



MINUTES OF BRIDGEWATER HOUSING ASSOCIATION

BOARD MEETING

Date: Wednesday 10th July 2024

Time: 5.30pm

Venue: BOARDROOM/TEAMS

Sederunt:		
Present	Apologies	In Attendance
John Paterson, Chair Alastair Morris, Vice Chair Suzanne Austin, Vice Chair Rab McNally Ken McIntosh Ken Caldwell Gavin Dayer	Jim O'Neil Liz Bowden <u>Leave of Absence</u> <u>Absent</u>	Andy Thomson, Chief Executive Ruth Brogan, Head of Housing and Customer Services Josephine Gibson, Property Services Manager (part) Leanne McGowan, Head of Finance Alison McManus, Head of Corporate Services Lesley Carr, Minute Secretary Catherine Henry CH Consultants (part) Ian Nock – Observer – Potential New Board Member

**Board Training 5.30pm –
 Short Training session on “Using Customer Insight to Inform Decisions”
 conducted by Catherine Henry of CH Consultants.
 This is required as part of the Governance Review Action Plan.**

GOVERNANCE		
Item	Details	Action
1.	Welcome and Chairs remarks	
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that members had received their papers on time.	
2.	Apologies	
	Apologies were received from Jim O'Neil and Liz Bowden.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	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	A member of staff declared an interest in item 18 on the Agenda and will leave the meeting at this point.	

3.2	Ian Knock will leave the meeting at Item 19 on the agenda to allow Board to consider his Share Membership Application and Application to join the Board.	
4.	Minute of the Board Meeting held on 29th May 2024	
	Members were invited to consider the minute of the Board Meeting minute held on 29 th May 2024.	
4.1	Members APPROVED the minutes as a correct record of the meeting as PROPOSED by Suzanne Austin and SECONDED by Gavin Dayer.	
5.	Matters Arising	
	The CEO provided updates on the outstanding action shown on the report as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CEO updated that item 8 – to review financial regulations in relation to authority for ordering repair orders should be highlighted in amber and he and the HOF will look at this during July and present any changes to August’s meeting; this may need to be re-visited once changes to our IT system are implemented. • The CEO updated that he Annual Return of the Charter had been submitted on time. 	
5.1	Members NOTED the matters arising and update provided by the CEO.	
6.	Minute of Housing Land and Property Services Sub-Committee held on 1st May 2024 for information	
	Members were invited to consider the Draft Minute from the Housing Land and Property Services Sub-Committee meeting held on 1 st May 2024.	
6.1	Members NOTED the draft minute which will be presented to the next HLPSSub Committee meeting due to take place on 7 th August 2024 for Approval.	
7.	Minute of Finance and Corporate Services Sub-Committee held on 15th May 2024 for information	
	Members were invited to consider the daft minute from the Finance and Corporate Services Sub Committee meeting held on 15 th May 2024.	
7.1	Members NOTED the draft minute which will be presented to the next F&CSSub Committee meeting due to take place on 21 st August 2024 for Approval.	
MATTERS FOR DECISION		
8.	There were no items for decision.	
MATTERS FOR APPROVAL		
9.	Volunteering Policy	
	Members were invited to consider a report by the Head of Corporate Services, the purpose of which was to recommend adoption of an Employee Volunteering	

	<p>Policy, which was agreed to as part of the recently reviewed People Strategy, to enhance our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, improve employee engagement and strengthen our community relations. By formally encouraging and supporting volunteer activities, our organisation can foster a culture of altruism and social responsibility, which aligns with our core values and strategic goals.</p> <p>The purpose of this policy is to encourage and support employees of the Association who either wish to become or who are already involved in volunteering, and to recognise the contribution that they make.</p> <p>This policy is in line with our belief that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone has something to offer their community. • Volunteering is a matter of personal choice. • Volunteering helps individual and personal growth. 	
9.1	Members APPROVED the Policy framework and SUPPORTED the implementation of the new Policy as PROPOSED by Alastair Morris and SECONDED by Suzanne Ausin.	
10.	Entitlement, Payments and Benefits Policy	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Head of Corporate Services, the purpose of which provide members with oversight to the changes which have been incorporated into the current Entitlements Payments & Benefits Policy.</p> <p>The HOCS updated that changes we made to the previous policy which were minimal as this is in line with the current SFHA model Policy which meets the Regulatory Standards. The SFHA model has not been updated again since the last approval.</p>	
10.1	Members APPROVED the updated Entitlement, Payments and Benefits Policy as PROPOSED by Suzanne Austin and SECONDED by Alastair Morris.	
11.	Procurement Policy	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Head of Property Services and presented by the CEO, the purpose of which was to provide an oversight to the Board on changes and updated that have been incorporated into the Procurement Policy. This Policy has been moved from the Corporate Services remit and is now the responsibility of the Property Services Department.</p> <p>This Policy ensures that the Association complies with regulatory and legal procurement requirements and provides clear guidance to employees and board members about how we procure good and service contracts.</p> <p>Internal consultation was carried out between 31st May and 10th June 2024, there were no comments received. There were no major changes to the aim of the policy, however, the policy has been streamlined and updated with the latest legislative requirements and staff delegated authorities.</p> <p>A member asked if in future the changes to any policies could be highlighted to make it easier for Board to understand where the changes have been made. The CEO said that this is normally what would be done when reviewing Policy documents, however, in this case this Policy has been totally re-written.</p>	

	<p>The CEO asked members to pay particular interest in the Value for money statement as this is an important part of this Policy. This is in place of a VFM strategy which is difficult to develop, most RSL's have developed a statement instead, this covers the provision of a strategy which is part of the Business Plan deliverables. The Association will always look at value for money when procuring contracts as well as considering quality.</p>	
11.1	<p>Members APPROVED the Procurement Policy as PROPOSED by Suzanne Ausin and SECONDED by Gavin Dayer.</p>	
12.	<p>Code of Conduct</p>	
	<p>Members were invited to consider the staff code of conduct the purpose of which was report by the Head of Corporate Services, the purpose of which was to set our standards of conduct required by members of staff. Staff are required to observe these standards in all the activities they undertake in connection with their employment with the Association.</p> <p>As a registered Social Landlord (RSL), the Association is required to comply with an appropriate Code of Conduct. This Code is based on the Model Code of Conduct produced by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) and Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH), which the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has confirmed fully complies with its Regulatory Standards.</p> <p>This Code of Conduct was adopted by the Covid Emergency Sub Committee on 15th July 2021 and there are no significant changes being proposed.</p>	
12.1	<p>Members APPROVED the Code of Conduct as PROPOSED by Suzanne Austin and SECONDED by Gavin Dayer.</p>	
13.	<p>Nationwide Authorised Signatories</p>	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Head of Finance, the purpose of which was to seek approval for the changes to the Nationwide mandated officers.</p> <p>Periodically Nationwide request an update to the mandated officers, changes are detailed within the report.</p>	
13.1	<p>Members APPROVED the Nationwide Authorised Signatories Procurement Policy as PROPOSED by Ken Caldwell and SECONDED by Suzanne Austin.</p>	
14.	<p>Factoring Arrears Policy</p>	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by Property Services Manager, the purpose of which was to provide oversight to the Board on changes and updates that have been incorporated into the Factoring Arrears Policy to ensure that Bridgewater complies with regulatory and legal Factoring requirements to ensure the policy provides clear guidance to customers, employees and board members about how the Association recovers debts.</p> <p>Internal Consultation was carried out between 20th June and 27th June 2024, there were no comments or suggestions received.</p> <p>There were no major changes to the aim of the policy, however the policy has been streamlined and updated with the latest legislative requirements and internal procedures.</p>	

	<p>The CEO drew members attending to section 4.14 within the Policy, which provides details of the debt recovery options available to the Association. A member commented that NOPL's are only useful to the Association if the sale of the property takes place within a couple of years.</p> <p>A member asked how the triggers for dealing with owner's debts differs from taking action against tenants for rent arrears. The CEO explained that process for taking action against owners is quicker than the process for tenants rent arrears however, similar support would be provided to any owner in arrears.</p> <p>A member asked if the process for signposting people to outside agencies for debt advice should be included within the Policy. The CEO explained that this information is detailed in any correspondence which his sent to owners and is included within the Debt Prevention Section of the Policy.</p>	
14.1	Members APPROVED the Factoring Arrears Policy as PROPOSED by Ken Caldwell and SECONDED by Suzanne Austin.	
MATTERS FOR ASSURANCE		
15.	Notifiable Events Register	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the CEO, the purpose of which was to provide members with an update on the Notifiable Events since the last meeting.</p> <p>The CEO updated that there is one new notifiable event on the register, NE30941 relating to the change of sheltered housing to an independent housing model and resulting implications for service to tenants and staffing implications (potential redundancies).</p> <p>The update report being presented to the Board earlier at tonight's meeting will be sent to the Regulator to provide an update on this event.</p>	
15.1	Members NOTED the Notifiable events register and the update provided by the CEO.	
MATTERS FOR OVERSIGHT/MONITORING		
16.	Supported Sheltered Housing Review Update Report	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Housing Support Co-ordinator and Head of Housing Services, the purpose of which was to provide the Board with an update on the progress towards de-registering our sheltered support service and undertaking a 12-month pilot of an Independent Living Model.</p> <p>The Association commissioned Angela Spence, Ideal Outcomes in June 2023 to undertake a review of the supported housing services and make recommendations for the future provision. The Consultant's report focused solely on the sheltered housing and a separate report for Extra Care and Managed Properties will be presented to the Board in August 2024.</p> <p>The Board considered and approved (29 May 2024) de-registering the sheltered housing support service with the Care Inspectorate & SSSC and implementation</p>	

	<p>of a 12-month pilot of Independent Living Housing.</p> <p>At the meeting on 29 May 2024 the Board agreed the actions that Bridgewater should take prior to the discontinuation of the service. In order to complete these actions a number of tasks need to be undertaken. Progress towards each task is detailed in the attached colour coded Action Plan tracker.</p> <p>The progress towards the actions agreed by the Board have been summarised within the report and were outlined by the Head of Housing.</p> <p>A member asked whether current tenants understood the independent living model and the HOH explained that we have yet to agree the model before we can explain the implications to the tenants.</p> <p>Members will be kept up to date.</p>	
16.1	Members NOTED the information contained within the report.	
17.	QEF Annual Statistical Review 2023/2024 (Benchmarking Report)	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Chief Executive, the purpose of which was to provide members with the 2023-24 Annual Statistical Review (ASR) from the Quality and Efficiency Forum (QEF) benchmarking Group based on the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).</p> <p>The CEO explained that the membership of this group has dwindled as he may need to look at why membership is falling and whether it is still beneficial for us to remain a member. A member asked what the cost of membership of this group is and the CEO stated that the fees are minimal.</p> <p>A Member asked why the number of complaints received by Bridgewater were higher than other organisations and the CEO explained that this more down to how individual organisation interpret the guidance on complaints provided by the SPSO. The CEO encourages any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf to be logged as a complaint this ensures that we can pick up on trends in complaints and have back up if there is an ongoing issue with a contractor who is carrying out work on our behalf.</p> <p>A member commented that it is good to see that a high number of our tenants are satisfied with our repair service.</p>	
17.1	Members NOTED the information contained within the report.	
18.	CEO Report	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by CEO, the purpose of which was to provide members with updates on a number of issues contained within the report.</p> <p>The report provided updates on the following areas regulatory/legislative/sector updates, governance/Board, development, flair updates and staffing matters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GWSF - The CEO highlighted item 2.7- GWSF Consultation on Community Based/Controlled HA's, The CEO is keen to understand Board's views on the topics included in the response prior to the consultation response being submitted by the end of August 2024 and asked members if they have any views to contact him directly by email prior to or following the meeting. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Stock Tour</u> - The CEO updated that the Board Stock Tour which took place on 25th June went well and allowed members and new staff members a better understanding of the type of stock that the Association has as well as an understanding of the large landscaping responsibilities and the demographic of our customers. A brochure was created for this event and is available to members in their Portal. The stock tour • <u>Development</u> - There is no update on the Development in Flourish Road and the CEO had discussed the possibility of future development with the Executive Committee and asked members whether they agreed that the Association should look at the possibility of building outwith the Erskine Area, possibly looking at building in Renfrew, Inchinnan or Bishopton. There were no objections from those present. Development would only be considered if there was government funding available and following financial appraisal was viable for the Association. <p>A member asked what the JR group are and what they do, the CEO explained that they are a construction company with experience of helping other HA's to purchase land and build housing. They are responsible for the construction part of the business. A member asked how the ownership for the properties would be arranged and it was confirmed that we would employ them to build for us, therefore taking on any risk with the build.</p> <p>Members AGREED in principle to pursue the possibility of building new affordable homes.</p> <p>The Chair suggested that this be a regular item of the Agenda for Board Meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Modern Apprenticeship</u> - The recruitment process for the Modern Apprenticeship positions had taken place and members will be updated on the outcome at item 20 on the agenda. • <u>Graduate Apprenticeship</u> – Members were updated that has been put on hold for now and we may look at other options next year, perhaps through the GEM project. <p>It was AGREED that this will be put on hold until next year and updates will be provided.</p>	
18.1	Members NOTED the updates provided within the CEO report.	
	The Property Service Manager, Corporate Services Assistant and Mr Nock left the meeting at this point.	
ADMINISTRATION		
19.	Share/Board Membership Applications and Use of Seal	
	Members were invited to consider Share and Board Membership applications from Mr John (Ian) Nock	
19.1	Members APPROVED the Share Membership and Application to join the Board. The Share certificate will be signed and sealed at the next Board Meeting.	
	The Corporate Services Assistant and Mr Nock re-joined the meeting.	

- **Board meeting dates 24/25 Training Dates (verbal)** – The CEO updated that he was looking to reduce the Board Meetings and have separate Training events and asked those present for their views. A member commented that he would rather have 8 meetings with less agenda items and less papers.

The Chair suggested that Board should meet without staff present, the CEO would be happy for Board to meet separately.

Members will have a think about the number of times they meet , although they were mostly in favour of reducing the number of meetings but would need to look at how we reduce the amount of material is presented to them. The CEO would need to take the delegated authority into consideration if decisions would need to be made in between meetings.

- **Global Action Plan (verbal)** – The CEO updated that we currently have a number of action plans, and he intends to consolidate these into one action plan to cover everything.

Members **AGREED** that one global action plan would be better.

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- **Recruitment** - A tabled report outlined that the recruitment for the modern apprenticeship positions had taken place. The CEO updated that 8 candidates were selected for interviews which were conducted by the Head of Housing Services and the Housing Manager. The recruitment was conducted in line with our Recruitment and Selection Policy.

One successful candidate is related to a current staff member. The Board is asked to approve this appointment and ratify the details into the Association's Declarations of Interests Register.

Members **APPROVED** the appointment and the Declaration of Interest Register will be updated.

- **Flair Conference** - A members asked that it be noted that she thoroughly enjoyed the FLAIR Conference and thought the workshops and speakers were well thought out and relevant to the work FLAIR are doing.

- **ACT Software** - A member also wanted it noted that Jim McFarlane has done a great job creating the new Care and Repair software (ACT). He provided a demonstration at Southside HA and he has created a really good bit of functional software which will only enhance the work of the C&R Team. The member thanked Jim and Alison for providing the demonstration to SHA staff.

20.1	There were no urgent issues for consideration.	
21.	Issues which the Chair has agreed as urgent out with the Meeting Cycle.	
	There were no urgent issues for consideration.	
22.	Meeting concluded - 7.30pm Date of next meeting – 28th August 2024	



Signed: _____(Chair)