

**WHEATLEY HOMES EAST
MINUTE OF BOARD MEETING
held at 5pm on Thursday 8 February 2024
New Mart Road, Edinburgh**

Members Present: Alastair Murray (Chair), Mark Keane, Jane Menzies, Ruth Kynoch, Helen Howden, Heather Macnaughton, Martin Dorby and (in part) Jack Cadell and Anne McGovern

In Attendance: Hazel Young (Group Director of Housing and Property), Laura Henderson (Managing Director), Lyndsay Brown (Director of Financial Reporting), Alex Lamb (Head of Housing), Lynsey Fotheringham (Head of Housing)

Prior to the formal business of the meeting the Board welcomed a member from the Group Scrutiny Panel to discuss the thematic review of repairs communication. The Board welcomed the work undertaken and thanked the thematic panel members for providing an overview of the key findings from the report and supporting action plan. The Board were advised that the thematic group will monitor progress against the action plan in June 2024. The thematic panel commended the cooperation received, the information provided and the access to staff at all levels which had helped inform the review.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Judith MacGlashan. The Chair confirmed the meeting as quorate.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Board noted the standing declarations.

3. a) Minute of the previous meeting held on 23 November 2023 and (b) matters arising

Decided: The Board approved the minutes of the above meeting.

c) Action List

Decided: The Board noted the action list.

4. Chair and Managing Director update

The Chair provided an update on the activity of the Group Board including the discussion on the Scottish budget, proposals for mid-market and full-market rents, and the continued focus on performance security in construction projects given the current market conditions. The Chair also provided an update on our approach to asset management, which would be a focus of our next strategy workshop.

Decided: The Board noted the update.

5. Repairs Update

The Board were provided with an update on the progress with repairs service enhancements, customer engagement to inform future service enhancements and an update on the Repairs budget forecast for 2023/24. The Board scrutinised the report, having had the benefit of the insight shared by the thematic review panel. The Board considered the importance of communication and how this impacted customer experience. The Board discussed Book It, Track It, Rate It through which we had received 2412 customer ratings with an average score of 4.3/5. The Board was also provided with an update on our approach to managing mould and damp.

The Board welcomed the progress that has been made in improving our repair service, which remains a key priority for our tenants. In particular, the Board recorded its thanks to the thematic review panel for their contribution towards our continuous improvements.

Decided: The Board;

- 1) noted the progress with repairs service enhancements;**
- 2) noted ongoing customer engagement to inform future service enhancements; and**
- 3) noted the updated repairs budget position for 2023/24.**

6. Rent setting and service charges 2024/25

The report received a report with feedback from our consultation on the 2024/25 rent, service and other charges increase.

The Board discussed the consultation which had attracted over 880 valid responses with 69.5% of respondents indicating a preference for the 7.5% option and 30.5% indicating a preference for the higher rate of 7.9%. The Board discussed the feedback received and the need to balance affordability with the need to ensure we adequately provide for investment in tenants' homes and communities and our longer-term business plan assumptions.

Following a detailed discussion, the Board agreed that the proposed option be agreed. In arriving at its decision the Board took account of the pressures facing tenants and the proactive support that we must continue to promote to tenants.

Decided: The Board;

- 1) Considered the feedback received through the consultation process with tenants on our 2024/25 +rent, service and other charges increase; and**
- 2) Approved a 7.5% rent, service charges and other charges (including garages and lock-ups) for 2024/25 for all original WHE tenants effective from the first Monday in April (1 April 2024); and**
- 3) Approved the 2.5% rent, service charges and other charges for 2024/25 for all ex-WLHP properties effective from the first Monday in April (1 April 2024)**

7. Financial projections 2024/25

The Board received an update on our financial projections for investment in our assets and services over the five years to 31 March 2029.

The Board was advised that the projected 2024/25 figures form the basis of our annual budget for 2024/25 which will be presented to the Board in March for approval.

The Board scrutinised the financial projections and our approach to stress testing. The Board also discussed the approach to achieving efficiencies.

Decided: The Board;

- 1) Approved the updated financial projections for investment in assets and services over the five years to 2029; and**
- 2) Agreed that the projected 2024/25 figures form the basis of next year's annual budget which will be presented to the Board for final approval in March.**

8. [redacted]

9. Five-year capital investment plan

The Board received a report on our five-year capital investment plan for the period 2024-29. The Board noted that the plan will deliver over £23.7m of planned improvements over the next five years.

The continuing focus of our programme is on delivering improvements that contribute value to tenants and communities, with over 60% of the core programme geared towards known customer priority investment.

Our investment programme will support the objectives of our sustainability framework, specifically around reducing carbon emissions and improving the fabric energy efficiency of our homes.

We will continue to explore external funding opportunities such as from the Scottish government and ECO to bolster our existing programme and further support the delivery of our sustainability ambitions. Our plans will remain agile to react to the outcome of the consultation on SHNZS.

Decided: The Board approved the five-year investment plan 2024-2029.

10. Neighbourhood approach (presentation)

The Board received a presentation on our approach to neighbourhood planning. It was explained that this directly responds to customer feedback about how they feel about the place they live and to the vision for neighbourhoods that we co-designed with our customers. It was noted that there were also other overlay tools that could help us to build our neighbourhood approach, for example through Historic Environment Scotland.

The Board discussed the importance of ongoing management of neighbourhood and anti-social behaviour issues. The Board also discussed how our neighbourhood approach would require support from a wide range of stakeholders. In addition, we should also seek to learn from other similar projects that had taken place elsewhere in the UK. It was agreed that we need to ensure we were clear with customers about the areas we can deliver on our own and those that require support from other stakeholders.

Decided: The Board noted the presentation.

11. [redacted]

12. Finance report

The Board were provided with an overview of the management accounts for the period to 31 December 2023 and the Q3 forecast for 2023/24. The Board scrutinised the report and noted the financial performance.

Decided: The Board noted the Finance Report for the period ended 31 December 2023 and Q3.

13. Performance update

The Board received an update on performance and delivery against targets and strategic projects for 2023/24 to the end of quarter 3.

The Board considered the report and our performance against the key indicators, including in relation to rent collection, days to let, complaints, repairs, medical adaptations, anti-social behaviour, sickness absence. The Board discussed the importance of looking at overall performance while ensuring that officers also continue to look at individual areas in detail to identify outliers and areas for improvement.

The Board discussed the arrangements we had in place to respond to reports of mould and damp and was informed about the number of lives cases. The Board also noted the total number of cases completed in the month and was assured that in five cases no mould had been found and that the remaining cases all fell within category 3 (mild).

The Board discussed sickness absence in detail, noting that we were currently above our 3% target. It was explained that this was an improved position from quarter 2. It was also explained that our performance is impacted by Care absences and that the Care target is 5%.

Decided: The Board noted the contents of the Performance Report

14. Governance update

The Board were provided with a paper which updated or sought approval where appropriate, on the following governance-related matters including: new Group Code of Conduct; Governing Body Member Expenses and Allowances Policy; Board Member CPD Programme; and 2024 agenda planner.

Decided: The Board noted the updated Group Code of Conduct; the 2024 CPD programme and 3-year rolling programme; and our 2024 annual agenda planner.

15. AOCB

No other competent business

Signed:..... (Chair)