

TRUST HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Minutes of the Board Meeting held on Thursday 4th April 2024 At 12 New Mart Road, Edinburgh EH14 1RL.

PRESENT:

Board Members

Dr Norval Bryson
Gordon Laurie
Ian Mitchelmore
Sharron Elsdon
Ian Gunning

David Knight
Steve McGowan
Paul McFarlane
Mary Niven

Officers in Attendance

Rhona McLeod, Chief Executive
Jackie McIntosh, Director of Assets & Sustainability
Zoe Purdie, Director of Finance & People
Neil Ferguson, Director of Business Development & Digital

Jenny Wallace, Director of Customer Experience
Claire Mottram, Governance & Business Support
Manager (Company Secretary)

DR NORVAL BRYSON IN THE CHAIR

Agenda Item	Detail
1.	Chair's Opening Remarks
1.1	Dr Norval Bryson, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted his congratulations to Trust for their recent acquisition of 101 properties from Methodist Homes. Norval recognised the effort that had been put in to make this success happen and acknowledged the recent articles in the press relating to this good news story. The Board shared their thanks with the Senior Team present. Rhona McLeod, CEO, expressed her thanks to the entire Trust team and noted that there is still hard work ongoing in relation to the operational integration.
2.	CEO Opening Remarks
2.1	Rhona had a couple of highlights to share. The first being the SHR Engagement Plan 24/25 which was recently published on the Regulator's website. Rhona referred to the good relationship Trust has with our Regulation Managers and spoke to the financial review completed this past year, particularly around our Heat with Rent and Communal Energy model, which showed Trust are in a sound position and the energy situation is being managed well. Rhona highlighted that SHR are no longer looking at customer rent arrears for Trust as our 'Gross Arrears' performance is significantly better than the Scottish Average, during what have been very difficult economic circumstances for customers. Rhona noted the reduction in heating charges for tenants this year and that SHR have asked to remain updated on board reports and minutes relating to energy during 24/25. Gordon Laurie, Board Member, queried how Trust compared to other RSLs in terms of engagement plans. Rhona advised that she felt Trust was in a positive place in comparison to other RSLs, particularly given the lack of RAAC affecting Trust properties, as confirmed by Will Rudd Engineers this past week. Rhona referred to the

2.2	<p>cost involved for landlords needing to rectify RAAC in properties and also noted that major new build programmes have received scrutiny.</p> <p>Secondly, Rhona referred to the new 101 Trust properties following the acquisition from Methodist Homes and noted that the tone in the developments with the customers and employees has been positive. Rhona noted that there is now the challenge of working through the operational tasks and integration, to get consistent ways of working with Trust. Rhona noted the rent harmonisation plan, as discussed at the previous Special Board Meeting and advised that rent consultation letters will be going out to tenants over the next few weeks in relation to a rent review from 1st June onwards. Rhona reflected on discussions so far with tenants and advised that the news has gone down positively in the context of them wanting security and peace of mind going forward, as well as Trust being a not for profit. Gordon queried if the funding from Scottish Government had been received yet. Rhona confirmed that funding was expected in the following week.</p>
3.	<p>Declaration of Interests</p>
3.1	<p>Mary Niven, Board Member (& tenant) declared an interest in Item 8 'Rent & Service Charge Review'.</p>
4.	<p>Apologies</p>
4.1	<p>Apologies received from Board Members: Graham Curran, Ali Ross, Kyle Ruparelia, Laura Bornatici,</p>
5.	<p>February Financial Review 2024/25</p>
5.1	<p>Zoe Purdie, Director of Finance & People spoke to the February Financial Review within the packs, noting that the YTD surplus is £120k ahead of budget. Zoe expected that following March and some adjustments and revisions, we expect to be on budget for year end. In terms of the Equalisation Account, Zoe confirmed that we expect to finish the year on £600k deficit which is £1m better than budget, which is a strong result. Zoe confirmed there were no concerns in relation to covenants. Gordon referred to the 'Key Submissions' section and queried if there was a similar list of non-financial returns required annually. Rhona confirmed that we have an annual governance plan and this could be included within a Board Governance Paper going forward.</p>
5.2	<p>David Knight, Board Member, queried the difference between 'major' and 'day to day' repairs. Zoe advised that major repairs would be a large spend which cannot be capitalised. Jackie McIntosh, Director of Assets & Sustainability, gave the example of a large spend relating to water or storm damage, which is not a planned capital enhancement.</p>
5.3	<p>Decision: Noted contents of the report.</p>
6.	<p>Revised Budget 24/25 and 30 Year Plan – please see private minutes</p>
7.	<p>Care & Support Verbal Update – please see private minutes</p>
8.	<p>Cost of Living Response Report</p>

8.1	Jennifer Wallace, Director of Customer Experience, referred to the report within the packs which outlined what financial assistance, hardship funds and items we have been able to achieve for our customers during the Cost of Living crisis. Paul remarked on the brilliant work and queried if this had been picked up in press releases and other comms. Rhona noted that a summary was included in our rent consultation comms with customers. Jenny noted that the hardship fund for 24/25 has just launched so there will likely be some messaging we can do as part of the launch around what we did last year. Steve McGowan, Board Member, agreed that it would be positive to publish the total figure publicly Jenny added that our Welfare Benefits Advice Team have also been able to increase the amount of financial assistance received by tenants by £600k, creating a total of £2.7m for customers this year, which more than justifies the additional half post which is very much appreciated.
8.2	Decision: Noted contents of the report.
9.	Rent & Service Charge Review – <i>please see private minutes</i>
10.	Duty of Candour
10.1	Jenny advised that we are required to bring to the Board annually a report on the Duty of Candour and to also publicise this on Trust's website.
10.2	Jenny was pleased to report that over the course of the last year we did not incur any specific accidents or injuries during the active delivery of care and support to our tenants.
10.3	Decision: Note the content of this report.
11.	Board Meeting Minutes
11.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes from the Board Meeting held on 8th Feb 2024 were proposed by David Knight and seconded by Sharron Elsdon. Minutes from the Special Board Meeting held on 13th March 2024 were proposed by Paul McFarlane and seconded by Mary Niven.
12.	Action Tracker
12.1	No comments to record.
13.	AOB
13.1	Ian Mitchelmore, Board Member, noted for information that the other Board he sits on 'Social Investment Scotland' has a new Chair of the Board who is George Walker – Chair of the Scottish Housing Regulator Board.
14.	Date of next meeting
14.1	Wednesday 29 th May 2024 (in the Edinburgh office).