



South Essex Homes Limited

Minutes of Board Meeting

Date: 24 October 2024

Start: 3.00pm End: 5.30pm

In Person – Committee Room 3

Minutes

Present Chris March (CM) – Chair; Roger Eastwood (RE) – Vice Chair; Chris Silvey (CS); Keith Ducker (KD), Sacha Jevans (SJ), Michael Oxley (MO); Anne Jones (AJ); Jane Norman (JN); Margaret Borton (MB), Peter Potter (PP).

In attendance: Mike Gatrell (MG) – Chief Executive, Sarah Lander (SL) – Director Housing Services; Daniel Lyons (DL) – Director Finance and Corporate Services; Beverley Gallacher (BG) – Director Commercial Services, Kevin Hazlewood (KH) – Director Property Services; Carol Cooper (CC) – Company Secretary; Glyn Halksworth (GH) – Director of Regeneration, Housing & Regulatory Services SCC; Tim Holland (TH), Head of Housing Supply, SCC; Chris Bellis-Wright (CBW) – Housing Client Relationship Manager SCC; Sir James Duddridge (JD) – Observer; Rachel Hadley (RH) – Observer

Tenant Observer: Majzoub Ali – Public Meeting Only

PUBLIC AGENDA		Action
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
1.1	CM welcomed everyone to the meeting. CM introduced Sir James Duddridge (JD) and Rachel Hadley (RH).	
2.	Apologies for Absence	
2.1	DJ provided his apologies for absence.	

<p>3.</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p>	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>AJ declared an interest as portfolio holder for the HRA.</p> <p>Sacha Jevans declaration was noted as her being Chair of the SEPS and SEFM Boards.</p>	
<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p>	<p>Public Draft Minutes and Matters Arising from meeting held 18 July 2024</p> <p>The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p> <p>5.5</p> <p>5.6</p>	<p>Chair's Remarks</p> <p>The Board noted that SEH had been formed as an ALMO 19 years ago today.</p> <p>CM reminded Board members of the importance of completing the SIA accreditation with 4 Board members accreditation still outstanding. JN noted that she had experienced issues at the Post Office and was meeting with Lynsey Hurd (LH) on 6 November to progress and hopefully complete the accreditation process. AJ noted that she had attended the central Post Office in Southend, and they had been unable to process the application at that time and that she had made a formal complaint to the Post Office about the lack of service.</p> <p>CM updated that the organisation had made a decision to discontinue using X as a social media platform due to the lack of engagement on that platform by tenants.</p> <p>CM updated that whilst the Scrutiny Forum had been due to present its annual report at this meeting, following discussion it had been agreed that in order for the Forum to have sufficient time to prepare a full report, the report would be brought to the January 2025 meeting.</p> <p>CM, MG and DL had attended SCC's Shareholder Board meeting on 14 October. SCC had been very supportive of the work undertaken by SEH and had provided positive feedback. CM thanked the Executive Management Team (EMT) on behalf of the Board.</p> <p>CM noted that this was the last meeting of DJ and SJ as both had completed the maximum 9-year term on the Board. CM and the Board thanked DJ and SJ for their work and commitment to the Board and in their roles as Committee Chairs. The Board noted that SJ was now Chair of SEPS so would still be involved in the organisation. DJ had sent his thanks to the Board and included that he had enjoyed his time working with the Board and Officers.</p>	

5.7	CM had attended a recent NFA ALMO Board Chairs' event. One aspect discussed was the suggestion that 20% of ALMOs' stock across the UK is suffering from DMC. CM stated that as part of the Regulatory Investigation it is important for the Board to have a full understanding of the DMC situation within SEH properties and that the Board needs to assure the Regulator that they are asking the right questions and scrutinising the information provided in relation to DMC.	
6.	Residents' Voice Your view	
6.1	CC presented the Residents' Voice Your View and read out the response.	
6.2	The Board noted this item. The Residents' Voice your View will be available on the website.	
7.	Governance & Stewardship Report	
7.1	CC provided an overview of the report and provided some additional information regarding the recruitment of previously interviewed candidates for Board vacancies from July 2025.	
7.2	CM, CS and GH (as the interview panel) confirmed that they were in agreement that both candidates would make suitable Board members and that their skills would enhance the Board.	
7.3	RE noted the particular importance of there being an accountant on the Board, in light of the departure of DJ and RE's upcoming departure in July 2025. The Board agreed that CC should contact both candidates and that if candidates expressed a wish to join the Board, then both candidates should be asked to provide an updated statement providing reassurance to the Board of any changes since the candidates had originally completed their applications. CC will provide an update at the January meeting.	CC
7.4	CC noted that KD's appointment to the Group Commercial Committee would be for a period of 12 months, by this time the Board would have 4 new recently appointed Board members and at that point Board members would be asked for further Expressions of Interest in the role. The Board agreed.	
7.5	Recommendations:	
i)	The Board agreed the appointment of Peter Potter to the Personnel & Remuneration Committee.	
ii)	The Board noted the update on recruitment to the Board and agreed that the Company Secretary approach the candidates to discuss their appointment to the Board as Non-Executive Directors with effect from 25 July 2025.	

iii)	The Board agreed the updated Board Scrutineer/Champion role profiles.	
iv)	The Board appointed Keith Ducker to the Group Commercial Committee as per the Terms of Reference for a period of 12 months.	
8.	<p>Health & Safety Compliance Report</p> <p>8.1 KH provided a verbal update to the following areas of the report.</p> <p>8.2 Paragraph 6.9 – dry risers compliance is now 100%% Paragraph 7.5 – gas safety compliance is now 100%. As of 24.10.24 there are 9 properties at risk of becoming non-compliant however this is being mitigated by either tenants receiving the 3rd letter, or a warrant is being obtained for force entry Paragraph 8.3 – All services on passenger lifts have been completed but supporting paperwork is being awaited. Paragraph 10.7 – Disrepairs – 23.10.24 a meeting took place with TH where a further work plan has been agreed regarding insurance and discussion with the legal team regarding how and at what stage to settle disrepair claims Paragraph 6.8 – fire doors – PP sought clarity as to whether the fire doors were all in one scheme and KH confirmed that this was not the case. KH noted that there is a 12-14 week lead time in the manufacture of the doors.</p> <p>8.3 KH clarified for CM that in 5.2 the contractor had been slow in the testing of the doors, and this has been addressed with the contractor. It is intended to accelerate next year’s programme in order to mitigate the risk of doors becoming non-compliant.</p> <p>8.4 AJ sought clarity as to whether she could extrapolate the information relating to fire doors and share with the shadow portfolio holder. The Board agreed that they were happy to share the information.</p> <p>8.5 RH sought clarity regarding the prevalence of DMC within properties as she felt that the figures noted would be lower than 20% of the stock. KH confirmed that following the tenant satisfaction surveys where 10% of tenants are contacted, approximately 600 properties, there had been 111 cases where a presence of DMC had been noted, 44 of these had previously been reported, this highlighted that there is still work to be undertaken to encourage tenants to report DMC.</p>	

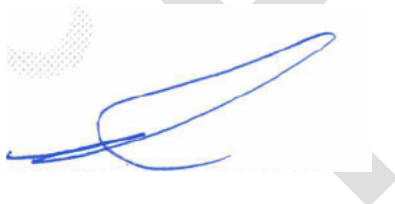
8.6	SL confirmed that the tenancy team carry out inspections of 20% of the stock each year. The team have been focusing on tenants where the first language is not English with 50 tenancies being identified, so far 8-9 have reported no DMC. In addition to these surveys the property team carry out stock condition surveys and DMC is targeted where necessary. KH confirmed that an appointment has been made for the 2 nd Healthy Homes Advisor which will help identify and treat further properties.	
8.7	MB sought clarity as to the effectiveness of the mould treatment, with some properties seeing the mould return. KH confirmed that following analysis of 440 properties treated there had only been 5 properties where there have been more than 2 visits necessary. For 2 of these properties, the issues had related to a leak. Due to the prevalence of DMC in tower blocks, the situation is monitored closely particularly for temporary accommodation where tenants can often be overcrowded.	
8.8	CM requested an additional column be included so that the Board can better understand how many DMC cases are being identified and the cause of the DMC. KH to provide from next meeting.	KH
8.9	<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>i) The Board noted the metrics as the Corporate Compliance Statement and the statements in sections 4 and 10 of this report.</p> <p>ii) The Board noted the actions being taken to regularise positions where required.</p> <p>iii) The Board noted the comments in paragraph 3.4.</p> <p>iv) The Board noted the situation reported in paragraph 7.3.</p> <p>v) The Board noted the information in paragraph 10.</p>	
9.	<p>Company Assurance Report</p> <p>9.1 DL provided an overview of the report.</p> <p>9.2 MO noted that he, DJ and KD and noted the overspend related to employee costs and moving staff from agency to permanent positions. MO sought clarity as to whether the overspend can be rectified without causing detriment to the services provided to tenants. DL confirmed that there is contingency within the budget and that tenant services are not affected</p>	

9.3	MO sought clarity to SCC's thoughts regarding an adjustment to the Management Fee to ensure that SEH is inspection ready. DL confirmed that SCC and SEH have worked closely over the last 6-12 months to ensure that SEH is inspection ready, and SCC had agreed that the recruitment to the role of Inspection and Continuous Improvement Manager. A joint SCC/SEH Consumer Standards Improvement Board is now in place to monitor progress. The work undertaken by Savills had evidenced the work that is required to be able to meet the consumer standards.	
9.4	GH confirmed the consumer standard framework has focused SCC and SEH with the Savills work providing both an understanding of how this should be undertaken. Through the Partnership Agreement the work will stand both SCC and SEH in good stead for the Inspection.	
9.5	KD sought clarity regarding postage costs and whether staff working in a hybrid way had increased the cost by utilising the hybrid mail service. DL confirmed that the hybrid mail service is not related to the hybrid working policy for staff and is a service brought in from SCC. The service is used whether staff are working in the office or at another location. Further analysis is underway to understand the increase, but it is believed the increase in postage cost overall would be a contributing factor.	
9.6	PP sought clarity as to whether a local provider of this service had been considered. GH confirmed that the SCC procurement process always looks for local companies to deliver services and those companies would score more highly in the procurement process, however there is not always a local provider available.	
9.7	DL confirmed for JN that there had been no increased workload for the existing EMT members following the removal of the Head of Management Projects post. This postholder had overseen high profile projects, such as the Balmoral Project and sprinkler system project but there are currently no projects of this type.	
9.8	MB sought clarity regarding there being only one roof replacement included in the Decent Homes budget. KH confirmed that following surveys only one roof had been identified, however if there were any large-scale repairs there is contingency in the Repairs and Maintenance budget.	
9.9	AJ thanked the Difficult Access Officer for the work in enabling access to properties for various inspections related to compliance.	
9.10	<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>i) The Board reviewed and considered South Essex Homes' financial performance based on information as of 30 September 2024.</p>	

ii)	The Board noted the performance as set out in the Key Performance Indicator Report as at 30 September 2024.	
iii)	The Board agreed the Management Fee bid for 2025/26 and authorised the Executive Management Team to negotiate this fee with the Council.	
10.	<p>Draft Financial Accounts 2023/24</p> <p>10.1 DL confirmed that the Draft Financial Accounts had been agreed by the Audit & Risk Committee and were being brought before the Board for approval.</p> <p>10.2 DL confirmed for CS that further discussion with HR and payroll is underway to address the note made by Audit that there is a gap in staff records.</p> <p>10.3 CM confirmed that the Accounts had been presented to the SCC Shareholder Board on 14 October and that SCC were aware of the accounts and there had been no questions.</p> <p>10.4 Recommendations:</p> <p>i) The Board approved the Financial Statements for 2023/24.</p> <p>ii) The Board noted the report to the Board and the external audit management letter comments.</p> <p>iii) The Board noted the Letter of Representation from the Company from Sumer Auditco Limited and authorised the Chair and the Company Secretary to sign the letter on behalf of the Company.</p>	
11.	<p>Reserves Policy Update</p> <p>11.1 DL confirmed that the Reserves Policy had been agreed by the Audit & Risk Committee and that no changes had been made since the Board had approved the Policy last year.</p> <p>11.2 Recommendation:</p> <p>i) The Board approved the Reserves Policy.</p>	
12	<p>Risk Management Strategy</p> <p>12.1 DL confirmed that the Risk Management Strategy had been agreed by the Audit & Risk Committee and were being brought before the Board for approval.</p>	

<p>12.2</p> <p>i)</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>The Board approved the revised Risk Management Strategy.</p>	
<p>13.</p> <p>13.1</p> <p>13.2</p> <p>i)</p>	<p>Performance Management Framework</p> <p>DL confirmed that the Performance Management Framework had been agreed by the Audit & Risk Committee and were being brought before the Board for approval.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>The Board approved the revised Performance Management Strategy.</p>	
<p>14.</p> <p>14.1</p> <p>14.2</p> <p>14.3</p> <p>14.4</p> <p>14.5</p>	<p>Business Plan Update</p> <p>DL provided an overview of the report.</p> <p>AJ sought clarity as to whether there is a demonstrable link from the subcategories in the action plan to the 5 Consumer Standard themes. DL noted that each element links back to a theme. AJ requested that the action plan is updated to show which element is associated with which theme. AJ noted that if it is easily demonstrable in the action plan this will make it easier for the Regulator. DL to amend to cross reference each element with the relevant theme.</p> <p>RE noted that SEH will need to demonstrate to the Regulator how well we know our tenants and their needs. SL confirmed that there is currently a temporary resource working to update tenant data. The sign-up process and tenancy audits have been amended to ensure that as much data as possible is recorded for tenants. The Comms team are currently working with ICT to introduce a resident portal where tenants will be able to update their data.</p> <p>There was discussion regarding how tenants could be incentivised to provide updated information on their circumstances.</p> <p>JN suggested that if tenants were to update their data and it was discovered that they were overcrowded, ie where household members had increased, then assistance could be given to address a change in housing need. SL noted that this could also work the other way with tenants potentially under occupying a property following a change in household.</p>	<p>DL</p>

14.6	PP suggested that getting tenants involved in the community charity could help with incentivisation. It was noted that the charity is currently in its infancy and currently bidding for funding, but tenants are engaged in the community by the work undertaken with ATF and the Resident Engagement team.	
14.7	DL confirmed for MB that the process of bringing the complaints into a central team has commenced. A phased approach is being undertaken which has started with the central team investigating repairs related complaints.	
14.8	CM confirmed that the Business Plan had been taken to SCC Shareholder Board on 14 October and that the comments had been positive.	
14.9	Recommendation:	
i)	The Board noted South Essex Homes Business Plan for 2023 to 2026 and the associated Action Plan.	
15.	Minutes of Audit & Risk Committee meeting held 26 September 2024	
15.1	In DJ's absence RE provided an outline of discussion at the Audit & Risk Committee. It was noted that the December Committee meeting would be Chaired by RE in his capacity as Vice Chair and that JD would Chair the next meeting following his attendance as a full Board member at the January Board meeting.	
15.2	The Board noted the Minutes from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting 26 September 2024.	



Chris March
Chair of Board

Date 23.1.25