

Income Focus Group

1st May 2026

Minutes of Meeting

Attendance: Carol Campbell, Keith Ducker, Mike McKenzie, Angie Burrows, Chris McPhillips, Sir James Dudridge, Sarah Gallagher & Lauren Anderson

		Action
1	Welcome	
	LA opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and reviewed the agenda.	
2	Apologies	
	Jane Stokes	
3	Sir James Dudridge – provided an overview of his role as a Board Member, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, and Vice Chair of the Board. The Board meets quarterly and is made up of residents, councillors, and four independent directors. Membership can change frequently, particularly among resident and councillor representatives. Board members are typically recruited for their housing sector experience. JD explained that he served as an MP for 20 years, which gave him extensive knowledge of the local area, its communities, and housing-related issues. The Board has two principal committees: the Audit and Risk Committee and the Resident and Remuneration Committee. He described the Vice Chair role as relatively flexible, primarily supporting the Chair, filling any gaps where needed, and providing additional assistance and leadership. He has undertaken a variety of responsibilities within the role, including attending meetings and engaging directly with residents to gain insights beyond performance data and reports. He advised that the Board's main responsibilities are to set the strategic direction for South Essex Homes, monitor organisational performance, and hold the executive team to account. Board members do not have executive responsibilities; instead, they dedicate approximately half a day per week to the role, providing oversight, asking constructive questions, and bringing external experience and perspectives to support effective governance.	
3	Minutes of last Meeting	
	The previous minutes were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record. Completed actions from last meeting: Budget Planner and Quick User Guide • SG and LA will develop this with members of the IFG.	

	Resident Engagement and Roadshow Development • Sarah confirmed plans for an estate day involving multiple teams and service areas. The event will take place at Saxon Gardens and include a bingo-style engagement activity, where residents can collect stamps from different service teams and receive a fish and chips voucher upon completion. • Smaller "Meet and Greet" sessions will also be held, with the next event scheduled at Cecil Court from 4.00pm to 6.00pm. A further event is planned for Longbow and Sherwood Way in August. Artwork is also being developed for the entrance to the building. Sandpiper Hall Meeting with HCST • A meeting at Sandpiper Hall with HCST has now been arranged. The group discussed the recent volunteering initiative, and SG confirmed there will be a second phase. MM gave positive feedback on the volunteering day, stating that the transformation of the community hall was phenomenal. SG also advised that she has approached Axis with the idea of designing signage for Sandpiper Hall to improve visibility, as the hall blends into the wider estate. Board Member Attendance • Two Board Members attended the meeting as requested. Action completed. Promoting the IFG on Electronic Notice Boards • SG is working with Julia, Communications Manager, to develop a strategy for displaying IFG information clearly and appropriately on electronic notice boards. A further update will be provided at the next meeting. Voicescape Automation • LA provided members with an overview of the Voicescape system and its automated communication functions. Resident Portal Access and Payments • KD raised the accessibility of the resident portal, including ease of finding information and making payments. Use of Voicescape Campaign Manager • SG highlighted the positive use of Voicescape Campaign Manager for providing timely updates to residents regarding lift breakdowns and other urgent issues. LA confirmed that reports are also generated to identify failed contact attempts, enabling follow-up where required. • AB raised concerns reported by residents who had received incorrect messages through the Voicescape platform. LA explained that a full review had been undertaken and the issue was identified as a staff training error. The messages had been manually created and issued incorrectly and were not related to the automated messaging process. • CC advised that MM had received a message indicating he was in debt when his account was actually in credit. MM stated that the message caused him significant stress and noted that a similar issue had happened to him previously. LA apologised for any distress caused and explained that the issue resulted from a staff training error rather than the automated system. LA confirmed that the Service Manager had spoken directly with MM about the matter. • MM explained that, due to his health, he may need to record calls to help him understand and revisit information provided. He also raised concerns about a recent interaction with a staff member and noted that previous experiences at Baxter	
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	Avenue had heightened his anxiety. He explained that he sometimes requires information to be repeated to aid understanding. CC acknowledged supporting MM during a particularly difficult situation. - SG suggested arranging a visit from a Housing Support Officer to discuss MM's concerns and updating internal alert systems to ensure appropriate support is considered during future interactions. Displaying Local Contact Information - SG suggested displaying details of the TSO, HSO and Income Officer at Sandpiper Hall. This will be linked with CC's work. CM suggested extending the same approach to other notice boards. Electronic Notice Boards in Sheltered Housing - MM suggested introducing electronic notice boards within sheltered housing schemes, including information about the MySEH resident portal. KD advised that once the tower block programme has been completed, SEH will assess whether notice boards can also be installed in sheltered schemes. Action: SG to develop a paper leaflet as an alternative communication method. Use of Drones for Roof Inspections - MM suggested using drones to inspect roofs to reduce the costs associated with scaffolding and access equipment. KD confirmed this had been explored previously but agreed to raise the suggestion at the next Board meeting. Action: KD to provide feedback from the Board. Positive Customer Service Feedback - Positive feedback received from residents was shared with the Contact Centre as a "pat on the back". All staff members are able to view this recognition. Feedback from the Big Conversation - The group discussed engagement with families. SG confirmed that work is ongoing with ATF, including Leapfrog sessions and broader family engagement activities. The next Big Conversation event is scheduled for December. Further engagement work will also be undertaken with residents living in temporary accommodation. SEH Rewards Points Scheme - SG advised that residents who participate in activities such as focus groups and engagement opportunities can receive SEH reward points. Resident Portal Feedback - Positive feedback was received regarding the resident portal. LA advised that the portal will continue to be developed and improved based on resident feedback and involvement. Fraud Prevention Query - MM raised a query regarding a recent article in the Echo concerning fraud detection and prevention. It was confirmed that SEH had no involvement in the story. SCC's Fraud Team routinely reviews accounts that are in credit by more than £1,000. Concerns Regarding Sandpiper Estate - CC raised concerns about issues caused by some residents allocated properties on the Sandpiper Estate, including reports of anti-social behaviour. SG explained that SHE does not control housing allocations. However, SG confirmed that the concerns would be discussed with HCST and the Tenancy Team, with feedback to be provided at the next meeting.	
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4	<u>Performance Update</u>	
	A performance handout was distributed, and the year-end performance data was reviewed. LA advised that overall performance had been positive however we continue to strive to improve income collection. LA also explained that the revised former tenant arrears policy and procedure is currently awaiting Board approval. LA invited feedback from members: AB queried the percentage of residents in arrears after eight weeks. LA explained that performance in this area has improved, with the percentage reducing from 39% in 2025 to 33% in March 2026. LA advised that, at the tenancy sign-up stage, residents are informed of their tenancy conditions, available payment options, and sources of support. Early intervention checks are also carried out to identify and address potential issues as soon as possible. JD asked what checks are undertaken with new residents during their introductory tenancy. SG and LA explained that a new tenant visit is completed shortly after the tenancy starts, followed by a nine-month review visit. During these visits, officers explore any support needs, ensure residents are receiving the correct benefit entitlements, and discuss any other concerns. LA further explained that where there is a breach of tenancy during the introductory tenancy period, the tenancy can be extended by a further six months. KD suggested that leaflets be issued prior to Christmas to encourage residents to keep their rent accounts up to date. Action: LA/SG to explore this proposal. KD also advised that feedback he has received from residents indicates that many do not read Insight. SG explained that Insight is a resident-focused magazine that includes a range of useful information and updates. It was suggested that it could be promoted further through meet-and-greet events and estate days. Action: SG to discuss this with Julia Pack and the Editorial Panel. SG advised that feedback from the High-Rise Focus Group has been very positive and that this will be featured in the upcoming edition of Insight. JD suggested that information should be simplified and condensed where possible, and that consideration should be given to measuring how many residents are reading Insight and identifying ways to increase engagement. Action: SG to raise this with Julia Pack and the Editorial Board. MM asked whether demographic information is reviewed to identify trends and improve resident engagement. LA confirmed that demographic data is regularly used to support engagement activities, with particular focus on key demographic groups and identified hotspot areas.	
8	<u>Any other Business</u>	
	Discussed time allocation for IFG meetings, members agreed 2 hours is sufficient.	
9	<u>Date of next meeting</u>	
	23 rd June 2026 10.30am – 12.30pm committee room 7 – (cancelled due to extreme hot weather)	

Actions from Meeting (to be completed in meeting)

Budget Planner	SG/LA to develop with IFG members
Promotion of myseh portal	SG to discuss with Julia Pack and develop a paper leaflet as an alternative communication method to the electronic notice board
Drones for roof inspections/repairs	KD to take to the board and provide feedback at the next meeting
Sandpiper concerns raised	SG to liaise with HCST and Tenancy Services and provide feedback at the next meeting
Leaflet to encourage payment prior to Christmas	SG/LA to review
Insight magazine resident engagement and promotion of the magazine	SG to raise with Julia Pack and the Editorial Board

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