

Homes in Sedgemoor Board Meeting

The primary purpose of the board meeting is to provide oversight and strategic guidance to the business, to address important matters, to assess emerging risks and trends, and make decisions.

APPROVED Minutes of the Non-Confidential Board Meeting held via Teams and in the Sedgemoor Room at Bridgwater House on Tuesday 30 July 2024 at 12.45pm

Board Members:	Chris Fisher Jen Vernon (<i>arrived 1.30pm</i>) Cllr Kathy Pearce Cllr Lance Duddridge Marie Hide Olly Keates (<i>arrived 1.45PM</i>) Paul Hackett Paul Stephenson (<i>Chair</i>)	Chris F Jen Kathy Lance Marie Olly Paul H Paul S
In Attendance:	Ben Lane, Director of Finance and Performance (<i>via Teams</i>) Claire Tough, Director of Communities & Customer Service Naomi Macey, Director of Asset Management and Safety Pauline Kelly, Executive Assistant (<i>minutes</i>) Peter Hatch, Chief Executive	Ben Claire Naomi Pauline K Peter
Guests in person:	Steve Handley, MEL (<i>via Teams</i>) Chris Hall, Executive Director, Community Services, Somerset Council (<i>via Teams 3pm</i>) Sujitha Herron, Management Accountant	Steve Chris H Sujitha
NO.	ITEM	
1.	Welcome Guests	
	Paul welcomed Board members, attendees, and guests to the meeting.	
	Apologies	
	Apologies received from Cllr Pauline Ham and Sarah O'Neill.	
2.	Presentation Slot	
	Corporate Strategy Theme: Customer Driven	
	Topic: MEL Annual Customer Satisfaction Results April 2023 – March 2024	
	Steve Handley joined the meeting via Teams, to give a brief overview of the results. Standout item was that almost all TSM perception results are upper quartile nationally with only Complaint Handling below this. Members discussed the challenges managing complaints and the low results across the sector for this TSM. Members acknowledged that in all but one measure results are well above the median quartile. Paul S confirmed he and Peter would be communicating their thanks to colleagues via video, and Claire will be organising an MEL session for all the workforce to attend to hear the highlights first hand.	
	ACTION	
	Pauline to upload the presentation onto the Board portal and send the full report slide deck to Marie.	

3.	Declarations of Interest
	There were no further declarations from Board members other than those previously recorded on Board Members' Declaration of Interests Forms.
4.	Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2024
	The public minutes from 28 May 2024 were agreed subject to one typographical amendment.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED and APPROVED the minutes.
5.	Matters Arising from the meeting held on 28 May 2024
	Members noted the matters arising. Completed items will be kept on the document as a record. Ongoing and current items will stay located at the top of the document.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED and APPROVED the matters arising.
6.	Chair's Update
	No questions or queries raised. Paul advised members that he had attended the Inside Housing seminar (not Chartered Institute of Housing as stated in his update) and will draft a separate briefing for Member information.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.
7.	Chief Executive's Update
	No questions or queries raised.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.
8.	Chair of Audit & Risk Update
	No questions or queries raised. Paul S advised he attended the June meeting as an observer and noted the agenda had been refreshed following the DTP review.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.
9.	STAC Update
	No questions or queries raised. Paul thanked Craig Green for stepping in as chair for the June meeting.
	Following recent interviews, Claire advised that two candidates were successful. The Terms of Reference will be discussed at the August STAC meeting, and these will be brought back to Board for review.
	Members noted the comprehensive list of items covered on the agenda and thanked STAC members on the amount of work being carried out by the committee.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.

10.	<p>Five Year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2024 - 2029 (Annual)</p> <p>Ben highlighted the following headlines to Members; that the Government may offer a more generous pay settlement than budgeted to the sector and repair costs could be greater than the CPI rate.</p> <p>Paul S raised a concern that the Board champion for Finance had not been engaged in the production of this report. Paul S had also identified some errors in the MTFP in his notes to ET prior to the meeting. Ben has subsequently responded to these and will make the necessary amendments. Executive Team and Senior Leadership Team to ensure Board Champions have sight of reports prior to presenting at Board.</p> <p>The report proposed moving the frequency of the MTFP to two yearly. Members discussed this matter in detail with Paul H noting the volatile local and national financial environments. Members agreed that as the Board has full responsibility for financial issues the plan should continue to come directly to Board for review. This should continue on an annual rotation until Somerset Council’s finances are more stable, the macro-economic picture is more settled, and the outcome of the options appraisal is clear.</p> <p>Paul H queried a prior question and action at March 2024 Board about target rents and what happens when properties are relet. Ben informed Board that this action is still in progress and discussions are being held with Somerset Council (SC) and a report will be provided to Board in due course.</p> <p>Paul H queried the Housemark quadrant position of ‘rent arrears and collection’ and noted that this had been raised before by Members who still sought clarity on the ‘relatively low performance/high cost’ ranking. Peter explained that a review of this aspect of our performance is underway and the results of which would be shared with Board in September.</p> <p>Jen noted that the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) has previously reviewed sensitivities in the MTFP and although the scope of ARC is being reviewed following the DTP review, she felt that this area of scrutiny should remain. Paul S agreed with this proposal but noted that Board cannot abdicate any responsibility.</p> <p>In view of the discussions on this item, Paul S proposed that Members approve the MTFP in principle but on the premise they have a discussion at the October 2024 Board Away Days. Any resulting amendments will be brought back to November Board meeting. All agreed.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>ET ensure that Champions have sight of reports prior to presenting at meeting.</p> <p>Peter to add <i>Rent Arrears and Collection – Housemark Results Investigation</i> to September Board agenda.</p> <p>Peter to add <i>Medium Term Financial Plan</i> to the Board October 2024 Away Days agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board APPROVED in principle the refreshed Medium Term Finance Plan for the period 2024-2029 and the proposals for monitoring progress • Board CONSIDERED moving the refresh period for the MTFP from annually to bi-annually however at this current time all Members in agreement to keep the plan to an annual review.
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11.	Final Annual Report and Financial Statements, Key Issues for Discussion And Letter Of Representation – 2023/24
	<p>Members noted all documents and were happy to approve. Jen noted that ARC had cross checked to ensure that anything outstanding had been actioned.</p> <p>Documents will be signed by Paul S and returned to Bishop Fleming to countersign and file.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board APPROVED the Annual Report and Financial Statements, and its signature by the Chair on behalf of the Board, in advance of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). • Board NOTED the 'Key Issues for Discussion' of the Independent Auditors. • Board APPROVED the Management Representation Letter, and its signature by the Chair on behalf of the Board.
12.	Financial Review
	<p>For Board information, Jen advised these reports will come to ARC, however only for information. Members noted and approved the Financial Regulations and Treasury Management Policy.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board APPROVED the Financial Regulations. • Board APPROVED the Treasury Management Policy. • Board NOTED that following a recommendation from the external Board Effectiveness review a recommendation to review the scope of the ARC going forward was made. As such, financial management matters, such as the review of the two documents above will come direct to the Board in the future without a review by the ARC beforehand.
13.	Whistleblowing Policy
	<p>Board noted the policy which had been refreshed. Paul S questioned how frequently Board is formally informed of any whistleblowing. Ben confirmed that this was carried out every six months via the Statuary Register.</p> <p>Jen raised the point that she will be standing down as Audit & Risk Committee Chair in September, therefore the policy will need to be updated at this time once a new ARC Chair was in place.</p> <p>A communication will be circulated to colleagues to refresh awareness of this policy.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>People Team to refresh the policy after the recruitment of a new Audit & Risk Committee Chair in September.</p> <p>Peter to liaise with Julia to arrange a communication to be circulated to all colleagues to refresh awareness of the Whistleblowing Policy.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board APPROVED the revised Whistleblowing Policy.

14.	Proposed Action Plan Arising from HQN Inspection
	<p>Members noted the comprehensive action plan and timescales within it.</p> <p>Paul S questioned if we are at risk if some actions that are dependent upon Somerset Council cannot be completed? Claire confirmed that this was a risk but that the teams are working hard with SC colleagues to complete key actions. Some progress is slow, due to resourcing limitations and availability due to current workloads. The teams are meeting on Wednesday 31 July to take this forward.</p> <p>Paul S advised that he would like to provide an update on the HQN action plan to the next Quarterly Partnership meeting in October. Claire to provide an update to Paul S in advance of this meeting.</p> <p>Action: Claire to provide an update on this action plan to Paul S in early October.</p> <p>Action: Pauline to schedule two six monthly updates on the Board Forward Plan.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board APPROVED the proposed action plan which will be delivered over the next 12 months. • Board APPROVED the proposal for Board to monitor progress against delivery of the action plan via two 6 monthly updates.
15.	Proposed Action Plan Arising from DTP Board Effectiveness Review
	<p>Members reviewed the action plan. Paul S noted there appeared to be a lot of actions attributed to Ben and Board is conscious that Ben does not feel pressurised to do all this work himself. They suggested he liaise with Sarah Jackson to utilise the retention agreement and share the workload.</p> <p>Marie raised the wording around moving to a skills-based Board because it fails to acknowledge the skills the Board already has. Discussions were held regarding the narrative around Councillor membership and the DTP recommendations. Marie felt that the Board is already skills based and hence the wording of the recommendation is wrong. Paul S advised members that although we need to consider the review recommendations, we also need to ensure that the recommendations work for us. Peter advised that we could amend the wording of this action if required.</p> <p>Paul S and Ben to catch up after the meeting to review the wording and content of the plan.</p> <p>Peter also noted that an update will be provided to the October 2024 Board away days.</p>
	<p>ACTION</p> <p>Ben to liaise with Sarah Jackson about sharing the workload relating to the action plan.</p> <p>Paul S and Ben to catch up after the meeting to review the wording and content of the plan.</p> <p>Pauline to schedule three, six-monthly updates in the Board Forward Plan commencing January 2025.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board APPROVED the proposed action plan. • Board APPROVED the proposal for Board to monitor progress against delivery of the action plan via 6 monthly updates commencing January 2025.



16.	Risk Management
	<p>Members were content with the documents all of which had been discussed in detail and refreshed at the April 2024 Board Away Days. Any tracked changes will be tidied up prior to uploading onto the Board portal.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board APPROVED the Risk Management Policy. • Board APPROVED the Political Economic Social Technological Environmental Legal (PESTEL) analysis. • Board APPROVED the Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) analysis. • Board APPROVED the Risk Appetite Statement.
17a.	Compliance Summary and Dashboard – June 2024
	<p>In response to a question from Jen on what is happening with the structural issues which came to light during the RAAC inspections, Naomi advised there was nothing of immediate concern but that areas of wear and tear had been identified. A plan for these works is being drafted.</p> <p>Paul S noted that at the July Quarterly Partnership Meeting, Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts raised the issue around access difficulties to properties, asking if HiS and the SC 'inhouse' team carry out the same procedure. There may be some differences in approach to access hence Dave Baxter has been tasked with drafting an access policy to align the process. There was a request from Members to ensure any new processes do not have a detrimental impact on HiS customers.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the contents of the report.
17b.	Damp, Mould, and Condensation Update
	<p>A question was raised by Jen on how we are meeting performance timeframes. Naomi advised that the team are experiencing some issues with access and this is the only reason we are not meeting the timescales.</p> <p>Jen asked if any damp, mould and condensation issues had been identified during the colleague community Connect day? Naomi stated that any issues noted on the day had been dealt with immediately.</p> <p>Going forward, Naomi proposed that updates will be by exception, however damp, mould, and condensation will continue to be reported monthly in the Compliance Report.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the contents of the report. • Board NOTED that future updates will be by exception only.
18.	Corporate Strategy 2023 – 2026 Progress Update (Six Monthly)
	<p>Members raised no questions and congratulated colleagues on the good progress made so far.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the contents of the report.

19.	Customer Influence and Engagement Strategy (Six Month Review)
	<p>Jen asked if these actions will be integrated with actions in the HQN Action Plan? Claire confirmed that this will happen.</p> <p>A question was raised around the Equality Impact Assessment and what came out of it. Claire confirmed this information was available in the full document and will forward a copy of the results to Jen and Lance.</p>
	ACTION
	Claire to forward a copy of the CIES Equality Impact Assessment to Jen and Lance.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.
20.	Board Governance Skills Matrix Update
	<p>Paul S thanked everyone for taking part. Following the completion of skills matrix forms, Board discussed what to do with the findings and how they fill any gaps. All in agreement to make sure there is a link to the DTP Board Effectiveness Review Action Plan. The utilising of Spotlight Sessions and Board Away Days are options for additional training. STAC will also be involved unless sessions are confidential.</p> <p>Jen noted the need to manage both generic skills and skills specific for HiS Board members and commended the last section and the 'next steps' of the report.</p> <p>Paul S confirmed that all information will be kept confidential, only being used for appraisals and recruitment to balance skills for the future.</p>
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the <i>summary findings from the latest Skills Matrix questionnaire</i>.
21.	Board Member Declaration of Interest Register
	<p>Thanks were given to all members for completing the forms.</p> <p>It was noted that Paul H appointment as CFO Support for YMCA Dulverton (West Somerset) had now been official declared on his new form.</p> <p>Olly noted that his name was wrong (Olive).</p>
	ACTION
	Ben to amend Olive to Olly.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the report and the intention to publicise the register on the HiS website.

22.	ICT & Digital Strategy (Six Monthly Review)
	<p>Ben presented the paper on behalf of Emma Jones. He reported that now we are a good way into the strategy, the next step is to look at costs for the preferred technologies and for delivery, which is proving difficult due to the speed at which Artificial Intelligence is developing.</p> <p>Kathy suggested STAC may want to be involved to look at ways that would help tenants feel more comfortable when using technology.</p> <p>Jen questioned the reasons for extra funding and wondered if this was purely due to cost increases. Ben explained that there were multiple reasons behind this, but the main reason was that the strategy was based on estimated costs and actuals have often been higher. Board agreed that it is better to overestimate rather than underestimate at the outset. Board would appreciate a better understanding of costs and to be regularly updated if any changes between the planned reviews.</p> <p>Paul S noted that a lot of progress has been achieved and thanked Emma on behalf of Board.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the progress on the ICT and Digital Strategy and Action Plan during the last six months and the likely future request for additional funds.
23.	Sustainability By Design Update
	<p>Following questions raised by Marie relating to EPCs for Bigwood & Staples development, Naomi advised that this site has not been handed over to HiS yet, but she will circulate EPC details to Board once available. Members noted the EPC increases related to retrofit properties and Naomi confirmed she will clarify this in more detail in the next report.</p>
	<p>ACTION</p>
	<p>Naomi to circulate EPC information for Bigwood & Staples when available.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.
24.	Health and Safety Performance (Six Monthly Review)
	<p>Chris H joined the meeting at this point. Paul S advised Members that the Health & Safety Forum gave great assurance of performance, supported by the independent assessment given by Alan Turner. Members thanked Alan for his ongoing support.</p>
	<p>Jen asked how the STAC Building Safety Review had gone. Naomi confirmed that it had gone well, and the findings are still being collated.</p>
	<p>This report is to be included in the briefing documents for the August Health & Safety Forum meeting.</p>
	<p>ACTION</p>
	<p>Pauline to include this report in the briefing documents for the August Health & Safety Forum meeting.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.

25. Key Performance Indicators – June 2024	
	<p>Members noted the report which included improvement for void turnaround and rent arrears (which currently stand at 1.1% which is exceptional).</p> <p>Paul S commended officers on the year to date 'Overall satisfaction with landlord' performance of 86.7%.</p> <p>Members were advised KPIs will in future come direct to Board, rather than via Audit & Risk Committee following DTP review.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the key performance indicator results for the first three months of 24/25 (Apr 24 - Jun 2024). Board NOTED the results of a Housemark sector survey into the 23/24 Tenant Satisfaction Measurement (TSM) results with Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS) included for comparison. This one-off report replaced the usual monthly report this month.
26. Corporate Risk Register – June 2024	
	<p>Jen asked members to note that the risk register will continue to be reviewed by Audit & Risk Committee. Following their July meeting (held prior to the Board meeting), committee members have made a request for ET to look at consolidating risks (where they naturally group together) as ARC considered 22 to be excessive.</p>
	<p>ACTION</p> <p>Ben to look at consolidating risks where they naturally group together, for ET to review and ARC to consider.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED this summary report following a full review of the refreshed risk register at the ARC in June. <p>The ARC was content with the register and is therefore able to provide assurance to the Board accordingly. The register is reviewed at each ARC and by the Executive Team (ET) in advance of each committee meeting.</p>

Confirmed as a true record of the meeting

Signed: 

Name (Chair): Paul Stephenson

Date: 24 September 2024

