



South Essex Homes Limited

Minutes of Board Meeting

Date: 29 March 2022

Time: 3:00pm Ended: 4.50 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); Carly Volke (CV), Sacha Jevans (SJ).

In Attendance: Mario Ambrose (MA) – Executive Director; Daniel Lyons (DL) – Assistant Director Finance & Corporate Services; Simon Putt (SP) – Company Secretary; Sarah Lander (SL) – Assistant Director Operations (Housing); Kevin Hazlewood (KH) – Assistant Director Operations (Property); Lynsey Hurd (LH) – Business Development Officer (SEPS); Glyn Halksworth (GH),- Director of Housing, SBC; Tim Holland (TH), - Head of Housing Support, SBC; George Sutherland (GS) – Chair SEPS’ Board (Confidential Agenda Items); Carol Cooper (CC) – Board Support Officer.

Tenant Observers: Keith Ducker (KD), Mike Smith (MS), Barbara Lambert (BL), Majzoub Ali (MA) (public meeting only)

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Action

	PUBLIC AGENDA	
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
1.1	RE welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2.	Apologies for absence	
2.1	There were no apologies for absence.	

3.	Declarations of Interest	
3.1	RE and MO expressed an interest in Agenda Item 7. LH declared an interest in Agenda Item 11 as she is a Board member of ATF.	
4.	Public Minutes & Matters Arising from the meeting held on 27 January 2022	
4.1	The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
5.	Chair's Remarks	
5.1	RE noted that KD is part of the ALMO NFA tenants group looking at the White Paper proposals.	
6.	Residents' Voice Your View	
6.1	No Residents' Voice Your View were received.	
7.	Governance & Stewardship	
7.1	MD took Agenda Item 7. MO & RE left the meeting.	
7.2	The Board accepted the recommendations that MO and RE remain on the Board for a further 3 year term.	
7.3	Recommendations:	
i)	To agree the re-appointment of Roger Eastwood and Michael Oxley to the Board for a further period of three years to run until 10th July 2025 in accordance with the Articles of Association.	
ii)	To note the position regarding the Tenant Board Member vacancy which is to be readvertised.	
8.	Company Assurance Report as at 28 February 2022	
8.1	DL gave an overview of the report and covered some questions that had been raised prior to the meeting.	
8.2	The Operating budget will show a small surplus at year end.	
8.3	Management Fee income is lower than budgeted for. The Management Fee is agreed in advance of the year and this year was reduced slightly as this had included funding for the Difficult Access Co-ordinator post which was not recruited to until late in the year, the balance has been returned to SCC.	
8.4	Careline income has reduced. Careline have experienced a reduction in customers, partly due to Covid. A new operating platform has been implemented and once the restructure has been completed marketing of the service will commence.	

8.5	Costs for premises has been overspent but in general the Overheads budget is underspent and has been offset by lower costs for employees and services.	
8.6	Revenue Repairs budget will be overspent by £560k and as previously notified, the work undertaken by FFT has taken place and reasons for overspend are listed in FFT's report.	
8.7	Capital programme has been underspent but has seen 82% expenditure which is good given the conditions over the past year with Covid and restricted access. £1.5m has been spent in March on capital projects.	
8.8	The KPI for the contractor KPI sits at 93% which is out of target but this was due to an ICT issue and once resolved will see the figure retrospectively corrected.	
8.9	Discussion is underway with SCC in relation to next year's voids target which will take into consideration the Queensway project.	
8.10	The Hardship Fund Policy has been drafted which SEH hope will enable us to assist residents who are experiencing exceptional financial difficulties currently.	
8.11	DL confirmed for MO that the Board are being asked to agree £50k from reserves to fund the Hardship Fund. MO sought clarity on what would happen when this had been spent. DL stated that he had needed to put a figure on this to get the fund moving and wanted the Board to have an understanding of what they are committing to. Currently take up levels are unknown and DL will continue to monitor the Fund closely and if more funding is required then a request would be made to the Board.	
8.12	GH updated that SEH and SCC work closely and there are currently multiple routes of financial support available to residents. GH agreed to discuss further with DL.	DL
8.13	MD sought clarity in relation to the fact that there had previously been no allowance for inflation in the repairs budget. DL updated that when the budget was set the fact that inflation would be rising so steeply was not known. The budget for 2022-23 includes inflation set at what is believed to be the right level and it is hoped this will not be a significant issue going forward.	
8.14	DJ noted that he had supplied some questions in relation to the reports prior to the meeting and requested that in future any responses to these questions be circulated to all Board members for information.	SP/CC
8.15	DJ sought clarity as to whether we would be advertising that the Hardship Fund is available or would we be relying on Officers to identify residents that are in need. DJ wanted to ensure that not only residents who are in receipt of benefits would be picked up but also those on low incomes which may not be on the Officers' radar.	

8.16	MA clarified that the Hardship Fund criteria won't be based solely on rent arrears and that liaison between the Tenancy and Support Services Teams will continue with input from colleagues at SCC. These Teams have good intelligence on residents who are both working and in receipt of benefits and will be able assist all tenants where necessary.	
8.17	MB wanted to know whether SEH were comfortable with Councillors informing residents that the Fund is available. RE confirmed that as GH had mentioned there are also other sources of assistance available so it would be preferable for Councillors to treat this support with discretion..	
8.18	SL updated that Officers already make use of the discretionary housing fund and essential living fund but the Hardship Fund is new and it is important that we reach the right people. The Fund is going to be treated as a pilot.	
8.19	DJ stated he felt that the key thing is that this is a funding of last resort when all other avenues have been exhausted and if residents genuinely need the assistance SEH can help.	
8.20	CM stated that he is supportive and noted that GH had made a valid point that other agencies are already engaged in this. CM sought clarity as to whether as an organisation are we comfortable Officers have the skills to make those judgements and whether we may be better working in partnership with other organisations to administer the Fund. DL stated that this was not something that had been considered and would add a further layer of complexity and it was important that we are able to help residents as soon as possible. Once more experience has been gained as to how the Fund will work we could explore other avenues in relation to administration and partnership working.	
8.21	<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>i) The Board noted the update provided on financial information as at February 2022</p> <p>ii) The Board noted the Key Performance Indicators position as at February 2022.</p> <p>iii) The Board agreed the Hardship Policy and suggested allocation of reserves.</p>	
9.	<p>Risk Register Review</p> <p>9.1 DL gave an overview of the report. RE noted that Risk Management is the responsibility of the SEH Board and the comprehensive report produced may benefit from a high level risk matrix summary for clarity.</p> <p>9.2 DL confirmed that the Strategic Risk Register goes to the Audit & Risk Committee and is reviewed by EMT regularly.</p>	

<p>9.3</p> <p>i)</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>The Board noted the Strategic Risk Register</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>10.6</p> <p>10.8</p> <p>10.9</p> <p>i)</p> <p>ii)</p>	<p>Health & Safety Compliance Report (incorporating Fire Safety updated)</p> <p>KH gave an overview of the report.</p> <p>KH updated that the Secretary of State has announced that the requirement in the Bill where organisations could recover costs from tenants for work undertaken to be compliant with the Bill had been removed. KH is in discussion with SCC in relation to funding as it is felt important that SEH have the right resources to ensure resident safety and compliance with the Bill.</p> <p>KH updated that electrical safety testing was at 92.3% completion. There is currently software being trialled to obtain electronic fire safety certificates and this will help with gaining information and tracking repairs.</p> <p>KH updated that an app based system for fire door maintenance is being installed which will provide additional back up for the SEPS' maintenance team for servicing.</p> <p>Following discussions with SCC it has been confirmed that the insurance contract in relation to lift servicing is still in place.</p> <p>PWe sought clarity in relation to a perceived continual problem with lifts at Beaver Tower. KH confirmed that there had been an increase in vandalism associated with lifts in the past 3-6 months but when lift breakdowns are reported they are repaired as soon as possible.</p> <p>MO sought clarity in relation to the survey underway for residents in tower blocks. KH confirmed that residents had been provided with the necessary information to be able to complete the survey positively.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The Board noted the metrics as the 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>11.</p> <p>11.1</p>	<p>Social Value – Options to be considered</p> <p>SL gave an overview of the report. Areas that would benefit from this type of work have been identified following feedback from Councillors including Beaver Tower and the Shoebury area where engaging with communities can have a real impact.</p>	

11.2	DJ sought clarity as to how projects are identified as suitable. SL confirmed that SEH do not undertake the evaluation and that ATF use the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) model. In the future SEH will look to train their own staff so that in due course we will be able to identify our own projects.	
11.3	CS commented that he has worked with ATF in the past and is aware of their commitment and outcomes they achieve. CS said he could not speak highly enough of ATF. They are particularly good at engaging with residents and obtaining the story from start to finish.	
11.4	CV suggested that it might help promote SEH if we could promote that we are working in partnership with ATF. Possibly look for a way to be visually connected with them	
11.5	MA updated that ATF will be working closely with SL's and Sam Elliott's teams and felt sure SEH's logo could be incorporated. SL confirmed that this is a collaboration and the joint approach will give maximum benefit to all.	
11.6	Recommendations:	
i)	The Board noted the approach detailed in ATF's proposal, including timescales, scope of activities and anticipated benefits and outcomes for our residents.	
ii)	The Board agreed that ATF run projects in three of the neighbourhoods that we manage – as per Option 2 (Appendix One).	
iii)	The Board agreed to fund this work using sums from reserves.	
12	Minutes of Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 17 February 2022	
12.1	CM gave feedback following Chairing the meeting in DJ's absence. One area that the Committee were not entirely comfortable with was in relation to data protection and the compliance position but the Committee are aware that we rely on SCC resources.	
	Date of next meeting – 26 July 2022	