

TRUST HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Minute of the Board Meeting held on Wednesday 27 May 2020 at 15:30 by Microsoft Teams call

PRESENT:

Board Members

Ali Ross
Gordon Laurie
Karen Cawte
Doreen Inskip
Ian Crawford
Desiree MacLennan

John Burke
Sr Jenny Lindsay
Wendy Wilkinson
Paul McFarlane
Nicky McLaughlin

Officers in Attendance

Rhona McLeod, Chief Executive
Gail Gourlay, Director of Customer Services
Jenny Wallace, Head of Housing & Support
Ian McDonald, Interim Director of Finance
Neil Ferguson, Head of Strategic Services
Peter French, Interim Director of Asset Management
Mary Strathearn, PA / Company Secretary

JOHN BURKE IN THE CHAIR

Agenda Item	Detail
1.	Chair's opening remarks
1.1	John Burke, Vice-Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that we are again holding the Board meeting virtually using Microsoft Teams due to the Coronavirus outbreak.
1.2	He added that Board Members have received a comprehensive board pack and were asked to share any comments and questions prior to the meeting. The only reports that will be presented today are: Item 5 which is a verbal update on Trust's response to COVID-19; Item 6 which relates to the End of Year Results; and Item 7 on Financial Scenario Planning. John highlighted that the scenario planning work that has been undertaken is very important given that the COVID-19 outbreak will be impacting on our tenants and their ability to pay rent, and also on business and supply chains.
2	CEO's Opening Remarks
2.1	Rhona McLeod, Chief Executive, noted it was great to welcome Gail Gourlay back to work and thanked Jenny Wallace who has been covering in the role of Director of Customer Services. Jenny has done a great job in what has been an extremely challenging time. She added that Neil Ash, who is the Head of Asset Management, leaves Trust this week and we have decided not to recruit to this post for the time being.
2.2	Rhona also noted her thanks to Ian McDonald who has provided interim support since the start of the year and has brought a huge amount of expertise. Zoe Purdie starts as Director of Finance & Business Services on Monday and a small number of the staff team will be meeting with her in the office to welcome Zoe to Trust and to make 'virtual induction' plans.
3.	Declarations of Interest
3.1	Wendy Wilkinson noted that for the past 6 weeks she has been working on the COVID-19 testing policy and procedure for the Scottish Government.

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4.	Apologies
4.1	Scot Smith noted his apologies.
5.	<p data-bbox="252 477 722 533">Coronavirus COVID-19 Update</p> <p data-bbox="252 544 1492 611">5.1 Jenny Wallace, Head of Housing & Support Services, reported that we have had 10 tenant deaths related to Coronavirus over all developments since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p data-bbox="252 622 1492 835">5.2 We have had 120 staff members return to work following a COVID-19 absence. Half of those staff members had been isolating due to living in the same household with someone who had symptoms. All office staff are working at home and supporting those on the front line. We have been issuing regular staff guidance as and when government updates are provided together with a live FAQs document which answers all questions that have been sent to the designated COVID-19 inbox.</p> <p data-bbox="252 869 1492 981">5.3 We have a number of office volunteers who have been distributing PPE, undertaking buddy calls to isolated tenants and carrying out shopping tasks. We have also completed check-in calls to all our general needs and amenity tenants.</p> <p data-bbox="252 1014 1492 1193">5.4 Sourcing PPE has been an ongoing issue, but we have not run out of any supplies and have been able to provide staff with what they need to deliver the key services to our tenants. Our development based staff have been outstanding in adhering to the restrictions and have worked flexibly to ensure we provide the best possible service to tenants.</p> <p data-bbox="252 1227 1492 1305">5.5 We have also had to provide regular reporting to Health & Care Partnerships and the Care Inspectorate and this has been quite a time consuming task for staff.</p> <p data-bbox="252 1339 1492 1529">5.6 The rent and allocations teams are working from home and the IT team have been fantastic in helping our office teams get set up to work remotely. The rent team are focused on arrears management as there has been an increase in arrears at end of April of £170k. We are also considering how we can fill our void homes and work to address the growing backlog of voids while we are not able to let homes.</p> <p data-bbox="252 1563 1492 1675">5.7 The Scottish Government has published a route map out of the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. A key theme of the guidance is the Test and Protect programme which we will be closely monitoring as this could impact on our tenants and workforce.</p> <p data-bbox="252 1709 1492 1821">5.8 At our Greenock development we had 2 deaths relating to COVID-19 and this was in the first few weeks of the crisis. Health Protection Scotland did not class these deaths as a cluster and there were no further cases at the development.</p> <p data-bbox="252 1854 1492 1966">5.7 John enquired about staff morale and noted that development staff have been holding up well for the 9 weeks of lockdown restrictions. He wondered how long staff can sustain working in such challenging times.</p> <p data-bbox="252 2000 1492 2101">5.8 Jenny acknowledged it is a challenge, but it has been great to see the whole staff team really pulling together to provide support to each other and working flexibly to deliver services.</p>

Agenda Item	Detail
5.9	John asked how the tenants are coping with the lockdown restrictions. Jenny shared that we are sign-posting tenants to local agencies for additional support and we have organised buddy calls to those tenants who are isolated. As we move to phase 1 out of the lockdown, we may have issues with socially distanced visits in the development gardens if all tenants have visitors at the same time, but we are briefing staff on how to manage this.
5.10	Peter French, Interim Director of Asset Management, advised that we have carried out on average 150 emergency repairs a week. The repairs team is sitting with a list of 220 other repairs to be carried out once restrictions are loosened. We have reintroduced gas servicing and are carrying out repairs and maintenance on fire alarms and heating systems in communal areas.
5.11	Going forward we are reviewing, in line with government guidance, how we will carry out routine work in occupied properties. This may mean we will only go to properties where tenants are happy with us accessing their home.
5.12	In relation to our newbuild programme, our contractor at Kirkintilloch is getting ready to open up the building site. We are happy for this to happen as long as the contractor can satisfy us that it is safe to do so and that appropriate social distancing and hygiene guidance is followed.
5.13	Peter wanted to note his thanks to the property team who have been doing a great job and extended his thanks to the IT team who have been supporting staff to work remotely.
5.14	Decision: Noted the verbal update provided at the meeting and the business continuity planning that has taken place.
6.	<i>Year End Accounts & Financial Review – see private minutes.</i>
7.	<i>Financial Scenarios Planning – see private minutes.</i>
8.	<i>COVID-19 Risk Register – see private minutes.</i>
9.	<i>Rent Account Management Proposal – see private minutes.</i>
10.	<i>Reduction To Asset Management Project Spend For 2020/21 – see private minutes.</i>
11.	<p data-bbox="244 1749 1485 1805">Governance Update</p> <p data-bbox="244 1816 1485 1939">11.1 Mary Strathearn, Company Secretary, advised this report was for noting and highlighted that the main issue is around holding the AGM in September but we will seek legal advice and provide update at July Board meeting.</p> <p data-bbox="244 1951 1485 2051">11.2 Gordon noted that he was comfortable with emergency arrangements that were outlined in the report.</p> <p data-bbox="244 2063 1485 2107">Decision: Noted the contents of the report.</p>

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11.4	Decision: Agreed that the current emergency arrangements contained with our Standing Orders are fit for purpose.
11.5	Decision: Noted the April SHR monthly return submission.
11.6	Decision: Noted the invite to join the virtual Governance Working Group meetings to be held over the summer.
12.	Bank Signatories
12.1	Ian McDonald, Interim Director of Finance, updated that the banking mandates require Zoe Purdie to be added as she starts with Trust as Director of Finance & Business Services on Monday.
12.2	Rhona advised Fiona Beattie will remain as a signatory for the time being as she has agreed to stay on with Trust until the end of June to help with Zoe's induction. This is especially helpful given the current situation we face with Coronavirus. Fiona will be able to share all her sector experience and understanding of Trust's financial models and the background to the banking covenants and this will allow Zoe to get up to speed as quickly as possible.
12.3	Gordon asked if the Board can give approval in advance to remove Fiona when she does leave Trust so we don't have to revisit the bank signatories again. Rhona offered to take this action off-line.
	Decision: Noted the content of this report and appendices.
12.4	Decision: Approved the new Santander minute at Appendix 1 & signatory mandate at Appendix 2.
12.5	Decision: Approved the new Nationwide Signatory Mandate at Appendix 3.
12.6	Decision: Approved the new RBS minute at Appendix 4 & signatory mandate at Appendix 5.
12.7	
13.	Health & Safety Statement
13.1	Mary advised that now John had replaced Heather as Chairperson of the Board, we had to update the Health & Safety Statement to reflect this change.
13.2	Decision: Approved the updated Health and Safety Policy Statement, in compliance with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, signed by our new Chair, John Burke and Rhona McLeod, Chief Executive.
14.	Minutes for approval and noting
14.1	Board Meetings – 26 March 2020 – approved.
15.	Action Tracker

Agenda Item	Detail
15.1	Discussion held on which items could be removed / greyed out on the action tracker and updates given on outstanding items.
16.	Any Other Business
16.1	John wanted to note thanks on behalf of the Board to Ian McDonald for his time and efforts with Trust.
17.	Date of next meeting
17.1	Thursday 30 July 2020 (by Microsoft Teams call)