SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR BOARD
Board Meeting 6 August 2019

Present

George Walker (GW)	SHR Chair
Anne Jarvie (AJ)	SHR Deputy Chair
Andrew Watson (AW)	SHR Board member
Bob Gill (BG)	SHR Board member
Mike Dailly (MD)	SHR Board member (items 1-13)
Helen Trouten Torres (HTT)	SHR Board member
Colin Stewart (CS)	SHR Board member
Ewan Fraser (EF)	SHR Board member

In attendance

Kevin Stewart MSP	Minister for Local Government, Housing & Planning (items 1-3)
Anne Cook (AC)	Head of Social Housing Services (items 1-3)
Michael Boal (MB)	Social Housing Charter & Regulation Manager (items 1-3)
Marissa Gallagher (MG)	Private Secretary to Minister (items 1-3)
Michael Cameron (MC)	Chief Executive (items 1-14)
Iain Muirhead (IM)	Director of Digital & Business Support (items 1-13)
Ian Brennan (IB)	Director of Regulation (items 1-13)
Roisin Harris (RH)	Corporate Governance Manager (items 1-13 & part of 14)

Observing items 1 - 13

Clare Nicholson (CN)	Business Manager
Craig Heron (CH)	Regulation Analyst

1. Apologies and declarations of interest

GW welcomed all present, especially the Minister and his team and the SHR staff observers.

The Board noted apologies from SHR Board member, Siobhan White (SW). EF reminded the Board of his declared interest with Weslo, which is mentioned in one of the Board papers.

2. Consent agenda items

The Board considered the consent agenda items.

MC explained the extended timescale for CivTech to allow for further development and confirmed there are no additional costs for SHR.

MC also confirmed that SHR is monitoring social landlords' progress in achieving minimum standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites. He reported all sites (apart from one) are expected to achieve the standards by March 2020 and that SHR is engaging with the social landlords that provide sites.

The Board agreed to note and approve the consent items including the:
- matters arising update;
- minutes from the previous meetings;
- Chair's report & member activity;
- Chief Executive's report; and
- the ARAC update, including ARAC's annual assurance statement.

3. Priorities for Scottish Government and SHR

The Minister set out priorities for Scottish Government and discussed with the Board:

- exporting best practice in Homelessness across all local authorities and work on prevention;
- distribution of the increased funding for rapid rehousing transition plans;
- delivery the recommendations from HARSAG;
- site standards for Gypsy/Travellers, noting SHR's forthcoming publication on work with its National Panel of tenants and service users;
- delivery of 50K new homes and the potential impact of Brexit;
- building standards, climate change and the challenge of older and sometimes still popular stock;
- affordability and growing interest in whole costs for living in a house; and
- housing to 2040.

MC explained some of SHR's priorities that are captured in its 2019-22 Corporate Plan and highlighted:
- SHR's role to monitor assess and report;
- homelessness;
- Gypsy/Travellers;
- good governance to underpin and drive good outcomes;
- SHR's new Regulatory Framework, the October deadline for submission of the first annual assurance statements and the positive work with SFHA, ALACHO and GWSF to develop the recently published Toolkit to support governing bodies and committees in gaining assurance;
- statutory action and intensive engagement casework;
- preparation work around Brexit and SHR's plans to communicate with landlords about preparation ahead of 31 October 2019; and
- engagement with Scottish Government around affordability and child poverty.

The Board and the Minister discussed the potential impact of Brexit on the social housing sector, noting some mitigating actions the Scottish Government has put in place.

The Board thanked the Minister and colleagues for meeting with the Board.

4. Wrap up discussion
The Board reflected on the discussion with the Minister and his team. GW also reported that he had met the Minister and his team prior to the Board meeting to discuss homelessness.

5. Governance Update – Gender representation
RH presented an update on the Scottish Government's consultation on reporting duties and statutory guidance on gender representation on public boards. The Board welcomed the work and discussed the appointment process and application statistics. It approved participation in the public consultation and to use this to promote SHR's commitment to the policy objective. It asked the Chair and RH to finalise SHR's submission. The Board also agreed to spend time at its workshop in October considering a programme of activity to encourage applications from women to SHR's Board in the future.

Actions:
- **GW and RH to finalise SHR's consultation submission and promote participation.**
- **RH to bring proposals for a programme of work to encourage female activity to the Board workshop in October and provide the Board with statistics on previous rounds of appointment to the Board.**

6. Quarter One Corporate Performance report & risk management update

MC presented the corporate performance report for quarter one to the Board. He highlighted the reduced level of statutory casework and updated the Board on the current position at Arklet and Wishaw & District Housing Associations. MC also highlighted an increase in the volume of notifiable events and explained the connection to the removal of consents.

The Board considered the report and discussed whistleblowing. It noted the information available on SHR's website and messaging SHR has done around this. IB explained that SHR reports on whistleblowing casework in its annual report and accounts. MC confirmed that themes tend to be focused on governance and board member/senior staff behaviours. The Board noted the updates and encouraged MC to consider any additional opportunities to promote whistleblowing.

IM confirmed that British Sign Language awareness-raising has been completed during quarter one.

The Board noted the changes to SHR's risk register. MC explained that some internal BI system challenges led MT to increase the risk scores for a related risk. IM reported that an internal work-around is in place and SHR is working with suppliers to resolve the issues. He also explained that due to policy developments around homelessness and Gypsy/Travellers, Management Team had adjusted the risk scores to reflect potential expectations.

MC reported that due to the time lag on absence figures, SHR has not yet received the quarter one data from Scottish Government.

The Board also discussed the expected merger between Wheatley Housing Group (WHG) and Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership (DGHP). It noted that DGHP's decision to seek a partner was arrived at via an open and transparent process. It noted that this will increase the size of WHG, which is already a systemically important RSL. The Board noted that the partnership would previously have been a matter for SHR's consent.

The Board noted the corporate performance report and thanked all staff for the work to date in 2019/20.

Actions:
- **IM to provide information on absence figures when they become available from Scottish Government.**
- **MC to consider opportunities for further messaging on whistleblowing.**

7. Quarter One Budget Update

IM provided an update on SHR's budget position at the end of June 2019. IM highlighted that SHR will be projecting an underspend ahead of the mid-year review in October.

The Board discussed planned improvements to SHR's directory and if more information relating to whole house costs can be provided, similar to that published online for the private sector. MC explained there is no single measure of affordability, but that SHR is considering what information it can provide to give a sense of costs. IM reported that SHR has asked additional questions on wider housing costs from its national panel of tenants and service users and will be reporting on findings. The Board noted development in this area.

The Board noted the budget expenditure to date and forecast outturn.

8. Toolkit funding

MC updated the Board on the development of the toolkit to support governing body and committee members gain assurance. He set out a proposal to fund the next phase of the toolkit to put it on a digital platform, which will improve the navigation, search functions and make it easier to update. MC explained that Scottish Government is unable to provide funding at this time and to date SFHA has funded development of the product launched in July. MC confirmed other partners will also be approached for funding further development.

MC explained that even if further funding does not become available, SHFA has committed to continue to host the toolkit on a public platform in perpetuity, which will remain a useful resource for all social landlords.

The Board considered the proposal and discussed:
- spend to date by SFHA on commissioning and staff time;
- timescales for the digital phase noting this would be after the submission of the first annual assurance statements to allow the partnership to take stock of how the toolkit was used, but that much of the digital foundation work can proceed beforehand;
- the benefit to all social landlords, both RSLs and local authorities, as well as to SHR;
- the agile nature of how the toolkit has developed and the importance of a discussion to clarify future funding between all the partnership members;
- queries raised by SFHA's board;
- accessibility benefits of moving the pdf toolkit onto a digital platform; and
- SHFA's leadership role in the partnership.

He explained this would be the first time that SHR has provided a grant and it can specify expected outcomes in the grant offer. MC also confirmed he has tested the provision of a grant with SHR's legal advisors and auditors who have confirmed it is competent.

The Board agreed that transparency between partners around future funding arrangements and intellectual property rights is essential. It noted that as the partnership is not constituted any grant funding will be received by the SFHA as project leaders. The Board agreed to provide £15,000 to fund the partnership to develop the next phase of the Toolkit.

The Board noted some issues around links in the current Toolkit and SHR's new website and IM confirmed he will look into this remedial work, which is ongoing.

Action: MC to issue £15,000 grant to the SFHA on behalf of the Toolkit partnership and with partners seek transparency around future funding and ownership.

9. Annual Report & Accounts

IM presented SHR's annual report and accounts 2018/19. He highlighted the annual statement of assurance that the Board noted under AG2e and the range of staff involved as well as the challenges in production. IM reported that SHR has received unqualified and substantial audit opinions and these have been inserted into the final report for signing by the accountable officer. The Board welcomed the report and the progress made during the year. It noted one small typo and IM explained this will be corrected and the auditors notified.

The Board agreed to approve the annual report and accounts. MC as accountable officer signed three hard copies in the presence of the Board.

11. AOB

The Board discussed the agenda planner. It noted that dates for the 2020 meetings and workshop will be circulated shortly and presented to the Board for approval in October 2019. The Board agreed to continue meeting on Tuesdays and follow the same mixture of meetings and strategic workshops.

12. Effectiveness of meetings and papers

The Board agreed that it found the electronic pdf of the Board pack very useful and welcomed that SHR will wherever possible try to provide these on the same day same day as the hard copy papers are issued.

EF reported that he had contacted SHR staff around some clarification points in the Board pack and found this very useful. The Board noted that all members are welcome to do this and contact details are available on each Board paper

CN and CH thanked the Board and welcomed the opportunity to observe the meeting.

13. DONM

8 October 2019 – workshop
29 October 2019 – board meeting

14. Private session

The Board held a private session with the Chief Executive.