

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 30 MARCH 2020

MINUTES

Present: Richard Hyde (Chair), David Bell, Ben Burton, Jenny Fletcher, Diane Howell, Nigel Page, Patricia Smith (Vice Chair), and Chris Williams

Officers: Fiona Hughes, Samantha Gilbert, Surjit Balu, Kevin Bennett, Mark Pinnell, Mary Moroney
Mark Wills and Jane Carter were present until the end of item 8.

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed members to the first Board meeting held via a teleconference.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies from Katy Blunt and Louise Tubbs.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

DECISION

THE BOARD

(i) **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2020 including the confidential extract.

5. ACTION LOG

DECISION

(i) **NOTED** the action log.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

Due to the current situation with Covid-19 pandemic the Chief Executive concentrated on the arrangements in place to maintain services as far as possible and support the local community and staff.

SCH is fully embedded with SMBC in the emergency planning arrangements with daily calls for strategic, tactical and operational cell meetings. A number of work groups have been set up to support the process such as health & welfare and communications and SCH has representatives on these groups.

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SCH has set up a daily service tracker, a copy of which was forwarded to Board members on Friday 27 March 2020. This is used by EMT at the daily meetings to identify critical services and those services which need to be paused or require additional support. All critical services are currently being delivered and not at threat at the moment. Resources will be moved to support critical services as required.

Performance levels and demand for key service is also monitored daily along with the headcount of staff working / not working / sick. The current absence rate is approximately 3.5 % today.

Staff support is provided via managers and through communications from EMT and updates every second day on the intranet. This includes links to guidance from public health England and the employee support service which can be accessed at any time.

Tenants and leaseholders have all been sent the special edition of the newsletter which was distributed at the end of last week along with regular social media updates and the website is kept up to date with information about services that have been paused.

At the end of last week we also started a project to contact all known vulnerable tenants (approximately 3,000) to check whether they have the support in place that is needed at this time. We are starting with contacting those aged over 70 years and then will move on to other groups.

SCH are also supporting the national operation shield and some staff assisted with packing food parcels today.

The social housing regulator has recognised that it may not be possible to maintain 100% compliance with safety checks during this crisis and we are using a compliance dashboard to monitor performance. As of today SCH has no outstanding safety checks.

Nationally there has been an increase in claims for Universal Credit and this is likely to have an impact on rent arrears but SCH will continue to provide as much support as possible to tenants.

SCH are working with SMBC to access appropriate personal protective equipment where required whilst recognising that the priority will be in adult social care.

All SCH development sites are closed at the present time.

Questions raised by Board members:

1. Can we identify any households currently in temporary accommodation (TA) where there is a person who should be shielded for 12 weeks or has underlying health conditions that might increase risk levels by sharing facilities?

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It was confirmed that there are no shielding cases in TA but we would need to check whether there are households with persons with an underlying health condition. Case officers do keep in contact with residents in TA and provide support. An update to Board members will be provided when we have established the status of cases in TA.

2. Have SCH shared any staffing resources with SMBC to maintain critical services?

This has not been necessary to-date with the exception of supporting operation shield with food parcels but the offer remains that we would share resources if required.

3. With regard to staff who are at home but not currently productive do we have plans to provide the necessary IT?

It was confirmed that additional laptops have been purchased and for those who will not have the IT other productive work such as supporting the outreach to vulnerable tenants but it is a challenge.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the content of the report.

7. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

A question was raised regarding the volume of surveys proposed to be completed and it was explained that we were following the industry standard of 20% and trying to maximise the value out of each survey by also completing EPS's and HHRS at the same time.

On page 11 of the strategy the date for measuring the success of the strategy will be amended from 2020 to 2022.

DECISION

- (i) APPROVED** the Asset Management Strategy 2020-2022 and recommend it for approval by SMBC
- (ii) NOTED** the installation of the ARK Strategic Asset Performance (ASAP) model
- (iii) NOTED** the approach to stock condition surveys

8. HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT FOR QUARTER 3 2019/20

There were no questions arising from the report.

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Ben Burton asked Board members to note that he had discussed the report and health & safety issues with Mark Pinnell, Mark Wills and Jane Carter prior to the meeting.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the contents of the report.
- (ii) NOTED** Appendix 1 – Local Health & Safety Plan on a page
- (iii) NOTED & AGREED** Appendix 2 – SCH compliance in relation to the Home Standard
- (iv) NOTED** Appendix 3 – Accident/Incident Reporting Analysis

Mark Wills and Jane Carter left the meeting at this point.

9. REVENUE & CAPITAL FINANCIAL MONITORING AND FORECAST 2019/20 DECEMBER 2019 (QUARTER 3)

A question was raised about the possibility of increasing the Hardship Fund in the light of the current Covid-19 pandemic. It was confirmed that this can be reviewed at a future date but also that SMBC have received Government funding to provide support at the present time and SCH are working with the Council on how this can be used to support the community.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the latest forecast to year end for the current financial year 2019/20
- (ii) NOTED** the transfer of management of the Procurement function
- (iii) NOTED** the revised 3 year Capital Programme
- (iv) NOTED** the progress on delivery of 2019/20 planned savings
- (v) NOTED** the current and forecast reserves position
- (vi) APPROVED** the allocation of the additional management fee for 2020/21
- (vii) APPROVED** the carry forward surplus on the Hardship Fund
- (viii) NOTED** the £100k additional cost incurable in 2020/21 for stock condition surveys and the impact this could have for the 2020/21 year end that would result in a contribution from the SCH Budget Strategy Reserve

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- (ix) NOTED** the Council's approval of 2020/21 HRA budgets for revenue, capital and rents as well as SCH Management Fee

10. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT

There were no questions arising from the report.

DECISION

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

11. SPRINKLER FEASIBILITY PROJECT

This item is confidential.

12. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM HOUSING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2020

Chris Williams gave a report on the meeting, at which the new framework for Customer Engagement had been approved which will see a culture change with engagement being everyone's responsibility within the organisation. The Committee were particularly pleased to note plans for co-designing services with customers and including a wide range of mechanisms for engagement going beyond the traditional face to face meetings. The new arrangements for the replacement for Tenant Scrutiny were approved which will have between 8 – 12 members and will carry out high quality service reviews 3 or 4 times per year. The name for the new scrutiny Committee has not yet been agreed.

The Committee had also had a comprehensive update on the homelessness service and were pleased to note the improvement in prevention success. However, there is still pressure on Temporary Accommodation with some families still having to be placed in budget hotels.

The Committee received a report on high priority sites for tree maintenance and will be receiving a future report on carbon reduction measures.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the content of the report

13. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM THE MEETING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES & REMUNERATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 MARCH 2020

The Human Resources and Remuneration Committee meeting was underway when the Prime Minister recommended face to face meetings should stop.

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The business of the meeting was swiftly dealt with to find time for a Covid-19 update that then went out to the Board.

The Gender Pay Gap and the Public Sector Equality Duty reports were circulated for comment. In the absence of any requests for change they will be published by the end of March 2020.

DECISION

(i) **NOTED** the content of the report

14. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 MARCH 2020

This item is confidential.

15. ICT SERVICE AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

DECISION

(i) **NOTED** the content of the report

16. ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORTS

DECISION

(i) **NOTED** the content of the report

17. WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS

This item is confidential.

18. FORWARD PLAN

DECISION

(i) **NOTED** the Forward Plan.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

20. REVIEW OF THE MEETING

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Board noted that it had been a productive meeting despite the limitations of a teleconference.

The Chair and Board wished to thank members of the EMT and staff for their continued efforts in dealing with the Covid -19 pandemic.

The meeting ended at 7:00 pm

Signed by chair:

Date:.....