



**MINUTE OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
HELD ON 30 MARCH 2022 AT 10.30AM AT  
EASTERBROOK HALL, CRICHTON, DUMFRIES**

Members present: Maureen Dowden (Chair), John Henderson, Michael Greaves Mackintosh, Caryl Hamilton, John McCraw and Fiona Burden.

In attendance: Hazel Young (Managing Director, Wheatley Group) Pauline Turnock (Director of Finance and Legal, Wheatley Group), Alan Glasgow (Managing Director, DGHP), Eilidh Mowat (Governance Business Partner) and In Part Lorna McCubbin (Head of Investment, DGHP Item 5 only)

**1. Apologies for absence**

Heather Macnaughton

**2. Declarations of interest**

The Board noted the standing declarations of interest.

**3. a) Minutes of meeting on 9 February 2022 and matters arising**

**Decided: The Board approved the minutes of the meeting on 9 February 2022.**

**b) Action Tracker**

**Decided: The Board noted the points in the action tracker and the items scheduled to be brought back.**

**4. Managing Director Update (verbal)**

The Managing Director updated the Board on the progress of the DGHP IT migration which successfully completed on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March.

The Board noted the update on the new build programme, noting that we had already met our targets for delivery of new build homes for this year. The Board noted that there had been no slippages, despite the difficulties around the pandemic. The Board indicated that they were delighted with the progress that has been made.

The Board received an update on the following action points listed in the tracker:

## **Fibre offer within new build homes**

The Managing Director updated the Board on the current offering to tenants in new builds, which is linked through Housing Officers and MySavings. There are currently 5 offers with different companies which is fluid depending on the offering in the market. There are cashback offers to tenants at sign up.

## **Local lettings plans/mixed tenure**

The Board noted that specific sites in Dumfries and Galloway are mainly social rent and not mixed tenure, this is due to the low demand for these property tenures in Dumfries and Galloway together with the lower levels of Local Housing Allowance. The Board agreed we could cover this in more detail at the May board workshop.

**Decided: The Board noted the Managing Director update.**

## **5. Home Safe building compliance update**

The Board received an update on our compliance works programmes, including gas servicing, TMV's, water management and electrical works such as electrical inspections and smoke and heat detectors. The Board discussed the high level of compliance generally across our programmes, noting that there are 36 properties waiting for electrical remedial works to be carried out – those works are scheduled for March 2022.

The Board asked if the Homes Safe messaging could be circulated more widely.

The Board sought further assurance around the number of forced entries and the associated costs and recoveries of this. The Board noted that the costs are not currently recovered and that comparator performance from across Group will be brought back to a future meeting.

The Board congratulated staff on their excellent work to ensure our high levels of building compliance.

**Decided: The Board noted the content of this report and agreed the proposed approach to compliance related works.**

## **6. Energy Costs: supporting our customers**

The Board received an update on the steps being taken to support our customers with increasing energy costs. The Board noted the key, bespoke energy advice service being delivered by the Fuel Advice team which is supported by the Energy Crisis Fund and the Wheatley Foundation through the Helping Hands fund. The Customer First Centre also plays a key role in signposting customers to advisors.

The Board discussed the need to ensure one point of contact for customers to ensure they can navigate the various sources of help in one place. The Board noted that Housing Officers act as that first point of contact for customers.

The Board agreed that rising energy costs will have a material impact on the cost of running a home for our customers. The Board agreed that this is a subject that will need close review and will be revisited throughout the year given the ongoing economic situation.

**Decided: The Board noted the measures we are taking to support customers facing hardship due to the energy crisis**

## **7. A New Deal for Tenants – draft Rented Sector Strategy consultation**

The Board received a report summarising the recently published draft strategy for the rented sector in Scotland, *A New Deal for Tenants*.

The Board discussed the draft proposals, agreeing that it will have significant implications for the private rented sector and the Group's commercial arm, Lowther Homes, which DGHP has an interest in. The Board felt that further consideration could be given to aspects of the proposals, such as the factors in terms of discretion to be taken into account in evictions.

**Decided: The Board considered and discussed the draft proposals set out in a New Deal for Tenants, to inform the Group's response to the Scottish Government's consultation exercise.**

## **8. Governance Update**

The Board received an update on the following governance related matters: recruitment of a tenant Board member; Chair's urgent action; strategic governance review implementation update and progress of the Novantia property transfer.

The Board discussed the appointment of the tenant Board member, noting the process that had been followed and noting the Chair's recommendation that the candidate has experience, good knowledge of the local community and would make an excellent tenant Board member.

The Board noted the Chair's action.

The Board discussed the matters arising out of the strategic governance review implementation and particularly discussed the proposed diversity indicators. The Board agreed that it is important to include socio-economic factors as a further check and balance. The Board sought information on the demographics of our current customer body. The Board were advised that a current project is being undertaken to collect data from our customers and to link in with the government census.

The Board discussed the skills matrix and recruitment more generally agreeing that as a Group, we can use the skills and experience of members across the Group to fill vacancies. That is a benefit of being part of a large Group.

The Board discussed the strategy workshop planned for May and the intention to resume our branding discussions as part of the wider Group strategy.

**Decided: The Board**

- 1) **Agreed to appoint Hugh Martin as a tenant Board member;**
- 2) **Noted the Chair's urgent action;**
- 3) **Agreed to recommend to the Group Board the proposed Terms of Reference;**
- 4) **Noted the Board diversity indicators to be factored into our 3 year succession plan;**
- 5) **Noted the revised Board reporting template;**
- 6) **Agreed that we incorporate the risk review into our wider strategy workshop in May; and**
- 7) **Noted the Novantia update.**

**9. New operating model and office update**

The Board received an update on progress with the new operating model and a presentation on the progress of the hub offices in Dumfries and Stranraer.

The Board noted that the progress of the hub in Dumfries has been subject to delays in respect of planning and the Board emphasised the need to push forward. The Board noted that an interim office has been acquired at Brasswell office park, which is now fully operational. The Board received a detailed update on the layout and plans for the Brasswell office, Dumfries and Stranraer hubs.

The Board noted that the tenant engagement exercise has had an excellent response. The proposals in respect of the Customer Voice has attracted over 100 customers and over 40 events have taken place, both online and in person.

**Decided: The Board noted the contents of the report and noted the timeline for the Dumfries and Stranraer hubs**

**10. a) 2022/23 Budget**

The Board were presented with the 2022/23 annual budget. The Board noted the variances from the financial projections approved in February which are in recognition of the challenging economic environment.

The Board noted that further increases in insurance costs are expected.

The Board noted the prudent proposals to mitigate the financial impact of the external environment, namely a rephasing of the capital programme. The Board noted that the core business is financially strong and agreed that the prudent approach in respect of the budget is sensible in these difficult times.

**Decided: The Board approved the draft 2022/23 budget**

**10. b) Financial performance to 28 February 2022**

The Board received a summary of our financial performance to date. The Board reviewed performance and discussed the key variances.

**Decided: The Board noted the financial performance for the period to 28 February 2022.**

**11. Gender Pay Gap**

The Board received a presentation on the figures in respect of the Gender Pay Gap reporting figures.

The Board noted that the DGHP figures are in line with partner organisations in the Group. The Board discussed the traditional gendered roles which are specific to many housing associations. The Board discussed the need to ensure that we focus our recruitment of men and women into the more traditional gender based roles.

**Decided: The Board noted the contents of the presentation.**

**12. AOCB**

The Board congratulated Alan Glasgow on his appointment as DGHP Managing Director.

The Board noted that the next meeting will be held at our offices at Brasswell with the strategy workshop to be held in the afternoon.

SIGNED: