

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 27 JULY 2020

MINUTES

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

Officers: Fiona Hughes; Surjit Balu; Kevin Bennett; Samantha Gilbert; Mark Pinnell; Mary Moroney; Olly Dodds; Mark Wills; Tony Bolder from Prism Fire Risk Management (until end of item 8)

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and advised that following the full Council meeting in July 2020 Katy Blunt had stepped down from the Board. The Chair asked for the thanks of the Board to be passed to Katy for her work over the past year.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

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 8 June 2020.

5. ACTION LOG

It was noted in relation to action reference 0919-5 that the Board are anxious to see progress with setting out SCH's approach to Carbon management and setting an energy efficiency target. It was agreed that a progress report will be presented to the Board in September.

DECISION

(i) NOTED the action log.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

The Chief Executive offered congratulations to Patricia Smith on her shortlisting in the Housing Heroes Awards in the Tenant Lifetime Contribution category.

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The offices have now been made Covid secure to permit staff to safely return to work if necessary although where possible staff will continue to work from home to ensure social distancing can be maintained. Generally, key performance indicators show a good level of performance and advised that since the report had been drafted the number of gas safety certificates which were overdue had reduced to 14. The indicator causing the most concern at present is rent arrears which is proving challenging at this time.

Board member questions:

1. In relation to anti-social behaviour cases the HouseMark data is indicating that SCH performance is very positive but the satisfaction data and evidence arising from the petition received from residents seems to show a conflicting position.

Surjit Balu responded that localities working during the Covid-19 lockdown had been very positive with close working with the local community, Police and Council to address serious issues. However, with so many people spending longer at home than usual there was a spike in reports of low level issues which was giving rise to the dissatisfaction levels. With regard to the petition this is an isolated case which will be discussed later on the agenda

The Chief Executive went on to discuss building safety which is critical to SCH and the Council and a focus of attention across the sector. The Asset Management Strategy which is jointly owned by both SCH and the Council is an important tool for measuring the stock performance and viability. The initial results of the stock condition survey will be available in October 2020 and it is planned to hold a Stakeholder Workshop when the data is available which will include Board members.

The Board Task & Finish Group is continuing to progress recruitment of a tenant member to replace Patricia Smith but due to carrying out some additional promotional work to attract as diverse a field of candidates it is unlikely that the recruitment will be completed prior to the AGM in September. Consent has therefore been sought from the shareholder to extend Patricia Smith's term of office until for up to 6 months. The Task & Finish Group will also be recruiting to the independent member vacancy.

Board member questions:

1. When will the Learning Pool be available for staff and Board members to access online training?

Fiona Hughes advised that this was expected to be available in the next couple of weeks.

2. With regard to the Strategic Vision there is a comment on page 15 referencing that the Solihull Council Plan will be reset in 2020 which has now happened. Can this statement now be amended?

Fiona Hughes confirmed that we will make the amendment as requested.

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With regard to the Vision statement there was general agreement that the word “aspiring” should be removed but otherwise Board were content to approve the Vision statement.

DECISION

- (i) NOTED** the content of the report.
- (ii) NOTED** the decision of the Council that Katy Blunt steps down from the Board with effect from 27 July 2020.
- (II) APPROVED** the Strategic Vision 2020-2025 subject to the minor amendments requested by the Board (removing the word aspiring from the Vision statement and confirming that the Solihull Council Plan has now been reset).

7. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Board members suggested including Equalities in the title of the Human Resources and Remuneration Committee to reflect that this is an important element of the work of the Committee. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee with proposals arising being brought back to full Board for approval.

DECISION

- (i) APPROVED** the adoption of the revised Standing Orders for SCH with immediate effect
- (ii) APPROVED** the proposed amendments to the Committee Terms of Reference
- (iii) NOTED** the Board attendance and expenses claimed for 2019/20

8. FIRE SAFETY MANAGEMENT – SPANDREL PANELS – CONFIDENTIAL

Item 8 on the agenda was a confidential item and therefore the minutes are recorded separately.

9. ANNUAL RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

Fiona Hughes advised that the corporate risk register is reviewed quarterly by the Audit & Risk Committee and the report presented to full Board represents the annual review. Olly Dodds from the Council's Internal Audit Team provides risk management advice and support to SCH and was in attendance to answer any questions arising from the report.

Board members raised the following questions:

1. In relation to the risk of fraud what are the main areas of concern?

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Surjit Balu advised that there were a range of concerns regarding fraud but the main issues relate to fraudulent housing applications, subletting of tenancies, fraudulent housing benefit and right to buy claims. Surjit confirmed that there are a range of mitigating actions in place to try to identify and deter fraudulent activity including close partnership working with the Council's Internal Audit Team.

2. The Covid Risk register refers to a potential shortage of temporary accommodation units to cope with a spike in cases of domestic violence. How many additional units are required? /Have been acquired?

Surjit Balu advised that sector intelligence suggested that there could be a significant spike in demand but in Solihull it has been a gradual increase rather than a spike and we have managed to cope within existing housing revenue account units. We did source additional budget hotel capacity and 4 extra two bed units from the housing stock.

3. SCH have had a small number of staff required to shield due to Covid but unable to carry out their duties from home. What measures are being taken to retrain /upskill these staff members to permit home working in future if necessary?

Fiona advised that the position was under constant review but there was no additional cost to SCH whilst these staff had been unable to work as they were not replaced so it was lost productivity rather than additional cost incurred.

DECISION

- (i) **NOTED** the information produced relating to SCH's corporate risks

Olly Dodds left the meeting at 7:27 pm

10. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT QUARTER 1 2020/21

Kevin Bennett introduced the report advising of good progress in relation to customer satisfaction levels. The cost per property data was noted and is useful but Board members felt that this could be further developed. It was agreed that Kevin Bennett and Samantha Gilbert will work with Nigel Page to propose amendments to the indicators to make the data more useful for analysis whilst retaining alignment with HouseMark indicators for comparison purposes.

DECISION

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

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11. NOTIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF PETITION - CONFIDENTIAL

Item 11 on the agenda was a confidential item and therefore the minutes are recorded separately.

12. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES AND REMUNERTION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2020

Jenny Fletcher thanked staff for the fantastic response to coping with working through the pandemic. Jenny summarised the meeting noting the reduction in the gender pay gap, agreement that the Board will have a 360 degree appraisal this year and recommending approval of three policies:

- Leave of Absence
- No smoking
- Adoption

The Board agreed to delegate authority to the Chair of the Committee in consultation with the chair of the Board and Committee members to approve the Domestic Abuse Policy.

DECISION

- (i) **APPROVED** the Leave of Absence policy
- (ii) **APPROVED** the No Smoking policy
- (iii) **AGREED** that the Board gives the chair of Human Resources & Remuneration Committee delegated authority to work with the chair of the Board and other Human Resources & Remuneration Committee members to agree the final version of the Domestic Abuse Policy
- (iv) **APPROVED** the Adoption policy
- (v) **NOTED** the actions of the Committee

13. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2020

Item 13 on the agenda was a confidential item and therefore the minutes are recorded separately.

14. FORWARD PLAN

DECISION

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

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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None

16. REVIEW OF THE MEETING

All Board members confirmed that they were happy with the meeting and felt that there had been productive discussions.

The meeting ended at 8:02 pm

Signed by chair:

Date:.....