

Minutes from Board meeting - Non-Confidential held 26th June 2024

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

Item	Notes	Action for
1	<p>Meeting commenced at 17:30</p> <p>Apologies received from TB, MS and GE.</p> <p>AP and PM attending remotely.</p> <p>No declarations of interest.</p>	
2	<p><u>Agree non-confidential minutes of the 29.05.24 meeting and to note progress on current action points</u></p> <p>The Board agreed the non-confidential minutes of the 29.05.24 meeting as a true record and noted progress on current action points.</p>	
3	<p><u>CEO Briefing (including Transition Update)</u></p> <p>PJ introduced the report and highlighted that all transition workstreams are rated green and TUPE transfer would be going ahead on the 1 July. He explained that communications have been sent to all colleagues, including notifications of change in line management where required. PJ noted that a review was being undertaken of open fire risk assessment actions to allocate resources, increase capacity and remove any barriers</p>	

<p>to progress. RP noted that for some compliance reporting a single issue within a block may be recorded as multiple issues to more accurately reflect the impact on individual properties within the block. He asked whether this was the case with fire risk assessment actions. CW agreed that we would confirm this and respond. PL commented that a new compliance report was being designed which would clarify how issues are reported. AP asked whether we had been aware of the number of outstanding actions. CW confirmed that high level information had been shared previously but that a more detailed analysis had been carried out with CBC as part of the due diligence exercise undertaken for the transition and it had been agreed that a programme of work should be established to ensure the actions are addressed.</p> <p>ACTION – Confirm whether fire risk assessments are reported per issue or per property.</p> <p>IM commented that it was positive to see that GE had met with the police and highlighted the vital importance of a multi-agency approach to tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB). He noted that they had seen successes within the Monkscroft area on ASB through engagement with the Monkscroft Community Action Group and recommended that a similar approach be considered with other resident groups. PJ agreed and noted that CW and her team were already making great progress in this area.</p> <p>SG joined the meeting.</p> <p>CW updated the Board that the ongoing review of the Consumer Standards had led to the Safety and Quality Standard assessment being downgraded from one area not met to four areas not met and one area partially met. She highlighted that the planned programme to complete stock condition surveys starting in July would be critical to meeting this Standard by providing the data needed to ensure we are compliant. CW explained that additional actions had also been identified in relation to asbestos procurement, management of legionella testing data, estate inspections and ensuring consistent communications with tenants around repairs, maintenance and planned improvements. She highlighted that whilst there is work to do on the remaining three</p>	<p>VD</p>
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	<p>Standards, the Safety and Quality Standard would be our key area of focus. CW added that she would be meeting with Pennington Choices to obtain an external expert view on this Standard.</p> <p>FC and GA joined the meeting.</p> <p>CG commented that it was important to acknowledge where we are with compliance against the Consumer Standards and positive to see that we have a plan of action to address gaps as a matter of urgency. PJ noted that he had had a very frank, open and solutions focused meeting on the stock condition surveys earlier that day. He highlighted that it had been a positive meeting and it had been agreed that a project governance approach would be taken. IM asked how this project would be financed. PJ explained that it was still being assessed whether this would be managed through re-deployment, re-prioritisation or the use of reserves. He highlighted that the benefit of securing accurate data was immeasurable and that this investment at the outset will lead to savings in the future. The Board noted that there will also be benefits through ensuring tenants are safe in individual homes and shared spaces and improved customers satisfaction scores. IM commented that economies of savings was one of the reasons for bringing CBH back in-house and asked whether these would be driven back into this work. PJ confirmed that we will be looking to reinvest savings and that we are comfortable that the savings targets identified for the transition will be met down the line, particularly through pensions savings. PL commented that the work being programmed will also bring efficiencies, for example by maximising our use of WL and ensuring we have one version of the truth in line with the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) expectations. JR agreed that it was vital that we have property data to drive assurance, tenant safety, efficient investment and our long-term asset strategy.</p> <p>PM commented that it was important to engage with tenants to achieve successful outcomes when considering what good looks like in terms of the delivery of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements. CW agreed that this would be a vital part of the process.</p>	
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	<p>Board noted the contents of the report , fully supported the approach proposed to reach compliance with the Consumer Standards and expressed their gratitude for the work carried out by colleagues.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p><u>Annual Overview of Customer Feedback</u></p> <p>CW introduced the report and explained that it included an annual overview of the quarterly Acuity satisfaction phone surveys. She noted that the perception information gained through these surveys forms a significant part of our response to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) which will be submitted to the RSH and published. CW highlighted that these results will in part determine when we will be subject to an In-Depth Assessment (IDA) by the RSH. She explained that the surveys have shown high satisfaction levels and have been primarily ranked in the first quartile. CW noted that we are contacting customers individually who have expressed dissatisfaction during the surveys to address their issues which has helped improve satisfaction. She explained that improvements have been identified to make customer contact more consistent and to improve the maintenance of communal areas, which has been supported by a scrutiny by the Tenant Scrutiny Improvement Panel (TSIP).</p> <p>CW noted that we are seeing challenges nationally with the collection of some TSMs, such as complaints and ASB, as customers are being asked to assess services that they have not personally experienced. She highlighted that we are developing a text-based survey for customers who have used these services to form a clearer impression of what improvements may be needed. CW explained that improvements had already been made with complaints handling in line with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code and the introduction of a dedicated Complaints Officer. She highlighted that this included meeting 100% of our 10 day targets and have been allowed extensions when requested. She noted that complaints had increased by 40% compared to the previous 12 months with 92% resolved at stage 1 and no new escalations to the Housing Ombudsman. CW noted that two complaints from the previous year had been escalated to the Housing Ombudsman and were currently awaiting review. She explained that</p>	

	<p>our figures are favourable in comparison to the wider housing sector. CW highlighted that she would be working closely with FC as the member responsible for complaints as the complaints process is transferred into CBC's governance process and will continue to develop learning from complaints and address concerns. FC highlighted that given the number of customers being managed our complaints figures are incredibly impressive already and it was good that we were continuing to look for improvements in the process.</p> <p>IM commented that complaints is a difficult area to assess fairly as you are more likely to be satisfied if your complaint has been upheld. He highlighted that the complaints learning framework is very impressive and asked whether this will be embedded in QL in the future. PL confirmed that it will be. RP commented that from a national context we have seen a significant decline in satisfaction with complaints and with the quality of services. CG noted that this was also partly a consequence of the increased awareness raised by the Housing Ombudsman. CW agreed and noted that they have transformed the perception of how complaints are handled. She explained that the issue with how satisfaction is being assessed is also driving satisfaction with complaints handling down nationally. PL noted that it is also important to consider how we communicate with tenants as a driver more generally to reduce the pressure on tenants to be responsible for raising formal complaints. He added that it was also important to consider that where there may have been issues previously, for example with the response to damp, mould and condensation (DMC), we will need to address the legacy of that response despite the significant improvements made in managing the issue. PL highlighted that it is important that we consider reasons customers may not be using our complaints process. CG agreed that it was important that we continue to highlight to customers how we are responding to their feedback through You Said, We Did reporting.</p> <p>FC noted that despite handling of ASB being identified as an area of dissatisfaction in the surveys, only a few customers had reported ASB cases and asked for further details. CW explained that this was a perception based TSM created by the government and we were required</p>	
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	<p>to ask of all tenants whether they have used our ASB service or not. She highlighted that this was affecting our results and that we were developing a follow-up text survey when cases are reported to provide additional clarity. CG commented that it is very common that people perceive ASB issues as more prevalent than they are in reality. IM noted that it was also important to remember that ASB can only be tackled in partnership with a range of organisations.</p> <p>SG asked whether the 302 calls had been made to individuals or properties. CW confirmed that they were made to individuals who had completed the Acuity survey. She highlighted the value these callbacks have added to help us learn from customers concerns and improve their perception of the service.</p> <p>AP asked whether the transfer of CBH will enable any easy improvements that will help our figures next year, for example through additional procurement powers. CW explained that Acuity have provided an analysis of the data collected and recommendations for areas where satisfaction can be improved which could provide easy improvements. She noted that many of these are also reflected in the Improvement Plan for the Consumer Standards.</p> <p>IM noted the recommendations for improvements of cleaning communal areas and commented that in his experience the cleaners required better equipment, such as pressure washers, to achieve better results. JR agreed and noted that TSIPs recommendations will hopefully support the improvement of this service.</p> <p>JR commented that it was impressive to see the standards of satisfaction maintained despite the uncertainty of the transition period. He highlighted that it was a positive sign that the new leadership and colleagues would continue to deliver in the future.</p> <p>RP asked how the measure of influence is calculated in relation to the key driver analysis. CW noted that she would confirm this with Acuity and report back to Board.</p>	
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	<p>ACTION – To confirm with Acuity how measure of influence is calculated in relation to the key driver analysis.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the report.</p>	<p>CW</p>
<p>5</p>	<p><u>Annual report on the Asset Management Plan</u></p> <p>PL explained that the item had been withdrawn as the programme to complete our stock condition surveys will require us to review the Asset Management Plan. He highlighted that this work will be managed by CBC from the 1 July.</p> <p>This item was withdrawn from the agenda.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p><u>Annual Review of Board Effectiveness and Board Terms of Reference (2023-2024)</u></p> <p>RW introduced the annual review of Board's activities, effectiveness and Terms of Reference in 2023 – 2025. She explained that these reviews were carried out to comply with the National Housing Federation (NHF) Code of Governance. RW noted that a review had also been carried out by the Audit & Risk Committee in May. She highlighted that no areas of non-compliance had been identified but we have found some areas of partial compliance, primarily relating to the changing priorities for the Board following the transfer announcement. RW added that changes to the Terms of Reference had been recommended to reflect the changes to the Articles of Association and the changing nature of the Board following the transfer.</p> <p>IM commented that the Terms of Reference had a conflict in relation to Board composition and its quoracy rules. RW explained that this conflict was present within the updated Articles of Association. She noted that the Terms of Reference needed to reflect the Articles so it was not possible to resolve this conflict without changing the Articles first. PJ noted that the addition of paragraph 2.2 to the Articles does allow for more flexibility with the Board. IM asked whether there were concerns that there was a greater risk of inquoracy with a smaller Board. RW</p>	

	<p>explained that as meetings would not be scheduled in advance it would be more possible to tailor meeting timings to enable all members to attend which would mitigate against the risk of inquoracy.</p> <p>FC noted that the Terms of Reference allowed for a minimum of one meeting annually and asked if it was possible that Board would meet more regularly than this. RW confirmed that Board meetings would be called in line with the needs of the business.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Considered and provided feedback on the final draft and approved the annual effectiveness review of the Board. 2. Considered and approved the updated draft Board Terms of Reference. 	
7	<p><u>Annual compliance review of NHF Code of Governance (2023-2024)</u></p> <p>RW explained that we annually review compliance against the Board's adopted Code of Governance with areas of non-compliance reported in the Financial Statements. She highlighted that there were no areas of non-compliance to report for 2023-2024. RW noted that areas of partial compliance have increased from 2 to 7 areas compared to the previous financial year but highlighted that there were no areas of major concern. She explained that due to the changing nature and priorities of the Board post-transfer recommendations for improvements have only been made in relation to increasing the prominence of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) commitments with tenants. RW noted that this will also strengthen our compliance with the Consumer Standards.</p> <p>CG asked PJ if he is content with review as it stands. PJ confirmed he was satisfied and noted that a similar approach is taken in councils' annual governance statements.</p> <p>IM asked whether CBH will remain a registered provider (RP) after the 1 July. PL confirmed that a small number of properties will continue to be held by CBH in the immediate future. He noted that whilst as a small RP</p>	

	<p>CBH will not face the same level of regulatory scrutiny, it will still require significant administration.</p> <p>FC noted in relation to EDI that it was important that we consider in the future how we can build opportunities for customers within marginalised groups to access training and employment within housing that will enable them to engage more fully. CG noted that the Board had previously had an EDI Champion who had stepped down in September 2023. She agreed that it was important for CBC to consider improving representation in the future. FC highlighted that the provision of training would also provide opportunities to train people for skills that are in short to supply. IM commented that the Skills Hub based at Hesters Way Resource Centre has been running for 18 months and has been very well attended by customers. He noted that it provides a range of programmes to support customers including the ability to secure a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card. RP noted that it was important to remember that the Skills Hub had been funded for 2 years through a grant from Gloucestershire County Council. He highlighted that it was important for us to secure additional funding to continue this great work.</p> <p>The Board approved the outcome of the review of compliance with the NHF Code of Governance (2020) for inclusion in the Financial Statements 2023-2024.</p>	
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Meeting Closed at 18:39

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

Date.....*31/7/24*.....

