldwell and <b>SECONDED</b> by Gavin Dayer.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p><b>Sheltered Housing Review - Final Approval of New Model</b></p>	
	<p>Members were asked to consider the report prepared by Housing Support Coordinator and Head of Housing Services, the main purpose of this report is to provide Board with an update on the progress towards de-registering our sheltered support service with the Care Inspectorate and SSSC and re-classifying the properties as Independent Living.</p> <p>The key findings were outlined in the report and detailed below:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation: Both tenants and staff were consulted on the proposed changes. 75% of responding tenants favoured the Amenity Plus model.</li> <li>• [REDACTED]</li> <li>• Deregistration: The Care Inspectorate and SSSC were notified. Renfrewshire HSCP confirmed no tenants require additional support.</li> <li>• Financial Implications: The current service model is not cost-effective. Planned service charges are applicable for Housing Benefit.</li> <li>• [REDACTED]</li> </ul> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>Overall, this report seeks Board approval to move forward with the Amenity Plus</p>	

	<p>model and associated changes.</p> <p>The action plan tracker provides members with an update on the progress of the process.</p>	
8.1	Members formally <b>APPROVED</b> the adoption and implementation of the Amenity Plus model from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025 for the current sheltered housing.	
8.2	[REDACTED]	
8.3	Formally <b>APPROVED</b> the de-registration of the sheltered housing provision no later than 1st April 2025.	
8.4	<b>NOTED</b> that the Association has engaged with Renfrewshire HSCP and Council to confirm the discontinuation of the service, and we have confirmed that no tenants have been identified as requiring additional support and	
8.5	<b>CONFIRMED</b> the date of 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025 for implementation of all service changes and implementation of new service charges.	
	As <b>PROPOSED</b> by Suzanne Austin and Ken Caldwell.	
<b>MATTERS FOR APPROVAL</b>		
9.	<b>Policy Reviews</b>	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Head of Corporate Services, the purpose of which was to consider the policy documents which have been reviewed and presented for approval. These documents are required to be considered in line with the Policy Review Schedule agreed by the Board on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024. This report provides a summary of each Policy review and the changes where applicable and a summary of the content of each new Policy.</p> <p>The report provides a summary of each Policy and a short summary of the changes to reviewed policies and the content of new policies. Links to the policy documents are also provided, together with the relevant appendices.</p> <p>Policies for review were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board Members Schedule of Expenses (HOF) – there were only minor changes to this policy. A members asked where the expenses amounts come from and the CEO explained that Board expenses don't appear in the EVH expenses rates but are linked to these. The members suggested that we add reference to this in the policy referring it to the EVH T&amp;C's. The CEO will arrange for this to be updated.</li> <li>• Board Member &amp; Succession Planning Policy (HOCS) – one comment had been received regarding ineligibility for joining the board, the CEO agreed and the policy will be amended to refer to rule 43.1 contained within the Associations rules which highlights those who cannot become a Board member.</li> <li>• Rent Setting (HOHS) – there were only minor changes made to this policy and these were outlined within the report.</li> </ul>	
9.1	Following the minor changes detailed above, Board <b>APPROVED</b> all three policy documents as <b>PROPOSED</b> by Liz Bowden and <b>SECONDED</b> by Gavin Dayer.	

## MATTERS FOR ASSURANCE

10.	<b>Tenant Safety Report/Audit</b>	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by HOPS, the purpose of which was to summarise the findings of the electrical safety and LD2 elements of the independent landlord safety audit, undertaken between June and October 2024 by Vicki Cutler, a longstanding health and safety professional operating in the social housing sector and a Chartered Fellow of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH).</p> <p>The HOPS updated that the audit confirms that Bridgewater’s electrical safety framework provides <b>adequate assurance</b> of compliance, reflecting substantial progress in 2024. Continued oversight, enhanced documentation, and robust contractor management will ensure sustainable improvements. A follow-up review of this audit within 12 months is recommended to assess advancements and offer a higher assurance rating.</p> <p>The HOPS explained that there were 9 recommendations made following the audit and that the auditor has accepted the responses and will provide a final report. The HOPS outlined the recommendation and the changes that have been made to processes and procedures, some of the recommendations have already been implemented and these are outlined within the detail of the report.</p> <p>A member commented that following on from the lessons learned with the Gas Safety that she would have hoped that we would make sure that there is sound administration and felt it was important that we move away from using two recording systems. The HOPS confirmed that there have been changes made within the department to ensure that due diligence and the staff have now moved away from the majority of the spreadsheet record keeping, he also confirmed that the PSM will be carrying out regular audits on the work being carried out internally.</p> <p>The CEO explained that this report will be provided to the SHR as part of their quarterly engagement and is hoping that this will satisfy the Regulator with the steps that are being taken.</p>	
10.1	Members <b>NOTED</b> the content of the report.	
11.	<b>Use of Associations Seal</b>	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Corporate Services Assistant, the purpose of which was to provide members with details of the Association’s seal during the past operating year, up to the Annual General Meeting (AGM).</p> <p>The Chair is required to sign the Membership/Seal Register to confirm that this information has been brought to the Boards attention.</p>	
11.1	Members <b>NOTED</b> the information contained within the report.	
12.	<b>Membership Status – 5 Year Rule</b>	
	<p>This report provides an update on the Association's membership status following the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Following the AGM and the 5-year rule when members are removed if they have not attended or submitted apologies for 5 consecutive years, a report will be prepared detailing the status of the</p>	





	[Redacted content]
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13.1	[Redacted content]
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**MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**14. CEO Report**

Members were invited to consider a report presented by the CEO, the purpose of which was to provide members with an update on some relevant issues currently being considered and to seek approval for matters as noted throughout the report where required.

The report provided updates on the following key areas:-

- Regulatory Engagement,
- Regulatory and Legislative Updates,
- Customer Services,
- Governance and Board,
- Board Recruitment,
- Board and Senior Staff Business Planning event,
- Board Training Events and Flair updates.

The CEO drew members attention to item 2.1 in the report - Housing Diversity Network/SFHA EDI Survey – where board are being asked to consider whether they wish to participate in both the survey and the demographic return, either one, or neither aspects of the research.

**14.1** Members **NOTED** the information contained within the report and the update

	provided by the CEO. Members <b>AGREED</b> to take part in both the EDI survey and the demographic return.	
<b>15.</b>	<b>Development &amp; Acquisitions</b>	
	Members were invited to consider a report by the CEO, the main purpose of which was to provide members with an update on all relevant property development opportunities being considered at the time of the report. The report included updates on the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flourish Road Development,</li> <li>• Safe as houses, Development Strategy,</li> <li>• JR Group &amp; CCG</li> <li>• Rental off the Shelf(ROTS).</li> </ul> The CEO reminded the board that the Association had submitted an expression of interest to the Scottish Government/Renfrewshire Council for funding for ROTS properties and confirmed that a total of £208k has been received. The Association will continue to contact owners who may want to sell their properties to the Association.	
<b>15.1</b>	Board <b>NOTED</b> the information contained within the report	
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>		
<b>16.</b>	<b>Issues which the Chair has agreed as urgent out with Meeting Cycle</b>	
	There were no issued for consideration.	
<b>17.</b>	<b>Issues which the Chair has agreed as urgent</b>	
	There were no urgent issues for consideration.	
<b>18.</b>	<b>AOCB</b>	
	There was no other competent business for consideration.	
<b>19.</b>	<b>Meeting concluded - 19.30</b> <b>Date of next meeting - Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025</b> <b>Board Christmas Event – Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024</b>	



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_(Chair)