



MARYHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26TH AUGUST 2020 AT 6.00 PM VIRTUAL MEETING VIA CONFERENCE CALL

Board Members	Attended	Apologies
Roger Popplewell (RP)	✓	
Isabella McTaggart (IM)	✓	
Lindsay Forrest (LF)		✓
Najah Plakaris (NP)	✓	
Paul Imrie (PI)	✓	
Raphael Rickson (RR)	✓	
Richard Turnock (RT)	✓	
Tim Holmes (TH)	✓	

Officers	Items
Bryony Willett (BW)	All
Jennifer Simon (JS)	All
Rebecca Wilson (RW)	All
Lesley Carnegie (LC)	All

Observers	Items
Caitlyn Maccabe	All
Janaki LakshmiNarayanan	All

Item No.	Issue	Action by
1.	Welcome	
1.1	RP welcomed everyone to the meeting and there was a round of introductions for the new Board members and observers. Apologies were noted and there were no declarations of interest.	
2.	Approval of Board Minutes – 6th July 2020	
2.1	Board agreed a minor amendment to the minutes at 13.1 to refer to the quality and detail of the papers, instead of the number of pages. With this amendment Board approved the minutes from the meeting held on 6 th July 2020.	LC
3.	Action Tracker	
3.1	PI asked in relation to the Glenavon render who would be the mediator. BW advised that this was not yet known. Mears had indicated that they were open in principle to taking part in mediation but as two sub contractors are involved in the legal action they would also need to agree to the approach before it was taken forward.	
3.2	Board approved the Action Tracker including all actions proposed for closure.	

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4.	Feedback and approvals from Audit & Risk Committee	
4.1	RT provided feedback from the Committee meeting held on 13 th August 2020.	
4.2	RT noted that the key item on the agenda was the Financial Statements. Committee agreed to recommend the statements to Board for approval after considering them and the auditors' report in detail. In summary the feedback from the external auditors was very good. The Committee had noted a well done to the Finance Team for the positive result, especially in the context of working remotely. There were some reasonably minor adjustments to the accounts but nothing of concern.	
4.3	The Committee also considered two internal audit reports. In relation to Business Planning there was a result of Strong assurance, which is the highest level. In relation to New Build Development there was Substantial assurance, which is the second highest, with only minor recommendations to address.	
4.4	The Committee also covered the standing items of the management accounts, risk review and fraud monitoring.	
4.5	Board noted congratulations to the Finance Team.	
5.	Rules update and Special General Meeting	
5.1	This item presented changes to the Rules of the Association for approval by Board before being considered by the wider Membership.	
5.2	One change was around allowing factored owners to be counted towards the customer majority instead of just tenants. It was noted that this would help ensure there is a voice for owners on the Board. The remaining question was around the level that owners should be limited to. The recommendation in the paper was no more than one owner at a time.	
5.3	TH suggested changing this to no more than two owners, as this would give more flexibility and keep options as wide as possible. NP agreed that no more than two might be better. PI noted that the main consideration is ensuring that tenants are in the overall majority - one or two owners perhaps did not make a significant difference.	
5.4	RP explained that the concern is that numbers could drop to seven Board members overall, which would mean four customers, and this could be two owners and two tenants. RT noted that while one or two owners might not seem to make a big difference that the balance might be wrong if Board numbers reduce, which can happen and indeed had happened recently.	
5.5	RP suggested a change in the Rules to no more than two owners as Board members. This was agreed by Board. BW would make this change before the Rules were sent to the wider Membership.	BW

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5.6	The second Rule change came from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), who wrote the Model Rules that Maryhill Housing was adopting. SFHA were recommending adding a Rule to allow virtual AGMs in future. RP explained that the preference would be for in person meetings but that this Rule made it possible to carry them out virtually if COVID-19 restrictions or any other reason meant it was needed.	BW
5.7	TH asked if the new Rule meant a meeting could have a combination of in person and virtual. BW confirmed this was the case.	
5.8	All Board members agreed this Rule change.	
5.9	RP advised that the Board needed to formally request that a Special General Meeting (SGM) was called to vote on the Rule changes. This was agreed by Board.	
6.	Outcome of Board recruitment process, nominations to the Board, additional tenant Board recruitment	
6.1	<p>BW provided an update on the paper to confirm that the final Board member interview had been successful and that all required application forms and £1 membership fees had now been received. The Board then approved the recommendations relating to Membership applications and Board member nominations. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of the Membership applications of Janaki LakshmiNarayanan, Caitlyn Maccabe and Jenny Crowe. • Approval of the nominations by the Chair of Janaki LakshmiNarayanan, Caitlyn Maccabe and Jenny Crowe for election to the Association’s Board at the September AGM. 	
6.2	RP then asked Board members about the proposed second round of Board member recruitment, specifically focused on identifying new tenant Board members. Several Board members had already commented that a bit more work was needed to identify and engage with potential tenant members.	
6.3	TH noted that there was a need to think outside the box and be proactive to maximise the number of tenants that will get involved. Housing Officers, Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs), community councils and voluntary organisation should all be approached.	
6.4	PI agreed that this was the best way forward. Tenants who are already engaged with the Association might be the most likely to consider getting more involved.	
6.5	IM agreed that RTOs and community councils were good places to start. IM noted that tenants are not sure about the Board and are often worried about what it will involve. There was a need to simplify the paperwork and refer less to qualifications and more to the local community.	

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6.6	RP agreed that there was a need to think about what the business of the Board is and to describe it in such a way that is attractive to tenants.	
6.7	TH noted that it is difficult to meet what the Regulator wants from a Board but also what Maryhill Housing wants in terms of tenant involvement.	
6.8	The Board agreed that a second round of tenant Board member recruitment should be carried out following the process set out in the paper. The recruitment paperwork should be amended to focus more on tenants.	BW
6.9	RP suggested that the recruitment panel involve Najah, Isabella and Tim who had formed the most recent panel. PI said that work permitting he would also like to be involved. This was agreed by Board as was the recommendation to delegate authority to the interview panel to co-opt successful tenant candidates onto the Board.	
7.	External Audit Report	
7.1	RP reminded Board that the External Audit Report had been scrutinised closely at the August Audit & Risk Committee. This and the Financial Statements now needed to be approved by the Board before presenting at the AGM.	
7.2	PI referred to the Unadjusted Items Report in Appendix 2, requesting that the formatting was changed so that the £ signs and the – signs were closer to the numbers. RW agreed to feed this back to Scott-Moncrieff for the formatting of next year's report, advising that this was their document so could not be changed by the Association at this late stage for this year.	RW
7.3	Board the approved the Financial Statements, Audit Management Report and Letter of Representation.	
8.	Employee Diversity and Wellbeing Strategy	
8.1	TH commented on the long length of the strategy. BW advised that there was also an action plan that was more specific and succinct that would be used to track delivery.	
8.2	TH asked how we know a Wellbeing Strategy is important for our staff. BW explained that a series of staff surveys had been completed and that the contents of the Wellbeing Strategy had come from these. The number of mental health related absences in the Association was also a reason for the strategy. Taking responsibility for your own mental health and wellbeing was an important focus.	
8.3	TH asked if some of the health and safety details should be in the Health & Safety Policy instead of the Wellbeing Strategy. BW explained that particularly in the context of the COVID lockdown there had been a big crossover between health and safety measures and staff wellbeing, which is why this strategy included some health and safety issues.	

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8.4	RP requested an update to the strategy to include all protected characteristics in the Equality & Diversity section. This will be amended in the final version.	BW
8.5	Board then approved the Employee Diversity and Wellbeing Strategy.	
9.	Factoring Policy	
9.1	<p>JS explained that this new policy combined the previous Factoring and Factoring Debt Management Policies into one document. Comments already received via email from Board members had led to some changes being agreed. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying that owners will be directed to the Financial Support Team for basic advice but also signposted to other grants. • Including the word “works” in relation to procurement. • Adding to the policy to state that the Association would be able to push through common works where required. 	
9.2	These amendments would be made to the policy before publication.	JS
9.3	With these amendments, the Board approved the Factoring Policy.	
9.4	TH left the meeting at this point.	
10.	Long service awards	
	<i>Details removed as confidential.</i>	
11.	Close Cleaning contract award	
	<i>Details removed as commercially sensitive.</i>	
12.	COVID – impact and relaunch summary	
12.1	RW advised that this was a standard update brought to all Board meetings. There was one correction on the relaunch planning paper, as close cleaning was already back to its normal service.	
12.2	RP noted that financially the Association was not seeing too much of a negative impact. Arrears had escalated but there were savings in other areas. However savings in some areas such as repairs will be caught up as things return to normal.	
12.3	RW noted that officers were working on a revised budget and business plan for the September Board meeting. JS advised that the backlog of non-emergency repairs was now being allocated out to Turners and would be worked through by the end of August. Business as usual would then resume from 1 st September.	
12.4	RP asked for an update on the backlog of gas servicing. JS confirmed	

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12.5	<p>that progress was being made and the number of outstanding services was reducing, however forced accesses had not yet resumed.</p> <p>Board noted the update.</p>	
13.	CEO report	
13.1	<p>RP explained that the Association was tendering for a new repairs contract from 1st April 2021. The Board approved key terms for this tender in June 2020 but following analysis by officers of market data from other recent procurements changes were proposed to tender all reactive repairs as a single contract, rather than separate out specific specialist trades such as roofing work and TV aerials.</p>	
13.2	<p>The Board approved the proposed changes to the procurement of reactive repair contracts.</p>	
13.3	<p>Board were also asked to consider an email from BW around increasing the number of lets to homeless households. The current target was for 47% to be to homeless households. Glasgow City Council (GCC) were now asking for this to increase to 90%, net of internal transfers. This equated to 68% of lets overall. This was to help reduce the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation, which had increased dramatically due to lettings having stopped during the COVID lockdown.</p>	
13.4	<p>In relation to the first request from GCC, to increase the level of lets to homeless households to 90% (net of transfers), Board agreed to comply but asked that there be some flexibility in terms of ensuring a balance of lets within developments.</p>	
13.5	<p>GCC had also asked that the Association under occupy lets to homeless households, for example allowing a single person to be allocated a two bedroom flat. It was noted that the Association already did this in some circumstances but GCC were asking that this was done for all lets. Board agreed to meet this request but not for houses or larger family accommodation, which there is a shortage of in Maryhill. Board approved a temporary change to the Allocations Policy to allow this.</p>	
13.6	<p>The final request from GCC was around converting any temporary lets to permanent tenancies. Board agreed that this would be fully supported by the Association.</p>	
13.7	<p>It was noted that all three requests were temporary until March 2021. Board supported these changes being temporary and revisited for the new financial year.</p>	
13.8	<p>RT asked if there had been any recent increase in anti-social behaviour (ASB) with homeless households. BW advised that while ASB had increased overall during lockdown this was not related to homeless lets.</p>	
13.9	<p>RP asked if under occupying would have a financial implication for those</p>	

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	on benefits. JS advised that discretionary housing payment usually covered the bedroom tax. JS also advised that Maryhill Housing had a good number of one bedroom properties and so under occupying would be avoided where possible.	
14.	Overall Assurance Position	
14.1	RP reminded Board members that this item related to the requirement introduced by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) last year that every association must prepare an Annual Assurance Statement to say that the Board is satisfied that the Regulatory Standards, Scottish Social Housing Charter and other legislation is being met. Maryhill Housing had created an Assurance Dashboard that was considered by Board quarterly, with colour coding to assist with identifying different levels of assurance.	
14.2	RP noted that any changes from the previous quarter were highlighted in yellow. BW advised that 'Access to housing' had moved back to green this quarter as the Association had re-started letting properties. BW also advised that 'Management of resources' had moved from amber to green due to the recent treasury work carried out.	
14.3	Ambers were in place in relation to governance due to the recent review of the handling of potential Code of Conduct breaches, and due to the need to carry out this year's Board reviews and to recruit more tenants. BW advised of one correction to the dashboard as Board recruitment and the Board customer majority issue should also be included at Standard 1.	
14.4	BW advised that there was improvement in relation to gas servicing and asbestos since the papers were published, as work on asbestos surveys have started and expired gas services have reduced. These areas should improve to a 'green' status prior to the final published version of the Assurance Statement being submitted in October.	
14.5	PI asked whether performance figures relating to rent arrears, void loss and factoring income had started to improve yet. JS advised that these were not improving yet. The process of letting properties had started but a number of lets would need to be completed before the void loss would reduce. In relation to arrears, management were working with the Housing team to improve performance, with a temporary move back to some specialist roles around debt management.	
14.6	RT noted that difficult conversations relating to arrears are challenging and from a wellbeing perspective it may be wiser to aim to have such conversations outwith the home environment. JS agreed that there had been some issues experienced by the team having to work from home. Staff were now able to work from the office if they needed to.	
14.7	PI asked about the level of complaints that had been upheld in the quarter, and whether these were related to COVID. LC advised that the communal cleaning complaints did relate to the reduced service provided during lockdown, and the complaints relating to the handling of ASB had	

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14.8	<p>been impacted by officers not being able to be out in their patches. The repairs complaints did not relate to the reduced service, but instead to quality issues or problems not being resolved. LC also advised that the percentage of upheld complaints was in line with past quarters, and that there were positive aspects to seeing complaints upheld, as it was an indication that staff were taking responsibility for things that could be improved.</p> <p>PI asked about the launching of a Maryhill Housing Instagram account. BW advised that this was to tackle problems the Association has with engaging younger customers. BW confirmed that there would be training provided. PI noted that the Association should be making the most of social media and promoting certain posts so they are always prominent, for example in relation to Board recruitment.</p>	
14.9	Board then approved the proposed Assurance ratings.	
15.	Meeting review	
15.1	RP led a brief review of the meeting. RP advised that in the past it had been agreed that Assurance Boards would not have other agenda items but that this was proving difficult. This was something to be thought about for future. In relation to the virtual meeting and use of technology this had worked well.	
15.2	RT agreed that the business of the meeting had been covered efficiently. It was good that there was the assumption that papers were being read by Board members, so there were shorter introductions.	
15.3	RP noted that with new Board members joining there was a need to be alert to the use of terminology that may not be fully understood. BW advised that there was a jargon guide available and that this would be added to BoardPacks. The new Board members were yet to be provided with their iPads and BoardPacks, which would happen soon and would help them with following the meeting.	LC
15.4	RT asked if the start time of meetings should be moved while meetings were virtual, as there was no travel time for those returning from work. RP advised that following the AGM a review of everyone's availability and preferences in relation to meeting days and times would be carried out.	LC