

ABERTAY HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Minutes of the Board Meeting

Wednesday 25 October 2023 17:00

Present: Ron Neave (Chair), Kath Mands (Vice-Chair), Paul Crichton, Darren Keddie, Vicki Cutler, Ian Byers, Denis Brown, and Alan Fraser.

The following joined via Video Conferencing: Kevin Braidwood.

In Attendance: Barry Moore (CE), Marjorie Sloan (CSD and Secretary), Roz Clark (CSO) and Clare Talbot (TIO). Linda Ewart attended via Video Conferencing up to agenda item 23/10/06.

23/10/01 Apologies

There were no apologies. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He welcomed Linda who would be present at the meeting until Agenda Item 23/10/06.

23/10/02 Declarations of Conflicting Interests

No Member declared a conflicting interest.

23/10/03 Minute of Board Meeting 20 September 2023 and Tracker

The Chair talked through the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 and asked for comments.

Approved. Proposed Kath Mands, Seconded Ian Byers.

The CE talked through the tracker highlighting that a number of the items would be presented later in the agenda and that the report on lift maintenance would be presented to the Asset Management and Development Committee in November.

23/10/04 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

23/10/05 Chair's Actions / Decisions between meetings

The CE presented the report and confirmed there had been no Chair's Actions since the previous Board Meeting on 20 September 2023; the Chair confirmed this to be the case.

Board **noted** the report.

23/10/06 Confidential Board Appraisals: Board Feedback Report 2023 – Presented by Linda Ewart

The Chair welcomed Linda to the meeting.

Linda thanked all Board Members for their input at the individual appraisals. Linda stressed that whilst each appraisal had been confidential in nature the report highlighted the overall assessment of the Board and governance of the Association.

Linda provided a comprehensive review of the Board Members' Appraisals findings, highlighting that overall, it reflected that the governance of the Association was good and strong. Linda reported that it was evident that decisions were made collectively following extensive discussion.

Linda reported that the Association had performed well, in particularly difficult times, and that it was evident that the Board were able to adapt to the challenges they faced. In particular she noted that the Board prioritised issues such as staff retention. Linda also noted that the Board were open to innovations, such as piloting net zero options.

Linda highlighted that the Board composition showed a strong and broad knowledge, with Members bringing their relevant skills, knowledge and interests to meetings. The strengths of the Board were in their decision making, robust discussions and ability to allow individuals to challenge.

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Linda reported that Board Members had agreed that they were well informed with the quality of the reports and input of senior Staff being a major factor.

Linda talked through points for consideration which were highlighted in the report. In particular she highlighted that Board recruitment and succession planning for the Chair and Vice-Chair should be a priority. Linda highlighted the importance of the Board getting together in person and having networking events and pointed out that the Board Away Days had been extremely well received by members.

Linda concluded that governance was very good, and the report reflected this. Linda confirmed that she would provide a copy of the slides.

Linda noted that following discussion with the CE she was content that her point for consideration in relation to the Rules in respect of the Chair's term of office had been dealt with.

The Chair thanked Linda for her report and presentation.

Linda left the meeting.

The CE highlighted that the Association would be concentrating on dealing with the financial challenges as a priority. He reported that the Governance Training Plan would be prepared using the Appraisal Reports from 2022 and 2023. The CE confirmed that a copy of Linda's slides would be provided to Board Members.

Board **noted** the report.

23/10/07 2023 Annual Assurance Statement

The CE presented the report. The CE talked through Appendix 1 which highlighted all of the Board reports presented throughout the year. He also talked through Appendix 2 which was the External Auditor, Alexander Sloan's, letter to Members relating to governance matters and which highlighted that the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 were accurate.

The CE gave an overview of the Internal Audits carried out in the previous year. The final Internal Audit covered the Assurance Statement Baseline Review and Quinn Internal Audit's conclusion was that the Board should consider reporting 'Fully Compliant' in its Annual Assurance Statement based on the evidence they had reviewed.

The CE gave a comprehensive overview of the Annual Assurance Statement Evidence and Action Plan Framework. He highlighted documents such as the Internal Management Plan, Operational Performance Report Key Performance Indicators and Risk Management Tables. The CE stressed the importance of the information contained in each document would provide the Regulator with evidence of compliance, should it be requested. He highlighted that it could be forensically interrogated to show that it was updated regularly and was a working document.

Board discussed the Draft 2023 Annual Assurance Statement and unanimously agreed to its submission.

Board **approved** the Association's 2023 Annual Assurance Statement and authorised the Chair to sign the Statement on behalf of the Board and the Association.

23/10/08 National Report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter – 2022-2023

The CE talked through the report. The CE commented that the environment in which the Association was operating is accurately reflected in paragraphs one and two of the Report, highlighting the theme of significant challenges in relation to costs and affordability.

The CE talked through the headline findings highlighting in particular the areas that mattered most to tenants such emergency repair response times, quality of homes, rent value for money, neighbourhood management, antisocial behaviour case resolution, complaints and average rent costs.

The CE stressed that the rent increase would need to be realistic in order to meet the Association's obligations in respect of planned maintenance.

The CE gave a comprehensive overview of the analysis in the report. He highlighted that the Report suggested the 2023 annual rent setting exercise had been the most difficult that social landlords had faced for some; however, in his opinion it was the most difficult that he had certainly faced in his entire career. He talked through the total rent arrears of £189million across the sector which equates to 6.9% of the rent due highlighting the struggles being faced by tenants, and as a consequence RSLs. He reported that there appeared to be a theme whereby RSLs were delaying or stopping Development which would undoubtedly have an impact on the number of affordable homes being built. He talked through the gas safety analysis reassuring Board that the Association was compliant in this respect. The CE gave a detailed review of satisfaction analysis highlighting that in general, save for repairs, it was down across all areas. He stressed that this was an area that the Association would be focussing on in the coming year.

Board **noted** the National Report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter – 2022-2023.

23/10/09 SHR Landlord Report 2022/23

The CE gave a comprehensive overview of the SHR Landlord Report. He highlighted that while the statistics were very positive in some areas there was work to be done to improve satisfaction in other areas. He highlighted that the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy Group would play an integral role in identifying ways of improving satisfaction levels.

Board asked whether the additional requirements for private landlords were impacting social landlords and if there was analysis. The CE highlighted that there was not any analysis but that it was evident that it was having an impact. Many private landlords only owned one or two properties and statutory rent control had implications on their ability to meet increased costs and as a consequence many landlords were contemplating selling their rental properties. This, along with the social sector not developing, has serious adverse implications on the number of homeless cases, hence why the homeless numbers have increased significantly.

Board noted that where performance was at the highest level it was generally within the control of the Association. Board asked what the return rate was for responses. The CE explained that the return rate had dropped considerably across the entire sector and therefore it was extremely difficult to make statistical comparisons. The CE explained that responses were analysed to gauge the most accurate themes being recorded.

Board asked whether there was a feeling within the sector that as a consequence of the responses RSLs may be under threat due to increased costs. The CE commented that, in his opinion, it was likely that some Associations may find themselves in financial difficulties.

There followed discussion on the rising costs in relation to Asset Management and Net Zero requirements and the impact this may have across the sector.

A Member asked for clarification on the statistical comparisons with other landlords, namely the rationale behind the identified landlords. The CE reported that the Association compared itself to RSLs that had housing stock in the Dundee area.

Board **noted** the SHR Landlord Report 2022/23.

23/10/10 CGPR: Business Continuity: Emergency Guidance

The CE presented the report. He highlighted that the purpose of the policy was to provide the Board with emergency guidance should there be a situation which led to the prolonged absence of the Chief Executive. He explained that the guidance focussed on the human resource aspects and that all involved were aware of their responsibilities.

Board **approved** the Business Continuity: Emergency Guidance.

23/10/11 CGPR: Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Policy

The CSD talked through the report. The CSD explained that the policy was last approved in October 2019 and was therefore due for review. The CSD confirmed that the policy had been updated to reflect current terminology. She reported that the Policy had also been reviewed by the external Data Protection Officer and one minor amendment suggested by her had also been incorporated.

Board **approved** the Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Policy.

23/10/12 HSPR: Abandoned Properties Policy

The CE, on behalf of the Housing Manager, talked through the report. The CE explained that the policy (formerly Abandoned Houses Policy) was last approved in November 2019 and was therefore due for review. He confirmed that the policy had been comprehensively updated.

Board **approved** the Abandoned Properties Policy.

23/10/13 HSPR: Home Loss Policy

The CE, on behalf of the Housing Manager, talked through the report. He explained that the policy was last approved in November 2019 and was therefore due for review. He confirmed that the policy had been comprehensively reviewed and updated to reflect current terminology.

Board asked whether the report referred to a home lost through fire or similar?

The CE explained that the policy didn't apply in those circumstances. The policy applied where the Association required the property in order to carry out extensive remodelling works or to demolish the property and hence the property was no longer available for rent. In those circumstances the tenant would be entitled to a home loss payment.

Board **approved** the Home Loss Policy.

23/10/14 HSPR: Domestic Abuse Policy

The CE, on behalf of the Housing Manager, talked through the report. He explained that the policy was last approved in May 2019 and had been presented at the September Board meeting. However, following discussion it was recommended that further amendments were required. Following discussion with two Board members the Policy had been updated to reflect their recommendations.

Board **approved** the Domestic Abuse Policy.

23/10/15 Share Membership Update

The CSO presented the report

Board **approved** the Share Membership Update.

23/10/16 Board Training Update

The CSO presented the report

Board **noted** the Board Training Update.

23/10/17 AOB

1. Board asked whether the recent flooding had diverted staff from repairs contractors to affected areas and whether this had impacted on the Association.

The CE confirmed that the service delivery for the Association had not been affected as there were dedicated staff who worked solely on the Association's Contract.

2. The CE highlighted that the next Asset Management and Development Committee Meeting was taking place on Wednesday 1 November 2023 and that all Board Members were invited to attend should they wish. He stressed the importance of the agenda and asked Board Members who could not attend to pass on any comments or questions they may have in advance of the meeting.

Meeting closed at 18.30hrs.