

South Essex Homes Limited

Minutes of Board Meeting

Date: 30 March 2023

Start: 3.00pm End: 5.45pm

Via MS Teams

Minutes

Present Roger Eastwood (RE) – Chair of the Board; Meg Davidson (MD) – Vice-Chair of the Board; Chris March (CM); Margaret Borton (MB); Chris Silvey (CS); Keith Ducker (KD), David Joyce (DJ)

In attendance: Mike Gatrell (MG) – Chief Executive, Mario Ambrose (MA) - Executive Director; Kevin Hazlewood (KH) – Director Operations (Property); Sarah Lander (SL) – Director Operations (Housing); Daniel Lyons (DL) – Director Finance and Corporate Services; Glyn Halksworth (GH) – Director of Housing SCC, Chris Bellis-Wright (CBW) – Housing Client Relationship Manager SCC, Lynsey Hurd (LH) – Business Development Officer (SEPS) – George Sutherland (GS) – Chair SEPS/SEFM Board (for confidential meeting only) Carol Cooper (CC) – Board Support Officer

Tenant Observers: Majzoub Ali, Susan Moss, Sally Robertson – Public Meeting Only

PUBLIC AGENDA		Action
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
1.1	RE welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2.	Apologies for Absence	
2.1	Apologies for absence were received from Sacha Jevans, Peter Wexham, Carly Volke and Michael Oxley.	

3.	Declarations of Interest	
3.1	CS and LH both declared an interest in their work with Achieve Thrive Flourish (ATF).	
4.	Public Minutes & Matters Arising of meeting held 26 January 2023	
4.1	Following an amendment to the day of the next meeting, the Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.	
4.2	<u>Matters Arising</u>	
4.3	14.2 – The Board requested further information regarding the EPC certificate of the stock and DL agreed to update the Board further regarding how the Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding will be used to retro fit 110 properties to increase the EPC rating.	DL
4.4	GH offered for SCC to provide a presentation to the Board on the SHDF and how the monies will be spent and the benefits of retrofit on the stock. The Board welcomed this. DL to progress.	DL
5.	Chair's Remarks	
5.1	RE updated the Board that the NFA Board are discussing the reduction in the level of income as there are less ALMOs. NFA are looking at ways to manage this and what it means for the future.	
5.2	KD provided the Board with an update on his meeting with the Housing Ombudsman. KD's report will be circulated to the Board following the meeting.	
6.	Residents' Voice Your View	
6.1	DL read the response included in the pack.	
7.	Governance & Stewardship Report	
7.1	DL gave an overview of the report.	
7.2	KD noted that he welcomed a Doorbell and CCTV policy to clarify for residents how this will be managed if there are issues. SL confirmed that there had not previously been a policy which will now provide staff with a more procedural approach in order to respond to enquiries from tenants. SL confirmed that the policy had been drafted with the assistance of SCC's Legal Team.	

7.3	CS suggested that an additional bullet point be added to page two of the Board Resident Engagement and Complaints' Champion role description to include:	SL
7.4	"Seek new resident engagement opportunities particularly with those groups that may be more difficult to engage".	
7.5	The Board agreed the amendment. SL to update the document.	
7.6	Recommendations:	
i)	The Board noted the annual analysis of Board Member attendance.	
ii)	The Board agreed the Board Forward Plan for 2023/24.	
iii)	The Board agreed the Board Resident Engagement and Complaints' Champion Role and Responsibilities	
iv)	The Board approved the new CCTV and Smart Doorbell Policy in Appendix 3.	
8.	Community Development Report	
8.1	SL gave an overview of the report.	
8.2	KD noted that at the Southend Tenants and Residents Federation meeting he had been approached by residents who were unhappy that the £50k tenant decoration budget had been withdrawn and he sought clarity as to how he should explain to tenants that the decoration budget would be cut but the Board would fund the ATF project. SL noted that the Board's job was to weigh up these issues and that the report showed demonstrable outcomes that will have a long-term effect on the community. DL noted that the Board needs to ensure the maximum return on limited funds and the report showed that the ATF project provided a much wider positive community effect.	
8.3	RE recognised that this issue is not something that could be resolved at the meeting and CM responded that it was important that information is confirmed to the tenant why the Board are funding ATF to ensure the residents understand the impact the ATF project will have on creating a better environment for the community.	
8.4	SL noted that if withdrawing the decorating funding is of concern then there may be other avenues open to assist tenants with funding and there is the possibility of liaising with the Probation Service in relation to the use of reparation schemes.	

8.5	MA noted that the funding for decorations comes from the Capital Programme and the withdrawal of funding for decorations had been necessary to ensure the capital programme is kept within budget given the financial restraints.	
8.6	The Board discussed the various routes open to progress the partnership with ATF and MG confirmed that the results of the options appraisal would be presented to the Board before a decision is agreed.	
8.7	<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>i) The Board noted the updated information (covering October 2022 to February 2023), which details the impact of the projects delivered by ATF, commissioned by SEH for our residents living in Shoeburyness, Mendip Estate and Eastwood. This information describes a wide range of measures that helps us understand the wider benefits of these projects for example engagement levels, social value, contribution towards feeling of community ownership, safety and well-being as well as the success in leveraging funding from alternative sources to support delivery of ATF’s work on our estates.</p> <p>ii) The Board supports SEH joint working with ATF by allocating funds for a further year (2023/24) to allow the work to continue and grow including targeting additional areas that we manage, where engagement activity is less established and community safety concerns and worklessness are prevalent (See Section 6 - Financial Implications).</p> <p>iii) The Board endorsed that an option appraisal is undertaken by SEH and ATF to evaluate the most effective means to formalise the relationship between our two organisations and leverage external funding to make community development projects in our estates sustainable.</p>	
9.	Company Assurance Report as at 28 February 2023	
9.1	DL gave an overview of the report.	
9.2	DL noted that the responsive repairs budget showed a forecast underspend of £200k which had been achieved through tight controls despite the uplift paid to the repairs’ contractor. The Capital Programme had seen a spend of £7.5m with a few projects being delayed however these will be progressed in the new financial year.	

9.3	DL noted that the rent arrear KPI figure for February was out of target but increases in rent arrears is being experienced throughout the sector with SEH currently experiencing 2.6% rent arrears, the average across the sector is 3.2%. In partnership with the Income Management Manager DL had put together a 31-point service improvement plan to ensure that rent collection continues at the highest level possible in the current climate.	
9.4	DJ sought additional information regarding the capital programme and whether there had been a genuine cost reduction, requesting that future reports provide more detailed information. DL agreed that this can be built into the budget. GH agreed that additional context would help the Board understand the situation more clearly and noted that SCC were very pleased with the spend which showed a strong performance compared to some areas of SCC.	DL
9.5	CM sought clarity as to whether the high cost of electricity is recharged to tenants and whether SEH understood the impact of the increase on tenants. DL confirmed that the increase had been included in the new service charges and will have an impact on tenants. Engagement and liaison work is underway with tenants to help them understand the reasons for the increases and to ensure that where necessary they are directed to organisations who can assist with costs and to ensure that they are maximising the benefits they are entitled to. GH noted that SCC had recently purchased "Lift" software to enable SCC to target tenants who may be entering financial hardship.	
9.6	MB sought clarity as to whether tenants are assisted with budgeting and SL confirmed that officers are trained to offer advice to residents and also work with Citizens Advice.	
9.7	MB sought clarity as to the reasons for the increase in stage 1 and stage 2 complaints. DL confirmed that the reason for the increase is due to a number of factors including the government awareness campaign.	
9.8	RE requested that all Ombudsman complaints be reported to the Board. DL agreed to update the Board electronically.	DL
9.9	GH sought clarity as to who in SEH signs off Ombudsman complaints. DL agreed to check the process and update the Board.	DL
9.10	MB sought clarity as to whether SEH provides Ombudsman information as part of the complaints process. DL confirmed that this information is provided to tenants in the complaint response.	

<p>9.11</p> <p>i)</p> <p>ii)</p>	<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The Board noted the update provided on financial information as at February 2023.</p> <p>The Board noted the Key Performance Indicators position as at February 2023.</p>	
<p>10.</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>10.3</p> <p>10.4</p> <p>i)</p> <p>ii)</p>	<p>Risk Register Review</p> <p>DL confirmed that the Executive Management Team completed a full review of the Risk Register, including considering environmental pressures and also took into consideration how these could become risks for the organisation and updated the Risk Register accordingly.</p> <p>DJ noted the addition of damp mould and condensation (DMC) as a risk and noted the importance of the contact centre receiving training to enable them to pick up where there could be issues of DMC that have not been identified by the tenant. DL agreed to progress this.</p> <p>It was noted that Page 7 of Appendix 2 should be updated to read Southend City Council instead of Southend Borough Council. DL to amend.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the report.</p> <p>The Board noted the Strategic Risk Register (Appendix 2).</p>	<p>DL</p> <p>DL</p>
<p>11.</p> <p>11.1</p> <p>11.2</p>	<p>Health & Safety Compliance Update</p> <p>KH updated on issues completed since the preparation of the report. The three outstanding fire risk assessments have been completed, the domestic gas safety certificate was completed and a further 16 risk assessments have been completed.</p> <p>MD sought clarity as to why the fire door assessments percentage was low. KH confirmed that the assessments are undertaken on a block-by-block basis and when blocks reset the anniversary dates fall out of sync. Once the Propellor system is in use an electronic tag will be attached to each door and the anniversary date will be recorded separately.</p>	

11.3	MB sought clarity as to whether residents are encouraged to report issues with Gerda doors in communal areas. KH confirmed that most information about issues is reported by residents and caretakers. When a door requires replacement, it can take some time to replace as manufacturing times for new doors is between 10-12 weeks.	
11.4	MB sought clarity as to whether the Cecil Court sprinkler system had been officially tested by ECFRS. KH noted that no official test had taken place but as part of the Fire Safety Act SEH had updated the ECFRS online portal with fire risk information for all blocks and those blocks where sprinkler systems were installed were noted as the lowest rated risk blocks.	
11.5	MB sought clarity on management of the mobility scooter policy and whether there had been any resident feedback. SL confirmed that residents' feedback showed that residents appreciated that it isn't safe for scooters to be stored in communal areas and tenancy services officers and the fire safety manager will carry out a joint visit and assess individual cases. It is recognised that storage is particularly difficult in low rise blocks and it can be difficult to find alternative storage. KH noted that so far, he felt the policy had been a success as there had not been a need to forcibly remove any scooters.	
11.6	SL and KH confirmed that residents should be encouraged not to charge scooters inside the house or overnight. It is advised to remove the battery and charge it away from the scooter.	
11.7	DJ sought clarity regarding 9.3 as he could not see where it was noted that SEH are compliant. KH noted that in 9.4 compliance is confirmed and KH accepted that it is difficult for the Board to be reassured but in the context of what is required in the legislation, where the company is obliged to have a programme in place, the statement confirms that the programme is in place. DJ felt that a statement isn't an assurance it is a statement and felt that evidence of compliance needed to be provided for the Board. KH agreed to review the report and consider DJ's concerns.	KH
11.8	RE sought clarity regarding the lift insurance. KH confirmed that the insurance policy covers domestic lifts, stairlifts, through floor lifts and hoists and the information held by the SCC insurance team does need to be revised, although there is no legal requirement to do this under LOLER. KH confirmed that the information will be refreshed at insurance renewal stage but in the interim the Board should be assured that the servicing regimes limit the breakdowns.	

<p>11.9</p> <p>i)</p> <p>ii)</p>	<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The Board noted the metrics as the Corporate Compliance Position Statement and the statements in sections 4 and 10 of this report.</p> <p>The Board noted the actions taken to regularise positions where required.</p>	
<p>12.</p> <p>12.1</p> <p>12.2</p> <p>12.3</p> <p>12.4</p> <p>12.5</p> <p>i)</p>	<p>Policy Update – Health & Safety Policy</p> <p>KH noted the Personnel & Remuneration Committee had agreed the policy, subject to the amendment in wording that “SEH is aligned to the principles of accreditation”. The Policy was updated to reflect the change.</p> <p>CM noted that there is a need for the policy to be as long and in-depth as it is but the Board must ensure that it is reviewed regularly.</p> <p>DJ expressed concern that some Board Members had said that they had not read the policy and wondered how residents would perceive it. RE suggested that the policy could be made more accessible and suggested a more concise statement might be more suitable for residents, that could be approved by the Board.</p> <p>MB sought clarity as to how SEH communicate to residents their duty/obligation to keep other residents safe. KH noted that each hazard in the fire safety act will have its own information campaign for residents. SL also noted that the revised tenancy conditions will be more explicit in ensuring that access is granted to carry out essential health and safety checks within properties.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>The Board ratified the decision of Personnel & Remuneration committee to adopt the revised Integrated Management System for Health and Safety.</p>	
<p>13.</p> <p>13.1</p> <p>13.2</p> <p>i)</p> <p>ii)</p>	<p>Committees’ Forward Plans and Terms of Reference</p> <p>DL gave an overview of the report.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>The Board agreed the Terms of Reference and Forward Plan for the Audit & Risk Committee</p> <p>The Board agreed the Terms of Reference and Forward Plan for the Personnel and Remuneration Committee</p>	

14.	Domestic Abuse and DAHA Accreditation Progress Update Report	
14.1	SL gave an overview of the report and an update on the positive feedback received from DAHA.	
14.2	The Board noted their appreciation of the work undertaken by those involved.	
14.3	Recommendation:	
i)	The Board noted the content of this report	
15.	Draft Minutes from Audit & Risk Committee meeting held 16 February 2023	
15.1	DJ had no comments on the Minutes and the Board noted the Minutes from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting.	
21.	Date of next meeting 25 July 2023 at 3.00pm via MS Teams	