Minutes of Meeting

Meeting: Members Forum Meeting
Date January 16th 2026
Time: 6 pm – 8:00
Venue: Boardroom

Present

Peter Haynes	Deb Longney
Vic Breach – Vice Chair	Richard Rule
Ann-Marie O'Sullivan – Chair	Bertie Doy
Margaret Buckell	Aurora Acone
Trish Langford	
Sarah Simmonds	

Also in attendance

Kate Wareing, Nasreen Hussain, Emma Langstaff, Jackie Logan, Matt Tatum, David Evans, Marisa Elliott, Michelle Pugh-Roberts & Alyson Barnes

Apologies: Debbie Evans

Observers:

Chris Hearn

1. Approval of the Minutes from November 13th

Approved

2.Matter arising

None

3. Chairs report by AMOS

Welcome to the first Members Forum meeting of 2026. Hope everyone had a grand festive season.

Firstly, can I say we have a very full agenda this evening so please put your hand up before speaking and come through the Chair. If not, you may be asked to stop as each item has its timings and we need to get through all items on the Agenda.

Food for thought - how do you think the Forum is working in its current format? Is it working? How do you feel about this going forward?

Staff changes - Warwick has taken over from Matt Archer as the Interim Director of Housing and Communities while he is away. Emma Langstaff has a new job and is now Head of Resident Experience and Organisational Learning. Matt Tatum is now the Neighbourhoods Manager, the post Emma just left.

Letters and emails went out last Wednesday for the upcoming elections in April. Please take time to fill out the bio part so members know what you do etc. Please could you get them in asap as we know it has come in-house this year which leads to a lot more work for the RI team.

We have two members that are standing down this year. On behalf of the Forum thank you to Trish Langsford for the years she has dedicated to the Forum and will be missed. She will still be Vice Chair of the DAAG group. Also Clive Jepson has decided to step back from the Forum as he needs to concentrate on his health. He's looking to stand again next year.

As you know, we ask for observers to the Board meetings. If you are interested in attending, please be prepared to get involved and to be asked questions. If you're new to the Forum or nervous about this, an experienced member of the Forum will go with you. This may not always be the case, but it's best to be prepared.

Now to hand over to Kate for the CEX report.

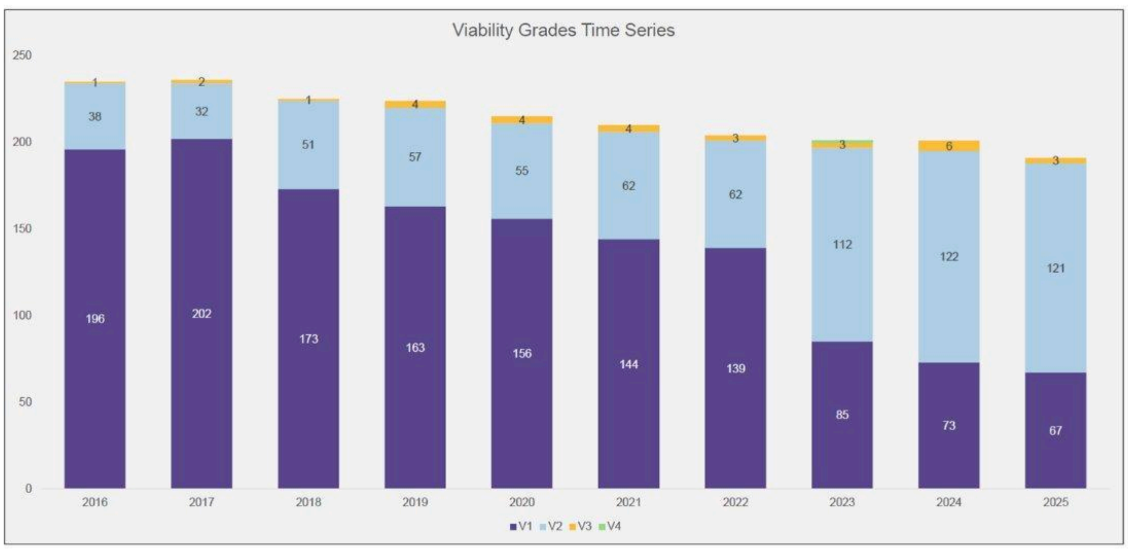
4. Chief Executive update by KW

Regulatory regrade

Kate provided an update on a change to the organisation’s regulatory grading.
The Regulator has regraded financial viability from V1 to V2 following the annual review of financial reporting. V2 remains a compliant grading and the Regulator was clear that this is a regrade rather than a downgrade.
This is primarily driven by the scale of the long-term business plan, including a significant development programme, low-cost home ownership exposure, and the full inclusion of net zero investment costs.
The Regulator remains satisfied with risk management and overall viability. Kate noted that the organisation was assessed as being on the boundary between V1 and V2, and that the decision was influenced by planned investment rather than

weak performance. Lenders and the Board have been informed and are not concerned, with no impact on debt pricing. The shift is mostly consistent with wider sector trends.

Viability	
Grade	**Description**
V1	Our judgement is that the provider meets our viability requirements and **has the financial capacity to deal with a <u>wide range</u> of adverse scenarios**.
V2	Our judgement is that the provider meets our viability requirements. It **has the financial capacity to deal with a <u>reasonable range</u> of adverse scenarios** but needs to **manage material risks** to ensure continued compliance.



External operating environment

Social Housing Renewal & Investment

- The government has launched the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) 2026-2036, marking a decade of long-term funding.
- £39 Billion Fund: The program aims to deliver 300,000 affordable homes, with a target of 60% for social rent.
- Bidding Window: Bidding for the new funding is scheduled to open in February 2026.

- National Housing Bank: Operational from April 2026, this new entity aims to unlock over £50 billion in private investment to support large-scale developments

New Safety and Professional Standards

- Professionalisation Standards: Starting in October 2026, the Competence and Conduct Standard will require senior social housing managers (Level 4) and executives (Level 5) to hold or be working towards professional qualifications.

- Awaab's Law Phase 2: Also in October 2026, mandatory repair timelines for social landlords will extend beyond damp and mould to include risks such as excess cold, fire, and electrical hazards.

- Fire Safety (PEEPs): New regulations requiring Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for residents with disabilities in high-rise buildings to take effect on April 6, 2026.

- Electrical Safety: Mandatory five-year electrical inspections for existing social tenancies must be implemented by May 2026.

Planning and Building Reforms

- NPPF Rewrite: Consultations on a massive rewrite of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) close on March 10, 2026. Changes include mandatory housing targets and "yes" policies for brownfield and "grey belt" land.

- Building Safety Regulator (BSR): On January 27, 2026, the BSR officially becomes an independent statutory body, separating from the Health and Safety Executive.

- Second Staircase Rule: From September 30, 2026, all new residential buildings over 18 meters must include a second staircase.

Internal Operating Environment

- February Board meeting – to discuss, Budget 2026/27 & Key Performance Indicators 2026/27

- New Consumer Standards Performance Report – Reports will go to the Board in January.

- Internal audit & external audit plan going to the A&RC in January.

- Oxford RPs and Oxfordshire RP forum meetings are both at our offices today. Purpose of both is to begin to build an agenda for closer collaboration and joint working between RPs and LAs in each area

- Google and Apple pay are now live on the Soha app for rent payments. Cash is no longer accepted.

5. Performance report by NH presentation

NH presented a number of slides detailing the latest performance from the TSM measures. Below you can see the traffic light system highlighting where we are over and under achieving. NS was confident that the repairs stats highlighted red, are a reflection of the Soha Response model embedding period.

Rented Stock:

TSM No.	Metric	12-month Rolling Average Rentals							
		Benchmarking Peer Data Q2 2025/26 *			Soha				
		75th percentile	Median	25th percentile	Q4 2024/25	Q1 2025/26	Q2 2025/26	Q3 2025/26	12-month Trending
TP01	Overall Satisfaction	85%	78%	67%	80%	79%	79%	81%	
TP04	Well Maintained Home	86%	77%	70%	78%	79%	80%	81%	
TP05	Safe Home	88%	82%	76%	83%	83%	84%	86%	
TP02	Repairs Last 12 Months	86%	80%	72%	70%	70%	73%	74%	
TP03	Time Taken Repairs	84%	76%	68%	69%	68%	70%	71%	
TP10	Communal Areas	80%	71%	63%	73%	74%	74%	77%	
TP11	Neighbourhood Contribution	77%	69%	62%	73%	72%	74%	76%	
TP12	Approach to ASB	69%	62%	55%	66%	68%	70%	71%	
TP06	Listens & Acts	74%	65%	57%	70%	70%	71%	72%	
TP07	Kept Informed	77%	71%	34%	83%	82%	82%	82%	
TP08	Fairly & with Respect	87%	83%	74%	86%	86%	86%	86%	
TP09	Complaints Handling	50%	40%	31%	38%	35%	37%	39%	
Non-TSM	Easy to Deal with	81%	74%	68%	85%	85%	85%	86%	

Shared Owner Stock:

TSM No.	Metric	12-month Rolling Average Shared Ownership							
		Benchmarking Peer Data 2024/25 **			Soha				
		75th percentile	Median	25th percentile	Q4 2024/25	Q1 2025/26	Q2 2025/26	Q3 2025/26	12-month Trending
TP01	Overall Satisfaction	63%	50%	41%	70%	72%	69%	69%	
TP05	Safe Home	82%	75%	58%	81%	85%	87%	88%	
TP10	Communal Areas	60%	50%	41%	54%	63%	68%	69%	
TP11	Neighbourhood Contribution	57%	43%	35%	61%	63%	62%	67%	
TP12	Approach to ASB	50%	41%	30%	54%	59%	56%	55%	
TP06	Listens & Acts	49%	38%	27%	60%	64%	63%	62%	
TP07	Kept Informed	66%	60%	50%	81%	84%	81%	82%	
TP08	Fairly & with Respect	73%	63%	52%	78%	80%	81%	80%	
TP09	Complaints Handling	36%	29%	15%	34%	39%	38%	32%	

6. Risk Appetite by KW

Every January Members' Forum carry out a review of the risk appetite statement for Soha. This statement is subsequently shared with the Audit & Risk

Committee and then goes to the Board for approval. We define Soha's risk appetite against a set of nine domains.

We show where we are prepared to take risks and where we are not, and show the controls put in place to ensure the risk is minimised.

1. **Financial risk**. Remains unchanged at **3 (medium).** We think our current approach to raising funds and balancing cost of carry against ensuring we always forward funds in place is working well. This risk statement is broad – arguably we are low risk in our approach to budget management and financial control; low risk in terms of our appetite to exposure to variable interest rates and have a slightly higher risk appetite about when we secure funding. We intend to continue to operate in this manner, which implies an unchanged risk appetite of medium.
2. **Governance, legal and regulatory (including health and safety).** Remains **unchanged as 1 (minimal).** Our primary duty is to provide safe homes for our residents. This clarity of focus is even more important in an environment where we may need to decide to de-prioritise some areas of work if our financial operating environment becomes more constrained. Whilst a higher risk appetite would reduce costs, we remain of the view that we must seek to minimise risk in these areas. Please note that this area now explicitly includes compliance with Awaab's law as part of our regulatory framework.
3. **Innovation.** Remains **unchanged at 3 (medium).** We are focusing on core service delivery, including ensuring that our investment in Soha Response translates through into improved resident satisfaction with our repairs service. This is also the year in which we will need to ensure we are ready for our In Department Assessment (including our first inspection against the Consumer standards), and need to manage the implementation of our new Compliance software. While we will still seek to innovate, we are unlikely to invest significant resources in new initiatives that are untried in this next twelve month period.
4. **People.** Remains **unchanged at 2 (low).** We strive to be a local employer of choice, and our focus on staff experience has served us well in remaining able to recruit in a tight employment market, and has paid dividends as we insourced our repairs service. We need to continue to focus on staff retention and staff development. We have been successful to date in retaining high levels of staff engagement. This remains critical as recruiting remains difficult, quality of service to our residents is founded on a having a strong, motivated staff team, and temporary staffing costs are very expensive. We have differentiated between turnover and voluntary turnover in statements given the change in our staffing with the creation of Soha Response.
5. **Reputational risk. Increase to 4** While we will always seek to minimise any negative publicity this risk domain defines the extent to which we are willing to take actions that may be unpopular. A more active asset management strategy with more disposals, or our environmental approach of replacing heating systems with air source heat pumps are both examples of decisions that will not be universally popular. SLT discussed

whether our focus on regeneration and a more active asset management strategy required a revision in this risk appetite and recommend an increase to 4 because this includes taking reputational risk for business returns. Arguably our plans are covered by our existing risk appetite of medium given disposals would be judged with social value at the heart of decision making.

6. **Service delivery / operational risk.** Remain **unchanged at 2 (low).** Delivering high quality services is core to our mission, and we have set our KPIs with the aim to achieve top quartile levels of customer satisfaction which implies this risk appetite. Increasing risk appetite would reduce costs but increase the risk of reduced resident satisfaction. Our focus this year remains on delivering great service, improving resident satisfaction with our repairs service and ensuring we can evidence compliance with the Consumer Standards. We recommend that our risk appetite and ambition should remain unchanged.
7. **Market exposure (sales and development). Reduce to 2 (low).** In reality we have always operated well within Soha's medium risk appetite. Given the scale of our development programme and our risk averse approach to any open market sale activity, we think a low risk appetite better describes our approach to development risk. We have re-worded the risk appetite statement to differentiate between shared ownership sale (which we continue to see as within a low risk appetite), and any significant development for open market sale which we think would take our risk appetite up to medium.

8. **Asset management (disposals and regeneration).** Remain **unchanged at 3 (medium).** To deliver the homes needed in our communities for the long term requires us to adopt a proactive approach to regeneration of homes to ensure they meet modern standards, including energy efficiency. We operate in a high cost area and are committed to retaining homes in high cost parts of our operating area, so disposal decisions will always balance financial return with meeting local housing need. This aligns with our strategic intention as set out in our new Asset Management strategy.

9. **Environmental Impact.** We introduced a new risk domain in 2021 to specify how we would consider environmental impact in our decision making. While this is a growing area of focus and investment for us, we believe that our current risk appetite of **3 (medium)** remains appropriate, because we will still continue to undertake activities that have a harmful environmental impact, and seek to balance mitigations with other factors such as cost and customer preferences. This is an area where Board may consider a risk appetite of 2 to be more appropriate in the future, particularly given our decision to achieve zero carbon standards on developments on our own land.

7. KPIs & TSMs report by KW/NH for discussion

Each February the Board sets the KPI measures and the levels it wants Soha to operate at in he new financial year (from 1 April). At the same time, the Board sets the Budget for the year. Expenditure levels in the Budget are set to deliver our ambition in the Corporate Plan and resources are allocated to deliver the KPIs and TSM targets approved by the Board.

Kate presented slides of the latest set of TSM's & KPI's

MF - KPIs & TSMs (January 2026).pdf

Members Forum are asked the following questions:

- Please say which 3 areas of the business are most important to you for us to focus on improving next year?

- If it would save us money to have a lower standards (KPIs), do you think we should do this in any areas? Please list up to 3.

AA commented that the service standards (repairs) is a priority for all of us, so resources towards that should be prioritised.

VB Former tenant arrears could go to 85%
Repair appointments are at presents 75% - move that up to 93%

BD Grounds maintenance could be achieving a higher standard.

8. Budgets 2026/27 by NH presentation

NS presented a presentation to the Forum detailing the draft budget for 2026/2027. Board will see this paper in January for discussion.

Headlines
Income to increase by approx. 5 Million pounds due to 4.8 rent increase.
We have a stock transfer coming over from L&Q and we have 160 new homes to build in the new year, pro rata.

	Budget 2025-26 £	Budget 2026-27 £	Variance £	%
Operating income				
Total operating income	**61,743,656**	**66,843,451**	**5,099,795**	**8.3%**
Operating expenditure				
Operating Expenditure	**42,252,579**	**43,997,686**	**1,745,107**	**4.1%**
Operational surplus	**19,491,077**	**22,845,765**	**3,354,688**	**17.2%**
Interest earned	200,000	291,421	91,421	45.7%
Interest payable	(18,170,904)	(21,227,282)	(3,056,377)	16.8%
Net interest payable	**(17,970,904)**	**(20,935,861)**	**(2,964,957)**	**16.5%**
Operating surplus after interest	**1,520,173**	**1,909,904**	**389,731**	**25.6%**
FRA - fire door replacement	(700,000)	-	700,000	-100.0%
Soha Response	-	-	-	
Surplus on property sales	2,242,609	3,463,680	1,221,071	54.4%
Overall surplus	**3,062,781**	**5,373,584**	**2,310,802**	**75.4%**
Key ratios	**2024-25**	**2025-26**		
Operating margin - overall %	30.8%	33.5%		
Soha Group TMP - EBITDA MRI (min = 100%)	117.3%	122.6%		
The Banks - EBITDA (min = 130% + 10% TMP = 140%)	156.0%	159.9%		
RSH - EBITDA MRI excludes other FA sales	106.5%	111.7%		
Cost per unit £	£5,443	£5,479		

Below are some of the larger investments that make up the operating expenditure figures above.

Investment:

- Components in new & existing homes (£707k) kitchen, bathrooms
- Heating replacement (£200k)
- Additional insulation, damp & mould (£500k)
- Ongoing FRA works (£1m)
- Disrepair claims (£80k)
- Resident engagement (£20k)
- Website re-design (£65k)
- Documotive replacement (£
- Housing management system (£50k)
- Finance system (£50k)
- Staff pay (£379k)
- Learning & process review
- Head of Resident Experience
- Neighbourhood Team Manager

- IT resource for data and process review

Staff Costs Summary		Board approved Budget 2025/26		Budget 2026/27		Diff	
Vacancy contingency		(468,190)		(502,469)		(34,279)	5.00%
Efficiency target		(224,731)		(241,185)		(16,454)	2.40%

Cost increases

- Pension costs (£21k)
- Corporate fees (£17k)
- Revaluation fees every 3 years (£63k)
- Insurance (£20k)
- Internal audit/external audit (£25k)
- Estate costs for new sites (£63k)

Costs going down – savings

- Governance review – every 3 years (£23k)
- Transfer incentive scheme (£30k)
- Rightmove (£16k) using a different service

Maintained

- Soha Community Fund at £60k
- Community Action Plan at £100k

Questions:

VB with regard to the unit cost, It was decided to move down to the lower end of the median, as our unit costs were higher than some others. You mentioned making it 'more lean' — does that mean we're planning to tighten it further, or will we keep it at the current level?

KW - Last year, we set aside £1,000,000 as a contingency because there was uncertainty about the cost and process of bringing our response in-house, which caused some significant shifts in the budget over the past couple of years. This year's budget is much more stable, partly because there are no major projects underway, the external environment is steadier, and we have already increased IT spending. Compared to other housing associations, our unit costs are still relatively low, as many associations have rising costs due to factors like high-rise blocks and fire safety remediation. While the budget may seem lean this year, the real pressures are over the long term, as this budget forms the base for projections over the next 30 years. Increasing expenditure significantly now could create tight constraints in future years, particularly as planned management costs are expected to rise.

AA – What do we use Rightmove for?

WAP - We use Rightmove for our property sales, including the resale service for shared owners and some new sales. We also used it on the lettings side for certain properties. The area where we've stopped using it is on the lettings side, and that is where the savings have been made.

9. SP37 Resident Shareholding Policy & SP13 Board Member Remuneration & Expenses Policy by ME – Approved

SP37 Resident Shareholding Policy – Approved

No changes are proposed at this time. The policy remains robust and fit for purpose.

Board Member Remuneration and Expenses Policy – For Information

The following updates have been made:

- Inclusion of a reference to the Soha Response Board, reflecting its position within the current organisational structure.
- Alignment of claims and remuneration arrangements with those of the Soha Board.
- Requirement for appropriate business use insurance in order for travel expense claims to be reimbursed.

10. SP49 HHSSRS Policy & Procedure by DE – Approved

DE presented the new Housing Health & Safety Hazard Policy (SP49) for approval and adoption. This policy integrates all 29 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards into a single corporate framework and replaces Soha's previous Damp and Condensation Policy. It ensures compliance with the requirements of Awaab's Law, Building Safety Act 2022, and related housing legislation.

The policy supports compliance with the *Hazards in Social Housing Prescribed Requirements Regulations 2025*, The regulations are being introduced in phases. Currently, landlords are required to respond to all emergency hazards (29 in total), as well as significant damp and mould hazards. Hazards are categorised as emergency, significant, or routine.

Where hazards arise due to resident actions (e.g. blocked ventilation or unauthorised alterations), these do not fall within the Awaabs law timescales. However, Soha retains a duty under the *Homes Fitness for Human Habitation Act* to ensure the property is safe. The immediate priority remains resident safety, with plans in place to review responsibility and potential cost recovery where damage is resident-caused.

Mandatory training has been rolled out to all Soha staff. Specialist training is being provided to the Health and Safety team, including new staff members. A web-based hazard management platform is in use, supported by a mobile app available to all employees, including response staff. This enables staff to quickly log identified hazards, upload photographs, and trigger immediate triage and corrective action.

10. SP61 Hate Crime Policy – Approved

This policy was sent out to the Forum for comment and approval before the meeting. Policy **approved** by the Forum.

11. Soha Response and service plan by BR

BR shared the latest stats for Soha Response.

Customer Satisfaction - Key Stats

SATISFACTION SURVEYS RECEIVED YTD: 1341

YEAR-TO-DATE SATISFACTION SCORE: **89.50%**

Customer Satisfaction - Individual Scores

Nicky Wilkinson (New Starter): 10 surveys, **100%** satisfaction

Gary Ellison (D&M Multi Trade): 62 surveys, **94.8%** satisfaction

Sam Boyd (Groundworker): 16 surveys, **96.9%**

Complaints

Complaints received YTD: 60

With over 17,700 orders raised, complaints represent only 0.34%, highlighting strong overall service performance. For every 294 orders, there is just one complaint—demonstrating a high level of customer satisfaction and operational consistency.

Voids

Void properties received YTD: **224**

Voids completed YTD: **190**

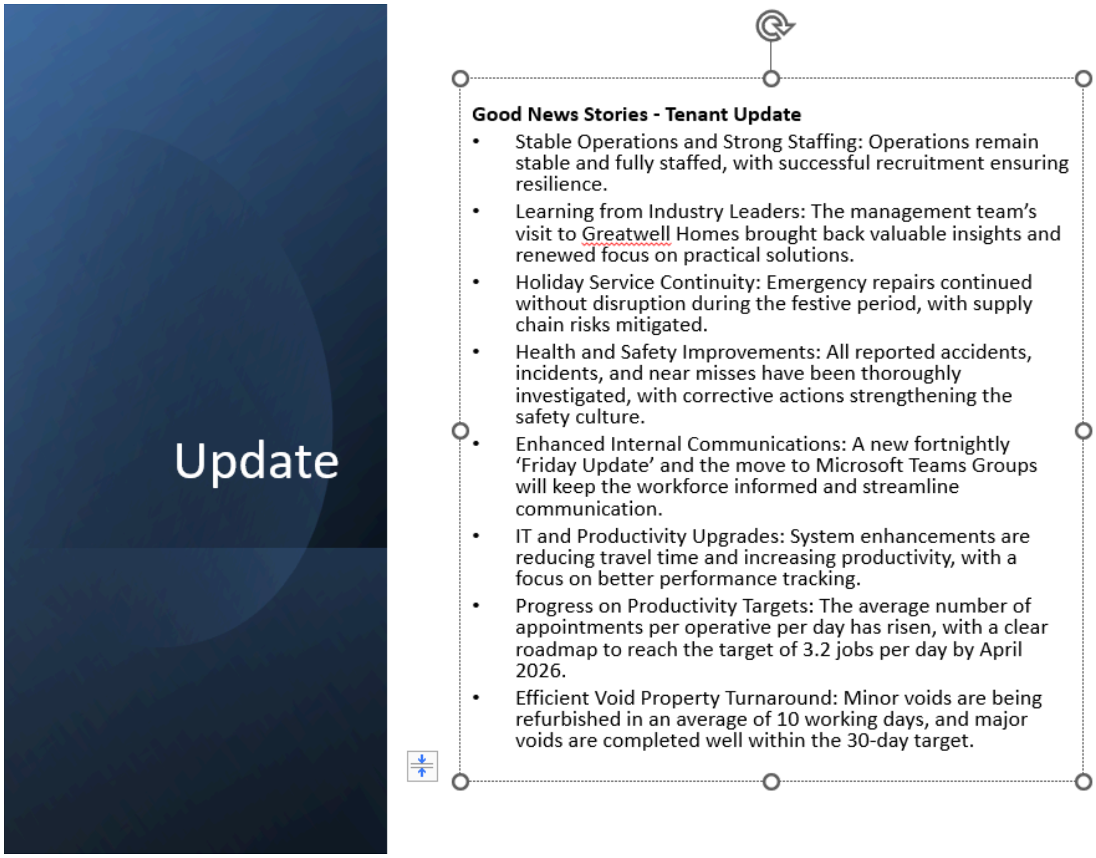
Property transitions are being managed smoothly, with a strong focus on efficiency. The team has turned around a large number of voids quickly, ensuring homes are ready for new tenants without delay.

Staff

Staff at start of year: **48**

Current staff count: **67** (Up to December)

Staffing has grown by **43%** in eight months, showing the expansion and strengthening of the Soha Response team.



12. Update on working in communities by MPR

This is a brief summary of what MPR & AB have been involved in over the past 9 months, and what's planned for 2026.

2025 Highlights:

- Networking & Learning: Our first 9 months focused on building relationships with partners, other housing associations, and attending conferences to understand best practices in resident engagement.
- Data Analysis: Insights from our work informed new initiatives and improvements.
- Resident Engagement Priorities Survey: 121 responses across all localities.
- Partnership Meeting: Hosted with 80+ partners and charities to share work and impact.
- Community Grant Fund: £50K fund; awarded 43 community applications (£37,173) and 2 individual grants (£849.99) for personal development.
- Community Presence: Attended multiple local events (e.g., Benson Big Green Week, Thame Pride), hosted door-knocking campaigns, and organised resident events like the Children's Halloween event in Benson. Feedback from Benson indicated a need for resources for younger children, which may lead to an after-school club/drop-in.

Co-Regulation & Governance:

- Members Forum Election (April 2026): Pilot managed in-house this year. Notices of Interest have been sent.
- DAAG: First meeting mid-February at Didcot Civic Hall to consult on E-Scooter, E-Bikes & Mobility Chairs policy and Estates & Communal Areas policy.

Upcoming Events 2026

- Community Stars 2026 with prizes such as tickets to Blenheim Palace.
- Digital Wings & Life Skills Platform (Barclays Bank): Free online training covering Microsoft Excel, cyber awareness, money management, and children's activities. Rollout on hold due to Barclays team restructure.
- Communities WhatsApp Channel: Promotes events, consultations, surveys, and polls to improve resident engagement.
- Faringdon Coffee Morning at the Corn Exchange: Informal meet-your-neighbour event to build trust and encourage resident feedback.
- 4Family-Focused Events During School Holidays: Engaging younger residents and families in the community.

13. Elections/Changes to the constitution for elections

JL spoke with the Forum regarding the Members Forum election term and concerns. If elections remain annual, there is a risk that fewer residents may stand, which could result in fewer members. Some members may not get elected consistently, potentially impacting engagement and continuity.

It was decided that the Forum would like to discuss the frequency of the elections again at the next meeting or possibly as an agenda item at the AGM.

AOB – none

Next Members Forum meeting – March 12th