

**THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED**

**IRVINE HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

Two Hundred and Fifth Meeting of the Board held at 5.30p.m. on Wednesday  
13 May 2015 at 44-46 Bank Street, Irvine

**Confirmed Minutes**

Present: Mr A. West (In the Chair), Mr C. Bell, Mrs W. Johnstone,  
Mr D. McEachran, Mr P. McGregor, Mr R. Sturgeon and  
Mr J. Wood\*

In attendance were Mrs N. Thom, Mrs M. Hutchinson, Mr  
J. Gordon and Mrs D. Boyle, Mr M. Fullarton, Mrs M.  
McPhail, Mrs M. Marks, Mr A. Paton, Mr J. Horner, Mrs J.  
Murray, Mr J. Hiles and Mr S. Grubb.

\*Via Tele-conference

Apologies for Absence

Miss F. Dunlop and Mrs F. Garven

Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

1. **Preliminaries**

Mr A. West welcomed the members of the Scrutiny Panel to the  
Meeting.

2. **Declaration of Interests**

None.

3. **Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 24 March 2015**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 24 March 2015 were approved  
subject to the "Present" section being amended to reflect that Mr M.  
Phillips was present for Item 6 only.

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes of 24 March 2015**

a) **Regulatory Guidance Consultation** (Min. 12)

Mrs N. Thom advised that the Association's response to the consultation had been submitted within the required timeline. Mrs Thom thanked the Board for its contribution to the Association's submission in response to the consultation.

b) **Governance Training** (Min. 17a))

Mrs Thom advised that the training which had been arranged through the Eydent group, was due to take place on Monday 18 May 2015. The Board noted that 3 Board Members were due to attend this event.

c) **Committee Minutes and Policies** (Min. 4a))

Mrs M. Hutchinson advised that a staff member had been manually pursuing factoring debt for the last quarter of the financial year. For the 13/14 year end, 21% of the debt had been collected. For 14/15 year end, 42% of the debt had been collected. The Board noted the intention to continue to dedicate a resource for the pursuit of the debt until an appropriate IT system could be put in place.

Following a query from Board, Mrs Thom advised that a preliminary meeting had been arranged with Group IT for the following week. Mrs Thom was hopeful that the Association would have an IT system in place within the current financial year.

d) **Board use of IT** (Min. 17c))

Mr J. Wood advised of the intention for a Group-wide approach to Board IT requirements and stated that Board Members would shortly be issued with a questionnaire regarding their requirements. Following analysis of the results, a further update would be given.

5. **Committee Minutes and Policies**

The Board noted the draft minutes of the:

- a) Operations Committee Meeting held on 17 February 2015.
- b) Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 10 March 2015.
- c) Group Housing Services Committee Meeting held on 1 April 2015.

## 6. **Scrutiny Activity – Outcomes and Evaluation**

Mrs N. Thom stated that, given scrutiny activity was being reported to Board for the first time, the full scrutiny reports have been presented for consideration in order for the Board to see the full extent of the work which the scrutiny group carried out on a voluntary basis. It is intended that future reports will be presented to the Operations Committee for noting and monitoring of agreed recommendations.

Mrs Thom reported on the “journey” the scrutiny group members had been on since being recruited from the “Count me in” panel back in 2013 to now being a properly constituted group which carried out meaningful work in order to bring about real service improvements for the Association’s customers. The Board noted the significant support offered to the Scutiny members from Association’s Mrs J. McTurk.

Mrs Thom then went on to highlight the key findings from the Housemark review which had been carried out on the scrutiny group’s first year in operation. The Board noted that some consideration would be required in relation to scrutiny’s formal link to the Association’s governance structure.

The scrutiny group shared some of their experiences of their first year in operation and praised Association staff for being very supporting of scrutiny and welcoming of challenge and probing questions.

The Board enquired on why the number of volunteers had reduced during the year, Mrs Thom stated there had been a sharp learning curve for the group at the start and that some people had not realised the significant time commitment which had been required in the first year. Given a review of the first year had been carried out, there was some scope to streamline some of the groups and processes in order to reduce the time commitment.

The Board thanked the scrutiny group for the massive amount of work they had carried out over the year and stated it had found the reports very informative. The Board suggested that the scrutiny group work with staff to prepare a prioritised action plan which would have the most impact for the Association’s customers for the Association to work through.

The Board discussed the potential issues arising from having a direct nomination from scrutiny group on the Association’s Board, however, agreed there should be a link from the scrutiny group to the Association’s governance structure.

The Board noted the contents of the Scrutiny Reports.

7. **Annual Return on the Charter**

The Board noted the key features of the Annual Return on the Charter and approved the submission of the Annual Return on the Charter to the Scottish Housing Regulator from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

8. **Board Recruitment**

Mrs D. Boyle reported on the outcome of the Governance Working Group's discussion in relation to the recruitment of new Board Members. The Board noted the intention that an advert be placed seeking potential new board members with a closing date of the end of June. Appropriate individuals which met the required criteria would be invited for a discussion with the Chairman and Interim Managing Director. Recommendations would thereafter be made to the Board for consideration. Mrs Boyle suggested that Board Members or scrutiny group members encourage any individual they were aware may be interested in joining the Board to apply in line with the draft advert which had been tabled.

The Board thereafter:

- a) Noted the outcome of deliberations of the short life Governance Working Group.
- b) Agreed to carry out further succession planning early in the new year.
- c) Agreed the proposed Board Recruitment process.
- d) Agreed the proposed timeline of board recruitment.
- e) Agreed the proposed contents of the recruitment pack including the advertisement for new board members.
- f) Delegated authority to the Chairman to agree the format of the potential applicant's informal discussions.
- g) Delegated authority to the short life Governance Working Group to consider and agree the applicants to be recommended for Board Membership.

9. **Performance Management**

The Board congratulated the staff effort involved in meeting all targets by year end and attaining 6 rosettes across the group figures.

Mrs M. Hutchinson highlighted that the Association's statutory accounts would be presented at the June Board Meeting. Mrs Hutchinson reported that income would be £60k less than expected largely due to the fee for managing EWI works not being processed in the year, not receiving the income expected from the sale of the Arran Homestake properties and a large number of accruals from a contractor not being carried over from the previous financial year. The Board noted that processes were being put in place to prevent this issue occurring again.

The Board enquired on the reasons for the May 14 financial covenants being red. Mrs Hutchinson advised that this was always the case in May as the calculation for the covenant was impacted by the rent free weeks at the beginning of the year.

The Board thereafter:

- a) Reviewed the Association's performance against the Group's Top Ten Key Performance Indicators for Local targets.
- b) Noted the Association's performance against the current Monthly Performance Review Report and Analyse by Division reports.
- c) Reviewed and was content that the Association was ensuring compliance with its funder's financial covenants.

10. **Governance Framework**

Mrs D. Boyle stated that the draft governance framework presented complied with the Scottish Housing Regulator's regulatory standards and also sought to harmonise the Association's governance processes with that of Group's as far as was possible. The framework sought to define the roles within the Association's governance structure and the Association's relationship with group.

Mrs Boyle highlighted that the Committee structure had been reviewed and it was suggested that a new committee be formed. It was suggested that the Association's Committee structure should be discussed in further detail at the Association's Board Strategy Day.

Mrs Boyle stated that the Code of Conduct which had been previously agreed by Board in September 14 had been amended further to remove references to the National Housing Federation and replace them with references to the Scottish Federation of Housing

Associations, to strengthen the section within disciplinary guidance in relation to adhering to collective responsibility and add in a reference to the Scottish Housing Regulator within the whistleblowing section.

The Board agreed to review the draft Governance Framework Document and its Appendices and provide any feedback to Mrs D. Boyle by 10 June 2015.

11. **Key Principles for Future Housing Services / Tenancy Sustainability Strategy**

Mrs N. Thom highlighted the key features from the report and the different options for tenancy sustainment which were currently being discussed and considered throughout the group. The Board expressed a strong view that issuing short term tenancies in line with behaviours including engaging in employment and training could be seen as discriminatory by tenants, and would be potentially at odds with the Association's charitable objectives. The Association operated in areas of high deprivation where seeking employment and training could prove challenging. The Association had always had a strong focus on assisting and supporting its customers rather than sending a message that good services would only be provided with conditions attached. Mrs Thom undertook to feed the Board's comments back to Group.

The Board noted the content of the report.

12. **Contractor Spend Annual Report 2014/15**

Mr J. Gordon tabled an updated version of the paper which included a section on value for money which detailed where savings had been made. The Board noted that £37,683 savings had been made on the previous year.

In response to a query from Board in relation to business planning, Mr Gordon stated that the Association now had a more accurate picture of stock condition information which would be uploaded to the promaster system to utilise for future investment planning.

The Board highlighted new legislation which was due to come in next April, the Public Reform Scotland Act and how this would have an impact on procurement arrangements locally and nationally. Officials undertook to look into this new legislation further.

The Board noted the supplier spend across the capital programme.

13. **Annual Write-Offs**

Mrs M. Hutchinson referred to a previous concern over increased levels of sequestrations and advised that there had been 4 sequestrations during the year which was less than the previous year.

In response to a query from Board, Mrs Hutchinson confirmed that all avenues for debt recovery were exhausted prior to write-offs being authorised.

The Board noted the write-offs processed during the year.

14. **Health and Safety**

The Board noted:

- a) The current position within the Association with regard to the key Group health and safety risk areas, and compliance with the Major Risk Assessment KPI.
- b) The staff Health and Safety training carried out in the period 1 October 2014 - 31 March 2015.
- c) The staff and contractor accident/incident statistics for the period 1 October 2014 – 31 March 2015.
- d) The safety inspections for the period 1 October 2014 – 31 March 2015.
- e) The meeting held by the Association's Health and Safety Working Group, Riverside's Health and Safety at Work Committee / Working Group and Riverside's Health and Safety Risk Management Group in the period 1 October 2014 – 31 March 2015.
- f) The current position with the Association's Risk / COSHH Assessments.
- g) The current audit position with regard to the Association's health and safety arrangements.

15. **PR & Networking Report**

The Board noted the PR and Networking Report.

16. **Corporate Annual Equalities Analysis Report**

The Board noted that the Association was fulfilling its obligations in terms of being an Equal Opportunities employer.

17. **“De Minimus” Payments and Benefits Log**

The Board noted that no Board or Staff member had exceeded the De Minimus monetary equivalent of £300 per annum for the period 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015.

18. **Any Other Business**

a) **Board Members’ Conference**

Mrs N. Thom advised that Riverside’s Board Members’ Conference would be held on 15 October 2015 in Manchester and requested that any Board Member interested in attending this year’s event should contact Mrs D. Boyle to advise.

b) **Nithsdale Community Achievement Awards**

Mrs Thom read out a letter which had been received from Dumfries and Galloway Council’s Community and Customer Services Department thanking the Association for its sponsorship of the Community Group of the Year Award.

19. **Date of Next Meeting**

Board Meeting – 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday 23 June 2015, 44-46 Bank Street, Irvine.

N. Thom  
Secretary  
14 May 2015  
NT/db

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