

**Harbour Homes Scotland Limited
Minutes of Harbour Homes Board Meeting held on
Thursday 23 November at 5.30 pm via MS Teams**

Present:

David Welsh (Chair)	Leigh Eardley
Campbell Whyte (Vice Chair)	Brian Reilly
Liz McLean	Anthony Gillespie
Kevin Anderson	
Caitlin McCorry	

In attendance: Heather Kiteley, Group Chief Executive
Gordon Cameron, Group Director of Operations
Tina Bell, Group Business Support Manager
Charlotte Gray, Communications Manager
Debbie Bayne, Tenant Participation Coordinator
Alison Petretti, Business Support Officer

Acronyms used:

CT	C+T Accountants
SHR	The Scottish Housing Regulator
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
HH	Harbour Homes
HMT	Harbour Multi-Trades
FRC	Finance and Risk Committee
GLT	Group Leadership Team
GBSM	Group Business Support Manager
BSO	Business Support Officer

Action

1. Apologies and Welcome

1.1 Apologies received from Ngeme Ntuli, Jim Sherval and Iain MacPhail

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 None.

3. Approval of Minutes Thursday 24 August 2023 and Special Board Meeting Wednesday 20 September 2023

3.1 Proposed by Caitlin McCorry and seconded by Anthony Gillespie.
[Leigh Eardley joined at 5.35pm]

3.2 Approval of minutes Special Board Meeting Wednesday 20 September 2023

Action

- 3.3 Proposed by Leigh Eardley and seconded by Campbell Whyte.

3.2 Matters arising and outstanding actions

- 3.2.1 A question was asked in relation to point 5.16 on the minutes of 24 August regarding the EICRs (electrical installation condition reports)?
- 3.2.2 The Board were advised we currently have a member of staff working full-time on EICRs to decrease the backlog. It is a priority to resolve this issue.

4. Noting of Matters Approved or Papers Issues Between Meetings (Monday 13 November 2023) - CEO

- 4.1 The papers issued were all for noting. One paper to draw attention to is the Board meeting dates for 2024-2025. The BSO will issue diary appointments in due course.
- 4.2 A briefing paper from SFHA and Campbell Tickell was circulated on Tenant Safety. The Board agreed for this paper to be discussed at the ad-hoc meeting on Tuesday 23 January 2024 at 5pm.
- 4.3 The Chair advised the Joint Board Away Day in October was engaging and enjoyable and a lot of preparation by staff had gone into making the day a success.
- 4.4 The Board noted the papers:
- A. Placemaking quarterly report April - June 2023 - issued 09.08.23
 - B. Board Bulletin #28 issued 28.09.23
 - C. Board Bulletin #29 issued 01.11.23
 - D. Meeting dates for 2024/25 issued 13.11.23
 - E. Report from Harbour Connections Board 6 November 2023 issued 13.11.23
 - F. Tenant Safety Briefing issued 13.11.23
 - G. Quarterly Report on performance against the RSL Business Plan issued 13.11.23
 - H. Assurance report on compliance and matters delegated to management issued 13.11.23
 - I. Update on SHR Engagement / Improvement Plan issued 13.11.23

For Approval and Review

5. Tenant Participation Strategy – Communications Manager/Tenant Participation (TP) Co-ordinator

- 5.1 The Chair welcomed the Communications Manager and TP Co-ordinator to the meeting.
- 5.2 The TP Co-ordinator advised of the process and how the TP working group (which Leigh Eardley was a member of) arrived at the final

Action

strategy. The group agreed the strategy was not to be a corporate document and should instead be written for the tenant.

5.3 The next priority was to work with staff and managers to compile and prioritise an action plan where the view of tenants would be captured.

5.4 In response to a question on the date of “2023”?

5.5 The TP co-ordinator advised this was incorrect and would be amended. The strategy is a three-year plan with a yearly action plan being prepared.

TP Co-
ordinator

5.6 In response to a question on the “the use of social media presence”?

5.7 The team are open to any kind of media that will work for our tenants.

5.8 In response to a question on “the process how we engaged with tenants for the strategy”?

[Mr Reilly joined the meeting at 5.50pm due to technical issues]

5.9 The TP working group was made up of four tenants and six staff members from various areas of the business. The working group looked at other organisations strategies and came up with our strategy.

5.10 The Board loved the design and felt the document looked and read well and requested feedback from tenants on the strategy be brought to a future meeting.

5.11 The Board approved the Strategy.

[Mrs Gray and Ms Bayne left the meeting at 6pm]

6. Annual Return on the Charter Benchmarking Report – Group Business Support Manager

6.1 Landlords must provide accurate information on the Charter indicators and contextual indicators to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

6.2 The benchmarking report compares ARC performance data for the period April 2022 – March 2023 with selected peer groups. This was presented at the meeting.

6.3 Highlights

Complaints – We excelled in complaints management, surpassing all comparable groups in performance.

Housing quality and maintenance - Collaborative working with Harbour Multi-Trades has ensured we are one of the top performers in the peer group for repairs indicators:

- Emergency Repairs - 1.3 hours – top performer in peer group.
- Non-emergency repairs - 5.2 days.

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- Right First Time - 93.4%.

Access to housing and support - Our Tenancy Support and Housing teams have been working with customers to sustain tenancies resulting in good performance in the following areas:

- Vacant properties – Vacant properties during 2022/2023 is below the Scottish median and our peer group.
- Abandoned properties - Seven abandoned properties meant we have the fourth lowest number of properties abandoned compared to our peers.
- We had six households awaiting adaptations. The average time to complete adaptations was 15.6 days. Approved adaptation requests continue to be given the highest level of priority.

Getting good value from rents and service charges – the introduction of our new core business system will give us the opportunity to automate some of our processes and give tenants easier access to their rent information.

- Rent due collected 99.8% - high performer within peer group.
- Rent arrears 3% - high performer within peer group.
- Re-let times 24.3 days - high performer within peer group.

6.4 Areas for Improvement

Satisfaction Indicators – all standards

As reported to Board in May 2023, the SHR has identified tenant satisfaction (charter indicators) and percentage of antisocial behavior cases resolved as areas of improvement for Harbour Homes. We were identified as one of the weakest performing landlords in this area.

An Improvement Plan has been produced to address these issues. The plan includes carrying out a full face to face tenant survey which is taking place November 2023 with a report due in January 2024. From the report and action plan will be developed to address areas of dissatisfaction.

Housing quality and maintenance

- Repairs satisfaction – Customer satisfaction with the repairs service remains low. The main areas of dissatisfaction are poor communication during the repair process and the quality of our repairs.
- Properties meeting SHQS – The reason for the drop in SHQS performance is largely in relation to access for electrical inspections. This is due to a significant number of no access situations in relation to the upgrade of smoke detection systems to LD2 compliance and the completion of Electrical Installation Condition Reports to properties. This is being reviewed as a priority.

Neighbourhood and community

Action

Antisocial Behaviour – The implementation of our new core business system will allow for the better management and reporting of ASB cases going forward. ASB is being reviewed as part of our improvement plan.

6.5 In response to a question on how we are addressing the “Electrical Inspections” and how we are prioritising?

6.6 The Board were advised tenant safety was a priority. A full-time staff member has been allocated to reduce the backlog paperwork and the number of electrical supervisors has increased to approve EICRs which will accelerate the sign off process.

6.7 The Chair advised this was a good piece of work and asked if the presentation could be put in the Board team’s channel.

AP
completed

6.8 The Board reviewed the report

7. Business Planning and Budget Assumptions, including Approval of Rent Increase for RSL Tenants and Commercial Properties- Group CEO

7.1 The Group CEO gave an overview of the paper and advised that the board were being asked to discuss and agree a rental increase for social rents, note the increase of 6.7% to commercial property in line with the lease terms and conditions, approve the budget assumptions detailed and note the variance between Harbour policy rents and Scottish Government benchmark rents.

7.2 She advised that the proposal made to increase social rents by 5% was based on balancing inflationary business costs, rents in comparison to others, affordability and the rent consultation results.

7.3 In response to a question “is there a risk of the council asking for HAG to be returned from the disposal program due to the pause in the development programme”?

7.4 Discussions have taken place with the council and there is a potential for HH to renegotiate the agreements and use the funds against our Asset Management Programme.

7.5 This is being considered as a priority to renegotiate, however legal advice received suggests that the HAG is historic and should be written off and not returned.

7.6 The Board had some concerns referencing some of the tenant comments from the rent consultation. The Group CEO reassured the Board that the Housing Services Manager was aware of the negative comments and has taken action to address them where the comment was not anonymous.

Action

- 7.7 In response to a question a Board member “was surprised to see the option of a four-day working week being offered” as they had not heard of this before.
- 7.8 This had been discussed in principle at the FRC meeting on Thursday 13 July 2023. It was not provided as an option, only given as one possible example of a reduced service, there has been no decision made other than to give it consideration as to a way to keep rental increases below inflation. A full consultation with staff and tenants would be required and if it was felt that it was feasible, a proposal would be brought to the Board for approval.
- 7.9 In response to a question “major and cyclical repairs, capital and revenue will be restricted to compliance requirements only. How will this affect HMT?”
- 7.10 Not all the work for HH is completed by HMT and won’t have a negative impact for HMT.
- 7.11 An example of increasing costs given was “a rise in our energy cost landlord supply”. As we are at the end of a two-year fixed term our cost will increase by 50%. This is additional funds for HH to secure.
- 7.12 The Group CEO advised we are in a similar position to last year and costs needed to be reduced if we were to increase rents below inflation for a further year.
- 7.13 In response to a question “would the sector look at mergers as a possible solution”?
- 7.14 It was likely that some are considering this as an option.
- 7.15 HH are not the only RSL stopping developing due to the challenges posed in the current economic environment. Other RSLs are taking similar measures as HH to reduce costs.
- 7.16 The final detailed budget will be presented to the FRC on Thursday 1 February 2024. If Board members would like to see the detailed budget this can be arranged, otherwise they would see a more summarised version in the business plans and strategy when presented in March.
- 7.17 The Chair thanked the Group CEO for this sobering detailed paper.
- 7.18 The Board:
- **AGREED** the level of the 2024/25 rent increase for social housing properties at 5% for social rents.
 - **APPROVED** the other key assumptions detailed for use in the preparation of the budget for the business year ending 31 March 2025.

Action

- **NOTED** that commercial property rents will be increased by 6.7% in line with lease terms and conditions.
- **NOTED** the variance between Harbour policy rents and Scottish Government benchmark rents

[Due to technical issues Kevin Anderson left the meeting 7pm. Various attempts were made to re-connect Kevin to no avail]

8. Board Skills Matrix – Group CEO

8.1 The group skills matrix is reviewed annually and was last reviewed by each Board in November 2022. It details the skills, knowledge, experience, interests and leadership that each Board needs represented by its Board Members.

8.2 After discussion, it was agreed the skills on the HH were correct.

9. Update on Development (verbal) – Group Director of Operations

9.1 This discussion was minuted separately as it was a confidential matter.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 None.

11. Date of Next Meetings

- 11.1
- Ad Hoc meeting - Presentation on Customer Satisfaction Results and briefing paper on Tenant Safety – Tuesday 23 January 2024
 - Ad Hoc meeting - Briefing on Asset management strategy and Board responsibilities – TBC
 - Board Meeting - Thursday 7 March 2024

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Action to follow up post meeting

Item	Action	Management Note
5.4 & 5.5	Amendment to the date (2023) on the paper.	Tenant Participation Coordinator to update TP Strategy