

Minutes from Board meeting - Non-Confidential held 29th May 2024

Attendance	Christine Gore (CG) (Acting Chair), Cllr Glenn Andrews (GA), Trish Blain (TB), Sarah Godfrey (SG) (<i>attended remotely</i>), Ian Mason (IM), Andrew Parfitt (AP), Cllr Richard Pineger (RP), John Rawson (JR), Martin Surl (MS), Gareth Edmundson (GE) (<i>attended remotely</i>), Paul Jones (PJ), Paul Leo (PL), Stafford Cruse (SC), Caroline Walker (CW), Olivia Underhill (OU), Edwin Trevena (ET)
Recorder	Rhian Watts (RW)
Apologies	Cllr Flo Clucas (FC), Vicky Day (VD)
Quorate?	Yes

Item	Notes	Action for
1	<p>Meeting commenced at 17:30</p> <p>Apologies received from FC and VD.</p> <p>No declarations of interest.</p>	
2	<p><u>Agree non-confidential minutes of the 24.04.24 meeting and to note progress on current action points</u></p> <p>The Board agreed the non-confidential minutes of the 24.04.24 meeting as a true record and noted progress on current action points.</p>	
3	<p><u>Annual Review of the Tenant Scrutiny Improvement Panel</u></p> <p>ET introduced the annual review of the Tenant Scrutiny Improvement Panel (TSIP) and explained that they had carried out major scrutinies on cleaning and maintenance schedules for communal areas and CBH's response to damp, mould and condensation (DMC). He highlighted that these scrutinies had led to a number of recommendations for improvement being made. ET noted that members had also attended complaint panel reviews and the tenant consultation carried out by</p>	

<p>Campbell Tickell. He explained that TSIP had recently met with colleagues at CBC to discuss the creation of a scrutiny panel following the transfer of CBH and plans for future tenant recruitment. JR commented that it was important that TSIP or it' successor continues to play a key role in CBC. He noted that DMC has been a concern for some time and highlighted how important it was to hear from tenants on how they feel we are handling the issue.</p> <p>IM thanked ET and TSIP for the work they carry out and noted that he hears regularly from tenants across Cheltenham about their concerns about the maintenance of communal areas. He asked for further details of the recommendations made about the cleaning schedules. CW explained that the Estates Maintenance Supervisor is working to standardise the cleaning practice, establish clear standards supported by pictures and engage tenants to feedback on the cleaning in blocks. She noted that we are also planning to echo CBC's Keep Cheltenham Clean campaigns during Race Week within communal blocks. CW added that we would also be doing work to ensure tenants value the role cleaners play to ensure they are treated with respect.</p> <p>ACTION – Share TSIP cleaning and maintenance of communal area recommendations with IM.</p> <p>JR commented that the KPIs reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee have flagged cleaning in communal areas as a particular concern for tenants and highlighted that it was good to hear that we have actions planned. MS asked whether issues with cleaning standards were primarily down to the actions of tenants and whether there were sanctions when problems were occurring over a long period. CW confirmed that behaviour is a factor but highlighted that it is a balance with the quality of standard provided, which is why it is important that the service is reviewed. She explained that sanctions are difficult to issue as it can be challenging to prove who is responsible in communal areas. ET commented that there are some issues, such as fly tipping, which are often not caused by CBH tenants. TB noted that there are high charges for the collection of large items which may lead more people to fly tip. She commented that it may help the issue if the council reduced these charges. IM commented that the Monkscroft</p>	<p>CW</p>
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	<p>Community Action Group (MAG) had discussed the issue of regular bulk waste collections with Councillor Victoria Atherstone and Estate Services and the impact it was having on the team's time and their ability to complete other responsibilities. CG highlighted that some councils discount rates for benefit claimants. PJ commented that this was something that could be explored in the future, alongside other means of addressing fly tipping such as the possible expansion of the Fix My Street app to encourage increased reporting of fly tipping. ET noted that TSIP's future workplan includes engagement with tenants to establish why they may not be reporting issues that are occurring. RP commented that sometimes issues in communal blocks are due to issues with the security of buildings allowing non-tenants access to communal areas. He highlighted that it was important to resolve security issues.</p> <p>The Board thanked TSIP for the excellent report and for their hard work over the last year. CG highlighted that it was important that their voice continues to be heard following the transfer of CBH.</p> <p>Board noted the Annual Review of the Tenant Scrutiny Improvement Panel</p>	
4	<p><u>CEO Briefing (including Transition Update)</u></p> <p>GE updated Board on the progress of the transition and explained that we have met with Trade Union colleagues to discuss the consultation on the TUPE measures letter which closes at the end of May. He noted that there had not been a significant response to the consultation so far and that the most common feedback has been disappointment about the removal of the free tea and coffee but a positive response to the new health benefit. GE confirmed that he was continuing to meet with colleagues and has offered to meet with people individually or in small groups to discuss any dissatisfaction. He noted that following the closure of the consultation colleagues will be issued with confirmation letters.</p>	

GE explained that Campbell Tickell have reviewed the workstreams and provided a couple of straightforward recommendations but identified no significant issues. He noted that the workstreams are working well with only the Compliance workstream rated as amber. GE commented that we are currently discussing changing this rating to green. He explained that Council will be taking a number of decisions in June to ensure that governance and policies are in place for the 1 July. GE highlighted that he had a very positive meeting with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and will likely be meeting with them again prior to the transfer.

AP asked whether the amber rating of the Compliance workstream reflected a risk to the transition or a risk to business as usual. GE confirmed that it was rated amber in relation to the transition. He explained that as part of the due diligence exercise we have been establishing a baseline position in relation to the Consumer Standards, stock condition surveys, asbestos surveys and open fire safety actions. GE noted that we now have confidence on the baseline position and the priority of the actions required which would allow us to change the rating of the workstream in relation to the transition. He highlighted that in terms of business as usual this will remain an amber risk until the stock condition surveys have been completed and the outstanding issues around fire and asbestos are closed. GE added that the RSH had been reassured that we know what improvements are needed and have a plan in place.

RP asked when it was intended that the Board's composition will change. GE explained that following the July Board meeting a lot of the responsibility will be transferred to the Housing Committee. A smaller Board will ensure that the remaining responsibilities of the company are discharged until the company is closed.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

5	<p><u>Consumer Standards Gap Analysis – High Level Overview</u></p> <p>CW introduced the presentation and explained how we have assessed our position against the Regulator of Social Housing’s (RSH) four new Consumer Standards. She highlighted that whilst areas of improvement have been identified we are in a good position against three of the Standards, with more significant work to do to comply with the Safety & Quality Standard. CW explained that work was already progressing on improvements for this Standard through the programme to complete stock condition surveys and the ongoing procurement for asbestos management. She noted that we would be taking our review of the Consumer Standards to TSIP on the 7 June.</p> <p>Board highlighted the importance of the piece of work and thanked CW and everyone involved for the work carried out. MS asked whether there are areas where we are not compliant which we may have missed in the past. GE explained that whilst we had seen early drafts of the Consumer Standards they were not finalised until recently. He highlighted the benefit of carrying out the assessment as part of the due diligence for the transfer of CBH in-house and with a fresh executive team. GE noted that the exercise has gone into a lot of detail to provide confidence in our position and our way forward. IM commented that he had attended meetings with the RSH and had been surprised at the level of detail expected for the new Standards. He highlighted that there was a great deal of reassurance in the methodology we have used to meet the RSH’s expectations, identify gaps and develop a plan.</p> <p>JR noted the focus on hate incidents within the Neighbourhood Standard and asked whether these are common within Cheltenham and whether we have a robust definition of what entails a hate incident. CW confirmed that incidents are rare in Cheltenham but that we have a policy to respond to hate incidents within 24 hours. She explained that from our perspective it was important to allow tenants to define whether what they are reporting is a hate incident. IM noted that anti-social behaviour (ASB) had emerged as a key priority for tenants from the Campbell Tickell tenant consultation. He asked what evidence we have of our work with other organisations to tackle ASB. CW explained</p>
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	<p>that multi-agency working on ASB is a real strength in Cheltenham with partnerships well established. She highlighted that we will be working to continue strengthening those partnerships in our response to deterring ASB and hate incidents. GE commented that we are aiming to strength our relationship with the police by holding more regular operational meetings with chiefs and strengthen the relationship overall. AP asked whether there is a degree of subjectivity with ASB recording and whether expectations are understood. CW agreed that ASB is very subjective from a customer perspective as tenants have different levels of tolerance and expectations on behaviour. She highlighted that it is important that we respond to all reports of ASB as they are causing stress to tenants and impacting quality of life and make use of all the tools available to us.</p> <p>IM asked whether we have made any progress on implementing the storage of stock data in one location given the limitations we have experienced with QL. PL explained that there is still work to do with QL as it has the potential to bring tenant and stock information together if utilised fully. He noted that other organisations are managing their compliance through QL and that if used correctly it has the potential to provide the RSH with a great deal of assurance. PL highlighted that work was still needed in this area to ensure that QL works for us.</p> <p>GE thanked CBH colleagues for carrying out the review of the Consumer Standards and providing a clear path forward to reach compliance. He highlighted the work and effort carried out by RW. The Board added their thanks.</p> <p>The Board noted the information contained within the presentation and commented on the contents.</p>	
6	<p><u>Feedback from the Audit and Risk Committee</u></p> <p>JR updated the Board on the last meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee and highlighted that a number of items had been recommended to Board for approval. He explained that Bishop Fleming had presented</p>	

	<p>the External Audit Plan and noted that they had also recently been appointed to be CBC's external auditors.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the update.</p>	
7	<p><u>Approve the Audit & Risk Terms of Reference</u></p> <p>JR explained that some minor changes had been recommended to the Audit & Risk Terms of Reference to reflect changes in job title and responsibility.</p> <p>The Board approved the draft Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference.</p>	
8	<p><u>Internal Audit Annual Opinion 2023-24</u></p> <p>PJ introduced the Internal Audit annual opinion and explained that SWAP had offered a medium reasonable opinion overall which represented a slight improvement from 2022-2023 with no significant risks, issues or priority 1 recommendations identified. He noted that SWAP were also the internal auditors for CBC which will provide continuity following the transfer. JR commented that Committee members had met privately with the internal auditors and been reassured by the conversation.</p> <p>The Board, having considered the assurances provided by SWAP and the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, approved the Internal Audit Annual Opinion 2023-24</p>	
9	<p><u>Approve the Water Safety Policy</u></p> <p>CW introduced the Water Safety Policy and noted that it had been reviewed and recommended by Audit & Risk. RP noted that there had been a water parasite outbreak in Devon since the policy had been reviewed. He asked whether a similar outbreak would be covered by this policy or through an emergency response plan. GE confirmed that</p>	

	<p>depending on the size of the outbreak it would be managed through an emergency response.</p> <p>The Board approved the CBH Water Safety Policy</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p><u>CBH Annual Management Accounts</u></p> <p>SC introduced the year end management accounts for CBH and highlighted that there are two main areas of variation from the original budgets. He explained that the first is an increase in repairs spending due to increased acquisitions, major voids, the electrical review programme and challenges to resourcing the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) leading to increased use of agency staff. SC noted that this doesn't impact CBH's deficit but impacts the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). He explained that the second variation related to the costs of transition, including termination challenges and professional fees.</p> <p>JR commented that the additional costs had seen the predicted reserves of £1 million almost halved to £682k. He asked whether we are confident that the reserve will be adequate going forwards. PJ commented that the most recent CBH reserve strategy had determined that £500k would be adequate and robust and provide a good cushion for any additional transfer costs. He explained that from the 1 July the management fee will be reduced to zero as it is novated back to CBC and the reserve will be included in the HRA. PJ highlighted that as Section 151 officer he has responsibility for assessing the adequacy of the HRA and is confident that the reserves are adequate.</p> <p>The Board noted the Year End Management Accounts result for CBH</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p><u>Year-end progress and performance update, including final Tenant Satisfaction Measures data for 2023-2024</u></p> <p>CW introduced the year end report on progress and performance and highlighted that performance has been strong over the year. She noted</p>	

	<p>that a number of KPIs are red and amber and further details were included in the report against these.</p> <p>IM noted that the KPIs relating to relet times and rent loss are red and amber. He asked whether this was due to a previous TSIP recommendation that works should be done, when possible, whilst properties are void. ET confirmed that this recommendation had been made. IM commented that whilst this was increasing relet times it is improving the service that is being provided to customers. CW agreed and noted that we have also seen an increase in major voids due to increasing numbers of acquisitions. She added that Heads of Service will be ensuring opportunities are taken to keep this performance strong.</p> <p>JR highlighted that overall tenant satisfaction has risen to 82.7% and thanked colleagues for the hard work reflected in this remarkable achievement. CG added her thanks and noted that it is good to see that we have a clear understanding of our performance, what issues are impacting scores and our plans to address them.</p> <p>AP asked for further details of the red score for damp and mould under the 'Big 7' compliance scores. SC explained that this reflected a higher number of cases being reported compared to those being closed. He noted that this score has been coming down and Mark Way (Head of Building Services) had confirmed he was comfortable with the current trajectory. ET commented that TSIP had carried out a scrutiny on the management of damp, mould and condensation (DMC) and found that there were issues with tenants who had reported DMC prior to the changes to how it is managed who are reluctant to report issues again. He noted that a future scrutiny was planned to consider how they can be encouraged to engage on these issues again.</p> <p>The Board scrutinised the content of the report and challenged it appropriately.</p>	
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12	<p>Agree confidential minutes of the 24.04.24 meeting</p> <p>The Board agreed the confidential minutes of the 24.04.24 meeting as a true record.</p>	
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Meeting Closed at 19:00

Signed.....*Christae Gore*.....
Chair of Cheltenham Borough Homes

Date.....*26 June 2024*.....