



South Essex Homes Limited

Minutes of Board Meeting

Date: 27 January 2022

Time: 3:00pm Ended: 5.45 pm

Via MS Teams

Present: Roger Eastwood (RE) - Chair of the Board; Meg Davidson (MD) - Vice-Chair of the Board; Michael Oxley (MO); Chris March (CM); David Joyce (DJ), Peter Wexham (PWe); Chris Silvey (CS); Phyllis Ward (PWA), Carly Volke (CV)

In Attendance: Mike Gatrell (MG) - Chief Executive; Mario Ambrose (MA) – Executive Director; Simon Putt (SP) – Company Secretary; Beverley Gallacher (BG) – Assistant Director Commercial; Daniel Lyons (DL) – Assistant Director Finance & Corporate Services, Sarah Lander (SL) – Assistant Director Operations (Housing); Kevin Hazlewood (KH) – Assistant Director Operations (Property); Tim Holland (TH), Head of Housing Support, SBC – George Sutherland (GS) – Chair SEPS’ Board (Confidential Agenda Items); Carol Cooper (CC) – Board Support Officer, Stuart Long (SLo) & Rob Walters (RW), ATF, (Agenda point 4), Cathy Beazley, Altair (Observer)

Tenant Observers: Keith Ducker, Bob Ayriss, Mike Smith, Barbara Lambert, Majzoub Ali (public meeting only)

Public Minutes of Board Meeting

Action

PUBLIC AGENDA		
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
1.1	RE welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2.	Apologies for absence	
2.1	Apologies were received from Sacha Jevans.	

3.	Declarations of Interest	
3.1	There were no declarations of interest.	
4.	Social Value Presentation – Stuart Long and Rob Walters of Achieve Thrive Flourish (ATF)	
4.1	Following the presentation the Board sought clarity on the following points:	
4.2	CS wanted to know whether projects could be carried out across districts to develop partnership opportunities for example with Rochford and Southend. SLo confirmed that ATF are currently involved in running projects in Rochford and Wakering. However it can be difficult to engage families in their own area and requiring them to travel could be a challenge.	
4.3	MD stated that it was a fantastic and very encouraging presentation. MD wanted to know how ATF start the projects? SLo updated that as an example Felmores was used as the Local Authority (LA) thought there were lack of provisions in that area. ATF held a discovery day where they engaged with families and young people from the area and also invited third party agencies and the LA to see what could work in the area. ATF were looking for assets and people passionate about community who wished to share skills with other people in order to drive the project forward.	
4.4	MG confirmed to the Board that ATF had been asked to give this presentation for the Board to consider setting aside investment for the community. From the feedback from Board members it is clear that the Board believe working with ATF to be of interest that could provide benefit. If the Board are interested in inviting some further thoughts from ATF are ATF able to resource further work over and above what you are already doing? SLo confirmed that the beauty of the model is looking for community assets and there are a number of people who are already engaged with ATF who are looking to upscale the work they do. SLo is confident that ATF would be able to have people in place fairly quickly to deliver the project.	
4.5	It was agreed that the Board would discuss further at the Away Day in March as part of the Resident Engagement Strategy.	
5.	Public Minutes & Matters Arising from the meeting held on 28 October 2021	
5.1	The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	

6.	Chair's Remarks	
6.1	RE updated the Board that work is underway on developing a set of proposals for the tenant satisfaction survey.	
6.2	RE updated the Board with the sad news that two members of SEH, Steve Turner and Coral Miller, had sadly passed away. Both members of staff helped a great many people in their roles with SEH.	
7.	Residents' Voice Your View	
7.1	No Residents' Voice Your View were received.	
8.	Governance & Stewardship	
8.1	SP gave an overview of the report.	
8.2	In relation to the Hybrid Working Policy, MO sought clarity as to measures in place for resolving disputes that may arise and whether the Policy had been looked at by Legal?	
8.3	SL confirmed that she hoped that the Policy itself will provide clarity in relation to how managers manage staff in 1-2-1 meetings and during the appraisal process. The Policy had been discussed with the Communication Managers Group and Staff Communication Group and their input had been included in the Policy where appropriate.	
8.4	SL confirmed that whilst the Legal Team had not looked at the policy she felt that having based our Policy on those of other organisations and in particular Campbell Tickell that the Policy suited the process although she would check with HR to see whether legal advice is required.	SL
8.5	CM stated that he believed hybrid working is here to stay but wanted to know what measures were in place where staff may not want to work from home but wanted to work in the office environment. SL confirmed that the policy allowed managers' discretion and the organisation realises that not all staff have the ability to work from home and indeed there are currently staff who work in the office full time as this is preferred by them. SL confirmed that the Policy is a useful framework for starting conversations and as long as the business needs were met then flexibility will be applied.	
8.6	Recommendations:	
i)	The Board Noted the Chair's Action agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair in accordance with the Code of Governance for endorsement.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a training provider for Board Member training and development 	

ii)	The Board noted the annual analysis of Board Member attendance.	
iii)	The Board agreed the Hybrid Working Policy as recommended by the Personnel and Remuneration (P&R) Committee following their meeting on 7 September 2021.	
9.	Health & Safety Compliance Report (incorporating Fire Safety Update)	
9.1	KH gave an overview of the report.	
9.2	CM sought clarity in relation to the lift compliance numbers as they appear to be remarkably high, what is the background? KH confirmed that the lift compliancy numbers relate to the provision of insurers Allianz and receipt of their inspection certificate. As KH has not received the certificate he would not consider SEH to be compliant. Allianz are instructed by SBC's Insurance Department to carry out annual inspections, the certificates are then supplied to SBC who in turn supply SEH this causes some delay but KH is looking to streamline the process.	
9.3	CM sought clarity in relation to the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations and wanted to know whether SEH were using in-house staff or external contractors and based on competency or availability of resource? KH updated that in-house staff have recently completed a refresher course and that it depends on the scale of the project whether in-house or external resources are used.	
9.4	DJ queried the testing and inspection of dry risers and how do we know they have passed if certificates have not yet been received? KH confirmed that all testing is done in the presence of the SEH Fire Safety Manager and where defects are found he arranges the repair immediately. This means that KH can maintain a level of assurance that they are operational but would not consider compliant until certificates received.	
9.5	DJ sought clarity in relation to asbestos testing? KH confirmed that there is a statutory requirement in place for all communal areas and it is good practice to have information on all domestic settings for both contractors and tenants. There are currently 41 properties that do not have up to date reports and these properties are either recently acquired or newly constructed. With properties constructed post 1985 it is fairly certain that they do not contain asbestos. Recently acquired properties are in the process of having a report prepared and will be logged onto the system.	

<p>9.6</p> <p>9.7</p> <p>9.8</p> <p>9.9</p> <p>9.10</p> <p>i)</p> <p>ii)</p>	<p>MD requested information on the delay with the Cecil Court sprinkler system. MA updated that during the procurement process exercise the British Standard was altered, which will eventually become a building regulation. In this instance it was necessary to ask the consultant to redesign the system and then the contractor was asked to requote for the new design. The new quote has now been received and SEH are in discussion with SBC Finance to obtain the extra money to carry out the work which MA now hopes will start early February.</p> <p>CV requested that the Report and Appendices be crossed referenced in order to be more clear to Board members. KH agreed to reference the relevant paragraph in the corresponding Appendix.</p> <p>CV expressed concern in relation to the C02 detector testing and the number of outstanding properties. KH updated that the properties listed do have detectors fitted but there are anomalies within these properties, such as there being no gas supply so a C02 detector would not be required. A project is ongoing to analyse these properties to ensure detectors are compliant.</p> <p>CS sought clarity in relation to the fire risk assessments at Mornington and Yantlet. KH confirmed that feedback has been received from Essex County Fire Rescue Service but formal notification has not yet been received.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The Board noted the metrics as Corporate Compliance Position Statement and the statements in sections 4 to 10 of this report.</p> <p>The Board noted the actions being taken to regularise positions where required.</p>	<p>KH</p>
<p>10.</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>10.3</p> <p>10.4</p> <p>10.5</p>	<p>Company Assurance Report as at 31 December 2021</p> <p>DL gave an overview of the report.</p> <p>Operating budget is within target and will make a small surplus for the year. A pinch point is a slightly lower service charge income due to higher levels of voids than anticipated.</p> <p>Revenue Repairs budget is overspent and as previously notified our consultants FFT are currently conducting a review and their report is expected by the end of January.</p> <p>Capital Programme has an underspend but it is planned to make this up by the end of the year although some projects will be moved forward to next year.</p> <p>Rent collection is good at 2.27% compared to a median sector of 3.1% in October so ahead of the sector.</p>	

10.6	DL made the Board aware that we are likely to see an impact on rent arrears with rising energy prices, the end of the furlough scheme and rise in NI costs. This is likely to result in families' incomes being squeezed further and seeing them struggle to pay bills. It is important that we continue to assist families going forward, to sustain their tenancies.	
10.7	Decent Homes currently sits at 10% non decency which is higher than expected. There are a number of programmes on track which will reduce the figure significantly but will not get to 0% non decency. This is a result of some issues with the window contractor and it is expected that there will be 3-4% non decency.	
10.8	Letting of some properties is still difficult but is improving slightly but there are still a large number of void properties. The void figure is impacted by void properties as part of the Queensway Project as it awaits demolition and properties affected by the Balmoral structural works project.	
10.9	During December sickness increased and total days lost to Covid was 24 days in December which is the highest level during the pandemic.	
10.10	The Resident Satisfaction surveys were completed with 1200 (20%) tenants being contacted. Overall satisfaction at was 81%.	
10.11	MO noted that the information provided in tables 5.3 and 6.2 was extremely useful particularly the comparative information supplied in table 6.2. MO requested that there be comparative information included in 5.3 for future meetings. DL confirmed that this information could be provided for 5.3 but only limited information is supplied by Housemark and full information could only be supplied on an annual basis.	
10.12	MO sought clarity around the high cost per property of supporting tenants. DL confirmed that he is currently in discussion with Housemark in relation to this as they had included Careline within this section and not all Careline customers are tenants. DL is looking for Housemark to remove this figure and believes that this would make us more comparable to other providers in the sector.	
10.13	CV asked if there should be concern at the number of complaints related to responsive repairs. DL confirmed that within the sector the number of complaints related to responsive repairs across many organisations is in excess of 50%. The level of complaints experienced by SEH in relation to responsive repairs is not as high as other organisations. DL reassured the Board that SEH have a robust and comprehensive complaints' policy and process and that we look to learn lessons and implement change where necessary.	

<p>10.14</p> <p>10.15</p> <p>10.16</p> <p>10.17</p> <p>i)</p> <p>ii)</p> <p>iii)</p> <p>iv)</p>	<p>DJ sought clarity as to how many employees there are in relation to sickness figures. DL confirmed that there are approximately 180 employees. DJ wanted to know if there was any comparative information available with other organisations. DL confirmed that this is not available. DL confirmed that any staff with mental health related sickness are supported by the organisation and support mechanisms are in place, including a counselling service to enable return to work.</p> <p>RE confirmed that from his experience of other companies that this does not feel out of line.</p> <p>PWe noted that there was no information in relation to the company's environmental footprint and climate change. Particularly what work is being undertaken with SBC. DL updated that this is referenced in the Business Plan Action Plan Report and that as the organisation builds on the sustainability and environmental projects the action plan will be updated and the Board updated too.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>The Board noted the update on financial information as at December 2021.</p> <p>The Board noted the Key Performance Indicators as at December 2021.</p> <p>The Board noted the Resident Satisfaction Survey Results as at 2021/22.</p> <p>The Board noted the Benchmarking Information provided for 2020/21.</p>	
<p>11.</p> <p>11.1</p> <p>11.2</p> <p>11.3</p> <p>i)</p> <p>ii)</p> <p>iii)</p>	<p>Budget 2022/23 (including Performance Target Setting)</p> <p>DL gave an overview of the report.</p> <p>DJ sought clarity over the £133k for utility costs and whether this was related to residents or civic buildings? DL confirmed that this is relates to communal areas and individual properties in sheltered schemes. DL also confirmed that EMT are looking to set up a hardship fund for tenants to help with the increased energy costs and the Board will be updated.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The Board agreed the proposed budget for 2022/23.</p> <p>The Board agreed the proposed use of reserves to meet one off and exceptional items in 2022/23.</p> <p>The Board agreed the Key Performance Targets for 2022/23 for further negotiation and discussion with Southend Borough Council.</p>	

12.	Business Plan Action Plan Update Report	
12.1	DL gave an overview of his report. The report sets out a provisional draft action plan under the business plan.	
12.2	DJ asked if we could consider including work practices and staff incentive schemes are part of the action plan. DL confirmed that this is something EMT have been discussing and will progress.	
12.3	RE wanted to know if there is a way to stratify the plan in order that the top priorities for the organisation can be easily identified. DL agreed to investigate to see if these can be stratified and prioritised.	DL
12.4	PWe commented that SEH need to raise the profile of their environmental work and that this should be at the top of the agenda.	
12.5	Recommendation:	
i)	The Board noted the Business Plan Action Plan	
13.	Minutes of Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 9 December 2021	
13.1	DJ confirmed that the Committee had reviewed the financial regulations with only a few superficial changes.	
14.	Date of next meeting – 29 March 2022	