

**WHEATLEY HOMES SOUTH LIMITED**  
**MINUTE OF BOARD MEETING**  
**held on Wednesday 7 February 2024**  
**Brasswell Office, Dumfries**

- Members Present:** Jo Boaden (Chair), John Henderson, John McCraw, Michael Greaves-Mackintosh, Hugh Martin, Garry Legg, Karen Hunter
- In Attendance:** Pauline Turnock (Group Director of Finance), Alan Glasgow (Managing Director), Eilidh Mowat (Governance Business Partner), Lindsey Dryden (Financial Controller), Kirsty Porter, Regulation Manager, Scottish Housing Regulator
- In Part:** Lorna McCubbin (Head of Asset Investment and Compliance - Items 5 & 6) and Lindsay Lauder (Director of Development and Regeneration - Item 9)

Prior to the formal business of the meeting the Board welcomed members from the Group Scrutiny Panel to discuss the thematic review of repairs communication. The Board welcomed the work undertaken and thanked the members for providing an overview of the key findings from the report and supporting action plan. The Board were advised that the thematic group will monitor progress against the action plan in June 2024. The Scrutiny Panel Members commended the cooperation received, the information provided and the access to staff at all levels which had helped inform the review.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Fiona Burden.

The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

The Board noted the standing declaration of interest. No new declarations were made.

**3. a) Minute of 22 November 2023 and matters arising**

**Decided:** The Board approved the minutes of the meeting subject to the addition of Karen Hunter to the list of members present and amendment of item 8 to reflect the request that management highlight any trends in deteriorating performance.

## **b) Action list**

**Decided: The Board noted the action list.**

### **4. Chair and Managing Director updates**

The Chair provided an update on matters considered by the Wheatley Group Board including the recent strategic asset management workshop. The Board noted that we are working to further refine our data and understanding of our assets, issues of energy efficiency and sustainability.

The Managing Director provided an update on the storms that had recently affected Dumfries and Galloway. The Board were updated on the partnership response to the incident. The Board were also updated on the March Board meeting which will take place at Dumfries and Galloway College, Stranraer campus.

**Decided: The Board noted the updates.**

### **5. Repairs update**

The Board were provided with an update on the progress with repairs service enhancements, customer engagement to inform future service enhancements and an update on the Repairs budget for 2023/24.

The Board were assured that good progress has been made in improving our repair service in the focus areas identified in the March 2023 report to the Board. The feedback from the recently implemented 'Book It, Track It, Rate It' programme has had a positive impact on the level of customer service and has increased customer satisfaction. The Board discussed our feedback levels in comparison to the other RSLs across the Group, noting the feedback levels are similar across the Group.

The Board asked for assurance on the recruitment of trades operatives; noting that recent recruitments have been successful, although there can be some difficulty in recruiting qualified operatives in Stranraer and the West of the region.

The Board discussed the trend of increased responsive repairs and the budget impact these have with respect to a delay in cyclical repairs. The Board noted that additional capacity will be brought in to pick up additional demand. The Board were assured that we would link this with our data intelligence and asset strategy.

**Decided: The Board:**

- 1)Noted the progress with repairs service enhancements;**
- 2)Noted ongoing customer engagement to inform future service enhancements; and**
- 3)Noted the revised repairs budget forecast for 2023/24.**

## **6. Five-year investment plan**

The Board received a report on the five-year capital investment plan for the period 2024-29. The Board noted that the plan will deliver over £38.7m of planned improvements over the next five years.

The Board was assured of the continued focus on delivering improvements that have the greatest value for tenants and communities, whilst ensuring compliance requirements are met; with over 70% of the core programme directed towards known customer priority investment; and shaped by our Stronger Voices programme.

The Board were assured that our trades workforce has the skillset required for the lifetime of the plan. The Board were updated on training taking place with operatives to upskill in relation to repair and installation of air source heat pumps. The Board discussed the requirement to have ongoing conversations between sectors, particularly local colleges to share information and knowledge.

**Decided: The Board approved the five-year capital investment plan 2024-2029.**

## **7. Rent setting and service charges 2024/25**

The report provided the Board with feedback on our consultation on the 2024/25 rent, service and other charges increase and sought approval on these increases.

The Board discussed the feedback received from the consultation and noted that the consultation has maintained a relatively high response rate from the previous year with qualitative feedback particularly supporting an appetite for investment and improvement to existing homes. It was also confirmed that, when set within the context of the cumulative increase over 2021-23, the proposed increase of 7.5% maintains us at the lower end of our comparator group.

The Board acknowledged that the Wheatley Group as a whole, together with our wrap around services and services offered by the Wheatley Foundation will continue to advise and help our customers and communities as required.

**Decided: The Board:**

- 1) Considered the feedback received through the consultation process with tenants on our 2024/25 rent, service and other charges increase; and**
- 2) Approved a 7.5% rent, service charges and other charges (including garages and lockups) for 2024/25 for all tenants effective from the first Monday in April.**

## **8. Financial projections 2024/25**

The Board considered a detailed report setting out the updated financial projections for investment in our assets and services over the five years to 31 March 2029. The Board was advised that the projected 2024/25 figures form the basis of our annual budget for 2024/25 which will be presented to the Board in March for approval.

**Decided: The Board:**

- 1) Approved the updated financial projections for investment in assets and services over the five years to 2029; and**
- 2) Agreed that the projected 2024/25 figures form the basis of next year's annual budget which will be presented to the Board for final approval in March.**

## **9. [redacted]**

## **10. Neighbourhood approach (presentation only)**

The Board received a presentation which outlined our approach to neighbourhood planning and our vision for neighbourhoods that we will co-design with our customers. The Board received an update on the proposed approach covering engagement, peaceful neighbourhoods, Keep Scotland Beautiful scoring, asset appraisal and area desirability.

The Board noted that our approach will initially focus on the areas of Dicks Hill in Stranraer and Lochside in Dumfries. The Board will be undertaking a stock tour after the March Board meeting which will include the area of Dick's Hill.

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

## **11. Finance report**

The Board received a report on the management accounts for the period to 31 December 2023 and Q3 forecast for 2023/24.

An overview of the key variances to the budget for the above areas was outlined to the Board.

The Board highlighted the increased spend on revenue repairs and maintenance relating to the higher than budgeted spend across responsive repairs; linked to higher demand for repairs with an increase in job numbers.

The Board noted and reviewed the security documentation in relation to the security charging exercise for 68 units in Newton Stewart in connection with our THFC loan.

**Decided: The Board:**

- 1) **Noted the Finance Report for the period to 31 December 2023 and Q3 forecast at Appendix 1; and**
- 2) **Approved the discharge of 47 units at Summerhill, Dumfries, and the granting of security over 68 units at Newton Stewart in connection with our THFC loan.**

**12. Performance report**

The Board received an update on performance delivery against targets and strategic projects for 2023/24 to the end of Quarter 3.

The Board noted that there is a strong performance against targets for 2023/24 in several areas including complaint timescales, emergency repair timescales, medical adaptation completion timescales, ASB resolved, sickness absence and average days to re-let. The key areas of continued focus include arrears and non-emergency repair timescales.

**Decided: The Board noted the contents of the Performance Report**

**13. Governance update**

The Board were provided with a paper which updated or sought approval where appropriate, on the following governance-related matters:

- New Board member;
- Group Code of Conduct;
- Governing Body Member Expenses and Allowances Policy;
- Board Member CPD Programme; and
- Board Agenda Planner 2024.

The Board discussed the proposed new Group Code of Conduct which is both streamlined and in line with the wider housing sector in Scotland.

The Board considered the Competency Framework and Professional Development Programme which will help us to ensure that Board members have the skills and knowledge to effectively govern our Group.

**Decided: The Board noted the contents of the Governance update.**

**14. AOCB**

No other items of business were raised.

**Signed:.....(Chair)**