



**West Lothian Housing Partnership (SC188968)**

**MEETING OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
By Zoom videoconference  
on Wednesday 10 November 2021 at 14.00**

Directors present: Mairi Martin (Chair), Lesley Bloomer, Judith MacGlashan, Bryan Sheriff, Gordon Smith and Gregor Dunlay.

In attendance: Olga Clayton (Group Director of Housing and Care), Stephen Wright (Deputy Group Company Secretary), Lynsey Fotheringham (Head of Housing), Lyndsay Brown (Financial Controller) and (in part) Elspeth Lang (Development Manager), Kirsty Ward (Group Universal Credit Lead) Helen Berry (Head of Assurance), Stephen Devine (Director of Assets and Sustainability)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Lesley-Anne Williams and Alan McCloskey.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

The Board noted the standing declarations of interest. No new declarations were made.

**3. Minutes of Board Meeting held on 22 September 2021 and matters arising**

**Decided: The Board approved the minute of the meeting held on 22 September 2021 subject to the following addition at item 6 on page 6 (Revive project):**

In discussing the project, the Board noted that this pilot was currently available to women only. It was noted that woman are statistically much more likely to experience domestic abuse than other genders. The Board considered that if the pilot is extended that we should seek to include all genders.

**4. Tenant consultation feedback**

The Board received an updated on the tenant consultation that had been undertaken in relation to our proposed new operating and engagement model, including: new Customer First Centre, more services being delivered in our communities and customers' homes, improved online digital engagement and self-service, new hubs.

The Board considered the consultation response and welcomed the tenant support for the proposals, noting that:

- 98% of respondents supported plans to introduce a new way of working and delivering services; and
- 97% of respondents believed the planned new way of engagement would make it more open and accessible for tenants to get involved and have their say

The Board also discussed the response rate of approximately 15% and asked that we try to maintain or exceed this in the future.

#### **Decided: The Board**

- 1) noted the outcome of the consultation on our new operating and engagement models;
- 2) in light of the views expressed by tenants, agreed that we should proceed with implementation of the proposals including:
  - Implementing the new Customer First Centre from 1 December 2021;
  - Commencing the recruitment of 50 tenants to be involved in our engagement activity; and
  - Incorporating £179k into the business plan for customer priorities.

#### **5. New build mid-year review**

The Board received a report on our new build programme performance for the year to date including:

- 188 unit completions projected for the current financial year (146 at Almondvale and 42 at Jarvey Street);
- 222 units on site and under construction (20 at Winchburgh 'O' and 14 at Blackness Road, in addition to those at Almondvale and Jarvey Street)
- One project due on site (81 units at Winchburgh BB)
- One project in our 5-year development plan which was scheduled to be considered by the Group Development Committee at its meeting on 18 November (63 units at Raw Holdings, East Calder of which 38 would be for social rent and 25 units for mid-market rent which would be built under contract for Lowther Homes)

The Board received an update on the impact of Brexit and Covid on material supply and delivery and the effect on construction costs across the construction sector which we continued to monitor. The Board was informed about the contractual protections in place to mitigate risk of cost increases.

The Board discussed the Jarvey Street litigation and requested that information be provided on: legal fees incurred to date, process for approving any settlement and court timetable following the hearing scheduled for 24 November 2021. The Board also discussed the importance of managing our reputation throughout the case including being prepared to respond to any adverse media coverage.

#### **Decided: The Board noted the report.**

## 6. a) 2022 rent setting

The Board received a report on the proposed rent setting for 2022/23 including:-

- Range of 2022/23 rent and general service charge increases for consultation
- How we intend to consult with tenants
- Mid-year update on financial projections and key indicators

The Board discussed the report, financial pressures facing our tenants and affordability assessments that had been modelled using the proposed rent options. The Board also discussed the fluctuation in inflation and increase in construction material prices that affected our repairs and maintenance costs. The Board discussed the range of options and customer consultation that would be undertaken on the additional projects that could be carried out should customers support either of the two higher options.

Having scrutinised the proposed range of options the Board was satisfied about the balance struck between affordability for tenants, taking into account inflation and costs rises.

### **Decided: The Board**

- 1) **agreed the proposed range of rent and service charge increase options for consultation with tenants excluding ex Barony stock as follows: 1.9%, 2.4% and 2.9%**
- 2) **agreed that ex-Barony stock is consulted on a 2% rent and service charge increase in line with ballot commitments: and**
- 3) **approved the approach to rent consultation set out in this report and noted that the results of consultation will be presented to the Board in February 2022 to enable final rent decisions to be made.**

## b) Benefit uptake campaign (presentation)

The Board received a presentation providing information about the range of benefits that some of our tenants are entitled to and how we can assist them to access these. The Board was also provided with an overview of tools and partnerships we have in place to raise awareness of the types of these benefits. In addition, the Board was updated on the Wheatley Works employability programme and examples of customers who have benefited from this.

**Decided: The Board noted the presentation.**

## 7. Repairs update and revised policy

The Board received a report on our repairs service and plans for its development, including our new repairs and maintenance policy framework. The Board was provided with a summary of the current demand for repairs, which has increased significantly since the Covid lockdown had ended and which had remained high.

The Board considered the report and noted that many of our customers considered repairs to be the most important service we provide. The Board also considered the proposal to support customers to carry out certain DIY jobs themselves, if they wish to do so. It was explained that this responded to

feedback from some customer groups that they would prefer to take more control of their home and its maintenance.

The Board noted the proposal to align the repairs service even more closely with the Customer First Centre and to increase the use of digital technology, such as booking and changing repairs online as well as tracking progress and providing real-time feedback.

**Decided: The Board**

- 1) noted the update; and
- 2) approved the WLHP Repairs & Maintenance Policy Framework at Appendix 1.

## **8. Independent review of pandemic response**

The Board received and welcomed a report from Campbell Tickell on Wheatley Group's response to the pandemic.

**Decided: The Board noted the report.**

## **9. 2021 Group Annual Assurance Statement**

The Board received a report on the Group's Annual Assurance Statement which had been approved for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator and was provided with assurance that we were materially compliant with:

- All relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the SHR's Regulatory Framework
- All relevant standard in the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Taking into account the guidance and restrictions relating to Covid 19 pandemic over the course of the reporting period, all relevant legislative duties

The Board was also provided with an update on the plans to implement an effective approach to the collection of equalities information.

**Decided: The Board noted the 2021 Group Annual Assurance Statement.**

## **10. Performance report quarter 2 2021/22**

The Board received a performance update to the end of quarter 2, 2021/22. The Board noted the stable progress against many of our performance targets and strategic measures. The Board also noted the particularly strong performance in relation to rent and arrears which had helped mitigate the financial impact of the pandemic.

**Decided: The Board noted the report.**

## **11. Finance report**

The Board scrutinised the financial information for the period to 30 September 2021, including the latest 2021/22 forecast.

**Decided: The Board noted the management accounts for the year period to 30 September 2021 at Appendix 1.**

## **12. Corporate risk register**

The Board received and reviewed a revised corporate risk register.

**Decided: The Board reviewed and approved the revised Corporate Risk Register.**

## **13. Assurance update**

The Board received an update on the assurance work carried out during quarter 1 and quarter 2. The Board noted the report and confirmation that there were no significant issues arising from the reviews carried out during the period that required to be highlighted to the Board.

**Decided: The Board noted the report.**

## **14. AOCB**

A Board member asked that we include a summary of the immediate business priorities on a rolling 6-monthly basis.

**I certify that the above minute has been approved as a true and accurate reflection of the proceedings.**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair)**

## Action List

No.	Business	Lead	Status
Item 3, Nov 2021	Minute – update re: discussion about pilot programme on domestic abuse	SW	Updated
Item 5, Nov 2021	Development update – information on Jarvey St litigation inc. legal fees, court process, settlement process	EL	February 2022 (post-court hearing re: court process)
Item 10, Nov 2021	Performance – analysis on complaints	LF	February/March 2022
AOCB, Nov 2021	Identify 6-monthly rolling priorities	LF	February 2022 – pending outcome of partnership proposal discussions