

TRUST HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Minutes of the Board Meeting held on Thursday 20 October 2022 at 15:00 by Microsoft Teams call

PRESENT:

Board Members

Kyle Ruparelia
Steve McGowan
Gordon Laurie
Dr Norval Bryson

David Knight
Ali Ross
Paul McFarlane
Karen Cawte

Officers in Attendance

Rhona McLeod, Chief Executive
Jackie McIntosh, Director of Assets & Sustainability
Zoe Purdie, Director of Finance & People
Neil Ferguson, Director of Business Development & Digital
Gail Gourlay, Director of Customer Experience
Mary Strathearn, PA/Company Secretary

DR NORVAL BRYSON IN THE CHAIR

Agenda Item	Detail
1.	Chair's Opening Remarks
1.1	Dr Norval Bryson, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He acknowledged that the environment has changed since our September Board meeting and, in particular, that Heat with Rent (HWR) does not come into conflict with the Scottish Government's rent freeze legislation. The first discussion today is a proposal on consulting with tenants on a mid-year HWR increase and plans for the next financial year.
1.2	The second item is our newbuild project at Langlands, Govan. The Board has been well briefed on this opportunity but today we are faced with a decision to proceed. We are in challenging economic times however we do have in place the bLEND financing to cover this project.
1.3	Our last item is the Annual Assurance Statement and this has involved the wider Board and senior management who have been taken through a thorough approach to self-assessment against the regulatory standards of governance.
2.	Chief Executive's Opening Remarks
2.1	Rhona McLeod, Chief Executive, advised that we are keeping up with the recent rent legislation and what this means for Trust. We have held a meeting of the Chair's Support Group to share with our office bearers the current financial position and to provide assurance that we are doing all that we can to mitigate these challenging times. Rhona added that we are planning to spend a lot of time at the upcoming Board away days considering the impact of the cost of living crisis. Rhona noted that the key pressures derive from inflation which is currently at 10.1%, the cost of energy and the cost of borrowing in the future. There is also uncertainty around the level of pension and benefits increases and this will directly impact our customers.
2.2	In relation to the Scottish Government's Rent Controls and Evictions (Cost of Living Tenant Protection) Scotland Bill, there was a lot of angst and lobbying from the social rented sector and the outlook has appeared to become a little bit more positive. Patrick

<p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p> <p>2.5</p>	<p>Harvey MSP has provided a response to our lobbying letter which indicates that the challenges faced by the social rented sector in the event of a continuing rent freeze are recognised.</p> <p>At the Board away days we will present our financial modelling on what rent increases may look like and how different scenarios will impact on the business. We will also consider our Net Zero ambitions and what effect a restricted rent increase will have on this work.</p> <p>David Knight queried about going out to tenants on a rent consultation. Rhona shared that both the SHR and Scottish Government have positively encouraged RSLs to proceed with rent consultation with tenants.</p> <p>Norval asked whether Rhona thought the RSL sector would collectively sign up to a rent increase figure. Rhona advised it would be very difficult to achieve a collective rent increase across the whole sector as each organisation is so different. She noted there has been lot of partnership working together between RSLs on this particular matter which was very positive.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>3.1</p>	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from Ian Mitchelmore, Mary Niven, Ian Gunning & Nicky McLaughlin.</p>
<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p>	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None.</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p> <p>7.4</p> <p>7.5</p>	<p>AAS 2021-22</p> <p>Mary Strathearn, Company Secretary, explained that it is a regulatory requirement that RSLs must submit an Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) and today she was asking for formal approval from the Board to sign off the statement included within the boardpack.</p> <p>Mary noted that this is the fourth year carrying out the self-assessment into the 7 standards of governance. This year we included a greater number of Board Members in the process which strengthens our approach to self-assessment having more voices around the table to input ideas. Mary suggested following this same approach next year.</p> <p>The overall assessment from the 3 workshops held was that Trust is fully compliant with the regulatory standards of governance.</p> <p>Mary wished to highlight a few points within the AAS. Firstly around COVID-19, we were not required to officially report on the pandemic, however the impact on Trust is still apparent across the business, so we felt it was important to make reference in this year's statement.</p> <p>In relation to equalities data, last August the regulator published guidance on gathering equalities data. A substantial amount of work has been done over the last year to gather and embed this data into appropriate systems. There is one area outstanding in Customer Experience around Care / Personal Plans but we have been working with the</p>

	service re-design team in how to shape this process and collect the equalities data from our Sheltered and Housing with Care customers.
7.6	This year the regulator has asked that RSLs should report within the AAS whether there are any outstanding Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs) which could be due to external factors such as the pandemic or supply chain issues. For Trust, we had 1824 properties for which to undertake EICRs and we have attended 79% and have successfully gained access and completed EICRs at 67%. There are 605 remaining properties to complete EICRs at and we aim to have this concluded by the end of the calendar year.
7.7	Mary advised that as in previous years we have compiled a list of improvement actions and have had some actions carried forward due to delays caused by the pandemic. The key point of approval today was around the AAS and Mary was happy to take any feedback on the process or comments from the Board. The next steps are to publish the AAS on our website, submit to the regulator and publicise in a Trust Talk newsletter article.
7.8	Norval asked what the mechanism was should we have to make changes to our AAS within the year. Mary noted that if the Board or any Trust colleagues felt we were not compliant with the regulatory standards, this would be indicated to the senior team and/or Mary. We would then need to notify the SHR of any non-compliance that would mean our AAS is not valid.
7.9	Gordon referred to the outstanding EICRs and asked how confident we were that we can complete this work. Jackie advised that she was confident we can make this target by the end of the year. She noted that some of our properties are remote and, for example, our contractors have struggled to get a booking on a ferry to travel to our island properties and this has caused some of the delays.
7.10	Decision: Noted the contents of the report.
7.11	Decision: Acknowledged the self-assessment work undertaken and evidence bank collated.
7.12	Decision: Confirmed assurance that Trust has been working towards having appropriate systems in place for the collection of equalities data and that we are working towards using this data to take account of equality and human rights issues in our decisions, policy-making and day-to-day service delivery.
7.13	Decision: Confirmed assurance that Trust is working to be fully compliant in completing Electrical Installation Condition Reports across all Trust properties and this work will be completed by the end 2022.
7.14	Decision: Confirmed assurance against the statutory regulations of governance and financial management.
7.15	Decision: Approved the Annual Assurance Statement and that the Statement be signed by the Chairperson on behalf of the Board and submitted to SHR.
7.16	Decision: Approved that the Annual Assurance Statement is published on Trust's website and in Trust Talk.

<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p> <p>8.4</p> <p>8.5</p>	<p>Meeting Dates 2023</p> <p>Mary advised that the proposed meeting dates for next year were shared within the Board pack. Today she was seeking approval for the meeting schedule for 2023 and also for the proposal around holding the Board away days in-house next year as a cost saving measure. All were happy to support the proposals.</p> <p>Gordon asked if we can we can add in the special Board meeting for October to the Board meeting schedule as we will need to approve the AAS for next year. Mary agreed to do this.</p> <p>Norval shared that although we are agreeing to in-house away days next year due to the challenges of the cost of living, it is important that the Board can meet informally with each other and the senior team as this is a key way of building strong team dynamics. Mary has been tasked to think of how as a Board we can achieve this.</p> <p>Decision: Approved the meeting dates and arrangements for 2023.</p> <p>Decision: Approved the proposal to have our Board away days in-house at the Training Academy at the Glasgow office next year.</p>
<p>9.</p> <p>9.1</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>None.</p>
<p>10.</p> <p>10.1</p>	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Thursday 1 December 2022 (in the Edinburgh office).</p>