

Approved Minute

Remote Zoom Board of Management Meeting held on 26th November 2020 at 6.00pm

Due to the Coronavirus public health crisis and government advice the Board meeting was conducted remotely using Zoom.

The following members participated remotely:

Mark Griffiths (Chair)	Margaret Vass	Lorna Cameron	Linda Anderson
Fiona Boath	Fionn Stevenson	Anne Law	
Theresa Elliot	Susan Macmillan	Malcolm Begg	

Staff & others in attendance: Donna Birrell (Chief Executive Officer – CEO)
Kirsty Brown (Deputy Chief Executive Officer/Finance and Corporate Services Manager – DCEO/FCSM)
Fiona Maguire (Asset & Development Manager – ADM)
Susan Mackay (Corporate Services Officer (CSO) and Minute Taker)

Stephen Clark, Chief Officer – Housing, Stirling Council, SC (Item 3 only)
Steven McCabe, Allocations Team Leader – Stirling Council, SM (Item 3 only)
Ewan MacDonald, Gregor Cameron Consultants, EM (Item 4 and Item 11 only)

Item		Action
1.	<p>Apologies and Conduct of Meeting</p> <p>The Chair thanked Members for joining the meeting early. He went on to welcome Stephen Clark and Steven McCabe from Stirling Council and Ewan MacDonald from Gregor Cameron Consultants to the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair proposed that Item 11 be taken following Item 4.2 to allow Ewan MacDonald to leave the meeting early. This was agreed.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Martin Earl and Cordelia Guidery.</p>	

2.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Interest was declared by Susan Macmillan and Malcolm Begg for Agenda Item 13.3 Annual Rent Review and Consultation.</p> <p>Interest was declared by Linda Anderson in Claish development.</p>	
3.	<p>Presentation by Stephen Clark, Chief Officer – Housing, Stirling Council and Steven McCabe, Allocations Team Leader, Stirling Council</p> <p>SC explained that as well as being a social landlord Stirling Council has a strategic role to play in terms of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan and the allocation of funding for new development.</p> <p>He also gave a brief overview of the statutory responsibilities for homelessness and the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. Data provided indicated that there was a shortfall in terms of the supply of single bedroomed apartments for homeless applicants.</p> <p>Following the presentation a few points were raised for further discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rapid Rehousing initiative and support available for homeless persons in the Rural Stirling area.</i> Recent experience had shown that a breakdown in supporting homeless persons had resulted in significant disruption in a rural housing area. SM commented that the Council were currently investigating how much information can be shared in compliance with GDPR with the Housing Association in relation to a tenant moving in to one of our houses under a Section 5 referral. It was noted that support for the tenant falls to the area Housing Officer which can be significant. The lack of amenities in more remote rural areas meant that a lot of Rural Stirling’s developments were unsuitable for those who required access to higher amenities, eg social services, foodbanks, public transport. SM confirmed that Stirling Council Homeless team would endeavour to ensure applicants are briefed fully on the services available in the rural areas. • Stirling Council had statistics that evidenced most homeless persons needed a one bed flat that could accommodate a single person or a couple. This was compared to Rural Stirling’s housing mix for the new development at Claish. The issue around what is sustainable for Rural Stirling to build and the need to house homeless persons by the Council required more discussion. The council were advocating for more flexibility in terms of single households under occupying 2 bedroomed property. The Association explained the allocation policy and build costs of one bedroomed accommodation and that this is comparatively more as expensive. Stirling Council understood this dilemma. SC went on to emphasise that the focus should lie with the Allocations Policy. Two bed flats should be an option for homeless couples as well as single people. It was understood that flats were less popular. Low turnover and lack of stock did also exacerbate the issue. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HSM confirmed that further discussions with Stirling Council are due to take place to finalise the lettings plan for Claish. • A Board Member commented that the issue required some imaginative thought and research into examples of good practice across the sector. <p>The Chair thanked SC and SM for a very interesting and informative presentation and summarised that there were obvious areas for collaboration and partnership.</p> <p><i>Stephen Clark and Steven McCabe left the meeting at 6.35pm</i></p> <p><i>Post meeting note: The presentation slides have been uploaded to Decision Time Document Library.</i></p> <p>The Chair reminded everyone that the meeting was being recorded for the purposes of preparing the minute.</p>	
4.1	<p>Development Exception Reports: Balmaha (Ewan MacDonald)</p> <p>A Member, as she was fairly new to the Association, queried the background to the development which had given rise to the relatively high unit costs and high fee costs?</p> <p>EM gave a brief history of the complex, and, at times controversial development which had been in progress for seven years. The start of the development predated Gregor Cameron Consultants' involvement and EM summarised that the project had encountered difficulties with finding engineering solutions with SEPA, and Scottish Water consents. As a complex development delays had been encountered along the way including changes in professional service providers including structural engineers and development agents. Gregor Cameron had been appointed Development Agents in 2019, as a result of a competitive tendering exercise.</p> <p>A Member added that the local population in the form of the East Loch Lomond Community Trust (ELLCT) had invited RSHA to support development in the area. She stated that development opportunity on the East side of Loch Lomond had historically been holiday lets and privately owned houses. Gaining approval for the development had been an achievement for RSHA and the local community were grateful.</p> <p>EM reported that the Scottish Government had today announced that they were comfortable with the total costs of the project. They required four different funding applications to be submitted and had explained how these were to be taken forward.</p> <p>The Board approved the recommendation to enter in to contract with the preferred contractor, subject to achieving an acceptable offer of grant and</p>	ADM, EM

	confirmation of ELLCT's development phase funding; and to enter into a development agreement with ELLCT to deliver the community housing	
4.2	<p>Development Exception Report: Lampson Road, Killearn (Ewan MacDonald)</p> <p>A Member queried why a Design and Build Contract had been used. She felt D&B contracts were always slightly riskier than traditional build as there was no link between Architect and contractor which could result in problems?</p> <p>EM confirmed that the procurement route for the project had been the subject of considerable discussion with the association. The project design will be taken to warrant stage with the detailed design being undertaken by the D&B Contractor. The Association has recently reviewed and updated its Design Guide and will produce a set of Employers Requirements. It was noted that in the D&B contract arrangement more risk passes to the contractor.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	
5.	<p>Strategy: Annual Procurement Report and Annual Procurement Strategy (ADM and Ewan MacDonald) Agenda Item 11.</p> <p>The Board approved the Strategy.</p> <p>The ADM confirmed following a Member query that Lampson Road, will have community benefits. She further confirmed that there will be community benefits in all RSHA developments in line with our Sustainable Procurement Policy.</p> <p><i>Ewan MacDonald left the meeting at 6.55pm.</i></p> <p><i>It was noted that the draft Customer Engagement, Participation and Scrutiny Strategy is deferred to February Board meeting.</i></p>	
6.1	<p>Health and Safety: Update (CEO)</p> <p>Following the recent review of H&S management structure the CEO reported that going forward the two distinct areas of H&S would be reported as separate Agenda items, ie:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Update; and • Landlord Facilities Health and Safety. <p>This would separate out H&S issues affecting RSHA staff and RSHA as an employer, and RSHA in performing its duties as a landlord.</p> <p>There were no H&S incidents to report.</p>	
6.2	<p>Landlord Facilities Health and Safety Update (CEO)</p> <p>There were no Landlord Facilities Health and Safety Updates to report.</p>	

6.3	<p>Annual Review and adoption of Health and Safety Policies (CEO)</p> <p>A Member commented that following the recent Board H&S training, the role of a “H&S Champion” in an organisation had been promoted as good practice, with this in mind Members supported the creation of this role within RSHA.</p> <p>It was agreed following further discussion that this person should be a Board Member and sit on the H&S Management Group and thus be the link between this group and the Board on all H&S issues. The CEO proposed that during the next Board recruitment campaign that a person with H&S knowledge be recruited. This was agreed.</p> <p>Both H&S Policies were approved for adoption.</p>	CEO
7.	<p>Group Minutes Board</p> <p>7.1 Minute of Board Meeting – 8th October 2020 The Minute was approved following a motion by Margaret Vass and seconded by Theresa Elliot.</p> <p>7.2 Confidential Minute of Board of Management Meeting – 8th October 2020 The Confidential Minute was approved following a motion by Margaret Vass and seconded by Theresa Elliot.</p> <p>7.3 Minute of Audit & Risk Committee held on 5th November 2020 was noted.</p> <p>7.4 Confidential Minute of Audit & Risk Committee held on 5th November 2020 was noted.</p> <p>Subsidiary None.</p> <p>Working Groups Investment: None Customer Engagement, Participation and Scrutiny: None</p>	
8.	<p>Matters Arising Schedule</p> <p>It was noted, in relation to the matter concerning contractors visiting tenants’ homes, that tenants should also open windows to increase ventilation.</p> <p>The CEO confirmed that this instruction was included in the COVID-19 H&S leaflet sent out to all tenants and contractors.</p> <p>The Matters Arising Schedule was approved.</p>	
9.	<p>Approval of Joint Vice Chair (CEO)</p> <p>Member Theresa Elliot, following the October Board had volunteered to stand for election as Joint Vice Chair, the Chair and Vice Chair had proposed and seconded the nomination respectively.</p> <p>The Board approved the nomination.</p>	
10.	<p>Record of Electronic Approvals</p>	

	Nothing to report.	
11.	<p>Group Key Risks (CEO)</p> <p>The CEO reported that the risk associated with having only one staff member trained in the private letting code of practice had been mitigated. A Housing Officer had agreed to do the training this year and another member of staff had been identified who was willing to do the training in the following year. This fully mitigated the risk. It was noted that both Forth and Ochil View Housing Associations did not have Mid-Market Rent properties and therefore did not have any staff trained in this area.</p> <p>The Group Key Risk Register was approved.</p> <p><i>Business Continuity update and SHR COVID-19 Information will be emailed by the CEO to Members as previously agreed.</i></p>	
12.1	<p>Quarterly Performance Report (Q2 July – September 2020)</p> <p>A Member queried the impact of COVID-19 on contractors and our ability to fulfil our responsibility to carry out repairs to tenants' homes. The ADM advised that so far this had not been an issue and at present only emergency repairs were being carried out whilst Stirling was in Tier 4 restrictions. She further added that in practice if a contractor ceased to operate that another contractor would be found from the Repairs Framework.</p> <p><i>2nd Phase Claish development:</i> it was felt that a second development in the same area as Claish would create a lot of affordable homes in the one area which was not usually considered good practice. A more mixed tenure development would be appropriate. This was noted.</p> <p><i>Strategic Plan:</i> It was agreed to include Climate Change and future proofing developments as a theme throughout the strategic plan and this was proposed as a topic for discussion at the Strategy Day in January. The needs of older people will also be considered.</p> <p>The ADM commented that CX Feedback was being used to gather tenant satisfaction surveys. She added that since adopting this method in October, 40 surveys had been returned. This system allowed a quick response to issues raised. (This compared to 17 postal surveys returned since April this year.)</p> <p>It was noted a lot had again been achieved in another quarter of living under the pandemic.</p> <p>The Q2 Performance Report was approved.</p>	
12.2	<p>FOI Quarterly Statistics: (CEO)</p> <p>The CEO will forward return via email to Members as previously agreed.</p>	CEO
13.1	<p>Confidential Q2 Management Accounts (DCEO)</p>	

	This item was confidential.	
13.2	Confidential 1st Draft Budget and 30-Year Financial Projections (DCEO) This item was confidential.	
13.3	<p>Annual Rent Review and Consultation (DCEO)</p> <p>The DCEO gave a presentation on the Annual Rent Review and the impact on the Association’s business plan model of the most prudent rent option being considered, being a 0% increase/rent freeze for the 2021/22 year. The DCEO/FCSM stressed that there were still unknowns and that the final version of the budget and business plan projections would be presented to the March 2021 Board meeting, however prudent assumptions had been made where actual figures were still to be confirmed. Based on these assumptions the Association could accommodate a rent freeze in 2021/22.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the DCEO for the clear presentation.</p> <p>A Member queried the forecasted figures which were based on a slightly increased level of development - what if that development did not happen? The DCEO advised that the business plan model did not capture all development projects that were detailed in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP), only those that were at the feasibility study stage. If one development did not happen as planned, another development would take its place. The Association was also in the fortunate position of having loan finance agreed of £5.5m with the Bank of Scotland and the business plan shows that it would only require another £2.5m to deliver the development projects that appear in the business plan.</p> <p>Members discussed the rent increase proposals in the context of the current financial impact on tenants of COVID-19 and the ongoing impact that had not yet fully been determined. Consideration was also given to the potential impact on RSHA and future development plans.</p> <p>There was some discussion on the impact a rent increase might have on arrears given the COVID 19 crisis and whether we should look at putting in place a hardship fund if rents were increased.</p> <p>The discussion resulted in a Member proposing that based on the prudent budget provided by the DCEO that:</p> <p>RSHA communicates a rent freeze for 2021/22 to tenants with no need to consult. A caveat would be added to say that we are able to do this in 2021/22 because of our current financial position and rent increases in the past. Tenants should also be made aware that in future years a slightly higher rent increase may be required.</p> <p>The proposal was passed on a majority.</p>	

14.1	<p>Governance Ethical Conduct and Notifiable Events/Annual Assurance Status Notifiable Events:</p> <p>It was noted the adoption of the new Rules is a notifiable event and this had been notified to the SHR by TC Young on 16th October 2020.</p> <p>The confidential recommendations to be discussed under Agenda Item 14.4.2 would, if agreed, be notified to the SHR. The Board approved the notifiable events report.</p>	
14.2	<p>Office Bearers' Decisions: There were none to report.</p>	
14.3	<p>Confidential Board Member Leave of Absence (CEO) This matter was confidential.</p>	
14.4.1	<p>Recommendations from Audit and Risk Committee: Confidential SHR Final Draft Annual Assurance Statement 2020 (CEO)</p> <p>This item was confidential.</p>	
14.4.2	<p>Recommendation from Audit and Risk Committee: Confidential HR Report: Review of Structure and Outcome of Group Consultation (CEO) This matter was confidential.</p> <p><i>Staff (with the exception of the CEO) left the meeting for this item.</i></p>	
14.4.3	<p>Recommendation from Audit and Risk Committee:</p> <p>Draft Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy for the Sustainable Procurement of Goods, Services and Works (incl. 2 appendices) • Security Policy • Ventilation & Fresh Air Policy • Waste Management Policy • Unacceptable Actions Policy and EIA • Safeguarding Policy and EIA • Company Credit Card Policy 2020 • Remote Working Policy • Social Media Policy <p>The above listed policies recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee were approved for adoption by the Board.</p>	
14.5	<p>Confidential RSG Learning and Development Plan 2020/21</p> <p>This item was confidential.</p>	
14.6	<p>Annual Group Strategy Session (CEO)</p> <p>The Board approved the approach to be taken as outlined in the report; and granted delegated authority to the CEO to take forward the arrangements and procurement in discussion with Office Bearers.</p>	

14.7	<p>New Member Applications (CSO)</p> <p>The tenant application from Deanston for Association Membership was approved.</p>	CSO
15.	<p>Operations: No Report.</p>	
16.	<p>Chief Executive’s Report (CEO)</p> <p>The CEO referred to the CX Feedback report on the pilot digital survey on the effect of COVID-19 on tenants and RSHA’s response. The survey had proved successful and it was proposed that another survey be carried out in another couple of months or so to find out how things were going. It was noted that the analysis of the data collected and reporting did require some skill. Comments from Members regarding presentation of the findings had also been taken onboard. This time CX Feedback had produced a report for RSHA however it is proposed that RSHA would do this in-house in future. The CEO confirmed that the responses would be examined in more detail and improvements made where it was considered necessary. Future survey report results would be shared, as appropriate, with the Board. It was agreed that this was an excellent tool.</p> <p>A Member queried how the questions had been decided upon? The CEO advised that CX Feedback worked with a range of RSL partners and had a bank of questions. RSHA had however adapted the questions to suit its requirements.</p> <p>It was noted that the software had also been used to carry out the Repairs Satisfaction Survey. The ADM reported that the responses rate had increased significantly using the digital survey.</p> <p>The CEO also highlighted the response to the EVH Pay Award Consultation which was considered by A&R Committee given pressing timescales.</p> <p>Correspondence from Kevin Stewart, Minister for Local Government referenced by SC in his presentation was also noted in the report.</p> <p>The content of the report was noted.</p>	CEO
17.	<p>Action Tracker: The Action Tracker was approved.</p>	
18.	<p>Attendance at Conference/Seminar or Networking Events: Board Member Feedback</p> <p>A Member reported on a recent EVH mini conference attended “Embrace the present: it’s a gift” on 30th October. She had found the speaker – Gavin Oattes, from the Tree of Knowledge - to be extremely effective and proposed to share slides with Members. It focused on working flexibly and looked at wellbeing whilst working remotely.</p> <p>The Chair and DCEO had attended the SFHA Finance Conference in November. It was felt that the topics had been somewhat repetitive and the lack of networking opportunity due to the conference being held online had detracted from the overall effectiveness of attending the conference.</p>	FB

	The CEO took the opportunity to remind all that - at the moment – “we are not working from home during a crisis, we are all at home during a crisis trying to work”.	
19.	<p>Any Other Competent Business</p> <p>The CEO wished all Board Members a Happy Christmas from herself and the staff team and the Chair in turn wished all RSHA staff a Happy Christmas on behalf of the Board Members.</p> <p>The Chair proposed that following the success of the recent “Getting to Know You Session” for Board Members that before or after future Board meetings a short time – 15 minutes - was set aside for socialising? It was felt this was a good idea and would allow Board Members to get to know each other better</p> <p><i>The meeting closed at 8.50pm</i></p>	
20.	Review/Reflections of Meeting: Please email your feedback to Mark Griffiths Chair.	
21.	<p>Date of Next Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Training Session: Governance, Thursday, 10th December at 6.30pm on Zoom. • Board Strategy Session: January 2021 TBC • Group Briefing Session: Equality & Diversity TBC • Joint Training Session: Effective Questioning, Scrutiny and Challenge TBC • Board Thursday, 4th February 2021 at 6.30pm 	