

Readers may note that some information within these documents have been omitted / redacted.

Some information has been omitted / redacted as disclosure may prejudice the commercial interests of Irvine Housing Association.

We recognise that the commercial sensitivity of information may decline over time and the harm arising from disclosure may be outweighed by the public interest in openness and transparency. We commit to review the redaction of any such information from time to time.

Some information has been redacted as it contains personal data which identifies an individual. Disclosure of this information would place Irvine Housing Association in breach of the Data Protection Act 2018.

HIGHLIGHTS OF IHA'S BOARD MEETING HELD ON 27 AUGUST 2020

DEVELOPMENT APPRAISAL MODEL

The Board received a presentation giving an overview of the process for the consideration and approval of investment proposals, and the role played by Group's Investment Appraisal Committee (IAC).

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Board received a report advising that the vast majority of the Association's services were now being delivered, albeit revised delivery models were being adopted to comply with social distancing guidelines, minimising direct face to face contact with customers and colleagues where possible. Work was also underway to prepare the office for some staff to work from the office when guidelines allowed this. Board also noted an increased volume of new Universal Claims during the lock-down period.

CORPORATE PLAN 2020-2023 – YEAR 1 DELIVERY

The Board noted the proposed Internal Management Plan to deliver the Year 1 objectives in the new Corporate Plan.

FINANCIAL PLAN

The Board approved the 2020/21 revised forecast, which would be adopted as the Budget for the 2020/21 financial year and also approved the revised 30 Year Financial Plan.

RULE 67 STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY

The Board noted the Secretary's Statement which was a requirement of the Association's Rules.

BOARD SUCCESSION PLANNING

The Board noted that a virtual workshop had been arranged in order to allow the consideration of the appropriateness of Board remuneration prior to future planned recruitment exercises. The Board also noted the Board Members who were due to retire at the Annual General Meeting.

ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Board approved the revised Asset Management Strategy.

TREE AND WOODLAND MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Board approved the Tree and Woodland Management Policy.

CCTV AND DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY POLICIES

The Board approved the CCTV and Data Protection and Privacy Policies subject to clarification of the requirement for the inclusion of specific Scottish legislation.

PROGRESS REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The Board noted the updates on the current development projects being progressed by the Association.

OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Board noted the operational report. They discussed in particular the sharp increase in arrears cases, the Scottish Government's announcement to extend non-evictions legislation in Scotland until March 2021 and the positive decrease in complaint numbers following the Association's closer review of trends which lead to changes to improve communications throughout the process.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Board noted the financial performance report.

MD'S REPORT

The Board noted the MD's Report which contained updates in relation to:

- AGM/SGM Arrangements
- Board Succession Planning
- Annual Assurance Statement
- Riverside Scotland Growth
- Data Incident
- Homelessness Funding
- Repairs and Maintenance Option Appraisal

THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED

IRVINE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Two Hundred and Thirty Eighth Meeting of the Board held at 5.30 p.m. on
27 August 2020 by Blue Jeans video-conference.

Minutes

Present:

Mr D. McEachran (In the Chair), Mrs M. Burgess, Mrs M. Crearie, Mr G. Darroch, Mrs J. Galbraith and Mr R. Hill.

In attendance were: Mr P. Hillard, Mrs H. Anderson, Mr A. Chapman (for item 5), Mr M. Ferguson and Mrs M. Hutchinson.

Apologies for Absence

Mrs J. Murray, Mr D. Thornton, Mr C. Bell, Mr C. Donohue and Ms C. McGuinness.

Declarations of Interests

No Declarations were made.

1. **Preliminaries**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted the apologies for absence received.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting – 237th Board Meeting held on 2 July 2020**

The minutes of the 237th Board Meeting held on 2 July 2020 were **APPROVED** as an accurate record.

3. **Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes**

237th Board Meeting

It was noted that all actions had either been completed or were scheduled to be completed within designated timescales.

4. **Development Appraisal Model**

The Senior Finance Business Partner provided members with an overview of the process for the consideration and approval of investment proposals, and the role played by the Investment Appraisal Committee (IAC). The robust and rigorous nature of the monthly meetings of the IAC was highlighted, with the membership comprising the Executive Directors, supplemented with attendance from other relevant Directors/Heads of including Governance, Legal, Treasury and Finance, as well as individuals who were seeking approval for investment appraisals.

The Committee typically followed a 3-Gate process in terms of investment appraisals which covered the full cycle from initial feasibility to approval and final contract stage. The process comprised Gate 1 (initial feasibility), Gate 2 (Detailed design) and Gate 3 (approval to get into contract).

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5. **Covid 19 Pandemic Update**

The easing of lockdown measures had meant that the vast majority of the Association's services were now being delivered, albeit that revised approaches had been adopted to comply with social distancing

guidelines, minimising direct face to face contact with customers and colleagues where possible.

A full service was being offered with safe methods of working being adopted by contractors where repairs were being carried out. Landlord compliance safety checks were also being undertaken and it was noted as encouraging that all Irvine HA properties were now 100% gas compliant.

Head Office had been prepared for use in a way that would allow social-distancing and safe working, however, this was currently not included on the list of lockdown measures proposed for easing from 14 September 2020. It was therefore not expected that the office would be available in the short term, although this would continue to be monitored.

Assurance was provided that the Management Team were continuing to give priority to support colleague well-being during the pandemic, supplemented with frequent team meetings to ensure regular contact was maintained. The Board welcomed this development and highlighted the importance of ensuring that staff were provided with the appropriate resources in order to continue to work effectively from home.

[REDACTED]

It was acknowledged that there had been a notable increase in the volume of universal credit cases during the lockdown period and, whilst the impact was not as significant as originally feared, it had led to an increase in cases of arrears, which had the potential to increase further following the ending of the Furlough scheme. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6. **Corporate Plan 2020-23 – Year 1 Delivery**

The Board considered the Association’s Delivery Plan for the first year of the Corporate Plan 2020 to 2023, which outlined the specific actions, initiatives and targets for year one delivery, with accompanying timescales and allocated officer responsibilities.

It was noted that the Delivery Plan for 2020/21 had been developed by the Association’s Management Team, who had outlined the key initiatives and activity that was anticipated to be delivered by March 2021. It was acknowledged that the revised plan was conservative and prudent in approach, taking account of the current Covid-19 pandemic and the impact on the Association’s business.

The key priority for the remainder of the year would be to continue to provide services within the constraints of socially-distanced working, improving customer satisfaction, maximising income and arrears control, and controlling expenditure. The Board agreed that, should it be deemed that additional resource was required, with a specific focus upon customer service issues, this would be something that would be considered.

It was acknowledged that due to the current uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic the operating environment did not lend itself to ambitious objectives for the remainder of this year, and it was appropriate to be mindful of the risk that a second wave of Covid-19 posed. It was nonetheless stressed that the current lack of KPI targets did not indicate that significant action was not ongoing to continually strive to improve operational performance.

The Board noted the update.

7. **Financial Plan**

The detailed Budget for 2020/21 and the 30 year Financial Plan had been initially approved by Board on 30 January 2020. It was acknowledged that, at that point, the widespread impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had not been anticipated, allied to the fact that the potential future impacts remained uncertain as the risk of a second spike, increased unemployment and the removal of the Furlough scheme, remained prevalent.

As a result of lockdown, many customers had suffered a loss of income either a result of job losses or of the Furlough scheme. Consequently, contact had been minimised, with work being carried out from employees' homes where possible and only essential visits and repairs being undertaken. These factors had impacted financial performance and, as a result, a detailed revised forecast had been prepared.

The 2020/21 forecast and the closing position for 2019/20 financial year had both been incorporated into the revised 30 year plan.



In some instances the costs anticipated in the full year revised forecast were the same as had been assumed in the original budget. However, due to the delay in works associated with the Covid-19 lockdown, costs would now be incurred later in the year than originally anticipated.

The Irvine HA Board were reassured by the steps which had been taken to reflect the changing circumstances imposed by the pandemic and formally:

APPROVED the 2020/21 revised forecast, which would be adopted as the Budget for the 2020/21 financial year
and
APPROVED the revised 30 Year Financial Plan.

8. **Rule 67 Statement by the Secretary**

The Board noted the assurance of the Company Secretary of compliance with Rule 67 of the organisation – specifically that:

“At the last meeting of the Board before the annual general meeting the Secretary shall to the extent within his knowledge confirm in writing to the Board that all the requirements of Rules 62 to 66 have been complied with or if they have not been complied with the Secretary shall report in writing to the Board the reasons for such non-compliance. The confirmation or report required by this rule shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.”

9. **Board Succession Planning**

The first stage of future Board succession planning was the consideration of remuneration for Board membership and officers of the Board. Consultants had been scheduled to conduct a session with the Board on 15 October 2020 to facilitate discussion of the issue. Due to the restrictions imposed by the lockdown this meeting would now be conducted by video-conference.

It was noted that, in terms of membership of the Irvine HA Board, Chris Bell was coming to the end of his nine year tenure. The Chair, Jane Galbraith and Doug Thornton were due to stand down, although would be eligible for re-election. Given the potential for a number of vacancies on the Board, the Company Secretary provided assurance that steps towards initialising a suitable recruitment process were in place.

10. **Board Group Appraisal & Action Plan**

It was noted that, although no significant issues had emerged from the recent Whole Board Appraisal process, the resulting actions had been formulated into an action plan which would be circulated to members for information. **ACTION PH**

11. **Financial Crime Policy**

The Board considered the Riverside Group Financial Crime Policy.

It was noted that the policy had not historically been included within the policy review schedule and consequently had not been previously considered by IHA Board. However, The Riverside Group Ltd was subject to financial crime regulation and, in the interests of good governance, and to ensure a consistent approach across the Group, the IHA Board were asked to consider adoption.

Assurance was provided that the policy was designed to ensure compliance with UK legislation, regulations, rules and industry guidance, and as a result help to protect colleagues, customers, and the Group from the impacts of financial crime.

Whilst broadly supportive of the Policy, the Board sought clarification that the adoption of the policy would also comply with the specific requirements dictated by Scottish law. Pending this clarification the Irvine HA Board **DEFERRED APPROVAL** of the Financial Crime Policy.

12. **Asset Management Strategy**

The Board considered the revised Asset Management Strategy.

It was acknowledged that the majority of key steps outlined within the strategy were already being undertaken and in place, although the revised strategy took a wider, more strategic approach to managing housing stock, the factors which should determine the value and viability of properties both now and in the future, and the specific challenges the Association faced in relation to the type and structure of Irvine homes. An action plan to support implementation of the strategy in 2020/21 was also submitted for consideration.

The Irvine HA Board welcomed the detailed and robust nature of the paper and formally **APPROVED** the revised Asset Management Strategy.

13. **Tree and Woodland Management Policy**

The Board considered the Tree and Woodland Management Policy.

It was noted that the Association had a large number of trees and woodland areas across current estates. Whilst tree maintenance was undertaken on a cyclical basis, there was currently no policy in place setting out the approach for dealing with the increasing numbers of concerns and issues raised by residents regarding the impact of trees on their properties and surrounding areas.

Consequently a Tree and Woodland Management Policy had been developed and was submitted for consideration. The policy set out the approach that the Association would take to issues raised by residents regarding trees, the factors that would be taken into account when determining the level of any remedial works, and the approach that would be taken to planned and cyclical maintenance.

The key aim of the policy was to ensure that trees across estates continued to enhance and contribute to the quality of neighbourhoods, and the fundamental value of trees to the local environment was maintained, whilst also addressing resident concerns in a consistent way.

The Board welcomed the structured and consistent approach outlined within the policy. The Board suggested that tree allocation and management for future developments be considered at the earliest opportunity in the new build development planning process, to ensure a longer term view for maintenance and management. **ACTION PH.**

The Irvine HA Board **APPROVED** the Tree and Woodland Management Policy.

14. **Donations Policy**

The Donations Policy had not historically been included within the policy review schedule and had not therefore been previously considered by IHA Board. A Group-wide Donations Policy had been developed by Group in consultation with the Managing Director.

The importance of having an appropriate Donations Policy in place was highlighted, providing clarity regarding the types of donations that the Association could pay and receive. The policy also served to highlight the importance of ensuring that donations aligned with the Group-wide values.

Whilst minded to support the policy, the Board requested that clarification be sought with regards to the current legal and regulatory definition of fraud, and to clarify if there was any specific stipulations required by Scottish law that should be included within the policy. **ACTION PH**

Pending this clarification the Irvine HA Board **DEFERRED APPROVAL** the Donations Policy.

15. **CCTV and Data Protection Policies**

The Riverside Group had recently revised the CCTV policy and Data Protection and Privacy Policy. These were Group wide policies and assurance was provided that they had been reviewed for any specific Scottish amendments.

Whilst minded to support the policy, the Board requested that clarification be sought with regards to the possible inclusion of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (Scotland) and if this should be referenced within the policy.

Subject to this clarification, the Irvine HA Board **APPROVED** the CCTV Policy and Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

16. **Progress Reports on Development Projects**

The positive nature of current development projects was noted, and it was anticipated that over the following nine months a further three schemes would be in development that it was anticipated would deliver a further 160 new units.

The importance of achieving a sound financial return for all schemes was highlighted. [REDACTED]

The Board noted the update.

17. **Operational Performance Report**

Following the Covid-19 crisis, rent arrears had started to increase sharply since the beginning of June 2020, and currently stood at a 4 week average of 4.18%.

Following the recent announcement to extend non-evictions legislation in Scotland until March 2021, specific steps had been implemented to try and minimise arrears increases. The potential impact this could have post March 2021 was noted.

It was noted as encouraging that complaint numbers had fallen since April. A deep dive analysis had been carried out of dissatisfied complaints and key issues identified. A lack of communication with the customer during the complaints process had emerged as a theme. Consequently, the Asset Services Support Officer had been tasked with contacting every customer who had raised a repairs complaint or service enquiry. The Board endorsed the approach being taken.

18. **Financial Performance Report**

The Board noted the financial update report. It was confirmed that the substantive points for discussion had been covered elsewhere in the agenda.

19. **Managing Director's Report**

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was scheduled to be held on Wednesday 16 September 2020. It had been intended to consider a proposed Rule change during this meeting, however, the Association's Rules stipulated that a separate Special General Meeting must be convened to consider any changes to the Rules. It was therefore proposed to hold an SGM back to back with the AGM. More information regarding the practicalities of these arrangements would be provided in advance of the AGM.

The revised Terms of Reference adopted by Board earlier this year had given responsibility to Board to make recommendations to TRGL Board about Riverside's growth strategy, and consequent activity, in Scotland. The key theme of Scotland's Growth Strategy was the pursuit of further merger and group structure activity. It was acknowledged that the covid-19 pandemic had constrained the availability of such opportunities, although work was continuing in this regard where possible.

20. **Minutes/Updates**

The Board noted the minutes from the Neighbourhood Services Committee meeting held on 25 June 2020 and the Group Board highlights report covering May-July 2020.

21. **Any Other Business**

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting was closed.

22. **Date of Next Meeting**

Board Meeting - 5.30 p.m. on Thursday 19 November 2020, by MS Teams video-conferencing

P. Hillard
Secretary
28 August 2020
PH/mf

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