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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
IRVINE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Two Hundred and Fifty Second Meeting of the Board held at 5.30 p.m. on
Thursday 26 January 2023 via MS Teams.

Minutes

Present:

Mr J. Strang (In the Chair), Mrs M. Burgess, Mr S. Easton (From item 6), Mr R. Hill, Mr T. McInnes, Mr P. New, Mrs S. Petrie and Mr S. Stewart (From item 6).

In attendance were: Mrs D. MacLean, Mrs H. Anderson, Mr R. Brameld (Items 1-5), Mrs D. Boyle, Mr C. Dillon (Items 1-8), Mr H. Owen (Items 1-6) and Ms L. Roberts (Items 1-8).

Apologies for Absence

Mrs M. Crearie, Mr G. Darroch, Mrs. J Galbraith and Mr P. Lynn.

Declarations of Interests

Nil.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Mrs M. Crearie, Mr G. Darroch, Mrs. J Galbraith and Mr P. Lynn.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests to declare.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting – 251st Board Meeting held on 30 November 2022**

The minutes of the 251st Board Meeting held on 30 November 2022 were APPROVED as an accurate record, subject to the word “dept”, on line 2 of paragraph 5 at Item 3, being replaced with “debt”.

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

The Board NOTED the update on the actions identified from previous Board Meetings. Mr R. Hill thanked the team for amending the format of the report which made it easier to follow.

5. **Data Retention Policy**

Mr R. Hill enquired if the reference to the storage of physical records required extension beyond Riverside premises, given that staff were now deemed as hybrid workers or if Group’s approach in this regard was captured within other policies. Mr R. Brameld confirmed that storage had been limited to Riverside premises to ensure secure record storage and destruction within Riverside premises. This was also covered within the Hybrid Working, Bring Your Own Device and Acceptable Use Policies.

Mr T. McInnes queried if the proposed Policy had been sense-checked against Scottish legal requirements. Mr Brameld confirmed that given the high-level nature of the Policy, it was more appropriate for the Data Retention Schedule to be appropriately sense-checked. Group’s Schedule was currently being amalgamated with One Housing Group’s Schedule and once finalised this would require to be reviewed to ensure it also incorporated any requirements under Scottish law.

Mrs M. Burgess questioned if staff were fully aware of the data retention expectations and protocols of hybrid workers. Mr Brameld advised that staff should be aware of the procedures. He confirmed that the Data Protection Team was moving to a business partner model and Riverside Scotland would have a dedicated business partner who would carry out a training needs analysis in order to establish appropriate role-based requirements, in addition to mandatory training.

Mrs MacLean confirmed that officers would liaise as appropriate with peers and / or solicitors, following completion of our legal services procurement and provide the Data Protection Team with a template Data Retention Schedule for consideration and inclusion within the Group Schedule currently being worked on.

Mr P. New advised that all staff were required to complete mandatory training which made expectations and requirements very clear. Mr

Brameld highlighted there was also a Group Data Classification Policy in place which detailed the approach for the classification of all documentation. This process was currently done manually, however, would be moving to an automatic classification system in the coming months which would strengthen this process from a risk perspective.

The Board thereafter AGREED to ADOPT the updated Group Data Retention Policy.

Mr Brameld then left the Meeting.

6. **Corporate Plan 2023-26**

Mr H. Owen advised that the current Corporate Plan was due to come to an end in March 2023. He updated on the corporate planning process which had been undertaken to gather the information presented for consideration, prior to commencement of the 2023-26 Corporate Plan drafting process.

Mr Owen highlighted the changes to the operating environment from when the current Plan had been drafted, when compared the current environment:

- The One Housing Group had joined the Riverside Group, meaning that the organisation now had a more diverse customer and stock profile. The new Plan would be developed to reflect this new Group structure.
- The current operating environment was particularly challenging and volatile, which meant the organisation was facing a number of major risks due to the cost of living crisis, the housing market, the state of the economy and the reputation of the sector. This meant that the new Plan would require to be kept under more regular review, to remain agile and be able to adjust course if required.

Mr Owen reported that a different approach had been taken as part of the process this year, with the intention to develop 9 supporting corporate strategies to follow on from the new Corporate Plan and also the setting up of a Sounding Board, which the Mr J. Strang, Chair, had been part of, to provide input and advice throughout the corporate planning process.

Mr Owen then reported on the stakeholder feedback gathered the previous year via polls and corporate planning sessions which had assisted to identify the proposed objective priorities for the new Plan, with:

- stock condition, building and disposals emerging as high colleague priorities, relating to a theme of renewal, ensuring that all housing stock was fit for the 21st century; and
- cost of living and stock condition being identified as key customer priorities.

From this feedback and Group Board discussions last year, 5 proposed corporate objectives had been developed, together with the detail contained in the story board information presented, which was approved by Group Board in December allowing commencement of the Corporate Plan drafting process.

Mr S. Easton joined the meeting.

Mr Owen confirmed that as part of the drafting process, discussions with Finance colleagues were also taking place to ensure that Corporate Plan objectives linked closely with the Financial Plans which were also currently being worked on. The draft Corporate Plan would thereafter be presented to Group Board in March for consideration and approval.


Mr S. Stewart joined the meeting.

Following a query from the Board, Mr Owen confirmed that the Corporate Plan would be available to the Board following its approval by Group Board in March.

Mr R. Hill referred to the ordering of the 5 corporate objectives and suggested that given the current Group-wide low levels of customer satisfaction and the engagement which had taken place with customers in the past year, that the prominence of the customer services objective was important. He also queried the ordering of the 3 cross-cutting themes and whether the people theme should have prominence, given that engaged colleagues were key to delivering the corporate objectives, particularly the improved customer services objective. Mr Owen concurred with the significance of the people theme and reassured Board that the detail of delivering this theme would be contained within the People Plan currently being developed. Mr P. New and Mr Owen agreed that the customer service objective should be front and centre of the Corporate Plan and undertook to factor this point into the drafting of the Plan.

Mr S. Easton enquired on reporting and measuring progress against the Corporate Plan objectives and regularity of this reporting. Mr Owen confirmed that measures of success would be developed following approval of the Plan and update reports were usually reported to Board on a 6 monthly basis.





Mrs D. MacLean stated that this would be the first year that the Association planned to adopt the Group-wide Corporate Plan rather than develop its own Plan, given the similarities of themes. Following adoption of the Corporate Plan, it was intended that Mr Owen would attend the Board Strategy Day in March to assist Riverside Scotland develop its local Corporate Plan Delivery Plan. Local success measures would also be developed with the intention of Board receiving 6 monthly reports on both Group-wide and local success measures.

Mrs S. Petrie enquired on the methods for horizon scanning to ensure that the Corporate Plan remained relevant. Mr Owen advised that the Planning and Strategy Team within Group scanned the political and regulatory environments to remain abreast of current thinking, manifestos etc. however, acknowledged other factors which could not be envisaged or planned for. Mr Hill advised that in addition, the Audit & Risk Committee reviewed the Strategic Risk Register on a quarterly basis, which considered and took account of any strategic risks to the organisation which was reported on a 6 monthly basis to the Board. Mr Owen confirmed that a similar approach was also taken on a Group-wide level, with Group Audit Committee reporting to Group Board.

The Board were pleased to NOTE the quality of the information included in the update on the development of the new Corporate Plan and the proposed supporting corporate strategies and thereafter thanked Mr Owen for his presentation.

Mr Owen then left the meeting.

7. **Budget 2023/24**

Mrs D. MacLean expressed her thanks to Mr C. Dillon and Ms L. Roberts for their support in compiling the proposed budget for 2023/24 in Mrs M. Hutchinson's absence.

Mrs MacLean reported on the results of the recent rent consultation which had been carried out with customers and also that the Scottish Government had lifted the rent freeze and had not applied any rent-capping legislation. Customers had been consulted on proposals of a 3, 5 and 7% rent increase which appeared to be in line with rent consultations of peers.

Mrs MacLean highlighted that the majority of responses received had indicated a preference of the 7% increase option which would mean no reduction of service delivery. She advised that a 5% increase was, however, proposed in the budget and the justification for this was that:

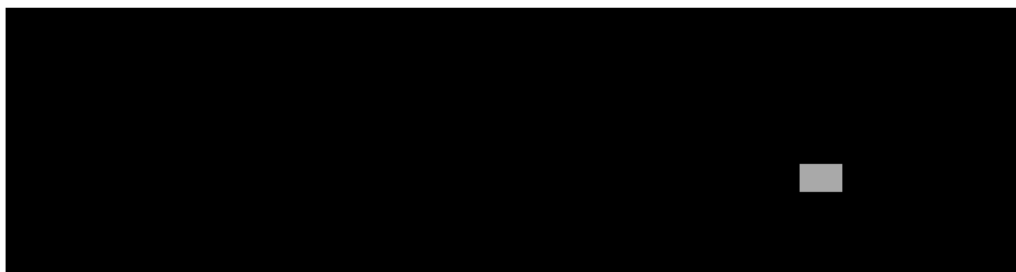
- Given customer satisfaction levels were currently poor, keeping rent increase levels as low as possible would support customers better and demonstrate that the Association cared.
- Officers had worked hard to produce a draft budget incorporating the lower rent increase without there being a detrimental impact on service levels.
- The Association would be able to keep the average rent under a £5 weekly increase which was in line with local authorities' approach.

Mrs MacLean also proposed that the additional charges applied in line with the rent harmonisation process were paused for the year, again to demonstrate the Association cared about its customers financial situation.

Mrs MacLean advised that the proposed rent increase was in line with peers' proposals. Appropriate financial scenario planning had been carried out and proposals of lower increases would impact the Association's covenant position in future years, which in turn would mean that future rent increases above inflationary levels would be required.

The Board recognised that the customers most affected by the proposed rent increase would be those in employment, given the current cost of living crisis and enquired on the support options available. Mrs MacLean confirmed that Officers would seek to work closely with these customers to maximise their income through various government schemes e.g. energy vouchers. Mrs H. Anderson advised that the new Affordability Officer post holder could also provide support to new customers at the start of their tenancy by providing advice on accessing appropriate funding streams etc.

Following a query from Mrs S. Petrie, Mrs MacLean confirmed that all service delivery complaints detailed in the consultation responses were followed-up.





Mrs MacLean advised that the significant increase in insurance costs had been due to the Association previously paying less than it should have been and also the recent re-tender of insurance services which resulted in a more robust insurance package being provided. Insurance costs had also generally increased significantly in the past year. This increase would have an impact on the budget, however, the increased costs were deemed appropriate, and this had been externally benchmarked with peers.

Mr J. Strang highlighted that if approved, the Association's budget was also subject to approval by Group's Board.

Following a query from Mr R. Hill, Mr Dillon confirmed that the budget for Board Training had been double counted in the proposed budget and this would be rectified in the quarter 1 forecast. Mrs MacLean highlighted the changed approach to providing individual training allowances to Board in the new budget in order to provide more visibility in this area.

Mr S. Stewart enquired on the Association's ability to be able to maintain rent increases lower than inflation in future years due to the current volatility in the economy. Mrs MacLean advised that the Association was fortunate to have access to sophisticated financial planning and treasury management services provided by Group.

The Board thereafter:

- a) APPROVED the 2023/24 budget.
- b) APPROVED the rent increase of 5% for 2023/24.
- c) APPROVED suspending the rent harmonisation process for 2023/24.

8. **Financial Performance Report**





Mrs D. MacLean advised that the additional stock condition survey works had been instructed following Board's recent discussions regarding EICR compliance, the verification of SHQS compliance data and on Group's Asset Team's recommendation following their review of the Association's Asset function. Following the Board's previous recommendation for the Asset Team to attend survey works training, to assist with strengthening the Team's knowledge, appropriate training had been organised for the relevant staff.

Mr Dillon confirmed that the Association's covenants remained complaint and Officers were currently working on the quarter 3 forecast, with the additional costs previously mentioned being factored into this forecast.

The Board thereafter NOTED the Financial Performance Report for Period 9.

Mr C. Dillon and Ms L. Roberts then left the meeting.

9. **Board Appraisal Review**

Mrs D. Boyle encouraged Board Members to utilise the scheduled Group Board Member Masterclasses available to them which were detailed at Appendix 2 of the report and also highlighted that there was likely to be a change to the order of the training session subjects in the proposed training schedule detailed at Appendix 3, given that the proposed training on Group's Governance Structure was likely to be brought forward to take place in April rather than November.

Mrs M. Burgess reported on the accessibility issues she had recently experienced and Mrs Boyle undertook to contact Mrs Burgess out with the meeting in order to resolve this issue.

Following review of the individual appraisal outcomes for 2021/22, the Board AGREED the proposed improvement actions and the proposed training schedule for 2023.

10. **Customer Involvement Strategy**

Mrs H. Anderson advised that the Group-wide Customer Involvement Strategy had been developed to lay out how the organisation wanted to engage with its customers post-Covid, factoring in the feedback which had been gathered last Summer as part of the Big Conversation survey.

Mrs Anderson confirmed that the principles and strategic aims in relation to customer involvement in the Strategy were aligned with Riverside Scotland's approach. It was intended that the Customer and Community Engagement Officer post which was currently being recruited, would work closely with Group's Customer Involvement Team moving forward.

The Strategy focused on working with customers to develop improvement projects and services at a local neighbourhood level, which was reflective of the customer feedback received. This would allow more flexibility, with customers being able to contribute to projects directly affecting them and allowed for a more fluid membership of the different groups such as a customer scrutiny group, a customer complaints panel etc. whilst also continuing to link in with the local community groups.

Mr T. McInnes enquired if the proposed Strategy would be a central part of the Customer and Community Engagement Officer's role. Mrs Anderson confirmed the reporting mechanisms both within Riverside Scotland and also with the Customer Involvement Team and advised that the new post-holder would work with herself to deliver the strategic aims of the Strategy through the development of an action plan which focused on local communities within Riverside Scotland. They would also link in with Group's Team in order to share learning of current initiatives which were providing positive results. Mrs Anderson confirmed that the intended post-holder would bring a wealth of experience of customer involvement with them, particularly experience of engaging with vulnerable households.

Following a query from Mr R. Hill regarding complaints response timescales, Mrs Anderson confirmed that response times were within 5 days for stage 1 complaints and 10 days, with option to request extensions, for stage 2 complaints, although the statutory requirement was 28 days. Mrs D. MacLean advised that the Association would be reviewing its complaints policy and response deadlines in due course in order to align more closely with the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman's guidance.

Mrs S. Petrie enquired on any perceived challenges in encouraging customers to be more involved. Mrs Anderson confirmed that there would be challenges in involving a wider range of customers in order to have more diversity on the groups and some creative thinking would be required to make participation attractive to a wide range of customers. Mrs Petrie suggested using the term "historically marginalised" rather

than “ethic minority/marginalised customers” as more appropriate terminology within the Strategy.

Mrs MacLean reported on her recent meetings with tenants who had indicated a wish to become more involved with the Association’s decision-making processes which was likely to result in a further co-option of a Tenant Board Member and also participants on the Association’s customer scrutiny panel.

Mr P. New concurred that the key to maximising customer involvement would be providing flexibility to encourage participation in the most suitable ways for customers. Mr S. Stewart agreed that providing customers with options in relation to their extent of involvement was proving more successful and also suggested that engaging with younger persons through school / university links could also provide good opportunities for both the organisation and young customers.

The Board thereafter AGREED to ADOPT Group’s Customer Involvement Strategy 2023-26.

11. **Car Allowance Criteria**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

12. **Operational Performance Report**

Mrs H. Anderson reported an overall downturn in customer satisfaction in the period. Following some investigation, this was found to relate to:

- Communication
- CSC call waiting times
- Repairs and maintenance service

Mrs Anderson advised that the new Asset and Compliance Manager commenced employment with the Association earlier that week. The key priorities for the service area had been highlighted and discussions were being progressed with the main contractor with a view to improving performance levels.

Mrs Anderson highlighted that the Association was currently in a transitional stage in the restructure process, with interviewing for the vacant posts advertised currently being carried out. It was currently envisaged that appointments would be made in the coming weeks and new staff would begin to join the organisation.

Following a query from the Chair regarding the repairs completed within timescales statistic, Mrs Anderson confirmed that it had been reported at the recent Audit & Risk Committee Meeting that repairs performance data was currently not reliable due to IT interfacing and process issues. These issues were currently being worked on with IT colleagues and the contractors and good progress was being made.



The Chair highlighted that low customer satisfaction levels were currently being experienced across the Group. The Association currently had a plan in place to address the issues and it was hoped that mapped improvements could be delivered in the coming months.

The Board NOTED the operational KPI's as at Period 9 2022, including the key risk areas and identified improvement actions.

13. **Managing Director's Report**

Mrs D. MacLean gave an update on the current ongoing recruitment process, highlighting that she expected that most posts were on target for commencing during February/March. Unfortunately, no applications had been received for the Technical Support Officer post in Dumfries and, following further consideration and discussion, it was intended that a part time Asset Officer would be advertised instead in this area.

Mrs MacLean stated that customer satisfaction levels were disappointing. Following detailed analysis, the two main areas of dissatisfaction were around communication and the repairs and maintenance service. Officers were focusing on these areas in order to resolve the issues and start to improve customer satisfaction levels. The Board recognised that customer expectations were high following the Big Conversation survey last year, and whilst internal changes had and were being made, it would take longer for the results to filter through to service provision, however, they expected that the changes being made would deliver results.

Mrs MacLean also reported on the disappointing results of the recent Hive Pulse colleague survey. The Board noted that the recent survey was taken at the same time of the restructure announcement in November and again expected to see an improved position in the next survey results.

The Board noted that the Association was currently in a transitional phase, reiterated its support for the direction of travel and thereafter NOTED the overview of the current issues and activity across the business detailed in the MD's Report.

14. **Minutes / Updates**

The Board NOTED the:

- a) Unconfirmed Audit & Risk Committee Minutes – January 2023
- b) Confirmed Customer Experience Committee Minutes – 22 September 2022.
- c) Customer Experience Minutes Away Day 22 and 23 September 2022
- d) Customer Experience Minutes – 1 December 2022
- e) Group Board Highlights – December 2022.

15. **Any Other Business**

a) **Resignation from the Board**

Mr J. Strang reported that Mrs M. Crearie had advised of her intention to resign from the Board. The Board agreed that contact should be made with Mrs Crearie to discuss an appropriate arrangement for expressing the Association's gratitude for her service.

b) **Board Strategy Away Day**

Mrs D. Boyle confirmed the location for the Board Meeting and Strategy Away Day and advised that she would contact Board Members out with the meeting to provide further information regarding the arrangements for these events on 30 and 31 March 2023.

c) **Board / Committee Meeting Schedule 2023/24**

Mrs Boyle proposed a change to the agreed Schedule for the Board Meeting and Strategy Away Day in March 2024 from 29 and 30 to 21 and 22, due to 30 March falling on a public holiday weekend. This was agreed.

16. **Date of Next Meetings**

253rd Board Meeting - 5.30 p.m. on Thursday 30 March 2023

Board Strategy Away Day - 9.30 a.m. on Friday 31 March 2023

Both events at the Grand Central Glasgow, 99 Gordon Street, Glasgow, G1 3SF.

D MacLean
Secretary
27 January 2023
DMcL/db

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Date: