

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting: Members' Forum Meeting
Date: 18th May 2023
Time: 6pm – 8:00pm
Venue: Boardroom

Present

Ann-Marie O'Sullivan - Chair	Elizabeth Welsh
Trish Langford	Clive Jepson
Gerald Prior	Peter Haynes
Val Kir	Deb Wills
Margaret Buckell	Aurora Acone
Kay Sentance	Martyn Thorne
Amanda Browning	
Bertie Doy	
Sarah Simmonds	

Also in attendance

Kate Wareing, Nasreen Hussain, Matt Archer, Emma Langstaff, Jackie Logan, Charlotte Copcutt, Michelle Pugh-Roberts, Marisa Elliott & Lee Hayward

Apologies

Brian Foley, Doreen Gow and Vic Breach

1.Approval of Minutes March 16th

Approved

Chair and Vice Chair stepping down and elected step up

Ann-Marie and Vic breach, Chair and Vice Chair of the Members Forum stepped down.

Kate Wareing took over the meeting to announce the newly elected Chair and Vice Chair following the recent voting.

Ann-Marie O'Sullivan elected as Chair of the Forum

Vic Breach elected as Vice Chair of the Forum

3. Chair and Vice Chair take their positions

Ann-Marie took control of the meeting again as the new Chair.

4. Election of Co-Optees

Debbie Evans and Sue Such were voted in as Co-opted members, with the Forums approval.

5. Matters arising

None

6. Chairs Report by Ann-Marie O'Sullivan

Thank you to those who voted for me as Chair and welcome to the new forum members.

We have had 2 resident members express an interest in the available Portfolio Holder positions.

- David Lloyd – Repairs and Maintenance
- Debbie Evans – Information Technology

Both positions were agreed by Ann-Marie and seconded by Forum member, Bertie Doy.

Ann-Marie to contact again, another interested resident who is a shared owner (EP) to see if she would like to become a portfolio holder.

Appraisals are on the horizon. I will be doing these in person before a Forum meeting, as we did before. I will be in contact with dates for your diaries in the next coming weeks.

To new members, please feel free to ask any questions and training that you would like to do. We are all very approachable. Induction packs have been sent out, please return all the documents that need signing.

7.Chief Executive Update by Kate Wareing

The Members Forum plays an important role with in Soha. We aim to run Soha for residents and members. The Forums role is to represent members, shaping our future decisions and also holding us accountable for those decisions we make.

External news

- Inflation continues to remain high at 10.1%. with food price inflation at 19.5%The inflation rate has an impact on Soha, pushing cost base up for contractors, staff pay etc.
- Interest rates increased to 4.5%. Our current borrowing is about £360 Million. Nasreen will be talking you through our business plan and how we plan to stress test Soha's finances over a 30-year period. The reason for this is to make sure the decisions we are making now, will not have an impact on us being a robust organisation in the future.
- In April all housing associations start collecting data on tenant satisfaction measures. We are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing, and this is now within their remit, and we are accountable to gather this information.
- Government have introduced the Renters Reform Bill.
This applies to people who are privately renting and not to those in Social Housing or shared owners. This bill will make sure that privately rented homes will become more secure by abolishing the section 21 policy (no fault eviction notice)

Internal News

- Working hard to address the repairs backlog to enable us to get back in a good position before the end of the summer. We are seeing that one of the fundamental problems is a lack of operatives. We have a second contractor on board to tackle this back log and will be looking to bring in a third if we need too.
- Generators have been installed in all 4 Extra Care Schemes following storm Unis last year. This is not something we are obligated to do but thought it was necessary after the lessons we learned if this was not implicated.
- 900 stock condition surveys have been carried out to date meaning we are proactively checking for hazards like mould and damp for instance rather than waiting for them to be reported to us.
- Thank you to those who carried out 'Mystery Customer' with us. This was a very useful exercise for us. We will be reporting back on this in July.
- We have launched a new app called MySoha and this has been

downloaded by 1600 residents already. This app has more functionalities, allowing residents to do more online.

- We have completed the first 256 whole house assessments for retrofits ready for us to deliver the work under the funding we were successful in bidding for and this will commence in July.

8. Localities & Communities Strategy Delivery: How will the Forum hold Soha to account?

Last year we adopted the Localities approach, breaking it down into 5 geographic areas so we can have a staff team invested in each local area to enable us to provide a better service.

There are now 6 teams organised by localities. 5 locality leads and a head of localities. You will have a rep working collaboratively within your communities and engaging with residents.

- Head of Localities – Emma Langstaff line manager to all localities leads.
- Locality Lead Didcot – Andy Ballard (interim) currently recruiting
- Locality Lead Thame - Annie Jenkins
- Locality Lead Wallingford – Mel Blanc
- Locality Lead Henley – Lauren Browning
- Locality Lead Vale & West – Karen Prickett

More information on your localities lead and neighbourhood officers please log on to soha.co.uk/localities.

Matt handed over to Emma Langstaff to introduce herself to the forum and to talk about what's next in terms of local needs.

The teams will be working on building a team, making sure there is cohesion within the team. For residents, the team will be in your communities working out what it's like for you living in your neighbourhood, what means most to you and how we can make a difference. We will be using the door knock feedback to help us understand what residents want.

We are looking at broadening our engagement at a much more local level. We will be looking at the performance priorities, having 3 priorities for each locality, shaping what's important to each area. We will also be looking to increase our engagement with residents.

9.Soha's 30-year Financial Business Plan by Nasreen Hussain for info

Nasreen updated the Forum on the Financial Business plan

A copy of this plan goes to our regulators and to our lenders. Our lenders and especially our regulators will look at this in great depth, to see if we are financially viable. Our business plan is a 30-year financial projection, looking at the first 10 years in more detail, based on a series of assumptions, demonstrating viability. It shows us when we might need new funding and also when we might hit trouble.

Nasreen presented a table of predictions to the Forum, based on the Bank of England assumptions. The predictions show that Soha a strong financial position.

Nasreen passed over to Kate Wareing for a further update.

Kate reiterated that the reason why we do all this planning, is to make sure we are secure as an organisation in the long term and that we have visibility of the future. Another area we look at once a year is, should Soha remain as an independent organisation or should we be looking at joining with another association. That is not a decision that our Board could make, it would sit with our members as we are a mutual association. Our recommendation to the Board is that we remain an independent housing association as we are financially strong. The other part of the recommendation going to Board will be, if other people came to us to consider a specific opportunity, we would look at it.

10.Year-end performance 2022/2023 by Kate Wareing for info

Our income has been slightly lower than our budget this year, reason for this is we took ownership for some of our houses coming out of our development plan later than we had planned, leaving us about a million pounds under budget on the income. Our expenditure has been higher than we expected it to be by about 2.3 million pounds. The reason for this was, we had about a Million pounds of non-billed repairs expenditure relating to the previous year, which of this year's budget. We have had higher than expected costs during last year, largely due to inflation, interest rates, repairs costs and insurances etc so surplus has been largely lower than we originally expected. The surplus was significantly lower than last years.

We have however, ended up in a good financial position following the first tranche sale i.e. the purchased part of shared ownership property, bringing in a surplus of 2.8 million pounds this year. Year-end surplus is 9.3 million which will be re invested onto building more homes.

Kate shared a number of graphs detailing how we are performing compared to other housing associations and for previous years on 1) average time to

complete repairs, 2) emergency repairs completed and 3) satisfaction with repairs service.

11. Annual Forward Agenda Planning by Jackie Logan and Marisa Elliott

Jackie, Marisa and Michelle have been looking at Agendas for Board, Forum, SLT, Scrutiny Group and DAAG. The idea of this document is so that you can see everything that is coming, giving you the chance to see what you want to get involved with and have your say on how you want to shape and develop together. We are hoping that this working document will give the Forum a chance to link in with the Board and any other working groups, having seen what they are doing in advance. There might be something on there that interest you i.e., training This document will give you the chance to influence the things you really want to and also hold us accountable, as the representatives of all members.

12. Tenant Satisfaction Measures Report by Jo Worth

In 2020 the government did a social housing white paper. One of the things they focused on was making us more accountable to our tenants. Following that TSM's were implicated across the whole of the sector. Any housing association with more than a thousand properties need to report yearly data on about 22 TSM's ie, repairs, resident involvement, neighbourhoods, complaints etc. We will be reporting on this data quarterly to the Board and the regulator.

We have used a company called Equity who produce quarterly bench marketing report across all their housing associations across. Currently they have about 67 so its quite a wide area.

We have revamped the questions we ask our residents, targeting area's such as communities, damp and mould and financial planning.

Currently this is cascaded yearly to the Forum but this will be available quarterly. The Forum were keen to review this data quarterly going forward.

13. Health and Safety update March 2023 by Lee Hayward for noting

Soha monitors health and safety compliance across all aspects of the business including employee and contractor health and safety such as fire, legionella, asbestos, gas, electrical and lifts.

Early this year we carried out a fire risk assessment across of our general needs blocks, sheltered & extra care schemes, identifying potential hazards. We have now received back the action report and all the recommendations have been assigned to the correct department ready to be started immediately.

We are looking to visit our schemes to talk to the residents through some of the fire risks that have been identified ie storage in communal area's. We will also be

notifying them when works will be carried out. Evacuation training sessions will be taking place with the residents over the next month.

Good news - we are 100% compliant at year end for gas servicing, fire safe equipment and water hygiene servicing. We have completed over 13,000 electrical inspections in 2022 & 2023 this is done every 5 years as a good practice but this is not a regulatory requirement and we have recently started rolling out Health & Safety training to our staff.

14. Complaints Report and Compensation Policy by Charlotte Copcutt for info and decision – approved

Number of complaints opened was 53 formal complaints 51 of them were stage 1 & 2 of them went to stage two. At the end of March, we had 16 live cases open. One of the main areas of complaint is repairs. We have now brought a new contractor in to help with the back log. Development, planned maintenance and rental income generally have the lowest complaints. We have recently updated the complaints policy to change the wording from dissatisfied complaint to rapid resolution which is a 3 working day target resolving those cases. If it can not be resolved in 3 working days it would usually go to a stage 1 which is a formal complaint, generally most complaints are resolved at this stage. Stage 2 the tenant may be asked to come into the office for a meeting with 4 others – 2 staff and 2 involved residents. If they are still not happy then they have the option to go to the ombudsman.

The compensation policy came to the Members' Forum in March and there were some queries, so we have made some amendments.

We have asked that the customer service agents and technical officers can authorise compensation payments up to £100 in hope that this shortens the process.

15. 15. Co –Reg Away Day Agenda

Ann-Marie asked the forum what they would like to look at the Co-Reg away day.

- Incentive vouchers clarity for involved residents
- as a result of the Audit and Scrutiny group review a question was raised - what data can we supply to the group to help them make a decision as to what area they will look at next, and how Soha can support the group to do that optimally, through types of meetings, contact with staff.
- Succession planning

15. AOB – Portfolio Holder update by Margaret Buckell

Portfolio Holders update from Margaret Buckell

Finance Port Folio Report

The Business Plan Draft was presented at the meeting by Nasreen Hussain and will be going to the next meeting of the Board.

It has been the Financial Year for the Annual Accounts. Work is underway, with the Finance team working on the accounts.

The vacancy left after Matt Ridley left has now been filled, with a Finance Business Partner, starting in July.

Ruth Byrne - Finance & Service Charge Manager - has reduced her working week from 5 days to 3 days. There will be some re-organising of the team. Watch this space for update.

The Steering Group looking at financial impact on future Service Charges hope to be meeting soon and provide a report to Members' Forum.

Date of next meeting – July 13th

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