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

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 t/a Riverside Scotland in breach of the Data Protection Act 2018.

## **THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED**

### **RIVERSIDE SCOTLAND**

Two Hundred and Forty Seventh Meeting of the Board held at 5.30 p.m. on  
Thursday 31 March 2022 via MS Teams.

#### **Minutes**

##### **Present:**

Mr J. Strang (In the Chair), Mrs M. Burgess, Mr G. Darroch,  
Mrs. J Galbraith, Mr S. Easton, Mr P. New, Mr T. McInnes  
and Mrs S. Petrie.

In attendance were: Mrs D. MacLean, Mrs H. Anderson, Mrs  
D. Boyle, Ms G. Gascoigne (Item 15). and Mrs M.  
Hutchinson.

##### **Apologies for Absence**

Mrs M. Crearie, Mr R. Hill and Mr S. Stewart

##### **Declarations of Interests**

Mrs D. MacLean, Mrs M. Burgess and Mrs J. Galbraith  
declared an interest in respect of Item 20.a).

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Mrs M. Crearie, Mr R. Hill and Mrs S.  
Stewart.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

Mrs D. MacLean, Mrs M. Burgess and Mrs J. Galbraith declared interests  
in respect of Item 20.a) and took no part in this discussion.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting – 246<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting held on 27 January 2022**

The minutes of the 246<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting held on 27 January 2022 were APPROVED as an accurate record, subject to the fourth line of Item 8 being amended to reflect that 57 and not 67 members remained.

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

**Item 9 – Risk Management Policy**

Mr P. New advised that the section 3.o of the policy had been amended to reflect that “Members or Officers of TRGL Board are appointed to subsidiary and TRGL Board Sub-Committees and will escalate risks and concerns to TRGL Board.”. Mr New confirmed that any concerns or risks from Board requiring escalation to TRGL Board would be reported by him, as an Officer of TRGL Board.

5. **30 Year Financial Plan**

Mrs M. Hutchinson advised that the 30 year financial plan presented was a compliant plan, based on the plan approved by Board the previous year with the updates from the approved budget at the January 2022 Board Meeting incorporated as year 1 of the plan. She highlighted that due to the current significant risks the organisation faced and the results of the stock condition survey not as yet being available, the 30 year financial plan would be subject to further review and consideration by the Board at a future date.

Mrs Hutchinson advised that stress testing had been carried out on the financial plan presented and reported on the impact of the following scenarios:

- If bad debts were to rise to 10%
- If void loss was to increase to 5%
- If bad debts were to rise to 10% and void loss was to increase to 5%
- If CPI only rent increases were applied from next year onwards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

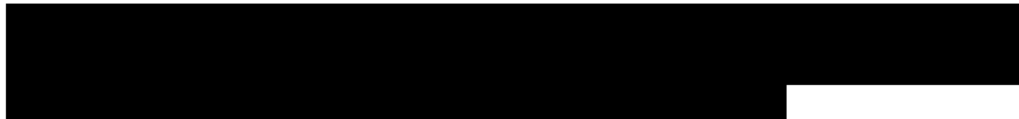


Mr P. New queried the proposal of 1.0% for bad debt provision in the plan, given the current bad debts were sitting at 1.3%. Mrs Hutchinson advised that it was hoped that whilst higher than projections at the moment, this figure could be brought within projections by year end. Mr New suggested that Board then accept the risk of assuming that the figures could be brought in line with provision within the year.

Mr New queried the drop in fixed asset levels in years 6 and 7 of the plan. Mrs Hutchinson confirmed that this was due to no developments and reduced planned and capital works programmes being in operation in those years.

Mr J. Strang advised on Mr R. Hill's comments on the plan regarding the significant nature of the current risks and the necessity for regular review of these risks and their impact on the financial plan.

The Board thereafter APPROVED the 30-year financial plan subject to subsequent approval by The Riverside Group Ltd Board.



6. **Repairs and Maintenance Programmes 2022/23**

Mrs H. Anderson stated that following the full review of the repairs and maintenance services and contracts and the retendering exercise, the new contracts commence from 1 April 2022. The detail of the proposals for the annual programme of planned maintenance and property investment was contained in the report.

Mr S. Easton queried the target for all properties becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Mrs Anderson stated that this date had been set as a target in order to align with local authority partners.

Mr Easton questioned if any works currently proposed could potentially contradict any future plans required as part of the EESSH2 requirements. Mrs Anderson confirmed they would not, as the works currently proposed were roof and render works which concentrated on

the fabric of the building. She also advised that any new developments would consider heating source options rather than gas boilers.

Mr P. New enquired which proposed works contributed to achievement of EESSH by 2023/24. Mrs H. Anderson advised the roof, render and external wall insulation works in Pennyburn were part of the energy efficiency works planned for achievement by 2024. It was projected that the Association would have 93% properties meeting EESSH by 2023 with 100% compliance being achieved in 2024.

The Board thereafter APPROVED the capital investment programme and associated planned works and responsive repairs and maintenance expenditure for 2022/23.

## **7. Performance Assessment with Potential Future Measures/Targets**

Mrs M. Hutchinson, highlighted that given the nature of the pandemic it had not been business as usual for the previous 2 years. The reported targets against past and current performance were therefore presented in order to realistically gauge where future performance should sit.

Mr P. New suggested that it would be useful for the future reporting format to contain trend lines which tracked historic performance.

Mr New commented that the achievement of 80% overall satisfaction target could be ambitious, depending on Q4 overall satisfaction figures.

Following a query from Mrs S. Petrie on customer satisfaction process. Mrs D. MacLean advised that surveys were issued on rolling monthly basis. Mrs MacLean advised that overall satisfaction as at 28 February 2022 was 74.5%. Given the current focus on customer satisfaction and that it had featured in the Association's Engagement Plan with the Scottish Housing Regulator, the proposed target was considered appropriate in the circumstances.

A discussion followed on the reporting of customer satisfaction in the ARC and the differing ways other RSLs gathered their customer satisfaction information for reporting, which meant not all information reported was as current as the Association's. The Board noted that the Regulator was aware of this issue.

Mr G. Darroch queried there not being a target proposed for factoring customer satisfaction. Mrs MacLean confirmed there should be a target figure and undertook to advise Board on the proposed figure.

Following review of the content of the presented targets against past and current performance, the Board NOTED the content of the suggested local measures and the relevant targets.

Further to their review of the draft suggested capture-all reporting tool, the Board AGREED the proposed performance framework and expressed their thanks to the Team for this detailed piece of work.

8. **Fire Safety Stay Put Policy**

Mrs H. Anderson advised that further to discussions at the previous Board Meeting, she reported that the cost to carry out the fire door replacements to the communal blocks in Dumfries and Caley House during 2022/23 would be [REDACTED] which was considered feasible and achievable.

Mrs Anderson confirmed that due to there being 8 owner-occupiers living at Caley House, [REDACTED] and following discussion with the Fire Safety Officer, it was recommended that a Stay Put Policy should not be implemented at this location. Customers at Caley House would therefore be advised of the Evacuation policy in place and appropriate notification would be made to the Fire Service.

Following discussion, the Board APPROVED:

- a) that the flat doors of properties owned by the Association within all communal blocks in Dumfries and Caley House should be upgraded to the latest Fire Safety standards during 2022/23.
- b) A Stay Put policy should be applied across all communal blocks from 1st May 2022, excluding Caley House in Kilwinning which is a mixed tenure complex.

9. **Anti-Money Laundering Policy**

Mrs D. MacLean stated the Policy had previously been considered by Board in May 2021. The policy presented had since been updated further to incorporate additional risks identified.

The Board thereafter agreed to ADOPT Group's Anti-Money Laundering Policy.

10. **Whistleblowing Policy**

Mrs D. MacLean reported that the Policy had been amended to ensure compliance with the National Housing Federation Code of Governance Guidance and incorporated the notification to a Non-Executive Director (Chair of the Audit Committee) of any concerns, in circumstances when a person felt unable to report a matter to an Executive Director.

The Board thereafter agreed to ADOPT the Group Whistleblowing Policy.

11. **National Housing Federation Code of Governance**

Mrs D. MacLean confirmed the Association's compliance with most of the code, with the exceptions to adopting the code being around board tenure and composition and in these instances the Association's Rules took precedence. In response to a query from Mr T. McInnes, Mrs MacLean advised that the Association had adopted the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's Model Rules which had been approved by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Mrs MacLean reported that, subject to adoption of the Governance Framework, officers would work with Group's Governance Team to fully implement the new Framework.

Mr P. New requested that the explanation for the red and amber compliance status section of the compliance checklist be fully populated for completeness. Mrs MacLean agreed to update the checklist as requested.

Following discussion, the Board:

- a) NOTED the outputs of the Riverside Scotland compliance assessment against the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance 2020 and that the exceptions identified would be reported in the Riverside Group's Financial Statements for 2021/22.
- b) agreed to ADOPT the Riverside Group Governance Framework with exceptions as noted in the report; and
- c) agreed to ADOPT the Executive Board Member Policy and Board Disputes and Grievance Policy.

12. **Progress Reports on Development Projects**

Mrs. D. MacLean gave an update on the Tarryholme 2, Dundonald and Monkton developments currently on site.



[REDACTED]

Mr P. New advised that he had visited the Dundonald and Tarryholme development sites that week and encouraged the Board to visit these sites.

Mr J. Strang commented that he was pleased to see good coverage of the current developments featuring on Twitter.

The Board thereafter NOTED the update report on the Association's current development projects.

14. **Operational Performance Report**

Mrs H. Anderson reported on performance against agreed KPIs up to Period 11 and highlighted a further decline in customer satisfaction relating to complaints handling, call waiting times and the repairs and maintenance contractor performance. It was hoped that customer satisfaction performance would improve in the new financial year, when the repairs and maintenance contracts would commence. Customer care sessions had been held with the new contractors with a view to driving forward real improvements in customer care and service delivery.

Mrs Anderson advised that key priorities for improving customer satisfaction had been discussed in detail at the recent Board Away Day. She highlighted the key actions identified for better understanding customers views, such as the planned Big Conversation events, the customer census and monthly focus group meetings. The Board noted the key actions in the plan in order to address the 4 main areas of dissatisfaction.

Mrs M. Burgess enquired if the issues identified as part of the Big Conversation events would be broken down into geographical areas in order to understand specific issues in different locations. Mrs Anderson confirmed that there may be different discussions in different areas and the results would be able to draw out the differences in all the areas of operation.

Mr G. Darroch questioned if the actions identified at the Value for Money section of the plan were more management actions rather than having a customer focus. Mrs Anderson stated that the current actions were subjective and broad. It was intended that the plan would change and evolve over time as more detailed information on customer views were established through the planned events.

Mr P. New advised that Group Board were also monitoring Group-wide Customer Satisfaction Improvement Plans and Mrs MacLean would also



attend Group-wide meetings to give updates on Riverside Scotland's Plan.

Further to a query from Mr J. Strang, Mrs MacLean confirmed that it was intended that progress against the plan would be presented to Board on a quarterly basis.

The Board thereafter NOTED:

- a) the position against the operational KPIs as at period 11 2021 including the key risk areas and identified improvement actions, and
- b) the new Customer Satisfaction Improvement Plan 2022/23 and proposed reporting arrangements.

Mrs G. Gascoigne joined the Meeting.

15. **Income Management Performance**

Mrs G. Gascoigne reported on the increase in arrears and compared the Association's performance against other Scottish providers and also other national providers. The Board noted the internal and external factors affecting the current arrears performance and the agreed improvement actions to be implemented.



Mrs Gascoigne, advised that time was required to get the new model right. The current arrears position had also been impacted by other significant factors such as legal action being suspended during the pandemic, the significant financial hardship being experienced by customers during the pandemic. Mrs Gascoigne stated that central and local Teams were working together to assist customers to claim local authority grants.

Mrs M. Burgess suggested that more local input was required at the early stages, as well as the end stages,

[Redacted] Given the financial challenges that customers were facing which would become increasingly more difficult in the coming months, in order to assist customers to sustain their tenancies she suggested that local, personal contact was likely to be more effective [Redacted]

Mrs Gascoigne undertook to discuss the matter further with the Housing Team to establish if there was capacity for more local involvement at the early stages of arrears cases.

Mr S. Easton concurred that more local action at the early stages was required. Given that customers were currently experiencing increases in all areas of expenditure, it was important that customers viewed their rent charge as a key priority. Mr Easton suggested that it be would useful to see how the debt profile changed over time to better understand if rent accounts were being cleared and new cases were appearing or if cases were continuing to increase.

Mrs Gascoigne commented that this could only be captured at certain points in time due to the changing nature of cases, however, a quarterly comparison could be incorporated as part of the next report.

Mr T. McInnes advised that he shared the concerns regarding the increasing arrears and accepted the mitigating circumstances. Mr McInnes understood the use of texts and emails within the process, however, suggested that early human contact was essential during this period.

Mrs H. Anderson stated that currently 58/60% of customers were in some form of arrears, which was considerably more than 5 years previously. She highlighted there were many external factors being experienced during the pandemic which meant there were many more customers in debt for the first time. She did, however, accept that the Housing Team had a role to play in early interaction with customers and that improved interaction between the Income Collection and Housing Teams was required.

Mrs D. MacLean reported that there had been good interaction between the Teams at the recent away day and these discussions would continue and the inclusion of face to face early interaction would be incorporated into the processes.



Following a query from Mr Strang, Mrs Anderson confirmed that the different approaches adopted by local authorities to the grant funding criteria had an impact on successful applications for customers in the different local authority areas.

Mr Strang requested that an action plan be developed for improvement in the areas discussed which could be reported to Board for monitoring purposes. Mrs Gascoigne agreed to work on an action plan.

The Board thereafter NOTED the performance position and actions being taken to improve the current position.

Mrs Gascoigne left the Meeting.

16. **Financial Performance Report**

Mrs M. Hutchinson reported that the favourable variance in repairs and maintenance was due to the delays in invoices being received for works outwith the price per property and void contracts. Asset colleagues were seeking to ensure invoices were received by year end. The Board noted that an underspend in programmed repairs was expected by year end due to staff and material shortages and refused access for works. Asset colleagues were currently quantifying the figures.

Mrs Hutchinson highlighted that all covenants are fully compliant. The key risks highlighted in the report were very real and were being monitored closely in order to mitigate where required.

The Board thereafter NOTED the content of the Financial Performance Report.

17. **MD Report**

The Board discussed the following points within the MD's Report:

a) **Tenant Board Member Recruitment**

Mrs D. MacLean reported on Mrs F. Fox's resignation from the Board. Unfortunately, she had been unable to visit Mrs Fox prior to the meeting, however, hoped to have a discussion with Mrs Fox regarding her potential Board involvement at some point in the future.

b) **Rent Letter Correction**

Mrs MacLean confirmed that the rent notices issued were valid given they contained the correct rent amounts, albeit the rent increase % had been incorrect. The Board noted that despite there being calls enquiring about the error, very few complaints had been received.

c) **Colleague Away Day**

Mrs MacLean reported on the successful Colleague away day with useful discussions and collaboration on putting customers first taking place with Riverside Scotland and central services colleagues. The discussions had focussed on the Riverside Way Everyday, our

values, acknowledging the difficult times experienced and how the organisation now moves forward.

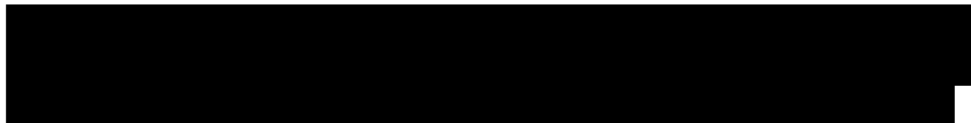
d) New Operational Governance Structure

Mrs MacLean reported that the new governance structure which had been put in place to ensure that all decision making was documented had been welcomed and was working well.

e) Scottish Housing Regulator

The Board noted that the Regulator planned to engage with the Association regarding its service quality and customer satisfaction. Mrs MacLean commented that further to discussions earlier in the meeting, these matters were very much priorities for the Association with improvement plans being implemented to address these issues. She expected that the Regulator would wish to see such plans and monitor progress against these plans as part of its liaison with the Association. Mrs MacLean advised that all Engagement Plans for RSLs would shortly be available on the Regulator's website.

f) Salary Increase



g) Public Affairs Activity

The Board advised that they were very pleased with recent public affairs activity and requested that their thanks be passed on to the Association's Marketing Partner, for promoting the Association's key messages effectively.

After discussion, the Board NOTED the content of the MD Report.

18. Minutes/Updates

The Board NOTED the:

- a) Audit & Risk Committee Meeting Minutes – 10 January and 14 March 2022.
- b) Group Customer Experience Committee Meeting Minutes – 6 January 2022.
- c) Group Board Core Brief – 20 January 2022.

19. **Disclosure**

No disclosures were made.

20. **Any Other Business**

a) **Subsidiary Appointment**

The Board:

- a) APPROVED the appointment of Diana MacLean as Director and Company Secretary of Thistle Housing Services and
- b) INSTRUCTED the Governance and Company Secretarial Assistant to provide the appropriate notice to Thistle Housing Services.

b) **Board Away Day**

Mrs D. MacLean advised that the presentations from the Board Away Day would be shared with those not able to attend the event. The Board commented that the event had been very useful in understanding the future direction and vision of the organisation and thanked the Senior Management Team for their efforts in facilitating the day.

21. **Date of Next Meeting**

5.30 p.m. on Thursday 26 May 2022 via MS Teams / Bank Street Office, Irvine.

D MacLean  
Secretary  
1 April 2022  
DMcL/db

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Date: .....