

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 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.

**THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED**

**IRVINE HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

Special Meeting of the Board held at 6.15p.m. on Wednesday 21 September 2022 at the Gailles Hotel, Marine Drive, Irvine

**Minutes**

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

In attendance were Mrs D. MacLean, Mrs H. Anderson, Ms E. Byrne, Mrs D. Boyle and Mrs M. Hutchinson.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr S. Easton and Mr R. Hill.

Declarations of Interests

None.

1. **Election of Chair**

In accordance with Rule 47(a), Board Members were invited to elect the Association's Chair, to hold office up to and including the next Annual General Meeting in 2023. The Board unanimously agreed to appoint Mr J. Strang as Chair on the motions of Mrs M. Burgess and Mr G. Darroch.

2. **Preliminaries**

The Chair welcomed Ms E. Byrne of Arneil Johnston to the meeting who would deliver a presentation on the results of the Focus Group element of the Big Conversation.

The Chair highlighted that the Board would be presented with the results of the survey, however, would discuss the implications and next steps in detail at the Board Strategy Day on 8 October 2022.

### 3. **Customer Feedback – Big Conversation**

Mrs D. MacLean advised that the results of the Big Conversation survey work was presented in two reports, one which provided comparisons against other regions in Group and one where comparisons were against local peers.

Mrs MacLean advised that a wealth of data had been collected which allowed for further drill down of information should this be required. It was noted that the Association was not currently meeting its customers' needs and it did not have a staffing structure in place to be able to do deliver services to address these needs effectively. Mrs MacLean advised that a new structure was currently being worked on, however, the recent Scottish Government announcement on the rent freeze until March 2023, with expected further announcements on extending this or introducing a form of rent control from April 2023, could have an impact on the Association's plans. It was currently expected that new legislation would be enacted on 5/6 October in this regard. The Board noted that any rent freeze or rent control beyond April 2023 would have a significant impact on the business plan and this would require to be discussed in detail at the Board Strategy Day on 8 October 2022.

The Board agreed that some difficult decisions would require to be made, given customer expectations following the Big Conversation would be high and the Association would have to be very honest in its customer communications about its decision making in the current financially challenging times. A discussion followed on the impact that the Scottish Government's plans would have on the housing sector. Mr P. New advised that Group were expecting the introduction of further rent controls in England too and colleagues were currently modelling the impact of rent caps of 3, 5 and 7% in England.

Mrs MacLean advised that recommendations for improvement actions were provided in the reports presented and these would require detailed consideration at the Board Strategy Day.

Ms E. Byrne thanked the Board for being given the opportunity to work on the project and commented that it had been great to meet and speak to the customers who attended the focus group meetings. She advised that 5 workshops had been held during September which had been attended by 17 customers with the purpose of understanding their views in relation to 4 key questions:

- Reasons for decline in overall satisfaction
- Why were tenants unhappy with participation in the business?
- Why were tenants unhappy with the management of their neighbourhood?
- What needed to change to improve customer satisfaction?

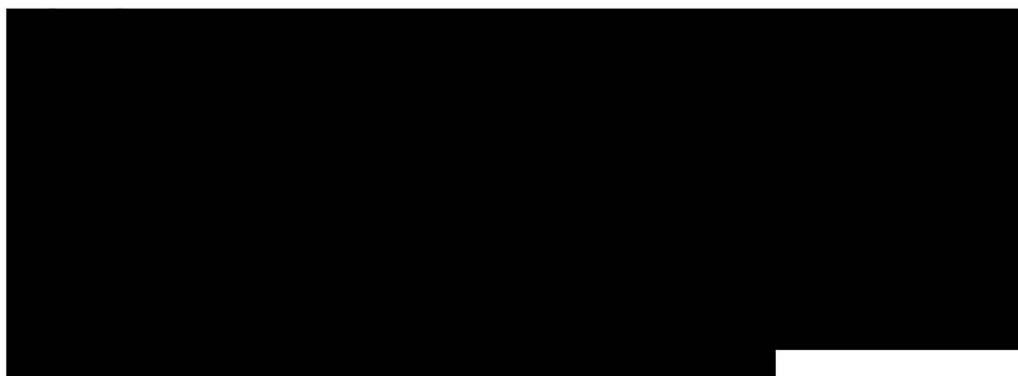
Ms Byrne advised that the customers in attendance at the meetings had been asked about their interest in future involvement in the Association's decision making, with potential Board membership being an option discussed. She undertook to provide information on the customers who had indicated an interest in discussing this matter further with officers.

Ms Byrne then highlighted some of the comments which had been made at the meetings which centred around the key themes of the repairs experience, service / staff accessibility, neighbourhood issues, participation and value for money.

The Board noted that customers had been strong on their views in relation to:

- Not all customers wanted to access services on-line – some still preferred the personal approach
- Having a local office with access to staff and knowing who their Housing Officer was
- When telephoning the Customer Contact Centre, they wanted to speak to staff who had local knowledge
- Quality of repairs services and the lack of inspections
- The condition of the Pennyburn estate compared to other local areas
- Having visible staff presence on estates
- Anti-social behaviour – particularly at the Dundonald new build estate, which housed veterans who had significant support needs.
- The use of blanket letters to tackle anti-social behaviour

The Chair thanked Ms Byrne for her very thorough presentation and advised that the Board now required time to digest the information presented prior to discussing it in detail and agreeing a way forward at the Board Strategy Day.



The Board thereafter NOTED the results of the Big Conversation survey and focus group meetings and undertook to discuss the identified improvement areas in detail at the Board Strategy Day.

4. **Chair's Action Procedure**

The Board NOTED the Chair's decision under the Chair's Action Procedure, to approve the changes to the Financial Statements requested by the external auditor, BDO, after the Board had approved the Financial Statements at the Special Board Meeting on 25 July 2022.

5. **Governance Documents**

Mrs D. MacLean advised that the governance documents presented were Group documents which had been updated to ensure compliance with the Association's regulatory environment and Scottish legislation.

Mrs M. Burgess, referring to the Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy, enquired if relationships with companies such as the HMRC which appeared on the suppliers list required to be declared, given that everyone had a relationship with HMRC. Mrs MacLean undertook to review the wording of the Policy to clarify the professional or commercial relationships required to be declared.

Mr P. New, referring to the Riverside Governance Policy Scottish Addendum, suggested the removal of the Item 3.1 which referred to The Riverside Customer Voice Executive, given this did not align with RCVE's current constitution. It was agreed that an amended item on this matter may be proposed for inclusion following a review of RCVE's constitution.

The Board thereafter:

- a) Agreed the Scottish Addendum to Group's Governance Framework, subject to the removal of Item 3.1.
- b) APPROVED the Code of Conduct for Board and Committee Members, the Protocol for Managing Performance and Conduct issues and the Board Member Agreement for Services.
- c) APPROVED the Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy, subject to the clarification of professional or commercial relationship declarations.

6. **Audited Financial Statements Return**

Mrs M. Hutchinson advised that the Audited Financial Statements Return was made annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator. Following a query from the Chair, Mrs Hutchinson confirmed that the information in the Return had been prepared by Group's Finance Team and had been verified locally.

The Board thereafter:

- a) approved the 2022 Audited Financial Statements Return.
- b) authorised the submission of the Return to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

7. **Any Other Business**

The were no other items of business for discussion.

8. **Date of Next Meeting**

Special Board Meeting – 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday 19 October 2022, via MS Teams.

D MacLean  
Secretary  
22 September 2022  
DMcL/db

.....