

Meeting Minutes

Board Meeting

Thursday 18 February 2021 at 10.00am
Via Microsoft Teams

Present:	Bob McDougall (Chair)	In attendance:	Lorna Cameron
	Beverley Graham		Craig Russell
	Bob Hartness		Jon Turner**
	Chris Baird		Carol Bonham***
	Dougie Taylor		Elaine Whyte***
	Frances Wood		Fiona Hoffie***
	Grant Carson		Greg Schneider***
	Jane Petty		
	Jean Hamilton		Michelle Allen-Proust (Minutes)
	Jill Pritchard		
	Rachael Docking*		Katie MacGilp*** (Observer)
	Susie Fitton		

Apologies: No Apologies

***Excluding items of Private Business 4575 to 4577

** Only item 4575

*From mid-point Item 4575

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

4573

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Bob McDougall welcomed everyone to the meeting including Jon Turner, Link Group CEO attending to provide the Board with an update on Link's Initiatives and the WESLO transfer of engagements.

On behalf of the Board, Bob also extended thanks and best wishes to Carol Bonham, attending her final meeting of the Board in her role as Finance Business Partner to Horizon, before moving on to her new role within Link. Carol's contributions over the previous nine years, and provision of a valuable service as Horizon's Finance Business Partner and Accountant, were greatly appreciated.

Greg Schneider, who was observing today's meeting, was warmly welcomed to post as the new Finance Business Partner to Horizon.

4574 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Jill Pritchard declared her position as a member of the Link Property Board.

Bob McDougall declared his position on the Link Group Board, where he represents Horizon. Bob further declared an interest, as the individual seeking nomination, in regard to Item 14 – SHAPS Employer Committee.

Both Jill and Bob declared their membership of the Link Conveners Group, where they represent the Horizon Board.

There were no other declarations of interest.

PRIVATE/RESERVED BUSINESS

The following three items were considered to be private/reserved business and separate confidential minutes produced. With the exception of Lorna Cameron, Craig Russell and Michelle Allen-Proust (minutes), no other members of staff were present during consideration of the following items.

4575 LINK INITIATIVES – JON TURNER

Jon Turner left the meeting

4576 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2021

4577 COST OF LIVING PAY AWARD

ITEMS FOR DEBATE/DECISION/APPROVAL

Staff members Elaine Whyte, Fiona Hoffie, Carol Bonham, Greg Schneider were welcomed into the meeting. Prospective member of the Board, Katie McGilp, joined to observe the meeting.

4578 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2020

Approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Moved: Jill Pritchard

Seconded: Jean Hamilton

4579 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising that were not captured on the action register or on the agenda.

4580 COVID-19 UPDATE

This report provided the regular update on the impact to date of Covid19 on Horizon, along with the Covid19 risk register included in the appendix.

Board members enquired whether any staff were finding working from home particularly difficult, and how staff were being supported to manage any challenges being faced. Estates and In-House maintenance teams continue to work in localities with safe equipment and with support from managers. Risk assessments and safe working methods continue to be updated.

A number of staff with school-age children have been challenged by school closures and line managers continue to offer flexible working options to help them. It was noted that this latest lockdown has been particularly challenging for staff. The fortnightly staff bulletin continues to cover wellbeing and suggestions of support and work is ongoing to investigate external hosted wellbeing sessions. Regular management team discussions and BENCH and Health & Safety meetings also discuss pressures and offer support for staff.

Board members and managers were in agreement that the priority at this time is being flexible and supportive to our staff, who have worked incredibly hard over the last year, continuing to deliver support and services to our tenants in what have been very challenging circumstances and asked that their appreciation be passed on to the staff.

The Board noted the impact on tenants, service delivery and staff of the current Covid19 pandemic and the actions and support in place to manage these. The Board is also noted the Covid19 risk register included in the appendix.

ANNUAL RENT REVIEW

This report provided an analysis of the key factors influencing the review of rents for 2021/22 and considered the rent increase needed to achieve budget requirements and long-term viability. It was reviewed by the Audit Sub-Committee on 3 February 2021.

During review, the following comments were noted:

- Reference to Welfare Benefit System to be amended to Social Security System
- It was clarified that it is the service and maintenance charges for adaptations that are shared across all rent costs, and not the actual cost of the adaptations.

A correction was provided in relation to the proposed increase to charges for Access Ownership set out in the paper:

An increase of 2.5% to management charges for Access Ownership and Shared Ownership properties and maintenance charges increased to reflect actual and forecast expenditure.

Correction – 2.5% increase applies to Shared Ownership Occupancy charges but that element of the charge for Access Owners is fixed. All other charges are increased to reflect actual and forecast expenditure

This should have read:

For Access Ownership and Shared Ownership properties, maintenance charges increased to reflect actual and forecast expenditure.

The Board praised staff for the excellent response rates to the consultation. Assurance was provided that the small number of less positive comments received were followed up. Work on affordability was already underway so that tenants continue to be supported when necessary.

Decision: The Board approved the recommendation of the Audit Sub-Committee to the Board that the following are applied from 1 April 2021:

- An increase of 2.5% to rent for social rented properties.
- An 2.5% increase to service charges, occupancy charges for shared ownership properties
- An increase of 1.9% for leased properties.

- Maintenance charges for Access Ownership properties increased to reflect actual and forecast expenditure.
- A freeze of the factoring administration charges and costs for insurance, maintenance etc. increased to reflect actual costs.

4582 DRAFT BUDGET 2021/2022, 5 and 30-YEAR FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

This report provided a comprehensive review of the revenue and capital budgets for 2021/22 to 2025/26 and the 30 Year Financial Plan which were recommended by the Audit Sub Committee.

It was noted that, as requested at Audit Committee, future financial reports would include a summary that would link spending to the relevant workstreams and objectives in the Business Plan.

The Board was assured that, based on the model's assumptions, Horizon will continue to be financially viable over a 30-year period.

It was recognised that being in a period of significant economic and political uncertainty makes any long-term financial forecasting difficult, however, the Board were assured that the plan has made reasonable and prudent assumptions based on expert opinion from a range of external sources.

Decision: The Board approved the Revenue and Capital budgets and the 30-year Financial Plan as recommended by the Audit Sub-Committee.

4583 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

This report provided the Board with the Management Accounts for the period ended 31 December 2020 which are recommended by the Audit Sub-Committee.

Concern was expressed about the underspend in the adaptations budget due to lockdown restrictions but it was confirmed that Housing Officers were continuing to arrange minor adaptations without the need for an Occupational Therapist referral.

It was further confirmed that Horizon would investigate signing up to the Housing and Dementia Framework.

A verbal update was provided on the underspend in management costs and planned maintenance which is expected to be used in full by year-end, though

not necessarily on the projects planned at the start of the financial year, prior to the pandemic. Some Horizon properties are still to receive EICR, which is progressing. All properties will be compliant by end of the financial year and this will then be an ongoing 5-year cycle. The budget for these areas is expected to be fully utilised by end March.

Decision: The Board approved the Management Accounts for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020 which were recommended by the Audit Sub-Committee.

4584 BUSINESS PLAN 2021-22 APPROVAL AND REVIEW OF 2020-21 PLAN

This report presented the Business Plan for 2021/22, due to be submitted to the Link Group Board with the other Partner plans. The report also included detail of the year-end progress against the Business Plan 2020/21 objectives.

Board members provided feedback, making the following comments or requests:

1. Desire to see more specific actions/plans for how each objective will be delivered.
2. Align the activities to the budget spend – as covered during discussion of the Budget. Make explicit where budget spend contributes to the delivery of objectives.
3. Seek partners to develop a national design standard for accessible housing. Build on relationships forged during delivery of the Accessible Housing Summit (4 March) and explore options for further collaboration/partnership/shared voice to reinforce the importance of accessible housing.
4. Objective 4 – Develop and support initiatives which keep older and disabled people in the community: there is current opportunity to work with HSC partnerships and 3rd sector in Edinburgh for this kind of engagement. The Edinburgh HSP have a project on Community Mobilisation which will include community wealth building, community anchor organisations, and working collaboratively to support and fund local need in a sustainable way.
5. Suggestion to explore collaboration with Prof Ryan Woolrych (Heriot Watt), EHSCP and Centre for Ageing Better who are developing the opportunity for Edinburgh to become an age friendly city – it would be great for Horizon to be involved in that as it moves forward

Regarding opportunities for collaborative working and influencing, it was noted that Horizon are currently engaged in an opportunity with East Renfrewshire HSCP for joint work, as well as work following on from the two national reviews: [Adult social care: independent review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#); and [If not](#)

[now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report: January 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultations/web_publications/now_when_-_social_renewal_advisory_board_report_january_2021.pdf)

Decision: With the above suggestions in mind, the Board:

- Approved the Business Plan 2021/22 and noted that it will be submitted to the Link Group Board with the other Partner plans.
- Noted the year-end progress against the Business Plan 2020/21 objectives.
- Noted that a six-monthly update on the plan will be presented to the Board in October.

4585 POLICY UPDATE

This report updated the Board on three policies which were due for review:

- Factoring Policy (Appendix 1)
- Policy for Managing Shared Ownership (Appendix 2)
- Disciplinary Policy (Appendix 3)

During discussion the following comments were received on two of the policies:

Policy for Managing Shared Ownership:

In response to a query about possible lack of interest in the Shared Ownership scheme, it was suggested that because, in addition to responsibility for financing their owned share (presumably through a mortgage) and having responsibility for repairs and maintenance, Sharing Owners also have to pay Horizon an occupancy charge, this may be less attractive/affordable prospect than other Shared Equity Options or initiatives, like the Help2Buy scheme.

Disciplinary Policy:

Previous comment from the Horizon Board, regarding the disciplinary policy for the CEO, and a suggestion that the Disciplinary Policy for staff should cross reference to the policy specifically relating to senior officers, would be provided to Link HR.

Decision: With the Board's comment on the disciplinary Policy in mind, the Board approved the following Policies:

- Factoring Policy
- Policy for Managing Shared Ownership
- Disciplinary Policy (prior to submission to Link Group Board)

4586 SHAPS Pension Employer Committee - Elections

Bob McDougall declared his interest in this item of business and, while remaining present at the meeting at the Board's request, he excused himself from discussion. Lorna Cameron presented this item.

Decision: The Board approved the nomination of Bob McDougall as Horizon's representative on the SHAPS Employers Committee.

4587 KPI REPORT

This report provided performance information for October–December 2020(Q3) with targets approved in the Business Plan for 2020-2021.

Further to the information in the report, it was noted that service user shielding and restrictions on visits has been the biggest barrier to assessments being carried out by Occupational Therapists (OTs). More OTs are now carrying out virtual assessments, and it is hoped that this will help with throughput. Horizon has also received a demonstration of the 'NearMe' platform being used by the NHS to carry out virtual assessments, and consideration is being given as to how this could be used as part of Horizon's Digital engagement.

The Board noted the performance achieved in Quarter 3 of 2020/21.

4589 RISK REGISTER REVIEW

This report presented the updated risk register to the Board following review by the Audit Sub-Committee at its meeting on 3 February 2021.

The Board noted the updated risk register and supporting COVID-19 risk register. There were no significant recommendations for change in existing risk levels to be brought to the Board's attention, but a number of updates had been made to mitigating actions and an additional detailed Covid-19 Risk Register had been added.

4590 BOARD DEVELOPMENT: DRAFT TRAINING CALENDAR

A verbal update was provided that, following on from successful training sessions in Zero Carbon and Finance, future training sessions were in planning, and a schedule of these events would be provided in due course, topics would include:

- Health and Safety – Responsibilities of the Board

- Finance – follow-up session on reading balance sheets, financial language, and red flags
- Climate Literacy – accredited course
- Estates' Visits

During discussion the Board confirmed they were content with the proposed topics; that these should be delivered within normal working hours; and that there was support for short information sessions to be run in the half hour before the start of Board meetings.

Board members were reminded that attendance at other training events and conferences was encouraged and would count towards their development. Any requests to attend external events in their capacity as members of the Board of Horizon should be directed to Michelle Allen-Proust in the first instance.

4590 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2021

The unconfirmed minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 3 February 2021, were confirmed to be an accurate record by the Audit Committee members present and were noted by the Board.

4591 LOAN COVENANT REPORT Q3

The Board were pleased to note the continued compliance with all loan covenant requirements.

4592 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4592.1 CONVENERS GROUP UPDATE

Bob McDougall and Jill Pritchard provided an update on their attendance at the meetings of the Link Conveners Group (LCG). Copies of the presentation made to the LCG by Jill and Bob would be made available to the Board.

It was requested that a future presentation from Liz Jarvis, Chair of the Link Living Board, on the work being carried out by Link Living would be added to the Board Training and Development schedule. This could be considered for a 30min slot pre-Board meeting.

4592.2 EMPLOYMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Chris Baird volunteered to join the membership of the Employment Sub-committee. The Board agreed.

Date of the next meeting

**The date of the next meeting is Thursday 15 April 2021 at 10:00 a.m.
venue/meeting platform tbc.**



Signed:

Robert (Bob) McDougall

Dated: 15 April 2021