

Meeting Minutes
Board Meeting
Thursday 8 October 2020 at 10.00am
Via Microsoft Teams

Present: Bob McDougall (Chair)
Beverley Graham***
Bob Hartness
Chris Baird
Grant Carson
Frances Wood
Jean Hamilton
Susie Fitton~

In attendance: Lorna Cameron
Jon Turner**
Craig Russell*
Carol Bonham*
Elaine Whyte*
Sharon Brady-Wardrope*

Michelle Allen-Proust
(Minutes)

Observing: Rachael Docking*
Katie MacGilp*
Jane Petty*

*Excluding items 4525 to 4531 inclusive

**Items 4525 to 4531 only

***Excluding items to 4535 to 4548 inclusive

~ Joined meeting at item 4531

Due to the ongoing social distancing restrictions surrounding the Coronavirus Covid19 outbreak, this meeting was conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams.

4526 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Jill Pritchard.

A request for a leave of absence had been received from Douglas Taylor which has been agreed and Bob McDougall will contact Douglas towards the end of the year to discuss his return to the Board.

Bob McDougall welcomed Jon Turner, attending for items 4526 to 4532.

Bob advised those present that, following the conclusion of the items of private business, at Item 4533, Rachael Docking, Katie MacGilp, and Jane Petty would be joining to observe the meeting. Following a successful Board member recruitment process, Rachael, Katie, and Jane had been offered positions on the Board and they had been invited to attend the October meeting to observe. This would allow them to make an informed decision on the offer.

Provided they remained interested in offer, their applications for membership of the Board would be presented for formal approval at the Board meeting in December.

Staff and guests would be welcomed into the meeting upon conclusion of the three Private/Reserved items on the agenda.

4527 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4528 ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON

Bob McDougall invited the Company Secretary, Lorna Cameron, to assume the chair for this item of business. Lorna invited nominations for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board.

Prior to the meeting Bob McDougall and Jill Pritchard had indicated their willingness to remain as the Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. No other nominations were received.

Bob McDougall was re-elected as Chairperson for a further year.

Proposed by Frances Wood
Seconded by Jean Hamilton

Jill Pritchard was re-elected as Vice Chair for a further year.

Proposed by Frances Wood
Seconded by Jean Hamilton

4529 APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEE CONVENERS

- **Audit, Finance & Risk**

The membership of the Sub-Committee was confirmed as Jean Hamilton, Bob McDougall, Bob Hartness, Douglas Taylor, and Frances Wood, filling five of the seven places on the Committee.

Jean Hamilton was content to remain Chair of the Audit Sub-Committee, and no other nominations were received.

Proposed: Bob McDougall

Seconded: Frances Wood

There are seven places on the Audit Sub-Committee and three members are required to be quorate. With only four active Committee members at present, Board members were asked to consider joining the Committee. Any interest could be communicated to Jean or Lorna out with the meeting.

- **Employment**

The membership of the Sub-Committee was confirmed as Jill Pritchard, Bob McDougall, Frances Wood, and Beverley Graham, who would continue as members, filling four of the five places on the Committee.

Jill Pritchard was content to remain Chair of the Employment Sub-Committee, and no other nominations were received.

Proposed: Frances Wood

Seconded: Bob McDougall

4530 APPROVAL OF THE CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2020

Approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed: Bob Hartness

Seconded: Jean Hamilton

4531 CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the confidential minutes of the previous meeting that were not already covered on the agenda for today's meeting.

PRIVATE/RESERVED BUSINESS

The following item was considered private/reserved business, and separate, confidential minutes produced. The only staff present were Lorna Cameron and Michelle Allen-Proust and Jon Turner was in attendance, and presented the update at item 4532:

4532 UPDATE ON LINK ACTIVITIES

After item 4532 the meeting was opened to staff and guests. Craig Russell, Carol Bonham, Elaine Whyte, Sharon Brady-Wardrope, Rachael Docking, Katie MacGilp, and Jane Petty joined the meeting.

Jon Turner left the meeting.

ITEMS FOR DEBATE/DECISION/APPROVAL

4533 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 13 AUGUST 2020

Approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Moved: Chris Baird

Seconded: Jean Hamilton

4534 MATTERS ARISING

It was noted that work was still underway to conduct a Link-wide Staff Satisfaction Survey, and Lorna would provide progress updates in due course.

Lorna reported that earlier in the year a staff survey on the impact of Covid and working from home was carried out and feedback, concerns, requests for equipment or support from staff were being followed up by line managers.

Craig confirmed that the management team have been consulting with Horizon staff to make sure they are supported to continue working from home (the case for most staff).

Lorna confirmed that, in line with government guidance, appropriate measures and adaptations have been put in place at Leving House to ensure the safety of any staff members who needs to attend the office to complete tasks they are unable to complete from home.

4535 ANNUAL RENT REVIEW

This report outlined plans for initial discussions on the rent increase for 2021/2022 and requested the Board's approval to begin consulting with tenants on the proposed increase.

The discussion then focused on the desire to balance the income needed to continue to deliver quality stock and services with affordability for tenants. Board members were keenly aware that tenants would be coping with a wide range of challenges this year, and that some tenants could be facing challenging financial implications because of the impact of Covid.

It was noted that the recent affordability review showed that the majority of Horizons tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, and/or have rent that is affordable and that those not on benefit would continue to be supported by staff if they were experiencing difficulties. There is also the potential to create a budget for tenants finding it difficult to pay their rent and the Board were supportive of looking at this.

In terms of comparability, it is difficult to compare Horizon rents with other RSLs because we include service charges in our rent calculation while many RSLs do not, so our rents will always seem higher. Many RSLs are also still to decide on their proposed rent increase rate for 2021-22, so it is not currently possible to say how many will be above or below the levels being proposed in this report.

It was agreed that the rent consultation would be carried out with sensitivity, providing tenants with clear information on the rational for the proposals, to allow them to make a well-informed choice.

The Board agreed to proceed with the planned timescales for the consultation.

Beverley Graham left the meeting.

Decision: The Board approved consultation with tenants on the two recommended options of 2.25% and 2.5%.
Although the budget figures available today did not indicate that a rent increase of less than 2.25% would be a viable option, the Board reserved the option to consider the possibility of a lower increase should the budget position prove favourable to do so when the final decision on rent setting is made in February 2021.

4536 FUEL POVERTY - OPTIONS APPRAISAL UPDATE

This report provided an update on progress on alternative heating for our electrically heated properties at South Gyle and Winchburgh. The main issue is the fuel poverty faced by many of the 21 tenants living in properties due to the current inefficient and expensive heating systems.

In relation to the 9 properties at The Gyle, board accepted the recommendation and gave approval for the installation of gas central heating in these 9 properties. For Winchburgh, further investigation is required and a pilot will be carried out with 2 properties. In one, a modern Quantum Electric system will be installed and the other, an Air Source Heat Pump system will be installed. Data will be gathered on efficiency and officers will aim to report back to April board with a preferred system for installation in the remaining 10 properties

In terms of funding options for Winchburgh, it's difficult to predict if funding would be available for this work and Sharon Brady-Wardrope advised the Board that it would be unlikely that Horizon would attain grant funding based on the criteria of the EPC rating, as it's aimed at properties rated 'E' or below (these properties have 'D' & 'C' ratings). However, if uptake on funding (in particular for gas infill) is low, grants may be extended to applications out-with the qualifying criteria. This would also apply to the ECO funding and for the Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) funding. In terms of Horizon's sustainability goals, gas at this stage can be changed over to combined

hydrogen with little or low cost or to hydrogen with a replacement boiler at the normal replacement cycle when these become available.

The Board welcomed the work carried out in the options appraisal, and provided the following approval:

Decision: The Board approved:

- the installation of gas central heating to the 9 properties at South Gyle subject to budget provision
- the pilot programme to install one Quantum Heating System and one Air Source Heat Pump to gather further data and present preferred option to the April board
- further analysis on funding for PV panels and present installation options to the April board for the 5 bungalows/house that these would be suitable for.

4537 EFFICIENCIES SAVINGS

This report provided an update on the efficiency savings options discussed at the June Board meeting.

In addition to the detail contained within the report, Lorna confirmed that, unsurprisingly, Covid restrictions have had some impact on costs and income. Some areas of underspend have already been identified, and the team is looking at which of these can be maintained through continued new ways of working. As the impact of Covid on the budget position becomes clearer, the requirement for the 150k of efficiencies savings will be reviewed on the back of the revised forecasts. It was anticipated that updated figures should be available in time for the Audit Committee meeting on 4 November.

Decision: The Board:

- Agreed to delay the identification of savings to meet the current shortfall.
- Noted that the efficiency savings will continue to be progressed and monitored.

HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

This report provides information on key health and safety matters and an update on the actions from the health and safety audit to review and revise targets where appropriate.

Decision:

The Board:

- Noted the progress in achieving required health and safety improvements.
- Noted the actions from the audit which require to be progressed, namely:
 - Commission an asbestos management survey to survey the entire office area (internal and external) to create a comprehensive asbestos register (2020 Audit).
 - Undertake a formal workplace noise assessment for all staff exposed to noisy environment and equipment (2018 Audit).
- Approved the removal of the completed audit actions from the 2020 and 2018 audits.
- Requested to receive this report in future on a 6-monthly basis.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO REVIEW STANDING ORDERS

This report advised of the intention to review the current Standing Orders and proposed amendments to:

- Reflect the adoption of the SFHA (Scottish Federation of Housing Associations) 2020 Model Rules
- Provide a clearer outline of the powers of the Board
- Focus the scope of policy approvals, and
- Update job titles and make minor changes throughout to ensure clarity and consistency

As well as the above amendments, board members suggested further amendments which would either be incorporated in the final draft for approval in December, or members advised as to why this was not possible – the main reasons being that the suggested change would be in conflict with the SFHA 2020 Model Rules.

Board members confirmed they were content with the responses received following their suggestions.

Decision: The Board gave notice of its intent at its meeting on 10 December 2020 to replace the current Standing Orders with the amended Standing Orders, incorporating proposed changes as shown on Appendix 1, and further incorporating those amendments requested by the Board that were confirmed as being appropriate and not in conflict with the SFHA 2020 Model Rules.

4540 POLICY REVIEW

This report provided the Board with an update on policies due for review, namely: Gas Safety Policy and the Payments to Tenants' Policy.

4540.1 GAS SAFETY POLICY

Decision: The Board approved the changes to the Gas Safety Policy.

4540.2 THE PAYMENTS TO TENANTS POLICY

Decision: The Board approved the changes to The Payments to Tenants' Policy.

4540 SCOTTISH PUBLIC SECTOR OMBUDSMAN (SPSO) MODEL COMPLAINTS' HANDLING PROCEDURE

This report outlined the new Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) Model Complaints' Handling Procedure (MCHP).

Decision: Following the update of the Link Group MCHP in line with the SPSO review, and subject to a small number of amends to reflect local arrangements for Horizon, the Board approved the Horizon Model Complaints Handling Procedures.

4541 BOARD STRATEGY DAY

The board discussed options for this year's strategy day, usually held over an evening and following day. However, due to on-going social gathering restrictions due to Covid-19, it was agreed to run three separate two-hour

virtual sessions on set strategic topics (to be decided upon by the Chair and CEO). These would be spread over 3 months, with one held each month. The first session would be held 10am – 12noon on Friday 20 November.

4542 ORDINARY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

This report presented three applications for ordinary membership from:

- Rachael Docking
- Katie MacGilp
- Jane Petty

Decision: The Board approved the applications for Ordinary Membership from Rachael Docking, Katie MacGilp, and Jane Petty.

4543 COVID-19 UPDATE

The Board noted this report which provided an update on the impact so far of the Covid19 pandemic on the delivery of Horizon’s housing services and shared the Covid19 risk register which was included in the appendix.

4544 RENT AFFORDABILITY UPDATE

The Board noted the information in this report which provided an update on the rent affordability review and information on the outcomes of the contact made with the 71 tenants whose rents were at the margins of affordability.

It was requested that this become an annual report.

4545 BUSINESS PLAN 6 MONTH REVIEW

The Board noted the content of this report which provided an update on progress with the strategic objectives, actions, and initiatives in the Business Plan 2020/21, highlighting key achievements and challenges.

4546 BOARD APPRAISAL PROCESS - UPDATE

Lorna confirmed that appraisal meetings were being arranged to take place during the next two weeks.

4546 BOARD RECRUITMENT PROCESS - UPDATE

Bob was pleased to confirm that following a successful Board recruitment campaign Rachael Docking, Jane Petty and Katie MacGilp had accepted the offers made to them for Board membership.

As a part of the recruitment process, Rachael, Jane, and Katie had been offered the opportunity to observe today's Board meeting before coming to a final decision on the offer made to them. Provided they remained interested in positions on the Board, their appointment to the Board would be made formal at the Board meeting in December.

4546 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE AGM AND SGM

The board noted the unconfirmed minutes of Annual General Meeting and of the Special General Meeting, both of which had been held on 15 September 2020.

4547 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4547.1 RIG (RESIDENTS IMPROVEMENT GROUP) MEETING ON 16 SEPTEMBER

Beverley Graham reported that, on behalf of the Board, she had been pleased to accept an invitation to attend a virtual meeting of the Residents' Improvement Group, held on 16 September.

It had been an interesting meeting and Beverley had appreciated the opportunity to meet RIG members and to find out that, of the 19 recommendations made by the RIG on their review of the Repairs service, 18 improvements had been implemented, and the one recommendation that had not been taken forward was due to the fact that other actions had addressed it.

Beverley had passed on the Boards thanks and appreciation to the RIG.

4547.2 SFHA CODE OF CONDUCT

Lorna advised the Board that the updated SFHA Code of Conduct would be considered for approval at the Link Group Board in November.

A copy of the updated Code would be circulated to Horizon Board members for information and comment could be provided by email and would be provided to Link Corporate Services in advance of the Link Group Board meeting.

There were no items of other business arising.

Date of the next meeting

**The date of the next meeting is Thursday 10 December 2020 at 10:00 a.m.
venue/meeting platform tbc.**

Signed: R. (Bob) McDougall

Dated: 10 December 2020