

3a. Minute

Barrhead Housing
Minute of Governing Board Meeting
Thursday 30 May 2024 6pm
BHA Offices and by Video Conference

Present

J Hamilton (Chair)	D McKinney (Vice Chair)
LA Junner	J Whyteside
D McVey	B Welsh
R McGuire	A Oliver

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 6pm</p> <p>Apologies & Sederunt Check Apologies were received from P McIlvenny, A Glasgow, B Connelly</p>
2	<p>Declaration of Interest: Board and Staff None</p>
3	<p>Approval of Minutes</p> <p>3a. Approval of Governing Board Minute of 18 April 2024 The Board approved the minutes as a true record.</p> <p>3b. Board Action Tracker The Board noted the action tracker.</p>
4	<p>Matters arising from minutes</p> <p>Hanover Housing Proceedings</p>

	<p>The CEO stated that after quite a delay, the Scottish Government have confirmed grant funding to support the purchase of the properties currently empty. The CEO and their customer services officer, Zubeida, will be speaking with the three tenants involved. The meetings will take place over the summer. The CEO will report back to the Board.</p> <p>LPS Meeting</p> <p>The CEO gave a brief update regarding the subsidiary meeting that took place on 30 May before the GB meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax advice has been received and is currently being looked over. There may be changes in terms of the leases because of this advice. • There may be amendments to the Services Sharing Agreement, and this will be brought back to the board to agree. • Recruitment for subsidiary board members is still ongoing. • P McIlvenny was approved to be on the subsidiary board.
<p>5</p>	<p>5.1 Annual Return on the Charter and Stock Return</p> <p>The CEO presented the report to the Board.</p> <p>Key highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection for the ARC is done monthly using the guidelines from the Regulator. Automated reports are used to gather the data. • Executive team did a mid-year run of the ARC report to test the process and identify any changes required to automated reports and minimise adjustments. • CEO reviewed all the indicators. • Scotland’s Housing Network, benchmarking and data analysis organisation, did a desktop review for validation of the data. • Three levels of defence: Process, Review and Validation – to ensure the accuracy of the data being reported. • A table of the core performance data was provided to the board. Overall picture is Barrhead Housing are on an upward trajectory. <p><i>Advance questions from the board</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Are there any plans in place regarding seeking legal redress in the eviction process?</i> <p>The DCS confirmed that Barrhead Housing went to court four times in 2023-24. There was one eviction, which was discussed in September 2023, as it was a significant amount of longstanding rent arrears. Eviction is always a last resort and there will always be many steps taken before anything reaches eviction stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>In the area of section 5 referrals from East Renfrewshire Council, why were there not more than 27 people assessed?</i>

The DCS confirmed that 42 referrals were received in 2023-24 and 27 now have tenancies, 14 refused offers made to them, and 1 referral was refused by Barrhead Housing due to substantial rent arrears and a previous eviction.

- *Offers refused are sitting at 18%, why is this?*

The DCS stated that the target is 20%, so this figure is below target. The bulk of the refusals were between April and June 2023, which is when the new build developments were concluding. Many people were holding out for an offer of a new build and refusing current properties due to this. The performance is good taking this into consideration.

- *Lost rent is sitting at over £14k, why is this?*

The DCS confirmed that the lost rent is the void period when repair works are taking place, we are not charging rent in this period. £14k works out about right for the year's loss.

- *Can the £78k in former tenant rent arrears be explained?*

Regarding the rent arrears, this works out about £1300 per tenant, over an average of six and a half years and this debt has built up over time. There is a new process within the debt recovery policy that will address arrears and ensure something is being done about it, to avoid debt build up. There is an ongoing process, and all former accounts are being checked and if viable, debt is being chased.

- *Why are the factored owner survey responses only 70%?*

The DCS indicated that a 70% response rate from factored owners is a good level of response. There will be a follow up survey done, which has been held back as there was potential of survey fatigue. This will be issued in due course, and we hope for higher response rates.

- *Is the right first time figure down to new contractors and is this something we look to improve on?*

The DAC confirmed that the right first time figure is down to the new contractor being in place. The contractor is relatively new, and the repairs service should continue to improve the longer they are working with us.

- *On the response to 'are you happy with the quality of your home', 139 were very satisfied and 189 fairly satisfied. Are there any thoughts on this?*

The DAC stated that this survey was completed in 2022 and there will be another issued next year. As the component upgrades and investments in properties continues, we would expect the satisfaction results to improve in next year's survey.

- *Is there any funding coming through Scottish Government regeneration capital grant fund?*

The DAC stated they were not 100% sure of the criteria for this but previous grant funding was for over and above day-to-day component replacements. The DAC is going to investigate this and report back to the board with their findings.

The Chairperson welcomed any other questions from the Board.

Board Question

- *Indicator 26 shows that rent collected as a percentage of rent due is more than 100%, why is this?*

The DFCS confirmed that this is due to the timing of income being received.

- *There is a concern about adaptations and this being an issue for Barrhead Housing longer term, if no funding is available.*

The DAC confirmed that the Scottish Government made an announcement today and they will be reviewing this in detail and report back on adaptation funding.

There were no more questions at this point.

5.2 Five-year financial projections

The DFCS provided a summary of the report to the board.

Key points highlighted:

- Financial projections include things we know are happening but does not include any guesswork or aspirational work. Reality will be different from the projections.
- There are a lot of unknowns at the moment in terms of finance and funding and we expect to know more later this year, which would change the picture quite a lot.
- Loan repayments are significant, and this influences the cashflow position. Reluctant to refinance loans due to low margins on existing loans.
- Development has been funded from reserves in last two years.
- Barrhead Housing's overall financial position is reasonably robust.

In meeting board question

- *Is there a need for rents to be adjusted, are they too low?*

The DFCS explained the position with bringing in rent harmonisation when we did. It means that everyone paying too high a rent is now paying the right amount. Those paying too little are still paying dramatically too little as it would not have been feasible to increase the rents by the amount required during the cost of living crisis. Over the next few years, the balance will be corrected.

- *The CPI inflation rate looks quite ambitious, is this correct?*

The DFCS confirmed that this figure was pulled directly from Bank of England and is what they project CPI will do. They project forward a few years.

The DFCS stated that traditionally it is October CPI that is referred to but there is nothing binding us to October and numbers could be looked at on different dates up to November or December.

The DFCS welcomed any questions or comments.

The Board stated the following points:

- The consultation is passed in October, and this is what the budget is based on.
- The development is quite prudent and there is always the option to pull back if something were to happen financially. The investment programme could be slowed down or phased differently.
- There is no requirement to have a reserves policy but setting 'Golden Rules' is effectively a policy statement. There is no requirement for a written policy document.
- The risk to income is low as 65% rental income is from DWP.
- The presentation of the projections was excellent.

The board **approved** the five-year financial projections.

5.3 Annual Treasury report (including loan portfolio return)

The DFCS stated that the report had been provided to the board for information and was happy to take any questions.

There were no questions from the Board in relation to the treasury report as many points were covered in agenda item 5.2.

The board **approved** the loan portfolio return.

5.4 Policy Approvals: recruitment policy

The DFCS stated that the recruitment policy had been updated and the amended policy had been provided to the board prior to the meeting. Questions or comments were welcomed.

The board stated that the recruitment policy was thorough and covered all aspects. The board **approved** the recruitment policy.

5.5 Debt write off

The DCS presented the debt write off report to the board.

	<p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad debt write offs are for debts that are deemed unrecoverable. • Traces have been carried out by TC Young and they are unable to track the person. • Debts are so low it is not worth the time and cost to pursue. • The tenant has sadly passed away. <p>The DCS is seeking board approval to write off the unrecoverable debts.</p> <p>The DCS added that the CS officers do training with TC Young in terms of pursuing arrears which has resulted in some good practice, and we should see results of this going forward. There is also a video on the website that sets out responsibilities of being a tenant and is more engaging for customers to watch in their own time.</p> <p>The board approved the debt write offs.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>6.1 Report on fire and Main Street sheltered housing</p> <p>The DAC presented the report to the board.</p> <p>Key points raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The incident took place on Thursday 25 April 2024 and sadly the tenant passed away the following day. • The fire started at flat D 117 Main Street, the fire alarms were activated, and the call went straight through to safety net, as the system is designed to do. • The CEO, DAC, DCS and Asset Manager attended the sheltered complex on 26 April to speak with tenants and the warden. • The tenants also received a visit from the Fire Services community action team, who went door to door to reassure tenants. • The DCS, CSM and Warden have liaised with East Renfrewshire Council and the tenants living in the affected block. One tenant had to be decanted due to the damage to their property. • The loss adjusters carried out their initial inspections on 14th & 15th May 2024 and we await their report. • The Fire Service contacted the DAC and arranged a post-fire fire safety audit on 30 April. The officer was happy with the fire safety documentation and equipment and mentioned we have implemented a culture of treating fire safety seriously. • The final audit report had one action which was due to the CHUBB community alarm system, which was giving an intermittent fault following the fire, we knew about the fault and that it was rectified the same day. • We arranged for a trauma counsellor from RAMH to attend, who spoke to the residents about the help they can provide, and they are now arranging for group and individual sessions with some residents on an opt-in basis. • The Care Inspectorate and Health and Social Care Partnership were both made aware of the fire and what action we were taking in response to the situation.

- The Scottish Housing Regulator was notified the day after the fire. They requested information about the decanted resident and the fire investigation report. We provided information about the decanted resident and a copy of the fire audit report. The regulator is content with the information provided to date and has asked for a copy of the investigation report when available.

The DAC added that the fire service has confirmed we will not receive a copy of the incident report as it is exempt from publication. They also added that the fault with the safety net equipment was a result of the fire.

The board asked the following questions:

- *The report states the tenant couldn't get out the property, can this be clarified?*
- *Can there be clarification on the safety net equipment and the direct link to the automated receiving centre. Was this faulty at the time of the fire?*

The DAC stated that the only information they have is that the tenant was advised to get to a place of safety. The tenant had known mobility issues, which could have been a deterrent in getting out of the property. The fire service attended immediately and got the tenant out of the property to safety.

The DAC clarified that the equipment was working before and at the time of the fire and the fire service was alerted via this equipment. The fault shown was a result of the fire damage and occurred after the fire and looks to be water in the system.

The board raised a concern that the fire audit report is slightly misleading as it reads as the equipment doesn't work. However, the equipment was fine until it became damaged during the fire and putting out of the fire.

The DAC confirmed that there are two audit reports, and it only states the equipment isn't working on one of them.

The board asked

- *Where does the responsibility lie in terms of tenants with mobility issues?*
- *Are the rules different for a sheltered complex in terms of fire safety and building safety?*

The DAC confirmed that Barrhead Housing is the landlord, and we have no care responsibilities as this lies with the care provider.

The DAC confirmed that fire testing and drills are carried out every six months in the sheltered complex common areas.

The DAC added that current regulations are for 30mm fire doors, but a decision was made that any requiring renewal will be upgraded to 60mm doors.

It was agreed that at the debrief session clarification would be sought on what we would be getting in terms of the investigation report, to give to the board, care inspectorate and the regulator.

The CEO noted that they were extremely proud of how the staff team handled this tragedy and situation. It was a massive undertaking and the team couldn't have done more to manage an extremely devastating situation and offer support and assistance to the fire service, tenants and their families.

6.2 Governance and compliance report

The CEO provided the governance report to the board for information.

Key highlights:

- Board training – if GB members are unable to attend training sessions, recordings are available and should be watched. CSO will then update training records.

Appendix attached – end of year position on projects. There has been a lot of progress and a lot was delivered in 2023/24 including new strategy, new website, housing management system, allocations policy, repairs service and factoring service.

The CEO welcomed comments and questions in relation to the report.

Board comments and questions.

- *The training courses provided so far have been excellent and enjoyable.*
- *Has there been an improvement in traffic visiting the new website?*

The DFCS confirmed that the website hits had not been investigated at this time. The CSO will look at this once the website has been live for a few months and report back to the board.

6.3 CEO Verbal update

The CEO highlighted the following updates:

- Full staff team day took place at the Burrell Collection on 2 May 2024. The day focused on reflection and being outdoors and was well received. It was an opportunity for people to think about their role in their teams and how that fits in with the overall strategy.
- Development Programme – Discussions have taken place with East Renfrewshire Council regarding the funding cut for development and housing. There are no major changes for Barrhead Housing as we don't have anything on site and can progress with planning.
- In terms of acquisitions, there is no funding confirmed at all other than the Hanover properties.
- The SFHA conference is on 11th & 12th June.
- FLAIR conference 20th June – there are 10 places available.

7	Parent monitoring Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Next meeting 13 June 2024 Audit, Risk and health & safety <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Met 23 May. Next meeting 15 Aug 2024 LPS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Met 30 May 2024
8	Any other business Alan Oliver expressed his thanks to Barrhead Housing for facilitating work experience for his niece. Her feedback was, she absolutely loved it, had a great time and learned an awful lot. Also, everybody was really nice to her. TPAS conference June 2024 – Rena and Brian are attending.

Date and time of next meeting(s):

22 August 2024 at 6.00pm

Signed by Chairperson: _____

Date: _____