

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING - 26 February 2019

MINUTES

Present: Richard Hyde (Chair), Ben Burton, Jenny Fletcher, Julie Hulland, Andy Mackiewicz, Nigel Page, Patricia Smith (Vice Chair) and Chris Williams

Officers: Fiona Hughes, Surjit Balu, Debora Good, Mark Pinnell, Sam Gilbert, Adrian Thomas (Item 9), Paul Langham (Item 8 only), Mark Wills (Item 11 only), Simon Rice (Item 11 only), Mary Moroney and Sarah Brookes

Apologies: David Bell and Louise Tubbs

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Paul Langham to the meeting and passed on the Board's birthday wishes to Patricia who celebrates her birthday tomorrow.

David Irwin (Solihull News) was in attendance to observe the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from David Bell and Louise Tubbs.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December were reviewed and agreed as a true and accurate record.

5. ACTION LOG

Each action was reviewed and the following updates were provided.

- **Review budget setting methodology** – Sam confirmed that a meeting took place on 28 January to review the budget setting methodology and it was confirmed that the diversity of the budgets does not lend itself to a zero based budget across the whole organisation. Work is in progress for considering zero based budget approach for discrete budgets and a further update will be provided to Board at the next meeting. Richard highlighted the importance of benchmarked cost per property information.
- **Understanding the specific needs of vulnerable customers** – work is in progress to identify customer vulnerability and this work is aligned to

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the customer satisfaction plan. A more detailed update will be provided at the next Board meeting.

- **Seek Council approval for 5 year contract (Envelope and Cyclical Maintenance)** - this work is being incorporated into the report to the SMBC Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environment in March 2019.
- **Board members/EMT members visit to top performing Housing organisations** - the Chair and Fiona have been discussing this action and it has been agreed to focus on organisations who are performing well digitally and with high customer satisfaction levels. The most appropriate organisations will be identified and invites will have been sent to members by the next Board meeting.
- **Informal conversations with Block and Street Champions** - Board members have been on 'Join the Conversation' visits as per the plans for engaging with customers. It was agreed that there is still a desire for Board members to meet the Street Champions and Deborah will arrange an event by the next Board meeting to recognise their contribution, and invite Board members.
- **Six monthly financial reports to the Board for Development and New Business activities** – this action will be taken off and Mary will include on the Board's forward agenda.
- **Review principle of adopting a cost per property KPI for 2019/20** – this action has been merged with the zero based budget action and Board will be updated.

6. STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS FROM BOARD

The report detailed the outcomes agreed following the Board Away Day on 18 January 2019. The HR and Remuneration (HR and R) Committee will consider a report on 'Embedding a skills-based Board' and a recommendation will be taken to the Board regarding its implementation. The proposals will be in line with the agreed direction at the Away Day.

HR and R will also be asked to consider a report on Board succession and terms of office supporting the identification of any skills gaps to consider for future recruitment.

It is recommended that the Board commission the Housing Operations Committee to undertake a review of scrutiny. A conference is coming up in April on good governance, and it would be prudent, if possible, for Chris to attend.

It was recommended that a report detailing the training and support for Committee Chairs is scoped for consideration by the HR and R Committee

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including options for delivery of the training. The skills of the Board need to reflect the direction of travel for SCH.

Fiona explained that the work to refresh the Vision and Values is a big project with a longer timescale. It was recommended that the final draft of the refreshed Vision is agreed by the Board by the end of 2019. It is intended to use the staff conference as a vehicle to facilitate engagement with staff.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the agreed outcomes from the Away Day.
- (ii) NOTED** the suggested approach to delivering the recommended actions.
- (iii) AGREED** an action plan for reviewing the Vision at the meeting in May 2019.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

Fiona provided an update to Board on the key work streams since the last Board meeting:

- Recruitment – Campbell Tickell have been appointed to work with the Executive Management Team (EMT) on recruitment to five key posts at management level. It is anticipated that the recruitment process will commence in March.
- We will use Campbell Tickell to advise on the best approach to recruitment processes for other vacant posts within SCH. The Board will be involved in the recruitment process to the Executive Director post. The benefits of working for SCH will be promoted during the recruitment process.
- Delivery Plan 19/20 to be reviewed under item 9.
- Customer Satisfaction – the four critical strands of this work, which are crucial to our progress, were reviewed. We are working with BMG to set a target for our customer satisfaction KPI and they will be externally validating our performance.
- The customer journey analysis has been undertaken by Campbell Tickell and key improvements have been identified to improve customer satisfaction. A Customer Service team has been recruited in the Asset Management team who will identify methods for improving customer satisfaction in the repairs service.
- Quarterly Monitoring Board – we reported on our performance in January and it was well received.
- SCH Business and Digital Transformation – Resourcing the process of business transformation will come through the Corporate Services Team

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under the Executive Director for Customer and Corporate Services with the support of the EMT. At present this is challenging but this will improve as the recruitment process concludes. The Chair identified this as a potential Board member skill and it was agreed to note this skill.

Fiona identified an incident that occurred when we fell short of the expected good practice at SCH. A comprehensive review of the Temporary Accommodation eviction process has been undertaken and the sign off procedure has improved control measures that are completed by management.

Andy Mackiewicz was satisfied that the incident was investigated to identify why it happened and to implement corrective measures however EMT need to ensure the improvements are horizontally delivered across the organisation. The process has identified learning measures and individual staff should not be isolated in decision-making, checks and balances must be implemented. Surjit confirmed that these control measures have been identified and implemented.

The process for evicting tenants from secure tenancies is different to that of Temporary Accommodation. Surjit confirmed that the secure tenancy eviction process is a legalised process with control measures.

DECISION

(i) NOTED the content of the report.

8. IT AND DIGITAL PERFORMANCE & DEVELOPMENT

Paul Langham summarised the report and how SCH need to exploit digital technology to drive service delivery and governance. SCH have undertaken a significant number of ICT system changes to upgrade its core Housing Systems and this work is still on-going. The Board and EMT need to establish a platform upon which SCH can deliver its digital ambitions. The Chair identified that the ambition is to be the top performing landlord.

Board were supportive of the digital process however it was felt that we need to first identify what we want to do and how we want the organisation to operate, review and streamline our processes and then look at technology/digital processes to enhance service delivery.

There was concern raised by Jenny concerning the cost of this to SCH and the need to train and develop staff to be more IT focussed. Fiona identified that the suggested digital improvements are not deliverable within the existing budgets. If Board has the ambition to drive improvements we will need to seek contributions from reserves. The Chair explained that a business case would need to be prepared if the Board are requested to approve using reserves.

The Chair confirmed that our main aim is to improve customer satisfaction and our systems need to be driven by customer needs to help them to engage with

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us. Paul agreed that they will look at digital efficiency to meet the aim of improving customer satisfaction and the goals of SCH.

A discussion took place about the 'My SCH' customer portal and Mark agreed to engage Board members in the testing of the portal.

It was confirmed that Lone Working technology will be included in the introduction of new mobile technology.

The Chair asked about the Council's timeframe for digital improvements in contact centre technology. Paul confirmed that a number of projects are currently being undertaken so that the council are more efficient and this includes replacing the Oracle System and replacing the telephone system from analogue to digital so that we can introduce Skype services.

The Contact Centre at SMBC and SCH use different technology and it is anticipated to review and provide similar technology to provide efficiencies/VFM. This project will be in approximately 2/3 years.

The Board asked if the tenants' contribution towards technology provides VFM. Paul confirmed that our IT staffing costs are very efficient, compared to similar organisations.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the content of the report
- (ii) APPROVED** the proposed approach

9. DELIVERY PLAN FOR 2019/20

Fiona explained the journey of the Delivery Plan; the draft Plan was presented to the Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) in February. The comments from CLT included the need for the Plan to reflect SCH's commitment to the Council's Green Prospectus Programme in carrying out its priority activities.

CLT had also suggested consideration be given to producing a business case for retrofitting of sprinklers to high rise buildings.

These comments together with Board comments will be communicated to the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board on 5 March 2019. The final version of the Delivery Plan will be submitted to the Cabinet member for Environment and Housing on 27 March 2019.

The comments raised by Board are detailed below:

- Page 6, P1 – amend to read “we are a limited company with one shareholder”
- Page 9, point 3 - change “just fewer” to something different it is repeated too often

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- Page 9, point 5 – we should not disclose the location of the CCTV Control Centre and we need to refer to the Homelessness service.
- Page 10, 8,851 gas services were carried out – a question was raised about this information. We do not have gas in all of our council homes and should the number of gas service carried out be shown as a percentage rather than a number? The feedback was noted.
- Page 13, the five priorities – how do SCH meet the SMBC priorities? It was suggested to provide an example for each priority
- Page 17, priority areas – there are a lot of deliverables and it was agreed that we need to be more specific and narrow them down.
- Page 21, Domestic Abuse Charter – requires a Domestic Abuse Champion and this will be decided later in the year.
- Page 26, Delivery Plan Milestones 19/20 – a question was raised about the significance of this information, since it was summarising what had already been written. Fiona confirmed that they are a summary of the milestones which are reported to the Council. It was agreed these would remain in the plan.

Board also requested that the Delivery Plan is designed and printed to meet the RNIB requirements.

DECISION

(i) APPROVED the final draft of the 2019/20 Delivery Plan.

10. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Deborah provided an update on SCH improvement activity and the approach to customer engagement and satisfaction. One of the key drivers for reviewing customer satisfaction has been the establishment of the Customer Satisfaction and Engagement group that is chaired by Fiona. The group brings together a range of staff from across the business to act as ambassadors and change agents for improving levels of satisfaction and engagement.

Jenny raised an issue with regard to repairs and that SCH are reliant upon its suppliers/contractors and if they do not deliver to a high standard this impacts on the customers' perception of the service provided by SCH. Deborah explained that to date we have been trying to identify the reasons for dissatisfaction and we will be working with BMG from 4 March 2019 to gain greater tenant feedback.

Mark confirmed that all of our main contractors are attending Customer Services training and our Contract Managers deliver toolbox talks on Customer Service standards. The SCH Code of Conduct will also be delivered to all contractors by the Customer Services team that has been created in the Asset Management team. All of this work will be documented and evidenced once it has been completed.

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Andy confirmed that the procurement process includes a quality ratio and the percentage can be changed depending on the goods/services that are being procured.

Ben asked how the new appraisal process differs to the old process and Deborah explained that the new process separates behaviours from performance targets and both are reviewed separately.

The Chair advised Board that the number of customers registering on and using the Customer Portal, when it goes live, will be reported in our performance information.

DECISION

- (i)** **NOTED** the update on SCH improvement activity and approach to customer engagement and satisfaction.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT FOR Q3 2018/19

Simon Rice was introduced as the interim Health and Safety Advisor for SCH to replace James Gorton who will be leaving SMBC on 29 March 2019. The Board requested that thanks are recorded for the advice and work provided by James in assisting SCH with Health and Safety. The Board wished him the very best in his new position.

Mark Wills provided the Board with an update on legislative changes and guidance, corporate health and safety activity and recommendations for improvements. Mark confirmed that the key priority occupational risk areas are work-related stress, musculoskeletal disorder and occupational lung disease. These areas need to form the focus for SCH.

Following the updated guidance, produced by the H&S Executive, EMT have agreed that all managers will be required to undertake a half day Mental Health First Aid Workshop. This is a starting point for raising awareness about mental health issues. A further update will be provided to the HR and R Committee on 11 March 2019.

Fire Safety – A discussion took place about the Government's announcement for 'Building a Safer Future' which follows the Hackitt review of building regulations for fire safety. The key recommendations from the Hackitt review were detailed in the report and Mark talked through the key points. Mark confirmed that moving forward a further report will be taken to Board detailing how SCH will conform to the implementation plan and ensure that our buildings remain safe.

SCH have a Fire Safety group to oversee all fire safety activities. We have recently introduced customer accompanied fire risk assessments where by SCH invite residents to accompany the risk assessors whilst they undertake the FRA of the block they live in. To date the uptake has not been very good however we will continue to promote this option.

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Andy Mackiewicz has facilitated a meeting with Mark and Asset Management representatives/SMBC representatives to review the Bowtie risk evaluation method for fire safety risk management. Mark provided an update and following the meeting we are identifying the critical risk areas and we will identify a structured way to respond to the critical areas.

Mark will be bringing a separate paper to EMT in May to consider the current management system framework HSG65 and how this meets the requirements for SCH. Feedback will be provided to Board as part of the next quarterly report in May 2019.

There have been no reportable accidents or incidents reported to the H&S executive during this quarter and there has been a decrease in the statistics from the same period last year.

Andy referred to Mental Health and Stress being the greatest cost to organisations and SCH need to invest in this area and actively manage the wellbeing of its staff. Andy suggested looking at the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) management Standards questionnaire although this deviates from current practice at SCH. Fiona will ask for a report from Human Resources and Health & Safety to advise on the best approach and this will be followed by a report to Human Resources & Remuneration Committee.

Jenny explained to Board that there has been a 33% increase in days lost and a majority of absences is due to stress/depression and anxiety. The Board consider the welfare of staff to be extremely important and it was suggested to consider incorporating ISO management standards into the staff survey.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the content of the report.
- (ii) NOTED** Appendix 1 – Fire Safety Action Tracker V23 (10.01.19)

12. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE UPDATE Q3 2018/19

Sam provided an update on the financial performance for the 6 months to 31 December 2018 (quarter 3).

The savings required in 2018/19 are all rated green, changes have been implemented and the value confirmed. There was no concern on the current debt position in SCH and the HRA.

Following the appointment of the Executive Directors, an exercise to establish the staffing requirements has been undertaken. This has resulted in the need to realign budgets in 2019/20 as detailed in Fiona's update report. Further detail was provided in the table shown in 10.1. In order to accommodate the growth in SCH staffing structures, it was proposed that SCH introduce a 3% Workforce Management Target with effect from 1 April 2019 to partially offset

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the additional costs as well as reflect the reality that 100% funded staffing budgets has generated significant underspends in past years.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the financial performance for 9 months to date of the current financial year 2018/19 and the latest forecast to year end.
- (ii) NOTED** the progress on delivery of 2018/19 planned savings.
- (iii) NOTED** the current and forecast reserves position.
- (iv) NOTED** the current debt position in SCH and the HRA.
- (v) APPROVED** the earmarking of £21k of the 2018/19 forecast revenue underspend in order to fund 3 months of the Head of Neighbourhood Services post into 2019/20 (4.2).
- (vi) RATIFIED** the introduction of a 3% workforce management target into 2019/20 staffing budgets with effect from 1 April 2019.
- (vii) RATIFIED** the staffing virement detailed at paragraph 10.1.

13. PERFORMANCE REPORT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Q3 2018/19

The report provided an update on performance against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at the end of quarter 3 where targets have not been met. These were considered in detail along with the full performance report by Housing Operations Committee in February 2019.

Generally, performance has been good; 28 targets have been met, 1 where target was not met and 4 that were off target but within tolerance. Board asked what action is being taken to improve the red indicator and ensure the ones within tolerance do not become red.

Surjit explained that the number of new self-funded Wellbeing service users remains below target and a robust action plan is in place for Q4 to increase the numbers. This includes targeted marketing and individual targets have been set to increase numbers. The target for next year will be more pertinent however Sam confirmed that there is no concern and we have savings from staff vacancies.

There were no further issues raised since the Appendix identified the proposals to improve performance on the amber KPIs.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the overall performance outturn and the commentary, listed in Appendix A, on those KPIs where targets have not been met.

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14. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM HOUSING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE 18 FEBRUARY 2019

Chris Williams provided a verbal update to Board following the Housing Operations Committee meeting on 18 February 2019. The main points are summarised below:

- There has been an increase in the number of homelessness cases presented on the day and this increases the pressure of work for our case workers.
- New posts for additional managers are about to be advertised.
- As a consequence of an increase of Homeless cases this has put pressure on Temporary Accommodation (TA) and led to an increase in the use of Travelodges and this is tracked weekly.
- The longest time in a TA is 697 days and this was due to their need for a 4 bed property (an exceptionally large family).

Chris confirmed that SCH are not unique with these pressures however he wanted the Board and Cabinet Members to be aware of the increased pressure arising from the Homelessness and Prevention services. The prevention rate is very inspiring and has improved by 55%.

It is frustrating that we still have a handful of difficult to let properties for example Dasset Road bedsits however work continues to try and let these properties. Lakeside will be used for accommodating younger people and these will be managed by St Basils.

Chris has requested further work to enhance our Social Value; currently we include this in the procurement of our contracts and services. It has been agreed to pass this on to the Audit and Risk Committee to quantify what we currently do and identify what additional social value can be achieved. Equality and Diversity in contracts also needs to be reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee.

DECISION

i) NOTED the content of the verbal report.

15. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted and there was one additional item for July. Mary will include 'New Business Committee Review' on the plan.

DECISION

(i) NOTED the contents of the Forward Plan.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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A date for the Staff Conference has not been agreed. Fiona agreed to finalise a date within one week and will notify Board members.

17. REVIEW OF MEETING

The Chair provided an overview of how the meeting was conducted and he considered the IT report to be very comprehensive and some very vital points about being pro-active with our agenda for managing Mental Health and Stress.

The papers reported to Board have been comprehensive, focusing on our strategic direction.

The meeting was concluded at 20.15.

The next meeting will be on 20 May 2019.

Signed as a true record of the meeting:
(Chair)

Date: