



West Lothian Housing Partnership (SC188968)

MEETING OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

held by videoconference

on Wednesday 12 August 2020 at 14.00

Directors Present: John Hill (Chair), Lesley Bloomer, Gregor Dunlay, Mairi Martin, Judith McGlashan

In Attendance: Olga Clayton (Group Director of Housing and Care), Stephen Wright (Deputy Group Company Secretary), Lynsey Fotheringham (Head of Housing), Morgan Kingston (Finance Manager), Professor Graeme Roy (in part, Fraser of Allander Institute)

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence. It was noted that non-attending members had been issued with the Board papers and given the opportunity to provide feedback to the Chair.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Board noted the standing declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Board Meeting held on 9 July 2020 and matters arising

Decided: The Board approved the minute of the meeting held on 9 July 2020.

4. Fraser of Allander Institute – Covid 19 economic impact (Presentation)

The Board received a presentation from Professor Graeme Roy on the economic impact of Covid 19, including: the channels of impact and duration; the potential shapes of the economic recovery and associated impacts such as the uneven impact on different segments and regions of the labour market, particularly on lower paying sectors; and how our existing strategy stands, with the key areas of focus remaining valid but the delivery and timing likely to require refinement.

The Board discussed the potential impact on communities in West Lothian and in the Edinburgh area. This included a discussion about the benefit increasing affordable housing could have on the local economy. The Board also considered the increase in home working and how we can ensure that our new build properties accommodate this.

The Board considered the use of community benefit clauses in our contracts and reinforced the need to continue promoting these to help create opportunities for our customers.

Decided: The Board noted the contents of the presentation.

5. Mobilisation of Services update

The Board received an update on our staged approach to remobilising our business operations as the current restrictions ease.

The Board was informed about the conversations we were holding with customers to try and help support them through this difficult time, particularly those currently on furlough or who had been made redundant. It was noted that we would also continue to monitor rent arrears to ensure we can provide support to those who are unable to pay.

The Board noted the continuing success of the Eatwell service and our proposal to move towards a voucher scheme as part of our remobilisation of the existing service.

Decided: The Board noted contents of the report and that a further update would be provided at the next meeting October.

6. Homelessness update (Presentation only)

The Board received a detailed update on: our response to homelessness across Group; the Scottish context; Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG); homeless direction and policy; our own contribution; and the impact of Covid-19 for letting and services.

The Board discussed the complex nature of homelessness and different approaches taken by each Local Authority in setting letting targets for their area. The Board noted the particular challenge with housing supply in the east of Scotland. It was explained that we remain engaged at a national and local level in relation to homelessness policy.

Decided: The Board noted the contents of the presentation.

7. Customer satisfaction surveys 2020/21

The Board discussed the proposed approach to assessing customer satisfaction for the 2020/21 period, considering the impact of Covid-19.

Decided: The Board

- 1) agreed the proposed approach to gathering customer feedback for 2020/21; and**
- 2) agreed that the 2019/20 formal ARC survey results will be reported in the 2020/21 returns to the Scottish Housing regulator, as is permitted within regulatory guidance.**

8. Development update

The Board considered the update provided including new build programme performance and programme highlights.

The Board noted that 83 new build homes had been completed last year and congratulated officers on this achievement. The Board received an update on the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on our development programme and the three sites which had been affected by lockdown. The Board was informed about the change to working practices which had been introduced in the construction industry to try and maintain social distancing. The Board was informed that we were currently reviewing potential new development opportunities and would provide a further update if these were considered to be worth pursuing.

Decided: The Board noted the content of the report.

9a. 2019/20 Financial Statements

The Board received a report regarding our 2019/20 financial statements and noted the £335k surplus for the year;

The Board scrutinised the financial statements including the change to the actuarial valuation of the pension liabilities. The Board also welcomed the unqualified opinion from the external auditors.

Decided: The Board

- 1) approved the 2019/20 financial statements**
- 2) confirmed the preparation of the financial statements using the going concern basis;**
- 3) delegated authority to the Chair and Group Director of Finance to approve any non-material changes to the accounts; and**
- 4) approved the letter of representation from the auditors, and noted the related letter of comfort from the Chief Executive.**

9b. Annual Internal Audit Report and Assurance Statement 2019/20

The Board considered the annual internal audit report and assurance statement, following assurance work completed and reported during financial year 2019/20. The Board welcomed the report and the assurance it provided.

Decided: The Board noted the contents of the report along with the overall Annual Internal Audit opinion.

10. Finance Report

The Board scrutinised the management accounts for the period to 30 June 2020. Reported a statutory deficit of £135k to the end of period 3, which was £138k favourable to budget.

Decided: The Board noted the Finance report for the period to 30 June 2020.

11. 2020 SHR Five Year Financial Projections

The Board received an update on our financial projections. The Board considered the changes that had been made to the forecast financial projections presented to the Board in July 2020. It was noted that these had been updated to reflect the final audited results for 2019/20 as reported in the statutory accounts. It was also noted that the projections had been reviewed against the outturn figures for the first quarter of the current year and forecast for the remainder of the year (and revised for any material changes).

The Board noted our performance against the loan covenants, which loan covenants are calculated at a group level.

Decided: The Board

**1) noted the update on the financial projections, including the impact of the actual results for 2019/20 as reported in the Statutory Accounts; and
2) approved the summary sheet and accompanying financial data and projections at Appendix 1 and authorised these to be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator**

12. Governance update

The Board received an update on the following governance related matters:

- 2020 Annual General Meeting arrangements;
- Secretary's report;
- Constitutional changes
- Board arrangements and cycle for the remainder of 2020; and
- Scottish Housing Regulator consultation on the Regulatory Framework

The Board considered the proposed constitutional change which would permit the Chair to extend their tenure with the prior approval of the parent, Wheatley Housing Group Limited. It was noted that this change was being sought to try and help ensure continuity of leadership during the pandemic, the end of which remains uncertain.

Decided: The Board

**1) Approved the proposed resolution at 5.13 to change our Articles of Association;
2) Agreed to call the Annual General Meeting for 23 September 2020 at 18.30 to be held virtually via Zoom;
3) Agreed to recommend John Hill, Mairi Martin, Bryan Sheriff, Gregor Dunlay, Alan McCloskey and Gordon Smith for re-appointment at the AGM, subject to Parent approval;
4) Noted the confirmation from the Secretary that Articles 62-67 have been followed
5) Agreed to call an 'Special General Meeting for 23 September 2020 at 18.20 am to be held virtually via Zoom to pass the special resolution to amend our Articles of Association**

13. AOCB

There was no other competent business