



**THE GLASGOW HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED**

**GHA BOARD**

**BY VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**MINUTE OF MEETING – FRIDAY 10 JULY 2020**

Present: Bernadette Hewitt (Chair), Jo Armstrong, Jo Boaden, Professor Paddy Gray and Cathy McGrath

In attendance: Anthony Allison (Director of Governance), Martin Armstrong (Group Chief Executive), Olga Clayton (Group Director of Housing and Care), Steven Henderson (Group Director of Finance), Jehan Weerasinghe (GHA Managing Director)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence. It was noted that non-attending members had all received the papers and given the opportunity to provide feedback on the papers.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

The Board noted the standing declarations of interest.

**3. Minute of 29 May 2020 and matters arising**

**Decided: The Board approved the minute of 29 May 2020.**

**4. Strategy refresh**

The Board received a presentation from Professor Graeme Roy on the economic impact of Covid 19, including: the channels of impact and duration; the potential shapes of the economic recovery and associated impacts such as the uneven impact on different segments and regions of the labour market, particularly on lower paying sectors; and how our existing strategy stands, with the key areas of focus remaining valid but the delivery and timing likely to require refinement.

The Board discussed the anticipated unequal impact of the pandemic on different sectors in the economy and the likelihood that our tenants will be particularly impacted, particularly in terms of labour market changes.

The Board discussed the potential impact on how we support strong communities and demand for open spaces or different home types in future should home working permanently become more prevalent. It was explained a particular issue in relation to communities will be the digital element of community engagement in future and how digitally enabled our tenants and communities are.

The Board sought feedback on the implications of the current UK government response and how this may be translated in a Scottish context. It was confirmed that to date the UK government has largely exercised reserved powers and reallocated funding, which does not therefore trigger any additional Barnett consequentials.

The Board further discussed the potential future stimulus packages and the potential for them to be funded by reallocating, thus reducing, other existing funding. The Board received a further update on the anticipated future fiscal bill relative to GDP in a wider UK context and that the strategy for dealing with this remains uncertain.

The Board discussed the proposed approach to refreshing our strategy, reiterating that core areas such as the single family approach remain relevant. The Board discussed how the strategy considers the impact on communities, the role we play in maintaining and supporting them and the increasingly digital element. It was explained that areas such as increased diversity in our communities, how we engage with communities and enabling sustainability and resilience will remain a key focus.

**Decided: The Board agreed the approach to strategy development set out in the report.**

## **5. Business update**

The Board received an update on current activity within the business, in particular arrears and our outbound engagement with tenants, which is now in excess of 100,000 calls.

The Board discussed arrears, in particular the differential in arrears attributed to Universal Credit. It was confirmed that core non-Universal Credit arrears was reducing but that the 5-week lag remained a cause of arrears for Universal Credit claimants. It was confirmed the proportion of customers in receipt of Universal Credit in arrears has fallen.

The Board discussed what support we are offering tenants in arrears, particularly in terms of mental health. It was explained this was a key focus of our outbound calling, further supported by the Tenancy Support Service. It was further explained the Tenancy Support Service is proactively supporting individuals who are at risk of, or have been experienced, job loss.

The Board sought feedback on the early testing and risk assessment of digital payment options. It was confirmed that the testing has been positive to date and that we are engaging our information governance specialists to assess and mitigate the risks.

The Board sought confirmation of how we ensure compliance with social distancing during gas safety checks, particularly with sub-contractors. It was confirmed City Building have very strict requirements and protocols in place and that additionally our Housing Officers are part of the process and can monitor they are being applied.

It was further explained that in our letter to all tenants we have clearly set out the standards they should expect from any contractors such as the application of Personal Protective Equipment and that City Building have specific protocols for checking compliance of sub-contractors.

The Board sought confirmation on whether we will convert the leased properties to the Local Authority to permanent tenancies and, if so, if the existing support packages would remain in place. It was explained this would be considered and that as part of this we would seek assurance that the support packages would remain in place.

The Board discussed our preparations for any second wave or local lockdown. It was confirmed we are planning for this and a specific update on our plans will be brought back to a future meeting.

The Board welcomed the low absence levels and sought an update on how staff are continuing to adapt to current operating model. It was explained that we have formally surveyed our staff on their experiences and that this will be supplemented with focus groups. It was agreed an update on the survey findings would be brought to a future meeting.

The Board welcomed the planned new build handovers.

**Decided: The Board noted the content of the report.**

## **6. Remobilisation of Services**

The Board received an update on our planned staged approach to the remobilisation of business operations over the coming months, including the methodology for transitioning between stages and the fit with phases of the Scottish Government's publication, '*Scotland's route map through and out of crisis*'. It was confirmed that grass cutting had been resumed, that this was being received well by tenants and that we have created a team of visiting Housing Officers.

The Board discussed compliance activity, including areas such as legionella and asbestos. It was confirmed that a further update on our compliance activity be brought back to a future meeting.

**Decided: The Board:**

**1) note the approach set out in this report**

**2) note that a further update on our service models will be provided to the next meeting in August.**

## **7. Fire Prevention and Mitigation Update**

The Board received an update on: the national picture and the how the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service have redesigned their services to reflect and take account of the COVID-19 pandemic; measures we have introduced to ensure fire safety and customer well-being continues to be of paramount importance during the post Covid 19 lock down period; and year end performance for fire safety remedial work.

The Board welcomed the level of assurance and continued focus, taking into account the restrictions currently in place for us and our key partners.

**Decided: The Board:**

- 1) noted the information provided within the report that evidences the measures we have introduced to reflect national policy changes and ensure fire safety and customer well-being continues to be of paramount importance during the COVID-19 pandemic; and**
- 2) the update on our end of year performance for fire safety remedial work.**

## **8. Health and Safety update**

The Board received a summary of the wide range of Health and Safety activity being undertaken to protect and support our staff and customers as well as meet our compliance requirements.

The Board reflected on the positive impact the very early mobilisation of our Business Continuity Management team has had. A further update was sought on our home working policy arrangements, such as insurance. It was explained the policy is currently being refined and is considering areas such as duty of care and insurance.

The Board placed on record its gratitude to our health and safety staff and the depth of activity undertaken.

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

## **9a. Finance report**

The Board received a summary of financial performance for the year to date. It was explained our financial position remains strong and that we do not anticipate all suspended work being completed in year.

A further update was provided on our loan portfolio return and particularly the Loan to Value position.

The Board considered financial performance, including where we place our cash that was assumed for now suspended or delayed work and potential price inflation. It was explained we place our cash in line with clear criteria set out in the Group Treasury Management policy and that whilst we have seen no price inflation to date, this is kept under review in development in particular.

The Board further discussed the potential for price inflation in development.

**Decided: The Board**

- 1) noted the management accounts for the period to 31 May 2020; and**
- 2) approved the SHR Portfolio Submission as at March 2020.**

## **9b. 2020/21 Financial Projections Reforecast**

The Board received an update on the expected impact of COVID-19 on our financial projections and key financial ratios. The key areas of revisions, including the rent assumptions and the necessary reprofiling of repairs and capital investment were set out in further detail.

It was explained the reforecasting would be an iterative process as we evolve in line with the Scottish government recovery plan phases.

The Board reviewed the financial projections and particularly welcomed the acceleration of the reduction in our rental uplift assumptions.

### **Decided: The Board:**

- 1) noted the update to our financial projections, including the reduction in the long term rent increase to 2.9%; and**
- 2) noted that a further revision to the projections will be brought back to the Board in August.**

## **10. AOCB**

There was no other competent business.

Signed ..... Date .....  
(Chair)