

TRUST HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Minutes of the Special Board Meeting held on Wednesday 18th October 2023 At Watermark Business Park, 345 Govan Road, Glasgow G51 2SE.

PRESENT:

Board Members

Gordon Laurie
Steve McGowan
Sharron Elsdon
Ian Mitchelmore

David Knight
Ali Ross
Paul McFarlane
Laura Bornatici

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
Jenny Wallace, Director of Customer Experience
Claire Mottram, Governance & Business Support Manager (Company Secretary)

GORDON LAURIE IN THE CHAIR

Agenda Item	Detail
1.	Chair's Opening Remarks
1.1	Gordon Laurie, Vice Chair, welcomed everyone to the Special Board Meeting and noted that Dr Norval Bryson, Chair, has submitted his apologies for today's meeting.
1.2	Gordon acknowledged that this meeting was being held at the end of their first Autumn Strategic Away Day, with Day 2 to follow on Thursday 19 th October. Gordon expressed his hope that, like he, the Board were all reflecting on an interesting and enjoyable first day. Gordon remarked on both the excellent external speakers and internal topics covered, which proved useful and fascinating. Gordon advised that he was personally very pleased to hear the session run by Sarah Holland, Head of People & OD, on employee engagement and to see the Employee Forum established. The Board welcome the proposal for the Forum to present at a future meeting or away day session.
1.3	Gordon moved on to recognise the recent article in Scottish Housing News around Trust being awarded £120,000 from the Scottish Winter Fuel Support Fund, to help support vulnerable tenants over Winter with warm and energy efficient household items such as heated throws, air fryers and slow cookers. Gordon expressed his thanks to all who were involved in submitting this application and making this happen. Gordon concluded that overall this was a significant amount of money and will make a real difference to our tenants.
1.4	Ali Ross, Board Member, noted that she had seen this on LinkedIn and noted that Trust had been more proactive on the platform recently which was coming across very well. Neil Ferguson, Director of Business Development & Digital remarked on the new Comms and Engagement team and noted that content is lined up in advance for posting on a regular basis.

2.	Chief Executive's Opening Remarks
2.1	Rhona McLeod, Chief Executive, thanked Gordon for his opening remarks and advised that she had no additional comments to note.
3.	Apologies
3.1	Apologies were received from Dr Norval Bryson, Kyle Ruparelia, Graham Curran, Mary Niven and Ian Gunning.
4.	Declarations of Interest
4.1	None.
5.	Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) 2022-23
5.1	Gordon advised that our first substantive item is the AAS and invited Claire Mottram, Company Secretary, to provide an overview of the process that has been followed by Board for 2022-23.
5.2	Claire thanked Gordon for the introduction and first recognised that the majority of Board Members had been involved in the Annual Assurance Review over previous years, but for the benefit of our newer members who have joined more recently, she provided a brief summary of the context, as well as the process followed this year:
5.3	Claire advised that the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) expects RSLs to be self-aware and to self-assess against the seven Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management. Each year, the Board re-convene the Governance Working Group which undertakes a rigorous self-assessment process over three sessions which each focus on 2-3 Standards, as well as the SHR's requested special assurance areas – for 2022/23 these related to Equality Data Collection & Promoting Equality in Practice, as well as Tenant Health and Safety.
5.4	Claire remarked on the benefit of breaking the review down into three sessions, as the method fosters deeper discussion and exploration of the sub-criteria and compliance. Claire added that, this year, there continued to be strong Board Member participation and excellent discussion, with members of the Executive Team present at each of the sessions. Claire noted that the overall conclusion of the Governance Working Group is that the Board should be provided with a strong level of assurance and Trust fully meets the regulatory standards of governance and financial management.
5.5	Claire referred to the full 'self-assessment' track changed documentation in the boardpacks, as well as the 'Governance Improvement Action Plan' which is a tool adopted to strengthen good governance and best practice – the 'Action Plan' records the completion of 8 actions, highlights progress against 9 remaining items, and includes 3 new suggestions to take forward on the back of the 22-23 review. Claire added that a comprehensive, 'supporting evidence bank' held in Microsoft Teams has also been updated as part of the self-assessment.
5.6	Claire referred to the 'Assurance Statement' itself – which is Appendix 1 in the packs - and highlighted the particular references to the 'Cost of Living' crisis, Equalities Data Collection and Tenant Health & Safety. Claire confirmed the working group gave great

	consideration to these factors and noted their confidence in the measures put in place by Trust.
5.7	Claire summarised the work undertaken internally around Equalities data collection and noted that reporting on 'Equality Monitoring Form' responses is routinely refreshed - updated trends with 2023 responses will be brought to Board in December, alongside a refreshed version of our 'Equality Impact Assessment' form.
5.8	Claire advised that she is today asking the Board to acknowledge the robust self-assessment and confirm their assurance that Trust complies with each of the regulatory standards.
5.9	Gordon referred to the 'Action Plan' and the good progress made. Paul McFarlane, Board Member, confirmed that he felt a lot of detail had gone into the process over the years.
5.10	Ian Mitchelmore, Board Member, queried if Trust had received any feedback from the SHR for previous submissions. Rhona advised that each year the SHR visit 12 RSLs and review their AAS as a part of a representative sample - however Trust has not yet been part of this sample group. Claire referred briefly to the recent Thematic Review publication from SHR on how RSLs and LA's complete the Annual Assurance Review and this was shared on the Board Team Site at the time. Claire added that Trust's process is comparable with many of the case studies presented.
5.11	Gordon invited further comments and questions. The Board unanimously agreed to sign off the below recommendations.
5.12	Decision: Noted the contents of the report.
5.13	Decision: Acknowledged the self-assessment work undertaken and evidence bank collated.
5.14	Decision: Confirmed assurance that we have established appropriate systems 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.
5.15	Decision: Confirmed assurance that we meet all of our duties in relation to tenant and resident safety. In particular, we have gained the necessary evidence-based assurance of our compliance in respect of duties relating to gas, electrical, fire, water and lift safety and our obligations relating to asbestos, damp and mould.
5.16	Decision: Confirmed assurance against the statutory regulations of governance and financial management.
5.17	Decision: Approved the Annual Assurance Statement and that the Statement be signed by the Chairperson on behalf of the Board and submitted to SHR (Appendix 1).
5.18	Decision: Approved that the Annual Assurance Statement is published on Trust's website and in Trust Talk.

<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p> <p>6.4</p> <p>6.5</p> <p>6.6</p> <p>6.7</p>	<p>Financial Regulation FR06: Delegated Authority</p> <p>This item was requested for addition following the circulation of the Boardpack. Norval, Chair, approved the addition and tabling of this item on the day. The report and appendix was circulated on the day of the meeting for members. Gordon checked that everyone felt they had the chance to read the item. All members were happy to proceed.</p> <p>Jackie McIntosh, Director of Assets advised that a member of her team – the Development & Remodelling Support Officer – manages the day-to-day medical adaptations programme, for which we currently receive approximately £0.5 million. Jackie added that whilst the role is relatively junior in terms of our structure, this member of her team performs a very important role. Jackie noted that Trust has become more proficient in processing the Stage 3 applications and have made increasingly good use of the grant funding available, and therefore the number of jobs processed has increased, alongside the general value and cost of these jobs.</p> <p>Jackie noted that the ‘Officer’ role has a low level of delegated authority for spend and is repeatedly required to seek line manager approval for these applications to be progressed, therefore slowing down and causing a barrier for this part of the process. Jackie advised that she feels there is an opportunity to streamline the process by increasing the individual’s delegated authority to £35k, as an exception case.</p> <p>Ali queried the level of authority this individual had previously. Zoe Purdie, Director of Finance & People advised that this was set at £500. Zoe noted her agreement with Jackie that given this individual’s experience, the requirement to go to another person for approval seems unnecessary. Zoe compared this to the ‘Energy Officer’ role which has a higher level by exception due to his unique experience and responsibility.</p> <p>Ali queried if it was the role or the individual which will receive the increased authority level of £35k. Jackie confirmed that it would be the role. Zoe agreed and noted that with it being ‘Stage 3’ grant funding, there will also be that additional layer of scrutiny on the spend too externally. Rhona agreed and noted the external verification by the Occupational Therapist and others who will be looking at the requested adaptations and confirming that they are required and beneficial.</p> <p>Gordon queried if the Exec Team were comfortable with this proposal and that they feel it is justified and would not give rise to any unintended consequences. All were in agreement with the proposal.</p> <p>Decision: Approved the attached Financial Regulation FR06 Delegated Authority [V015] including Appendix 1.</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 7 December 2023 (in the Edinburgh office).</p>