



**Meeting: BOARD MEETING**

**Date & Time: Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 5:30pm**

**Venue: 51 North Bridge Street, Hawick/via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:** Ronnie Dumma (Chair)  
Ian Davidson (V Chair) (ID)  
Alan Brown (Board Member) (AB)  
Kate Christie (Board Member) (KC)  
Wendy Davidson (Board Member) (WD)  
David Gordon (Board Member) (DG)  
Johnny Pietranek (Board Member) (JP)  
Laura Ryan (Dr) (Board Member (LR) – by Microsoft Teams  
Christine Stewart (Board Member) (CS)

**In Attendance:** Paul Scott (Chief Executive) (CEO)  
Carole Yallop (Operations Director) (OD)  
Lorna Notman (Corporate Services Director/Co Secretary) (CSD/CoS)  
June Wilson (Executive Support Officer) (ESO)  
Simon Lynch (Observer)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2025 and welcomed Simon Lynch to the meeting as an Observer with the potential to joining the Board.

## **Part 1 Standing Items**

### **1.1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies received from Julie Watson (Board Member).

### **1.2 Declarations of Interest**

Declarations of interest were noted regarding:

Item 2.1 – Rent & Service Charge Increase 2025/26 – Christine Stewart, Johnny Pietranek.

Item 2.2 – Workforce Budget & Pay Review 2025/26 – Paul Scott, Carole Yallop, Lorna Notman, June Wilson.

Item 2.3 – Staff Consultation on Working Hours - Paul Scott, Carole Yallop, Lorna Notman, June Wilson.

### **1.3 Minutes of Previous Board Meeting (29.10.24)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024 were approved and will be signed by the Company Secretary as being an accurate record of the meeting.

#### 1.4 Matters Arising from previous Board Meeting Minutes (29.10.24)

None

#### 1.5 Future Meeting Dates

- Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025 **AICC @ 5:30pm**
- Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025 @ 3:00pm – **Questions you should be asking Housing Management** followed by
- 5:30pm **Board Meeting**

### Part 2 Strategy

#### 2.1 Rent & Service Charge Increase 2025/26

Having presented a Declaration of Interest for this item, it was agreed that Christine Stewart and John Pietranek could remain within the meeting whilst the item was being discussed.

The consultation with Tenants began on 18.11.24 and concluded on 10.01.25. Tenants were sent this questionnaire by email, through social media and 5 drop-in sessions were held in Newtown St Boswells; Burnfoot, Hawick; Bannerfield, Selkirk; Langlee, Galashiels, and Kelso.

On conclusion of the consultation there were 126 responses (8.9% of all tenants), 102 were received electronically (by email, through social media) and 24 completed at the drop-in sessions. These returns were comparable against previous year's returns. Alternative methods will be sought for future rent and service charge consultations.

The report submitted to the Board details the results from this consultation whereby the tenants preferred Option 2 – Increase rent and service charges by 4.1% by a majority of 68 responses in favour of the 4.1% increase against 58 responses in favour of the 3.6% increase.

**The Board Members approved the proposed rent and service charge increase at 4.1% taking effect from 7 April 2025.**

#### 2.2 Workforce Budget & Pay Review 2025/26

Having presented a Declaration of Interest for this item, staff members Paul Scott, Carole Yallop, Lorna Notman and June Wilson left the meeting whilst this item was being discussed.

The Board Members discussed and agreed that a 2.5% salary uplift be awarded for 2025/26. Board Members noted that it is proposed that a full organisation review be carried out during 25/26 and this may identify areas that require further discussion.

#### 2.3 Staff Consultation on Working Hours

Having presented a Declaration of Interest for this item, staff members Paul Scott, Carole Yallop, Lorna Notman and June Wilson left the meeting whilst this item was being discussed.

Prior to leaving the meeting the CEO briefed the Board Members on the background relating to this report and to date.

In 2023 there was an Employee Survey carried which led to a consideration of a more flexible week, this resulted in the office closing at 12noon on a Friday.

In June 2024 there was Tenant Satisfaction Survey carried out including their views on the early closure on a Friday afternoon – this ascertained that 18.4% of Tenants would prefer the office to be open on a Friday afternoon.

In September/October 2024 a Staff Survey was carried out – this elicited the opinions of staff on how services can be best delivered to our tenants. A majority of staff views believed there to be no negative impact on tenants from the early closure on a Friday.

Following the Staff Survey a small consultation was carried out in January 2025. This included a question on preference of working patterns and opening hours. A majority of staff (65%) responses indicated a preference for Mon-Thu 8:15-16:45 & Fri 8:00-12:00 (with a 45-minute lunch) working week.

The Consultation also included a question about opening the front door of the office, 39% felt Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday mornings would represent our commitment to providing a Great Customer Service.

### **Part 3 | Governance & Assurance**

#### **3.1 | Policies Review**

The Board Members approved the changes presented to them with regard to the Pay Policy, albeit an additional change was asked to be added regarding maintaining staff salaries in line with CPI inflation in September of the relevant year and the Property Services Handbook.

#### **3.2 | Continuous Self Assurance – Governance Report**

This report submitted to the Board Members is to evidence continuous self-assessment, compliance with the Regulatory Framework and the assurance that in the opinion of senior staff there are no material changes since the last meeting in October 2024.

The CEO informed the Board Members that following on from the Board meeting in October 2024 the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Assurance statement was submitted in October 2024 and is also available on the WH Website.

There was a meeting with the Regulator in November 2024 regarding the engagement plan, they informed us that the RAAC Notifiable Event has been closed.

In the report and attachments, including the evidence bank located at [Annual Assurance Statement Evidence](#) it shows there have been no material changes.

The Board Members agreed to there being no evidence to suggest any material changes since the AAS was submitted in October 2024.

The Board Members noted there are no new notifiable events since the last meeting, the list of Governance Related Policies and the additions to the Evidence Bank in relation to the Regulatory Requirements and Regulatory Standards per sections 5 & 6 of the report.

## **Part 4 | Performance**

### **4.1 | Health & Safety Bi-Annual Report**

The CEO informed the Board Members that this is a new report which will be coming to the Board twice a year. Previously this information was embedded in the quarterly performance reports.

This report relates to the events recorded between April-December 2024 and gives updates of events that have taken place during the specified times as set out in section 2 of the report.

As required, Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) and Risk Assessments are updated and rolled out to staff once completed.

The Health & Safety Forum is currently being reviewed exploring alternatives to this forum which could include an oversight of related issues through the full Management Team and the inclusion of Health & Safety as a key part of the Employee Focus Groups remit. The Board Members will be kept up to date with any changes through the bi-annual reports submitted to them.

The Board Members noted the report.

### **4.2 | Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Update**

A further update was presented to the Board Members on the status of RAAC in the Office.

There were 3 options suggested to WH regarding RAAC presence. The Property Services Manager is seeking quotes to remove and replace the RAAC elements so that this can be considered through our Business Plan in the longer-term. If any of the options were carried out it could take approx. 3 months to carry out the works and staff would be moved within the office or work from home if required.

Board Members will be kept up to date with progress.

The Board Members noted the report.

### **4.3 | Development Report**

Further updates up to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 were detailed in the report submitted to the Board.

OD reported that there is progress at Upper Langlee in line with the updated programme. House kits for Block 5 are expected to be onsite by the end of this week with the erection of the kits starting week beginning 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

Further delays have been identified due to Scottish Water insisting that the full diversion be carried out under phase 1. These works are required for future phases of the Newbuild programme.

There has been an updated phased handover plan of newbuilds for Phase 1:

- Block 5 (7 units) – 30 June 2025
- Block 8 (4 units) – 15 July 2025
- Block 6 (7 units) – 8 August 2025
- Block 7 (7 units) – 26 November 2025

Members received an update on the preparation work involved in tendering for phase 2.

**The Board Members approved to incur the additional costs to carry out the full diversion works by Scottish Water.**

**The Board Members approved Officers engaging with MHS & SBC to discuss additional funding opportunities.**

#### **4.4 Business Plan & Risk Management Report – Quarter 3**

The CEO's paper presented the position at the end of Quarter 3 with KPI's, Risk Management, ARC Data and went over the highlights.

Members noted that 8 of 12 deliverables in the Operational Plan were underway and heard how some will likely be carried forward into the 2025/26 Operational Plan.

At the end of Q3 15 out of 16 KPI's were being met with void relet days being slightly over target but not causing concern.

Members were provided with details of the increased risk around the Development Programme and how that led to an increase in the scoring within the Company's risk register. Conversely, Members were updated on the decreasing risk scoring around staff and Board Member recruitment following successful recruitment campaigns.

The Board Members noted the report.

#### **4.5 Financial Management Accounts – Quarter 3**

CSD reported on the Financial Management Accounts for the end of Quarter 3, noting that the results were better than expected.

The positive variants were due to better than anticipated voids, bad debts and tenant recharges.

Positive expenditure variance due to combined staffing costs and underspend on planned maintenance costs which offsets the overspend on sub-contractor repairs. This explains the lower costs of materials used by WH trades team.

There has been an underspend on IT systems at end of Q3, but further improvements are planned.

Insurance costs did come in higher than budgeted for and there were extra costs for utilisation fees.

The Board Members noted the report.

### **Part 5 Items for Discussion**

#### **5.1 Chairs Items**

The Chair will be attending the SFHA Governance Conference in Glasgow with KC and AB.

#### **5.2 Chief Executive's Items**

The CEO reported on various meetings he has attended:

- BHN CEO's have met frequently since last Board meeting.
- BHN CEO meeting at Eildon next week, agenda items including Warm & Well bid. Other RSLs being asked to contribute towards the costs of the project, WH will contribute to keep post active. Further details in the budget setting process.
- Scottish Borders Council (SBC) has put in place a Strategic Housing Forum to address the housing emergency. SBC suggested 2/4 of the CEO's to attend however the CEO's feel it is relevant that all 4 attend as they each have different things to offer.
- Members briefing for SBC Elected Members on the adaptation process with BHN CEO's.

### **5.3 Minute of Committee Meetings**

None

### **Part 6 Items for Information**

From the previous meeting to date the following items have been circulated round the Board Members via email:

November 2024

Share Training Courses & Newsletter

December 2024

Training Courses & Events at Share

Scotland Housing Festival 2025

January 2025

Governing Board Members Conference & Training courses at Share

### **Any Other Competent Business**

None

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and their input into the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm