

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 19 NOVEMBER 2020

MATTERS ARISING

The Board approved the CCTV and the Data Protection and Privacy Policies.

REPAIRS OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The Board noted the report on the first phase of the options appraisal for the delivery of the repairs service.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Board received a report advising on the current position in relation to service delivery, in line the new tier system for local authority areas. Staff continue to work from home and the Association had initiatives in place to support well-being during these difficult times.

FINANCIAL PLAN

The Board agreed the financial assumptions to be included in the financial plan and also that the Association should consult with customers on a proposed rent increase range of 1.5% - 2%. The results of this survey would be considered as part of the budget and financial plan approval process at the January 2021 Board Meeting.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE – ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Board considered the regulatory compliance assessment reports and approved its Annual Assurance Statement for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

GROWTH STRATEGY

The Board approved the Association's Growth Strategy Statement and agreed to recommend the mergers and acquisition section for inclusion within Group's overall Mergers and Acquisitions Strategy to Group Board.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – TARRYHOLME PHASE 2

The Board noted the project update report and confirmed its continued support for the progression of the Tarryholme Phase 2 development project.

PROCUREMENT POLICY

The Board agreed to adopt Group's revised Procurement Policy.

OSCR ANNUAL RETURN

The Board approved the Association's Annual Return submission to OSCR.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTER

The Board approved the removal of the proposed 11 members in line with the Association's Rules.

EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2020/21

The Board noted the contents of the 2019-20 EDI Action Plan Monitoring Sheet and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan for 2021.

PROGRESS REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The Board noted the progress report in relation to the Association's current planned development projects.

PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Board considered the operational performance report, noting in particular:

- The current approach to communication to address arrears levels / assist with increased Universal Credit claims
- That 100% gas safety compliance was being achieved
- The relet service had re-commenced and relet turnaround times had increased to include deep cleans
- The increase in customer satisfaction levels.

The Board considered the financial performance report, noting in particular:

- The timing of invoicing and funding applications in relation to disabled adaptation funding.
- The monitoring of the impact of the Covid pandemic on customer incomes and also the impact of a potential no-deal Brexit on supply chains.

MD'S REPORT

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

- Board Succession Planning
- Irvine Office
- Branding of Irvine HA
- Homelessness Funding
- Pennyburn Lock Ups
- Data Incident

THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED

IRVINE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Two Hundred and Thirty Ninth Meeting of the Board held at 5.30 p.m. on
19 November 2020 by MS Teams video-conference.

Minutes

Present:

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

In attendance were: Mr P. Hillard, Mrs H. Anderson, Mr M. Baxter (Echelon), Mrs D. Boyle, Mr R. Butler, Mr P. Dillon and Mrs M. Hutchinson.

Apologies for Absence

No apologies.

Declarations of Interests

No Declarations were made.

1. **Preliminaries**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting – 238th Board Meeting held on 27 August and the Special Board Meeting held on 16 September 2020**

The minutes of the 238th Board Meeting held on 27 August and the Special Board Meeting held on 16 September 2020 were **APPROVED** as an accurate record.

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

238th Board Meeting

Financial Crime Policy (Min. 11)

The Board noted that policy was not applicable to the Association in the context of specific Fraud legislation. This matter would be factored into future policy reviews.

Donations Policy (Min. 14)

The Board noted the policy was being revised further to ensure its cognisance of Scottish charity legislation and would be presented to the Board for consideration in due course.

CCTV and Data Protection and Privacy Policies (Min. 15)

The Board noted that the Association's solicitors, Harper MacLeod, had confirmed the applicability to the Association and that no changes were required to the policies which had been presented. These policies were therefore approved by Board.

4. **Repairs Options Appraisal**

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5. **Covid 19 Pandemic Update**

Mr P. Hillard advised that following the government's announcements on the tiers applied to the local authority areas, further advice had been issued which confirmed that the properties in the local authority areas which were in tier 4, could only have emergency repairs and gas safety checks carried out. A suitable communication had been prepared and issued to customers in East Ayrshire and had also been promoted on social media.

Mr Hillard advised that the current challenges were maintaining the health and wellbeing of staff who continued to work from home. The Association was working with staff to suggest ways to improve wellbeing

such as reinforcing the importance of getting outside and also arranging on-line events in order prevent feelings of isolation. The Board recognised the difficulties that came with working from home, particularly during the shorter daylight hours during the winter months.

The Board thereafter noted the contents of the Covid-19 Pandemic Report.

6. **Financial Plan**

Mrs M. Hutchinson advised that work on budgets for 2021/22 was currently underway. Prior to the proposed budget and 30 year financial plan being presented for consideration at the January Board Meeting, the Board were asked to consider key assumptions for factoring into the financial plan. Mrs Hutchinson advised that the Association required to shortly consult with its customers on the proposed rent increase for 2021/22. The results of this consultation process would then be presented for consideration as part of the financial plan approval process.

Mrs Hutchinson referred to the current financial plan and highlighted that it currently projected that rents would increase by 2.5% in the next financial year, however, Board had recently expressed a view that given the current pandemic situation this projection should be re-considered in context of customer affordability. Mrs Hutchinson then highlighted the impact of there being no rent increase or an increase of 1% in the next financial year and options the Association would require to consider in the years beyond that in order to generate the income required to deliver key objectives that the Board had set in the coming years.

Mrs Hutchinson then went on to highlight the other key assumptions which had been incorporated in the draft plan in relation to voids, bad debts, salaries, repairs and maintenance, interest payments. She also highlighted other one-off areas of planned spend during the next financial year such as [REDACTED] the estate regeneration which had been included as a corporate plan objective, remedial fire safety works etc.

Following queries from the Board, Mrs Hutchinson advised that the void loss assumption had been based on the longer re-let time which had been experienced during the year due to the new deep clean protocols being required. The draft plan also assumed that the bad debt provision would require to be increased in the next 2/3 years. The Board advised that they considered the proposed bad provision prudent for the year, however, suggested that officers should keep a watching brief on this area and plan accordingly for the next year.

A detailed discussion followed on the potential rent increase consultation. The Board were of the view that the impact of no rent

increase on the Association's ability to deliver the appropriate services and planned investment to its customers and housing stock was not considered an appropriate approach, however, they were keen to keep any proposed rent increase as low as possible taking into consideration that a significant amount of customers were facing difficult financial times. Mrs Hutchinson advised that North Ayrshire Council were currently consulting on a rent increase range of between 1.9 – 2.5%. The Board suggested that the range of the proposed rent increases communicated clearly linked to the investment plans for the year in order to demonstrate what the rent increase would deliver for the customer.

The Board thereafter:

- a) agreed the Association's proposed rent consultation with customers should be on the options of 1.5% and 2% increases.
- b) agreed the presented assumptions to be used when compiling the revised 30 year financial plan.
- c) Noted the current 30 Year Financial plan.

7. **Regulatory Compliance – Assurance Statement**

Mr P. Hillard advised the Board on the process undertaken for the assessment of the Association's regulatory compliance and the subsequent audit of the process by Group Internal Audit which had given the Association's approach a clean bill of health.

Mr Hillard highlighted that the critical issue for the Board to consider was the materiality of the Association's non-compliance with the achievement of EESSH for 100% of its housing stock by the end of the year and how this was communicated in the Association's Assurance Statement. Mr Hillard also drew attention the Scottish Housing Regulator's guidance on Assurance Statement's, particularly the section on assessing materiality which detailed the issues to consider.

Following discussion, the Board agreed that the non-compliance with EESSH was declarable, however, they did not consider it to be an area of material non-compliance. They were content that they had considered this matter in detail and that the Management Team had a plan in place with associated timescales, which Board had agreed, in order to address this area of non-material, non-compliance.

The Board then considered the draft Assurance Statements presented which had been drafted in discussion with the Chair and Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee and agreed that the Assurance Statement which highlighted the EESSH non-compliance as non-material (Draft A) should be signed by the Chair on behalf of the Board and submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

8. **Growth Strategy**

Mr P. Hillard advised that the proposed Growth Strategy Statement formalised the Board's discussions on the preferred geographic areas for growth, the financial parameters and considerations, and governance considerations for the new build programme and potential merger and acquisition activity.

The Board concurred with the criteria which had been identified within the Statement and recognised that the longer-term approach to mergers and acquisition activity began with building of relationships with potential partners over a period of time.

After full consideration, the Board:

- a) approved the adoption of the Growth Strategy Statement and, thereafter,
- b) agreed to recommend the mergers and acquisitions section of the Statement to Group Board as the basis of the Scotland element of the Group Mergers and Acquisitions Strategy.

9. **Development Project – Tarryholme Phase 2**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Board thereafter noted the project progress and confirmed their continued support for the project proceeding to the next stage of the development.

10. **Procurement Policy**

Mrs H. Anderson advised that Group had recently revised their Procurement Policy in consultation with officers. The Association's Board had previously agreed to adopt Group's Procurement Policy, therefore the revised policy had been presented for consideration and adoption.

After consideration, the Board agreed to adopt the revised Group Procurement Policy.

12. **OSCR Annual Return**

Mrs D. Boyle that that the Annual Return had been prepared on-line. Subject to the Board agreeing the contents of the Return, it would be submitted on-line along with the Association's previously approved annual accounts to OSCR.

The Board thereafter considered and approved the on-line submission of the Annual Return to OSCR.

13. **Membership Register**

Mr P. Hillard advised in order to keep the membership register current, officers had carried out analysis of attendees at the Association's Annual General Meetings (AGM). The proposed members for removal had not been present or had failed to give apologies for the previous 5 AGM's.

The Board thereafter agreed to pass a resolution that:

"The 11 members identified at Appendix 1 to the paper presented shall be deemed to have withdrawn from membership of the Association and his / her ordinary share shall be cancelled and the amount paid thereon shall become the property of the Association".

14. **Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Action Plan 2020/21**

Mrs M. Hutchinson, referred to the 2019-20 EDI Action Plan Monitoring Sheet and highlighted that some actions would be ongoing as new staff and customers came through the organisation.

The Board noted the contents of the 2019-20 EDI Action Plan Monitoring Sheet and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan 2021.

15. **Progress Report on Development Projects**



The Board noted progress report on the Association's current development projects.

16. **Operational Performance Report**

Mrs H. Anderson referring to the arrears position, advised that 4 housing officers were now working with the Income Collection Team on dedicated arrears recovery. Weekly monitoring of arrears cases was also being monitored by management staff. Mrs Anderson stated that all methods of contacting customers were being pursued including calls, visits, text and emails which allowed a payment system to easily be accessed by the customer, contacts regarding gas safety checks were also being utilised in order to maximise the opportunities for communicating with the customer. There had been a sharp increase in new universal claimants and operational teams were discussing cases on a priority basis and supporting customers as appropriate through the claims process which included assisting with the updating of journal information which was a time consuming process.

The Board noted that 100% gas safety compliance was being achieved.

Mrs Anderson highlighted that following the re-commencement of the relet service, the average number of re-let days had decreased from 23

to 18 from the previous month. New lets were generally taking an additional 5 days turnaround due to deep cleans being required in all new lets. Staff continued to work their way through the backlog from when only emergency lets were being carried out.

The Board were pleased to note an increase in customer satisfaction which had been due to a dedicated member of staff being the single point of contact for all complaints updates.

The Board recognised the huge team effort from staff working in different ways to seek to keep performance as closely in line with targets as possible. The Board requested that their thanks being passed on to all staff for their efforts and flexibility during the difficult times which were constantly evolving.

The Board thereafter noted the Operational Performance Report.

18. **Financial Performance Report**

Mrs M. Hutchinson stated that there had been an adverse variation in other income to the budget. This related to a delay in a contractor submitting invoicing for disabled adaptation works which then delayed the application for funding to the Scottish Government for these works. It was now expected that the funding claim would be made in December.

Mrs Hutchinson advised that the Association continued to monitor the impact of the Covid pandemic on customers incomes and also the potential impact of a no-deal Brexit on supply chains for capital works and development programmes.

The Board noted the financial update report.

19. **Managing Director's Report**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Mr Hillard advised on the current thinking to postpone the name change, given the current pandemic and look to rebrand the Association instead at this stage. Mr Hillard presented current examples of the potential new logos which may be considered as part of this process. The Board advised was of the view that it should still formally consider any decision to proceed with a name change at some point in the future, given it made sense to move away from using the name Irvine when the Association's current geographical spread was much wider. It was also suggested that this could have an impact on any potential mergers and acquisition discussions. It was thereafter agreed that this matter be considered in more detail at a later date.

The Board thereafter noted the contents of the Managing Director's Report.

20. **Minutes/Updates**

The Board noted the unconfirmed minutes from the:

- a) Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 5 October 2020,
- b) Neighbourhood Services Committee meeting held on 24 September 2020 and also
- c) the Group Board highlights report covering May-July 2020.

21. **Any Other Business**

Ayrshire Growth Deal

The Board highlighted the Ayrshire Growth Deal which had been signed that day and requested that officers consider its potential implications for the Association. Mrs H. Anderson advised that this would likely filter through to the Association through discussions with local authorities in relation to the housing needs demand assessments.

22. **Date of Next Meeting**

Board Meeting - 5.30 p.m. on Thursday 28 January 2021, by MS Teams video-conferencing

P. Hillard
 Secretary
 20 November
 2020 PH/db

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