



Barrhead Housing
 Minute of Governing Board Meeting
 Thursday 14th December 2023
 BHA Offices and by Video Conference

Present

J Hamilton (Chair)	D McKinney
A Oliver (6.30pm arrival)	J Whyteside
LA Junner	A Glasgow (VC)
Beth Welsh (VC)	ClIr Devlin

In Attendance

L Wilson	Chief Executive (CEO)
K Devon	Minute Taker (CSO)
C McCulloch	Director of Customer Services (DCS)
L Rice	Director of Finance and Corporate Services (DFCS)
S Stewart	Director of Assets and Communities (DAC)

Minute – BHA Governing Board Meeting

1	<p>The meeting started at 6.00pm</p> <p>Apologies & Sederunt Check Apologies were received from B Connelly (MBE), P McIlvenny, D McVey & R McGuire (BEM)</p>
2	<p>Declaration of Interest: Board and Staff There were no declarations of interest.</p> <p>J Whyteside announced his membership in the Glasgow Building Preservation Trust board.</p>
3	<p>Approval of Minutes 3a. Approval of Governing Board Minute of 26 October 2023 The Board approved the minutes as a true record.</p> <p>3b. Board Action Tracker December 2023 The Board noted the action tracker.</p>

'at the heart of our community – investing in your future'

	<p>Matters arising from minutes There were no matters arising.</p>
4	<p>Matters for Approval</p> <p>4.1 – Build homes, grow communities, delight customers – draft strategy The CEO presented the draft strategy to the board. Main points highlighted were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic goals are categorised into three primary areas: Homes, People, and Services. • The strategic action priorities incorporate one or more of the strategic goals. Each action is marked with one or more icons representing home, people, or services. • Barrhead is dedicated to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Making Barrhead Housing an excellent workplace. ➤ Establishing governance that is industry-leading and guided by local people. ➤ Considering the sustainability, both environmental and financial, of our decisions ➤ Embracing diversity, celebrating differences, and designing services and ways of working so people feel like they belong. ➤ Continuously seeking opportunities for enhancement. Developing capacity, tools, and approaches to innovate. ➤ The ERC strategic agreement has been drafted, and the CEO is awaiting feedback from the council. The intention is to finalise the strategic agreement alongside the launch of the strategy. <p>The CEO confirmed that the consultation period is scheduled for January and February, and a finalised version will be presented to the Board in February for approval, with a view to launching the strategy in spring 2024.</p> <p>The Board expressed that the strategy is ambitious and commendable work.</p> <p>The Board approved the draft strategy.</p> <p>4.2 – Lavern Property Services</p> <p>The CEO updated the board on the development of a new business strategy for the subsidiary.</p> <p>CLlr Devlin confirmed that the council had approved the closure of the current service at Connor Road as anticipated, and asked the board to consider a new lease at Connor Road for the provision of short stay accommodation to help alleviate the homelessness crisis. Board members responded that they would require a detailed proposal from the council including consultation with local residents, assessment process for individuals, management arrangements, repair and maintenance arrangements and proposed rental income to Barrhead Housing. Board members indicated that the development of mid-market rent had been agreed as part of the new business strategy and that they were</p>

'at the heart of our community – investing in your future'

content with the proposals in the papers including the use of Connor Road for mid-market rent. Cllr Devlin also suggested considering using the Mixed Tenure Team for the new proposed painting and decorating service, rather than employing through the subsidiary, and the DAC agreed to explore this option. Following discussion, the CEO agreed to have a discussion regarding Cllr Devlin's request with senior officers at ERC. The board agreed to approve the governance proposals for the subsidiary and the draft budget and implementation plan, subject to any changes agreed by the board as a result of information received regarding a new proposed new lease at Connor Road, and subject to any changes agreed by the board regarding the painting and decorating service following discussions with the Mixed Tenure Team.

Board members discussed a possible change of name for the subsidiary and agreed that they would like the name to be a sub brand of Barrhead Housing. Board members were asked to share any suggestions with the Executive Team individually.

The Governing Board

- Approved the purpose, remit and standing orders of the subsidiary.
- Approved the intra group agreement.
- Approved implementation of two new business units – mid market rent and painting and decorating service - subject to any changes to be agreed by the board following the outcome of discussions with ERC's mixed tenure team.
- Approved the implementation plan, subject to any changes to be agreed by the Board following receipt of additional information regarding a proposed new lease at Connor Road.
- Approved the draft budget.
- Agreed that the final business plan would be brought back to the Board in February for consideration.

A Oliver joined the meeting 6.30pm

4.3 – Rent setting 2024-25

Councillor Devlin disclosed a conflict. The Executive Team and Board noted that the rent-setting matter is solely a consultation and there would be no need for Cllr Devlin to leave the meeting for this item.

The CEO presented the rent setting report to the Board.

Key highlights included:

- Proposed rent increase is 6.6%
- Consultation with tenants to commence January 2024
- Rent increases proposed in the sector range from 4%-8%
- Considerable effort has been invested in determining how the funds will be allocated.
- Barrhead Housing will actively focus on assisting those who may face challenges in meeting the increased rent – particularly low-income single occupants

'at the heart of our community – investing in your future'

- Financial implications are illustrated for both a lower and a higher rent increase.

The CEO invited any feedback and questions regarding the proposed rent increase.

The Board provided the following feedback:

- The 6.6% is reasonable when compared to other Registered Social Landlords.
- To enhance tenant homes and provide improved services, rent increases are necessary.
- Consultation with tenants must be clear and concise. Tenants should be well informed about the benefits associated with the rent increase.
- The Board acknowledged that certain households need to be specifically addressed, as this increase will have a more pronounced impact on their affordability compared to others.
- A rent increase is necessary to cover the costs involved in providing quality homes for Barrhead Housing tenants. The service provided has significantly improved compared to previous years and the rental increase reflects this.

The Board **approved** consultation with tenants on a proposed rent increase of 6.6%.

4.4 – Draft Budget and Business Plan

The DFCS delivered the report to the board and highlighted the following, in addition to the report:

- The exact salary increase for EVH is currently unknown.
- Value for money savings have been achieved in multiple areas, including mobile phones, broadband, and bank charges and we have identified some areas for further savings in 2024.
- With the change of contractor during the year, repair costs will be reassessed in January when additional data becomes available.

The DFCS invited feedback and any questions from the Board.

The Board provided the following questions and feedback:

What is the rationale for the anticipated reduction in repair costs? How can we be confident that this will happen?

The DFCS and the DAC indicated that the increase in repair costs is due to reactive repairs identified during tenant visits, leading to additional repairs for Q1 and Q2. This is expected to reduce as the first tranche of visits are concluded.

The board **approved** the draft budget and business plan.

D McKinney left the meeting 7.05pm

4.5 – Policy discussion and approval for consultation: allocations policy

The DCS presented the draft Allocations Policy to the Board.

The main points highlighted were:

- The policy will encourage individuals currently under-occupying to consider downsizing, and there is an opportunity to initiate discussions regarding downsizing.
- The policy emphasises supporting individuals discharged from hospitals, members of the armed forces, and those dealing with mental health conditions.
- There is flexibility with the policy, and the Executive Team is receptive to feedback and willing to modify the policy if there are identified weaknesses in a specific area. They are always open to enhancing the policy for the benefit of potential applicants.
- Priority will be given to individuals escaping domestic abuse.
- Next year, there will be a dedicated policy for individuals experiencing domestic abuse.
- Housing Options is ready to provide guidance for individuals applying for housing.
- Testing is underway to assess the effectiveness of artificial intelligence in offering assistance for completing application forms. Findings from the testing will be presented to the Board.

The DCS stated that the final draft of the policy will be submitted to the board in February 2024 for final approval. This is a draft policy for consultation. The DCS welcomed any questions.

The Board provided the following feedback:

- Could a summary page be created since the policy is extensive.
The DCS confirmed that an executive summary is in the policy for the Board's information.
- Items should be presented in a straightforward manner, allowing tenants to directly access the section that relates to them.
The DCS advised that there would be links and bookmarks to assist with this.
- Boundaries need to be considered to assist victims of domestic abuse in East Renfrewshire, given its small size. It is essential to ensure housing is located far away from perpetrators.
The DCS acknowledged the significance of this concern, stating that Barrhead Housing will take measures to ensure there is appropriate housing for any victim within a safe distance from the perpetrator. This will be thoroughly examined to prioritize the safety of victims.

The board noted the policy and **approved** the consultation.

5 Matters for Discussion

5.1 – Quarterly performance report

The DFCS provided a copy of the performance report that went to Audit, Risk and Health and Safety sub group on 30 November 2023.

The DAC highlighted that:

- There have been 278 additional repairs identified during Q1 and Q2 compared with the same period last year through tenancy visits. The rise in repairs is associated with implementing tenancy visits.
- The new repairs contractors started in August, and by February, there will be a more comprehensive sample size in relation to repairs.
- Window repairs have contributed significantly to the cost of repairs this year. There have been a high number of repairs and each one is expensive. Following the window replacement contract it is anticipated that this will decrease. Continuous monitoring will take place, with a detailed review of costs scheduled for February 2024.

The CEO mentioned that the Audit & Risk sub group have agreed to offer suggestions for developing the content and format of the performance report before the next sub group meeting.

5.2 – Governance and compliance report

The CEO shared the report with the board for noting only. It was confirmed that Social Housing Net Zero Standard (**SHNZS**) in Scotland will replace Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (**EESH2**).

5.3 – CEO verbal update

The CEO reported the following:

The Association is presently in talks with Hanover Housing to determine the cost to acquire the five units. The costs will be finalized before initiating consultations with the tenants. Since they are already designated as social housing, there is no grant funding available.

The CEO confirmed there had been a second attempt to secure grant funding. It is crucial to retain these houses under social housing, as they would otherwise be sold and transition to private ownership if not acquired by a Social Landlord. The aim is to secure funding aligned with Rent of the Shelf (ROTS), set at £50,000 per property.

The Senior Customer Services Advisor is due to return from maternity leave on 8 January 2024 and their role will be changing with additional responsibilities, including those related to the subsidiary. The current grade for the position is grade 6. EVH has re-examined the role and determined that it now falls under grade 7. To implement this upgrade, approval from the Board is necessary.

	<p>The board approved the change to the job profile and grade.</p> <p>Steven Quinn, the recently appointed CEO of East Renfrewshire Council, would like to meet with the board. It was proposed he could attend the Board meeting in February. The Board agreed that the next board meeting was suitable for this introduction.</p> <p>The DAC provided the following verbal updates:</p> <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Association has secured funding for internal wall insulation and thermostats in tenement buildings in the region of £915k. The works are set to commence in January 2024, covering 100 tenement buildings. This was secured through ECO4. • Tenants will be provided with a £300 decoration allowance and an additional £300 as compensation for any inconvenience caused by the works. <p>Social work partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Learning Network West offers social work placements for students and the association has partnered with them. A social work student in their fourth year will participate in an 8-day placement with the Community Investment and Customer Services team, collaborating with CAB to provide tenants with social work assistance. Barrhead Housing are paid for the placement, and it will commence on 5 January 2024 <p>Christmas support and activities for tenants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 600 food parcels were packed and distributed to tenants. Thanks to CX surveys for volunteering their time and resources to this project. • GasSure generously contributed 800 selection boxes, which were distributed during the Barrhead Housing Christmas party. Forty children had the joy of receiving a selection box and a gift from Santa. • The Employability Project by Impact Arts successfully concluded an art show. A letter from one of the tenants expressing the profound positive impact it has had on their life will be shared with the Board on Teams. • In Cahootz drama group successfully presented their first performance 'Oor First Noel' • Staff members Hilary and Shay prepared the Christmas dinner for the sheltered complex. • Funding for fuel vouchers to assist tenants is available until 22nd December 2023.
6	<p>Parent Monitoring</p> <p>Development sub-group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next meeting to be confirmed. <p>Audit, risk and health and safety sub-group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met 30 November

'at the heart of our community – investing in your future'

	LPS board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next meeting to be confirmed.
7	AOB Nothing to note

Date and time of next meeting(s):

29 February 2024 at 6.00pm

The Minute was approved by the Board at the meeting on 14 December 2023.

Signed by Chairperson: _____

Date: _____