

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting: Members' Forum Meeting
 Date: **13 May 2021**
 Time: 18:00 – 20:00
 Venue: Zoom

Present

Trevor Brewerton	Ann-Marie O'Sullivan
Trish Langford	David Peedle
Edwina Lamond	Gerald Prior
Naomi Barrand	Margaret Buckell
John Smelt	Sue Such
Peter Haynes	Vic Breach
Gerald Prior	Val Kir
Deb Wills	Kay Sentence
Bertie Doy	Robert Stark – Observer
Angela Harding – Observer	

Also in Attendance

Kate Waring, Jude McCaffrey, Marisa Elliot, David Reynolds, Dave Edge, Mat Ridley and Michelle Pugh-Roberts,

1 Voting for Co-Opted Members

Trevor opened the meeting by asking for a show of hands for voting of Co-Opted members. We had two people standing for this position, Vic Breach and Edwina Lamond. In both cases the majority of hands were raised so Trevor announced Vic and Edwina had been elected back in as Co-Opted members.

2 New Chair and Vice Chair Election

Trevor and Ann-Marie stood down as Chair and Vice Chair in order for Marissa to take the chair for the next item on the agenda, which was the election of the new Chair and Vice Chair of the Members' Forum. Trevor put himself forward for the position of Chair and Ann-Marie put herself forward for the position of Vice Chair. Voting took place by a show of hands. The Forum all raised their hands. There

was no one against this motion and no abstentions, therefore Trevor and Ann-Marie have been appointed as Chair and Vice Chair once again.

3 Apologies for Absence

Aurora Acone

4 Approval of minutes

To consider the minutes of the Members' Forum held on 18 March 2021 and authorise the Chair to sign them as a correct record – **Minutes approved**

5 Matters Arising

To note and consider any issues from previous meetings, not covered on the agenda – **No matters arising**

6 Chair's Report by Trevor Brewerton

Thank you for voting me in for another term as Chair of the Members' Forum, I am looking forward to working with you all during the next year.

We have a busy summer; in the July meeting we will be having quite a few strategies coming to us from different service areas.

Before coming to us they will be going to the newly formed sounding board for consultation. The sounding board is there to make sure that members have fed directly in to Soha on services and strategies. Some of you are already on the sounding board. If you would like to join or know more, please contact Andrea.

You will have seen in the papers for this evening's meeting that there is the feedback from the AGM workshops. The most popular workshop was the environmental issues, which is why there were two, run by Lee and Craig. It is now time for us to start work again on the action plan for the Communities Strategy. As you will know the last issue was around loneliness and the new Community Connectors project was a result of all the work of the members involved during last year.

As a result of the AGM feedback and other conversations and consultation outcomes it would seem that more work around environmental issues and projects should be explored with projects led by members.

That does not mean that we will not also be looking at other issues that members feel are important, but the environmental projects should become a priority. In July the Members' Forum will be asked for a decision to go ahead with the environmental issue and to commence working with Members.

In the meantime, the Resident Engagement & Communities Team will be gathering more information from communities and residents on what their priorities are.

7 Update for Portfolio Holders

Bertie advised that the estates team have been working well after catching up due to lockdown restrictions.

Vic & Gerald would like Kate to organise a re-meet for the Portfolio holders face

to face once restrictions have been lifted. John Smelt who is the Portfolio holder for IT will be arranging a meeting with Dave Edge in the near future. Portfolio Holders reports will be a new feature on the agenda for each meeting going forward so everyone can report back to the Forum.

8 Chief Executives Update

Kate updated the Forum with what has been going on externally. It has been a very busy time from a policy perspective from the National Government. There are two large bits of legislation that are going to be in acted during this parliament that will have a big impact on Soha.

Firstly, the building standards Bill, which is really the long path between Grenville and legislation following on from the Grenfell fires. Mostly what it's doing is making sure there are named individuals responsible and accountable for safety in organisations such as Soha and other housing associations.

Lee Hayward will be our rep for Soha whom will be responsible for the building safety. In that respect, one thing we are incredibly grateful for is we are particularly fortunate as we do not have any cladded buildings and we are not an organisation that has lots of high-rise buildings, therefore we are not facing some of the issues regarding building safety that other organisations are now facing. We are in a very good place in terms of our statutory compliance and that continues to be the case however, that Bill is something we need to be really careful about and make sure we continue to comply with that legislation once it's introduced. The Second major reform is the overhaul of the planning system. As an organisation that builds over 200 homes a year that's important to us. This may have an implication on us as it is proposing to remove the section 106 which is basically how we buy most of our homes of the builders that build for us at the moment. It has the capacity to really hit how we procure/buy most of our new housing so we have started thinking already what we could do instead and how we might adapt to those changes. These changes will not happen immediately, the legislation is coming forward this parliament, but we have already got a Two-year pipeline agreed for the new homes that will be coming into our ownership, so we are looking at maybe 2 to 3 years down the line.

We have talked a lot about the White Paper. One of the things that didn't happen was the proposed extension of the remit of the regulator to cover what are called consumer standards, Basically, this is for our regulator to look at how well we deliver services as well as how robust our staff finances are and how well we are run. That required legislation was not for immediate action. We are still planning for this as we think it will still be coming and we want to make sure we are ready for it when it does, and most of what the regulator will be looking at our Board already look at so it's not a huge change for us as an organisation. The work we have done talking about how we are going to respond to the White Paper all still carries on, but it is unlikely that's going to be translated through to an extended remit for the Regulator any time soon.

As of Monday 17th, hospitality re opens. From a work perspective, RSH will re-open to reception and there will be a staff team in the office. Reception will be open from 9am ready for visitors. The Government have not lifted all restrictions yet and have advised if you can work from home then you still should so the

office will not be opening to work from every day until the 21st of June. We are really hoping that in person meetings with tenants/members will start up again after the 21st June. However, if one of the Forum members wanted to come in and meet with one other member of staff that is possible. We can accommodate if we all observe the social distancing rules. This is a positive change that we are all very happy about.

What this means in terms of working is there is more space to do what we normally do which is make sure we are robust about how we are working collaboratively together as we have a big agenda for this next year. We will be bringing an environmental strategy to you later this year. We have put a provision budget of £10,00 per property into our business plan to spend on the overall quality of homes between now and 2050 so we can improve the environmental efficiency of our homes. We have started to look at high tech thermostats so we can pick up on dampness early and the installation of electric charging points for cars. We are also looking at a new development strategy which is largely driven by the fact that we think our traditional model isn't going to work 3 years from now, but we will be talking to you about over the next few months. A new set of thorough actions will be put in place on how we address equality, diversity and inclusion. We will be investing a lot more money into our IT system this year also a new telephone system.

My Summary is, in the context of a really difficult year the overall performance for Soha has been very strong, that isn't universal so we will make sure we also highlight on this meeting the areas where we have seen dips in performance as well as areas it has been strong but we have still produced a very healthy surplus, we are still a very strong financially as an organisation and we have seen the majority of services recover really quickly after the first lock down. I would like to say a big thank you for your patience, support and sheer hard work of this last past year. I am optimistic there are calmer waters ahead. Kate then handed over to Jude to talk about the neighbourhood pilot.

We have been looking at the figures with the Board recently and the year before last we had about 491 reports of neighbour nuisance and Anti-social behaviour compared to last year, we only had 436. What was interesting was the time taken to resolve those case was significantly higher. 2 years ago, it was taking on average 87 days to resolve a neighbour dispute but last year that grew substantially to 114 days which reflects on the difficulty's people were having being at home for such long periods. The team supported over 1000 people during lockdown with phone calls, visits, shopping and prescriptions. In addition to that we had the Hardship fund and the tenancy sustainment fund which really helped a lot of people experiencing financial difficulties. Coming into this New Year we are trying some new projects around supporting adults with mental health challenges whose tenancy may be at risk. We have also trained several staff in mental health first aid which is invaluable when looking at people's different behaviours and why they might be reacting in certain ways. We have had some good successes of the past year including a customer services excellence accreditation and on the back of that we have been invited to talk to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea as a good example to other landlords. We have been specifically talking to the team who looks after the Grenfell estate who want to turn a corner, so this is a good opportunity to be a

critical friend. Finally, I would like to say thank you to all the staff for their patience and professionalism.

9 Ways of working and survey result by Ann-Marie O’Sullivan

We recently sent a Survey out to all the Forum Members asking them to answer questions proposing a new Format for the way the Forum is run. We had some positive feedback.

Please see appendix 1 for Survey Results

10 Year End Performance and Data 20/21 by Mat Ridley

This report details the draft performance metrics for Soha Housing for the year ended 31March 2021 including prior year and current year budget, together with 2020 global accounts and Housemark median quartile comparatives where appropriate.

1. Properties

At 31 March 2021 Soha owned and/or managed 6,946 properties and was able to develop 183 properties during the financial year, ahead of the revised target of 135. This resulted in a new units delivered percentage of 2.6%

2. Financials

Social Housing Rental Income was £39.7m in 2020/21, an increase of 5.5% from 2019/20 (£37.7m).

This is due to more houses being built and rental increases and relets during the year.

The amount of income lost during the year as a result of void properties was £407k, 1.0% of rental income, up from 0.8% in prior year.

Total operating expenditure is provisionally set at £23.9m, an increase of 9.2% from 2019/20 (£21.9m).

As a result of the above, current outlook for Operating surplus before finance interest costs are deducted are £18.1m, a 4.5% increase from 2019/20 (£17.4m), with an overall surplus generated of £11.4m after allowing for surplus from property sales of £2.6m and £1.7m of gift aid from SIB.

3. Housing and Lettings

Total Current Arrears as a percentage of Rental Income at year end 31Mar2021 were 5.5%. The COVID-19 pandemic has without doubt affected tenants’ ability to keep up with rent payments, as have delays with universal credit processing. The Rental Income team continue to

provide help and support to all tenants who need it and work towards

reducing the arrears balance.

Relet times have also shown a decline despite our Lettings efforts, now showing at 54 days.

4. Repairs & Maintenance

98.7% of Repairs were completed at the first visit, while 97.0% of repair appointments made were kept, which compares favourably to sector averages.

5. Tenant Satisfaction

Satisfaction with overall service continues to exceed sector performance, with 91% of tenants providing positive response. 88% of tenants are satisfied with their new home and 90% of tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood.

6. Staff

In a recent survey 99% of staff stated they were proud to work for Soha, and staff turnover continues to exceed sector averages at just 4.2%

Overall Soha's performance, during a year of turmoil and pandemic disruption, has been very positive, and allows the association to continue to provide vital services to its tenants and communities as we move ahead.

11

How we Communicate with Workshops by David Reynolds & Dave Edge

We are here tonight to as part of the Comms team commitment to engage the Members Forum in decisions that affect all our residents. It's your ideas that we act on that help us shape the future of Soha. We had plans prior to the covid situation but we have had to rethink the way to move forward. We will particularly be focussing on communication because its key to any business transformation There was a short presentation on Business Transformation and Communication then a workshop to gather ideas and feedback. There will be a follow up session coming soon.

Please see Appendix 3

12 Any Other Business

None Raised

ENTER DATE

Signed..... Date.....
Chair of Members' Forum