

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 28 May 2024 at 1pm

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| Board Members: | Chris Fisher Jen Vernon Cllr Kathy Pearce Cllr Lance Duddridge Marie Hide Olly Keates 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 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: | Chris Hall, Executive Director – Community Services, SC Lindsey Hoggard, Compliance, Building & Safety Manager Ros Griffiths, STAC member (<i>arrived at 1.30pm</i>) Damian Roche, HQN (<i>via Teams</i>) Lydia Dlaboha, HQN Wayne Hughes, HQN (<i>via Teams</i>) Sarah Jackson, Director, DTP | Chris H Lindsey Ros Damian Lydia Wayne Sarah |

| NO. | ITEM |
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| 1. | Welcome Guests |
| | Paul welcomed Board members, attendees, and guests to the meeting. |
| | Apologies |
| | Apologies received from Sarah O'Neill. |
| 2. | Presentation Slot |
| | Corporate Strategy Theme: Thoughtful Enterprise – Good Governance |
| | Topic: Mock Inspection Preliminary Findings - Housing Quality Network |
| | Jen asked if Board would now receive an action plan derived from the results of the mock inspection. Claire confirmed that this would be coming to July Board. |
| | Paul S asked if there were any surprises in the findings, of which Lydia advised there were none and no areas of material non-compliance or showstoppers had emerged. Lydia reminded Board that any inspection would focus on the local authority and not just HiS. |
| | Lydia noted we have a strong culture, great customer experience however some colleagues she spoke to felt overwhelmed with the pressure of work and deadlines. |

1 Chair Initials:



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| | <p>Olly asked Lydia what one thing she would highlight as a priority from the exercise. Lydia felt it was household data and demonstrating management of property compliance risks beyond the 'big 6'. Longer term, the Asset Management Strategy needs reviewing but aware that this is being undertaken jointly with SC.</p> <p>Marie raised the comments regarding value for money of the 'same day repairs' service and Peter explained the detail behind Wayne's findings (namely around opportunity cost).</p> <p>Lydia noted the need for a story telling exercise to capture the complexity of the organisation and the changes afoot with SC.</p> <p>Paul S asked how do we compare to other inspections carried out? Lydia and her colleagues agreed this was one of the best with no grounds for self-referral.</p> <p>Marie noted colleagues should be proud of our performance and this be communicated to them.</p> |
| | <p>ACTION</p> <p>Claire to ensure that the Board's thanks are communicated to all colleagues.</p> |
| 3. | Declarations of Interest |
| | <p>Paul H confirmed he has been appointed as CFO Support for YMCA Dulverton (West Somerset). There were no further declarations from Board members other than those previously recorded on Board Members' Declaration of Interests Forms.</p> |
| 4. | Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2024 |
| | <p>All members agreed that the minutes recorded are a true record subject to amending the date of the March minutes to <i>Tuesday 26 March 2024</i>.</p> |
| | <p>ACTION</p> <p>Pauline to amend date of the minutes.</p> |
| | <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED and APPROVED the minutes. |
| 5. | Matters Arising from the meeting held on 26 March 2024 |
| | <p>Members noted the matters arising.</p> |
| | <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED and APPROVED the matters arising. |
| 6. | Chair's Update |
| | <p>Further to his report, Paul S notified Board that, on behalf of Board, he has expressed an interest in joining the Board of the National Federation of ALMOs (NFA)</p> <p>No questions or queries raised.</p> |
| | <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |
| 7. | Chief Executive's Update |
| | <p>No questions or queries raised.</p> |
| | <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |

2 Chair Initials:



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| 8. | Chair of Audit & Risk Update |
| | Jen confirmed there has been no meeting so update following that made to Board on 26 March. The next meeting is planned for 4 June. |
| | RESOLVED |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |
| 9. | STAC Update |
| | Claire confirmed due to the availability of STAC members, the committee have not met, and meetings were out of sync. Next meeting planned for 13 June. |
| | RESOLVED |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |
| 10. | Lifts Safety Policy: May 2024 – July 2024 |
| | <p>Paul S confirmed the policy had been tabled at the Health & Safety Forum (HSF) and that members will also see the management plan is able for review in the Briefing Pack. Management plans for the big six policies are to be shared with Board when policies are reviewed.</p> <p>Request from Marie to remove the flowchart as this did not match the steps in the detail.</p> <p>Lindsey joined the meeting and gave a brief update to members. Policy has been refreshed and removed any references to Sedgemoor District Council. We are currently going through an audit with SWAP which may show further outcomes to report back to Board.</p> <p>In terms of the policy there are no major changes required. Lindsey is aware the Management Plans are long documents, and she is currently working through each management plan to create actions plans, which will go via the Health & Safety Forum.</p> <p>Jen asked if an action plan is derived from the management plan. Lindsey confirmed that this is being developed.</p> <p>Kathy asked that audit findings come back to Board (for information) as she is aware lifts are aging and it is increasingly difficult to source parts. Lindsey is happy for Board to email her direct with any questions on individual issues, as these can often be unique to each lift. Paul S confirmed the plan was for the audit findings to go to the Audit & Risk Committee; however following Kathy’s request, Paul S asked for the report to come back to a Board meeting.</p> <p>Paul thanked Lindsey for the brilliant job she is doing and confirmed Board feel very assured.</p> |
| | ACTION |
| | Lindsey to remove the flowchart to be removed from the Management Plan. |
| | Lindsey to share the SWAP Lift audit report with Board when available. |
| | RESOLVED |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board APPROVED the updated Lift Safety Policy 2024/27. |

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| 11. | <p>Debtor Balances and Write-Offs (Six Monthly Report)</p> <p>Ben introduced the paper by saying that this is the first report during his tenure that has sought Board approval for a single debt write off over £5K. He also confirmed that overall, performance was very good, and we continue to pursue long standing commercial debt.</p> <p>Paul S queried a debt relating to an individual which Ben confirmed related to septic tank works.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVED the write-off of £47k worth of unrecoverable recharge debt relating to three debtor balances and; • NOTED the position concerning the write-off of rechargeable repairs, rent & service charge debt levels and commercial debt levels for the 23/24 financial year. |
| 12a. | <p>Governance Framework: Presentation Slot</p> <p>Corporate Strategy Theme: Thoughtful Enterprise – Good Governance</p> <p>Topic: Board Effectiveness Review 2024 – Sarah Jackson, DTP</p> <p>Sarah Jackson joined the meeting at 2.45pm. She noted there were no non-compliance issues and colleagues engaged very well. Sarah gave brief feedback on her findings.</p> <p>Discussion relating to DTP Recommendations 1-4</p> <p>Sarah felt the remit of the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) was too broad. ARC need to have clear sight – they should not be given too much to do which will detract them from this.</p> <p>Marie felt that all current Board members demonstrated competency and reiterated the need to look at competency of members when recruited and she felt no Board member should be appointed solely to fill a particular area. Sarah noted Councillors may have been appointed via that route however we need to look at succession arrangements and ensure we recruit to cover that.</p> <p>Jen suggested that members need to collectively look at competency and skills, and if any member feels this is not being achieved, the Chair needs to look at this. The need of the Board for skills will change over time and changes may be required to membership.</p> <p>Discussion relating to DTP Recommendations 5-8</p> <p>Paul S noted the DTP7 recommendation mentioned the need to do a full self-assessment and asked do we need to commit to this and when. Ben confirmed this was open ended, reflecting on the recommendations and not wishing to overload colleagues. Jen suggested the Governance working group could look at what needs to be done and when. Paul S requested that an action plan be drafted and Board to receive six monthly updates from that.</p> <p>Discussion relating to DTP Recommendations 9-12</p> <p>Sarah advised that plans for Executive Team succession need to be looked at.</p> <p>Discussion relating to DTP Recommendations 14-16</p> <p>Sarah suggested we make sure papers connected to the meeting be in the main pack, with additional reading in a supplementary pack. More important items to be higher up the agenda.</p> <p>Minutes to be in-depth, shortened and capture individual contributions to reflect which member made the point or raised a question.</p> |

Discussion relating to DTP Recommendations 17-20

Sarah suggested the inclusion of a report header to give members background information, key indications and more clarity on the subject being discussed. Health & Safety reporting could be strengthened to give more clarity and be clear on any recommendations that come to Board. Sarah suggested the compliance report be in the main pack and given sufficient time on the agenda for discussion.

Discussion relating to DTP Recommendations 17-20

Look at what can be done to increase Board member contribution at meetings. Sarah reiterated that environment is very important and does contribute. Jen noted that board meetings are far more transactional than board away days and suggested trialling cabaret table layout which has a more relaxed feel and use successfully at board away days.

Olly agreed that away days were more relaxed and asked how we could make board meetings better. Sarah reiterated that the environment for meetings was fundamentally important and suggested presentations/discussions could be schedule before board meetings. Marie asked that we avoid full day meetings as members need to digest information.

Paul S asked Sarah what she considered to be the top priority. She felt it was the remit for Audit & Risk Committee,

Next Steps

Ben suggested board reconvene the Governance Framework Working Group to draft an action plan which would be presented to July Board along with any additional points for discussion.

A retainer for DTP to be organised so that additional support is available when devising and implementing the action plan

Paul S to reflect on different learning skills, how best to layout Board meetings and plan in strategy discussions.

All Board members in agreement on the next steps as suggested by Ben.

ACTION

Ben to organise a retainer for DTP.

Paul S to reflect on different learning skills, how best to layout Board meetings and plan in strategy discussions.

Ben to reconvene the Governance Working Group to be organised to discuss recommendations and draft an action plan.

RESOLVED

- Board **NOTED** the contents of the report and the proposed next steps.

12b. Governance Framework – Board and Committee Attendance Report 2023/24

Paul S thanked everyone for all they do and noted that DTP will be helping to refresh the skills matrix which members will be asked to complete ahead of July Board.

ACTION

Ben to email the draft skills matrix form to Sarah for review and distribute to members during June.

RESOLVED

Board

- **NOTED** the attendance for the 23/24 financial year.
- **DISCUSSED** whether it has any concerns regarding attendance at Board and Committee meetings. None were raised.

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| 12c. | Governance Framework – NHF Code of Governance 2020 Annual Self-Assessment |
| | <p>Ben noted that the self-assessment needs to be read in conjunction with the DTP report.</p> <p>Jen questioned if any material non-compliance had been identified. Ben replied that there wasn't but noted that, following the update from Sarah, DTP have suggested some small changes that can help us improve ourselves. An important piece of assurance to Board and SC that, coupled with the mock inspection results, present a positive position</p> |
| | <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |
| 12d. | Governance Framework – Board Member Tenure and Term Update as of 31 March 2024 |
| | <p>Ben confirmed Jen will be the first member to leave the current Board set up in 2025, followed by Paul S in 2026. Both Board and ET have already discussed succession planning and how we go about ensuring we have sufficient plans in place to avoid issues. Julia Paling, Head of People & Communications has been working in the background pulling together a recruitment pack for Jen's replacement. Board will be advised when the advert goes live.</p> <p>Jen noted that lots of conversations have been had around recruitment and it was important to note that if the Board co-opts a member, their official term starts straight away (as advised by DTP).</p> <p>Paul S noted that this work was an important piece of succession planning and assured Board colleagues that the skills matrix exercise will show any gap analysis, and this will be used to help recruit new members.</p> <p>Ben confirmed that Somerset Council (SC) have put forward the current three Councillor Board members as members of HiS Board for the next 12 months.</p> <p>Marie asked if we should have the same maximum term (6 years) for Councillors as we do for Board members. Chris H reiterated that SC Councillor Board members are on the Board as Councillors and not as a person. Councillor members are subject to the electoral system and are therefore rotated on a four yearly basis and if they lose their seat, they will no longer be a HiS Board member.</p> |
| | <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the annual position statement and CONSIDERED what action needs to be taken to maintain a full complement of members in accordance with the Articles of Association. |
| 13. | Customer First Report (Six Monthly Review) |
| | <p>Jen noted the scrutiny event held in October and suggested there would be merit in seeing if the recommendations are now embedded to ensure they are working. Claire confirmed that colleagues always take forward any learning.</p> <p>Paul S asked if plans would need to be amended as part of the mock inspection recommendations. Claire confirmed some plans may need to be amended and SLT are working together to make sure complaints handling is not just Rachel or the Customer Service team – complaints is the responsibility of all colleagues.</p> <p>Paul S asked if Housing Ombudsman (HO) data is submitted via SC. Claire said we submit direct to the HO but share any correspondence with SC via monthly Clienting Meetings.</p> |
| | <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |

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| 14. | Key Performance Indicators April 2023 – March 2024 (Summary including Provisional Annual TSM Data) |
| | <p>Ben confirmed this report is going to the Audit & Risk Committee meeting in June. Highlights noted are the red actions have reduced to nine and arrears have lowered. Assurance is needed for void relet times to ensure it does not get lost.</p> <p>Paul S noted the positivity around last year’s performance which were very commendable.</p> <p>Jen asked if there were any change in stress related staff sickness. Peter confirmed we have no work-related stress sickness absence at present (Post meeting note: The last absence was one person for 5 days in April).</p> <p>We are recording incredible TSM results. Jen noted she would be interested to know how we measure against the sector. Jen asked if the combined figures for HIS and the inhouse team could be separated to see how each are doing and what we can learn from each other. Peter to arrange for a report to be drafted, showing both joint and separate information and will share with Board once available.</p> <p>Peter informed Board that these are the 23/24 TSM results that Board signed off in March. However, they remain provisional whilst we assess any need for weighting to be applied. We are liaising with our contractor and SC to ensure our survey questions are weighted correctly and consistent across both delivery models. Any material changes to the TSM submission will be flagged up to Board in advance of submission. Ben is also looking at the split of surveys we do each month.</p> |
| | ACTION |
| | Peter to arrange for a TSM report to be drafted which shows both joint and separate information. Once available, this will be shared with Board. |
| | Ben to flag up any material changes to TSM data following conclusion of the weighting discussions with MEL and SCI. |
| | RESOLVED |
| | Board |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTED the key performance indicator results for the full year 23/24 Apr 23 - Mar 2024) and to; • NOTED the provisional Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) results for 23/24 |
| 15. | Compliance Report Summary – April 2024 |
| | <p>Marie noted that lift performance had improved and commended Naomi. Naomi stated the team are working hard to keep the momentum going.</p> <p>Paul S asked how we were doing with regard to retaining some external health and safety advice. Peter confirmed Alan Turner will not now be retiring in October and is continuing with his support to HiS until the service is retendered later in the year.</p> |
| | RESOLVED |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the contents of the report. |

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| 16. | Value For Money (VFM) Annual Report |
| | <p>Jen asked how much ET felt the Housemark VFM data for 2022/23 compared to 2021/22 was down to direct planning and how much is circumstance? Ben confirmed these are the results of mostly conscious decisions taken by the organisation. Jen noted that staff have made a conscious effort to save money, and this should be applauded.</p> <p>Paul S questioned why 'rent arrears and collection' was positioned in the top left quadrant of (relatively poor performance and high cost). Peter noted that ET had raised the same point and further investigation was required because we know we perform very well in this area. Ben will share the findings with Board.</p> <p>Claire confirmed the team are looking at a piece of work in housing management. Part of the exercise for officers to look at is what they do during the day and how they appropriate their time. There have been many discussions on this, and we will be looking at a deep dive when we have the capacity to do it.</p> <p>Marie suggested we not allow the information to influence decisions until we have more detail.</p> <p>Peter stated he is confident we are using the data in the way Housemark expect us to, however agreed that more information was needed.</p> |
| | ACTION |
| | Ben to share findings of investigations into quadrant position of 'rent arrears and collection' with the Board. |
| | RESOLVED |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |
| 17. | Statutory and Other Registers (Six Monthly Report) |
| | No questions or queries raised. |
| | RESOLVED |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |
| 18. | Sustainability by Design Update |
| | <p>Marie asked if the EPC rating for Bigwood & Staples had been confirmed and if we have closed the loop on decarb work for EPCs. Naomi confirmed the rating had yet to be announced however she is expecting it to be A and will circulate the information once available. Naomi informed Board that a new contractor had been recruited to complete all outstanding EPCs.</p> <p>Marie noted that it is important to ensure we close the loop on decarb works by completing the EPC once all works are finished and operating correctly. Naomi confirmed that the team are looking at the logistics of how we organise this.</p> |
| | ACTION |
| | Naomi to circulate EPC data for Bigwood and Staples new homes. |
| | RESOLVED |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |



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| 19. | Fraud Review (including Whistleblowing/Bribery Act) Annual |
| | No questions or queries raised. |
| | RESOLVED |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report. |
| 20. | Management Accounts – March 2024 |
| | Paul S commented that it was good to see the favourable variance. Ben noted there are some challenges ahead for 2024/25 but that the positive year end variance will mean that we can undertake carryover works without having to request additional funds as planned from SC. |
| | RESOLVED |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the management accounts for the full year 23/24 (April 2023 to March 2024). |

Confirmed as a true record of the meeting

Signed: 

Name (Chair): Paul Stephenson

Date: 30 July 2024

9 Chair Initials: 