Minutes of Meeting

Meeting: Members Forum Meeting
Date May 14th 2026
Time: 6 pm – 8:00
Venue: Boardroom

Present

Ann-Marie O'Sullivan – Chair	Michael Gale
Richard Rule	Brian Foley
Margaret Buckell – Co-opted	Bertie Doy
Karen Chandler – Co-opted	Jo Garvey
Sarah Simmonds	Greg Gwiazda
Chris Hearn	Ad Martinus Van Der Heijden

Also in attendance

Kate Wareing, Jeremy Vickers, Jackie Logan, Glenn Loftus, Michelle Pugh-Roberts & Alyson Barnes

Apologies: Debbie Evans, Vic Breach, Marina Kaplais & Neelam Rutti

Observers:
Karen Chandler

1. Approval of the Minutes from January 16th

Approved

2.Matter arising

None

3. Chairs report by AMOS

Good evening everyone, a very warm welcome to all of you but especially our newly elected Members of the Forum. Please welcome Greg, Jo, Ad, Chris, and Michael to your first meeting.

Can I also welcome our observers tonight, Karen Chandler who decided to come along after attending the AGM, and Margaret Buckell as some of you may already know.

We are really pleased to have you joining us. Vic and I are very much looking forward to working with you all and getting to know you better over the coming months. Your ideas, experiences and input are incredibly valuable, and we are excited to have you involved.

We run our meetings in a friendly and fairly informal way, but please do raise your hand if you would like to speak or ask a question, as this helps make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute and be heard.

You should all have received your meeting papers last week. Michelle aims to circulate these around a week before each meeting to give everyone enough time to read through them and digest the information in advance.

We appreciate that there can sometimes be quite a lot to get through, but reading the papers beforehand really helps and allows more time for meaningful discussion when we come to reviewing and approving policies at the meeting itself.

Some papers, such as the finance reports and TSMs, may look a little overwhelming at first glance, particularly with all the figures and data. Please don't worry — these are always talked through during the meeting and explained in a clear and understandable way, with colour coding and guidance to help make the information easier to follow.

Current members of the Forum have IPads loaned to them by Soha which they bring to the Forum to help follow the meeting. If this is something you think might be useful, please let either Alyson or Michelle know and they will arrange this with our IT team.

Vic and I will also be looking at arranging some training sessions for our new members later in the year, so please keep an eye out for dates and times as these are confirmed. We hope these sessions will help everyone feel confident and supported in their role on the Forum.

I hope you all enjoyed the AGM last month. A great evening was had by all who attended. It was very well attended by new and old faces.

You may have noticed there have been some changes to Soha's organisational structure.

These are:

Jeramy Vickers - Interim Director of Finance and Resources. He has taken over from Nasreen Hussain who left us recently and will be sorely missed.

Matt Archer is Director of Service Redesign and Digital Transformation

Warwick Ainsley-Parker - Interim Director of Housing and Communities

Emma Langstaff Head of Resident Experience & Organisational Learning

Shern Hooper - Interim Head of Sales & Home Ownership

Voting for Chair and Vice Chair had moved to July this year as it was agreed moving it back would give the newly elected members a chance to meet everyone to help them make an informed decision when voting.

We would also kindly ask that you let Jackie and the team know if you are unable to attend a meeting. We completely understand that emergencies and unexpected situations can arise, and sometimes these things cannot be avoided, but it is always really helpful for the team to know in advance where possible.

And lastly, the next Board meeting is on 21st May 6pm. Is there 2 members of the Forum that would like to attend?

I will know hand you over to Kate for the CEX update

4. Chief executive update by KW

External operating environment

Local Elections

Four local authorities operating in our area held local elections: Swindon, West Oxfordshire, Cherwell District Council and Oxford City Council.

Global volatility and contingency planning

The current situation in the Gulf may start to impact fuel supplies and could increase the cost of food. For Soha the availability of fuel could be an issue and therefore our ability to deliver our services. We have the financial flexibility to be able to increase staff resources and/or hardship funds if necessary but clearly cannot offset increased budget pressures for residents.

Renters' rights act

The renters' rights act came into effect on 1 May. This primarily impacts the private rented sector, and abolishes s20 "no fault" evictions, giving private tenants some additional security. This has minimal immediate impact on Soha.

Internal Operating Environment

Fire Risk Assessment Actions

24/25 Actions – 2 Actions remain due - minor works to fire doors and contractors instructed.

25/26 Actions – 2751 Actions remain outstanding from 3123 last month.
A further 180 actions were raised during the month meeting a gross completion of 557 actions during the month. Now in receipt of all but 3 of the FRAs.

Stock Condition Surveys

989 properties still to be surveyed. Still achieving 300 surveys completed per month and on track to be close to 100% by summer.

Update on Overdue EICRs

Currently have 83 overdue certificates and are working to close the remaining certs asap.

Homes England Update

Homes England's Social and Affordable Homes Programme is now open for bids.

Questions

JG
When you build properties yourselves, do they still have to be let via SODC?

Yes, because we're applying to them for planning permission, and that forms part of the agreement. Typically, 100% of new lets go to people on the housing waiting list. Some existing tenants move internally if they need a transfer, supporting mutual exchanges where tenants swap homes, or enabling downsizing moves so we can free up larger family properties.
We may occasionally do a direct let, but generally that's how the system works. There's a slightly longer answer around the exceptions to the 'almost always', but that's the broad picture

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5. KPI's & TSMs by Kate Wareing

Kate provided an overview of the year-end performance figures and tenant satisfaction measures before handing over the financial update. She explained that residents may receive phone calls from an independent company gathering feedback on services, which contributes to nationally recognised Tenant Satisfaction Measures used to compare housing associations across the country. The latest results showed strong overall performance, with most measures rated above average or within the top 25% nationally. The only area currently slightly below average is repairs, although this has improved significantly over the last year, increasing from 70% satisfaction to 76%. Kate noted that, if progress continues, repairs should return to above-average performance next year.
She also highlighted that satisfaction levels among shared owners are particularly strong, with every shared ownership measure sitting within the top

quartile nationally. Although shared owners can sometimes report lower satisfaction overall, Soha compares extremely well against other housing associations.

Questions

CH - How many housing associations are included in the comparison?
Kate explained that the benchmarking likely covers around 100 organisations through the survey company

AV How many HA's in the country?

A quick search was done returning results of 1,500–1,600 organisations of varying sizes nationally.

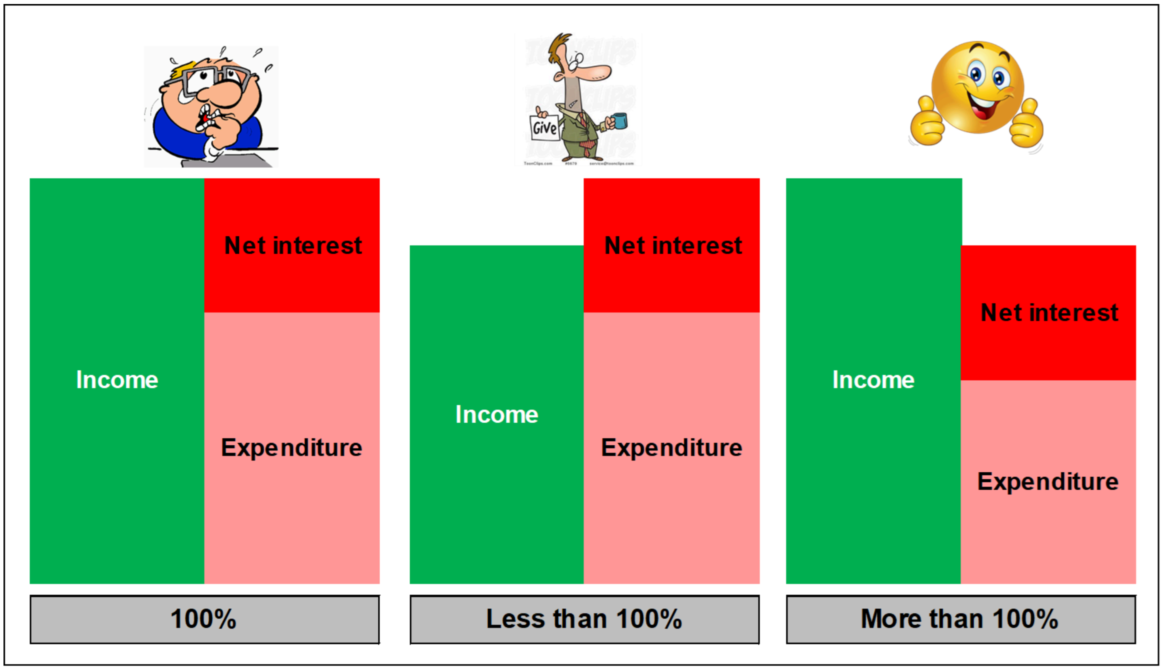
GG raised concerns about residents not answering satisfaction survey calls because many people now avoid unknown numbers due to spam calls. He suggested Soha should communicate the name of the survey company more clearly in advance so residents know the calls are genuine. Kate agreed and acknowledged that communication could be improved, particularly through text messages as well as newsletters, as not all residents read the newsletters.

Kate explained that the large performance document shared at the meeting outlined the organisation's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets for the coming year. She said the data is collected both to meet regulatory requirements and to help ensure the organisation is performing effectively. The targets have now been agreed and approved by the Board.

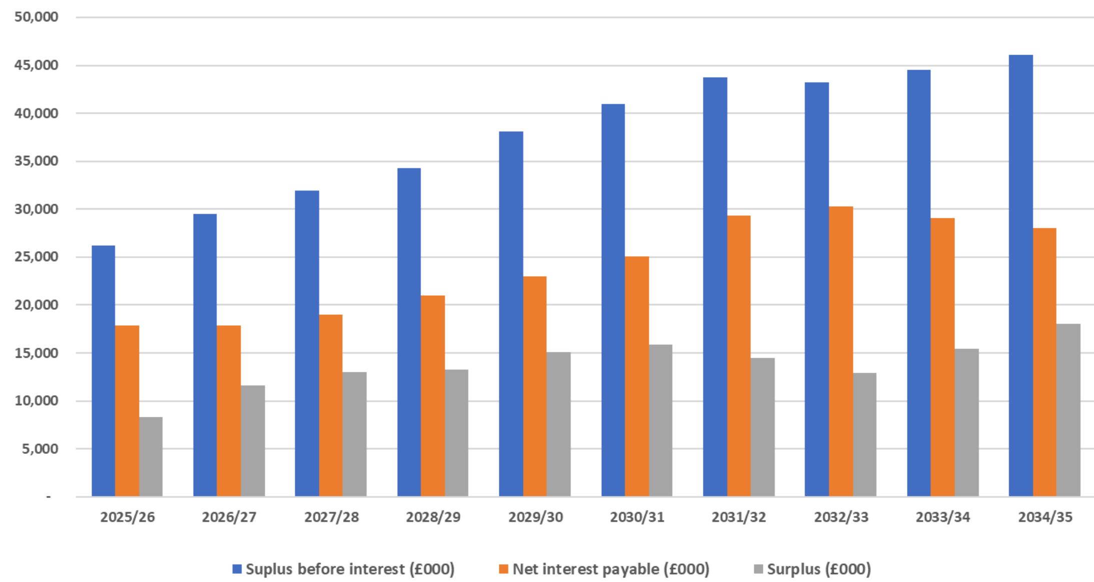
6. Business Plan 2025 – 2026 presentation by JV

Example interest cover

JV presented a financial overview using a visual chart previously developed by Nasreen to explain one of the organisation's key financial measures. The chart compared income, expenditure and interest payments to show the organisation's financial position.
He explained that the green section represented income, while the red and pink sections showed interest payments and expenditure. The examples illustrated different financial scenarios: one where income and costs are very closely balanced, another where spending exceeds income and borrowing would be needed, and a stronger position where income is higher than both expenditure and interest costs.
Jeremy said the organisation aims to remain in this stronger financial position, where income comfortably covers costs. He also explained that the graph showed projected financial planning over the next 10 years, with forecasting extending even further into the future to support long-term financial stability and planning.



Jeremy explained that the financial chart below showed the organisation's surplus before interest, the interest paid on borrowing, and the remaining surplus after interest costs. The blue columns represented surplus before interest, the orange columns showed interest payments, and the grey columns showed the remaining funds generated by the organisation itself.
He highlighted that it is always preferable to reinvest money generated internally rather than relying heavily on borrowing and paying interest, although borrowing is sometimes necessary to support future plans. One of the organisation's key goals over the next seven years is to increase its development programme to around 200 new homes per year, which is higher than current levels.
Jeremy also pointed out that interest costs are expected to rise initially while development projects are actively underway, as borrowing increases during construction. Over time, as developments are completed and loans are gradually repaid, interest costs are projected to reduce. He explained that these measures form some of the organisation's key long-term financial indicators and planning assumptions.



Question

CH – Are rates fixed for 10 years, and do you get a sporadic movement when it comes out with a fixed rate?

Jeremy explained that the organisation can choose whether to borrow money at fixed or variable interest rates. He said the company currently has a very high proportion of fixed-rate borrowing, with 87% of loans fixed and only 13% on variable rates at the year end.
KW added that the organisation can currently only secure fixed deals for around five years at a time. KW explained that fixing borrowing for longer periods is currently very expensive so shorter-term fixed arrangements are considered the more practical.

Carbon Zero Spend

Components	Lifecyle	Estimated cost base	First year cost in:	Duration	Total cost*
External/ Internal Wall Insulation	25	2% of 500 properties per annum at £30k each	2029/30	Until 2054/55	£8,400,000
Mechanical ventilation (MVHR)	20	No of bedrooms at £3k each	2025/26	Until 2054/55	£80,789,500

Photo-voltaics (PV Panels)	20	Lower cost range = £7.5k Upper cost range = £10k	2030/31	Until 2054/55	£84,970,186
LED lighting & draught proofing	20	Lower cost range = £200 Upper cost range = £300	2025/26	Until 2054/55	£2,369,100
Loft insulation & Windows	25	Lower cost range = £1k Upper cost range = £3.1k	2025/26	Until 2054/55	£8,228,207
Upgraded floor insulation	50	Lower cost range = £5k Upper cost range = £12k	2025/26	Until 2054/55	£2,380,000
Total carbon zero spend					**£187,136,993**

JV explained that the above financial slide focused on the organisation's long-term investment plans for maintaining and improving its homes. He highlighted that around £187.136.993 is planned to be spent over many years, with projects extending as far ahead as 2054–55.
He said some improvement works, such as loft insulation and solar panels, may attract government grants, which would help reduce the overall cost. However, the figures presented reflected the full projected investment before any grant funding was applied. The aim is to ensure homes remain well maintained, energy efficient and up to the required standard over the long term.
JV also explained that lenders closely monitor the organisation's financial health using key performance measures. The graphs showed the minimum levels the organisation must stay above, alongside its actual projected performance. He noted that maintaining a strong gap above the minimum thresholds demonstrates financial stability, which helps reassure lenders and supports access to borrowing at more favourable rates of interest.

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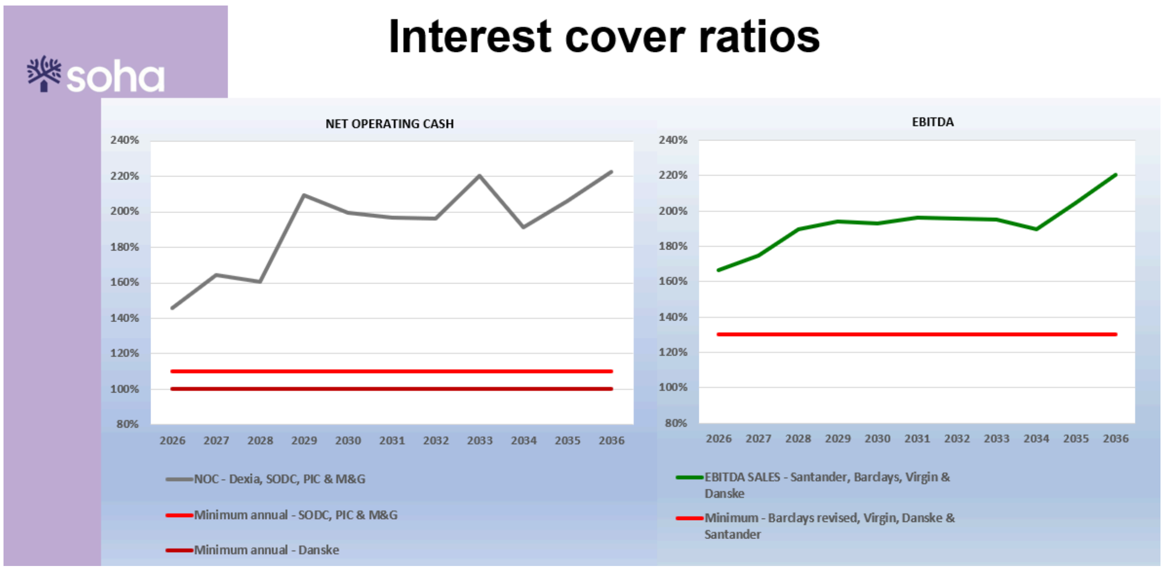
Interest Cover Ratios



JV presented benchmarking data comparing Soha's performance with other housing associations over the past five years. He explained that the figures showed Soha to be one of the more efficient organisations in the sector.

One measure looked at the cost of managing homes. Soha's average cost was just over £5,000 per property each year, which includes providing services and paying interest costs. Kate clarified that this works out at roughly £100 per week per home, which is considered low compared to many other housing associations. Jeremy noted that Soha sits just outside the top quartile and within the top third for cost efficiency.

Questions

CH Do you buy your land in front or do you have to go to the market at the time?

KW explained that the organisation has a land banking policy which limits the amount of undeveloped land it can hold to a maximum value of £10 million at any one time. She stressed that Soha does not buy land for speculation, but only purchases land intended for housing development.

She also explained that land purchases are usually dependent on planning permission being granted, helping to reduce financial risk. The only developments that may receive preferential planning treatment are known as rural exception sites, where planning policy allows land to be used specifically for affordable or social housing.

JV added that developments involving external builders require careful financial scrutiny. In these cases, the organisation not only assesses the construction costs, but also checks the financial stability and reliability of the developer to ensure the project represents a secure investment.

7. Annual Partners Merger review by KW – approved

Each year, Soha's Board formally reviews whether the organisation should make any changes to its corporate structure, including whether merging with another housing association or forming formal partnerships would help deliver better services and build more homes.

The Members' Forum is invited to provide feedback to help inform the Board's consideration. The current recommendation from management is that Soha should remain an independent organisation, as it continues to be financially strong and well placed to deliver its objectives effectively.

Kate also clarified that any decision to change the organisation's legal structure could not be made solely by the Board. Instead, it would ultimately require approval from Soha's shareholder members at the AGM.

Members of the Forum agreed that they do not want to merge with other HA's as Soha is financially strong and independent.

8. Communications Strategy 2026 – 2030 - approved

KW introduced Soha's new communications strategy, explaining that it had largely been developed by RF and the communications team in response to feedback showing that communication across the organisation needs

improvement. KW stressed that this is not just an issue for the communications team, but for the organisation as a whole.
The strategy was informed by extensive consultation work, including 544 resident responses, group discussions and staff surveys. From this feedback, Soha developed an action plan focused on improving clarity, accessibility and consistency in communication.
Key commitments within the strategy include:

- Making communications clearer and easier to understand, following feedback that around 20% of residents found letters confusing.
- Improving digital services so residents can complete common tasks online more easily, while still ensuring support from staff remains available when needed.
- Strengthening communication between internal teams to reduce misunderstandings and service failures.
- Being clearer about expectations and delivering on promises to avoid confusion for residents.
- Improving the website and app so information is easier to find and more accessible.
- Building stronger communication with local communities and partner organisations.

JG suggested using WhatsApp groups for simple notifications and updates, such as survey reminders or service updates. MPR confirmed that a WhatsApp channel has recently been launched and efforts are underway to encourage more residents to sign up.
SS raised concerns about unreliable postal communication after receiving unexpected home visits without prior notice. KW acknowledged these concerns and agreed that clearer communication about appointments and access requirements is increasingly important. Staff also noted that texting is becoming a preferred method of communication because it is quicker, cheaper and often more reliable than post.

10.Soha Homes 2025 by KW

Kate introduced an early discussion about Soha's long-term housing strategy and the types of homes the organisation wants to own by 2050. She explained that, while Soha currently owns around 8,000 homes and residents have the right to remain in their homes, the organisation recognises that some existing properties are becoming expensive to maintain or may no longer meet the standards they would want to provide in the future.
To help shape the strategy, residents were asked to complete surveys about what they value most in their homes and communities. Kate explained that this feedback is directly influencing future planning and board discussions.

Based on the aspirations expressed by the 642 residents who responded to our consultation last Autumn and conversations with the Board at their away day last October we know we want our future homes to be energy efficient; accessible, and meet the needs of larger families; have access to outdoor space; meet the varied needs of excluded groups of people in our communities; are within a geography that means we can deliver an excellent, efficient service; and are truly affordable for our residents to buy / rent.

To summarise how the stock of homes we will own in 2050 will differ from the stock of homes we own now: by 2050…

We will have more:

Social rent homes, we will be net zero by 2050 (EPC A of 92%), more larger homes in stock, more accessible homes in stock. The average home will be cheaper, larger, more energy efficient and more accessible. More homes will have access to outdoor space. Our stock will reflect the needs of our residents and the aspirations of our Local Authority partners.

We will have less / no:

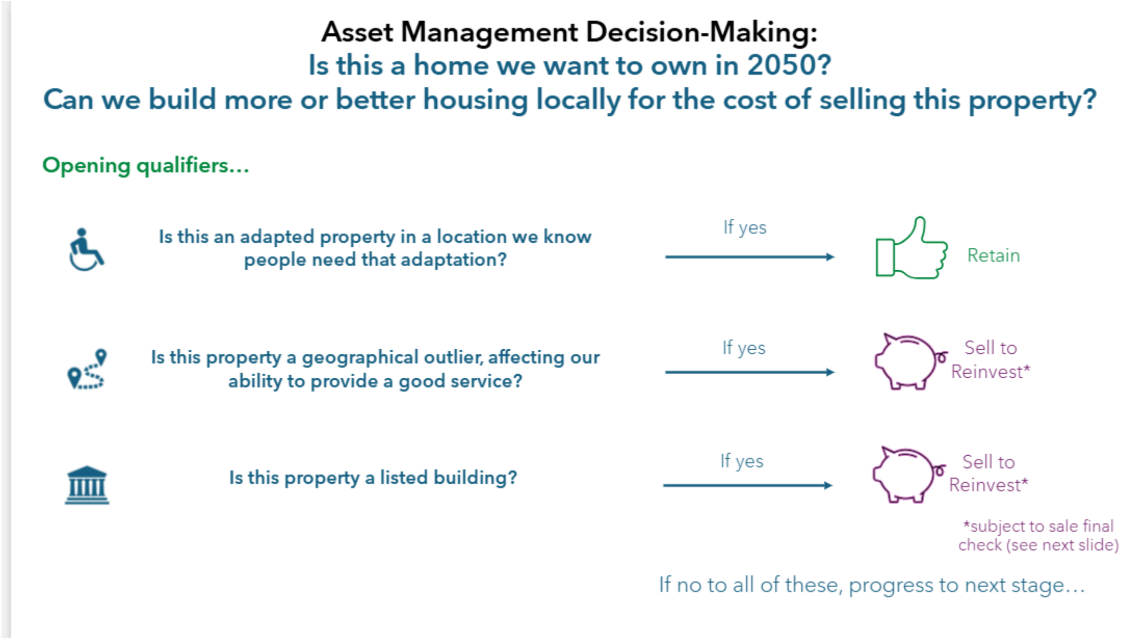
Homes below EPC C, fewer "far flung" properties that are expensive to service.

The table below therefore proposes minimum and aspirational standards both for the properties we develop / buy, and the criteria that guide both investment in our current homes and how we will decide whether to sell houses that become empty. We expect these criteria to guide our decision making until 2030, and seek Members' Forum feedback on these.

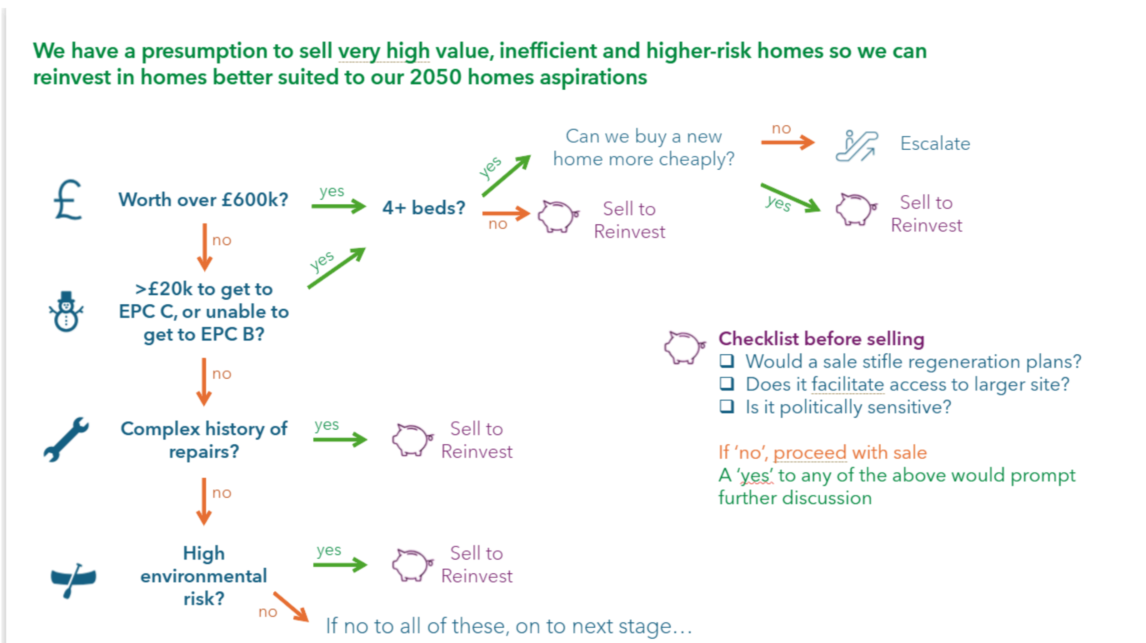
	Development Standards – until 2030		Existing homes – until 2030			
Our 2050 homes should be:	**Aspirational Standard**	**Minimum Standard**	**Retrofit and planned standards**	**Disposal / future regen Threshold**	**Targets**	**Implications**
Social Rent	That over 60% of rental properties in the development pipeline be at Social rent	That we are increasing the number of homes available for social rent every year (ie replacing more social rent homes than we dispose of)	N/A	We ideally want to keep social rent homes, particularly larger family homes. The disposal criteria will be more stringent for social rent homes	54.8% of our stock is currently social rent. If we were to deliver 60% of the programme as social rent until 2030 this would increase to 58% of our homes. Given disposals and opportunities to build social rent we think aiming for	Most s106 homes in SODC / VOWH are affordable rent homes. This is changing more quickly in CDC and WODC and all s106 in West Berks is social rent– so delivering this would change the

	Development Standards – until 2030		Existing homes – until 2030			
Our 2050 homes should be:	**Aspirational Standard**	**Minimum Standard**	**Retrofit and planned standards**	**Disposal / future regen Threshold**	**Targets**	**Implications**
					56% of stock to be social rent is more realistic	geography of our s106 acquisitions
Zero Carbon	Net zero carbon in use (SAP 100)	Building regs standards: EPC B	All homes to be minimum EPC C by 2030, subject to refusals and govt exemptions. Investment plan for average SAP of 92% (EPC A)	Unless a specific reason for retention, if we can't improve to EPC C we will dispose when vacant	All homes to be minimum EPC C by 2030, subject to refusals and govt exemptions. Investment plan for average SAP of 92% (EPC A)	We will need to consider strengthening in the future - but major implications for stockholding (eg some homes we own can't practically get to EPC C)
Adaptable/ Accessible	At least 20% of new build homes meet M42/ M43 accessibility standards	That Soha exploits all viable opportunities for the provision of adaptable/ accessible homes, weighted against other priorities. We will target acquisition of M42 and M43 properties in our s106 and land led programme. Cat 1 standard across the whole programme.	All existing adaptations accurately recorded in Asset Management system to enable effective allocation when void. No accessibility adaptations reversed at void. Wherever possible approved contribution (£20k) to improve accessibility in excess of grant.	If we dispose of an accessible home for other disposal reasons we will ear-mark receipt to enable replacement with an accessible home (specific purchase for need rather than adaptions to current home). The disposal criteria will include accessibility as a positive factor for retention.	Data on adaptions in place in all homes (gathered through stock condition surveys). At least 20 new M42 / M43 properties delivered per year.	Reduced resident satisfaction on re-let if we won't replace accessible showers with baths. Longer void times if holding adapted homes for those who need adapted properties
Homes With Gardens and / or access to external space	That all houses have gardens and all flats have access to public open space	That all houses have gardens and all flats have access to public open space	Continued work with communities funding to improve public outdoor space	That access to private/public open space be a consideration in the decision to retain/dispose of homes.	At least 3 positive improvements in public outdoor space per year through communities funding	N/A
Larger Homes	At least 10% of homes in the development pipeline to be 4 bed size	That Soha exploits all viable opportunities for the delivery of larger homes.	N/A	Presumption in favour of retaining larger homes	Increase in number of 4 bed homes in stock from 280	
Excluded Clients	A stock that is flexible, with partnership working to meet the needs of specific excluded groups	That Soha exploits all viable opportunities for the delivery of homes for excluded clients	As per other homes	As per other homes		
Geography	In-filling of gaps to make us more operationally efficient within existing stock footprint	In-filling of gaps to make us more operationally efficient within existing stock footprint	N/A	That outlying properties that cannot easily be maintained/managed be disposed of	Measure to be developed based on driving time and density	Disposals if do not meet other criteria should be to another landlord as social housing stock.

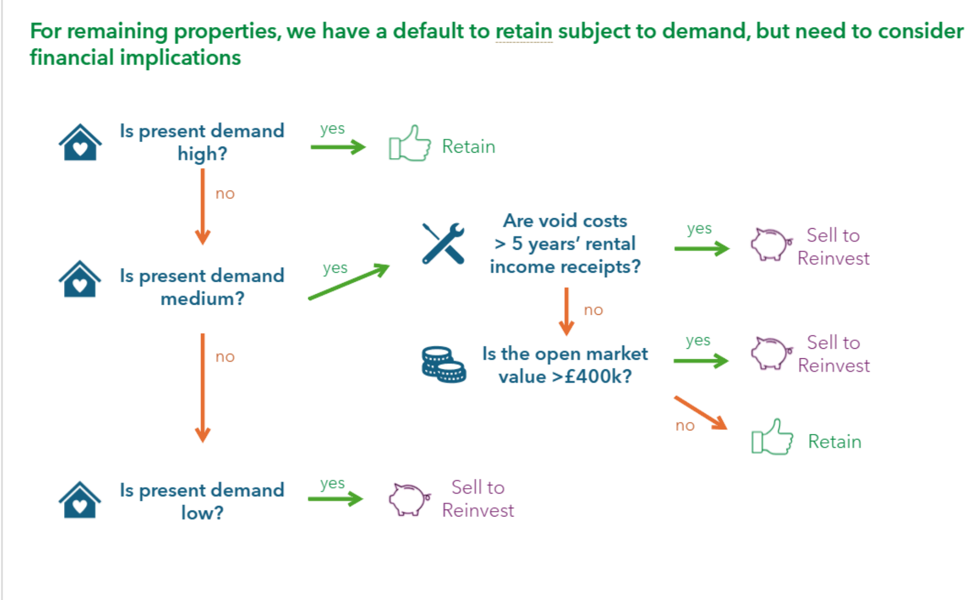
KW introduced a proposed new framework that Soha will use when deciding whether to keep or sell homes once they become empty. She stressed that the proposal is still in its early stages, has not yet been tested, and will be trialled over the next three months before any long-term decisions are made. She acknowledged that selling social housing properties is a highly sensitive issue, particularly in village communities, and emphasised that Soha does not want to reduce its presence in local areas unnecessarily.
The proposed criteria are intended to help Soha make long-term decisions about whether properties remain suitable, sustainable and financially viable through to 2050. The framework would only apply when a property becomes vacant and would not affect current residents.



Asset Management Decision-Making:
Is this a home we want to own in 2050?
Can we build more or better housing locally for the cost of selling this property?
Opening qualifiers…
Is this an adapted property in a location we know people need that adaptation?
If yes
Retain
Is this property a geographical outlier, affecting our ability to provide a good service?
If yes
Sell to Reinvest*
Is this property a listed building?
If yes
Sell to Reinvest*
*subject to sale final check (see next slide)
If no to all of these, progress to next stage…



We have a presumption to sell very high value, inefficient and higher-risk homes so we can reinvest in homes better suited to our 2050 homes aspirations
Worth over £600k?
yes
4+ beds?
yes
Can we buy a new home more cheaply?
no
Escalate
yes
Sell to Reinvest
no
Sell to Reinvest
no
>£20k to get to EPC C, or unable to get to EPC B?
yes
no
Complex history of repairs?
yes
Sell to Reinvest
no
High environmental risk?
yes
Sell to Reinvest
no
If no to all of these, on to next stage…
Checklist before selling
❑ Would a sale stifle regeneration plans?
❑ Does it facilitate access to larger site?
❑ Is it politically sensitive?
If 'no', proceed with sale
A 'yes' to any of the above would prompt further discussion



Kate explained that the proposed framework had only recently been developed and is intended as a starting point for longer-term planning about Soha's housing stock. She stressed that the purpose is not simply to sell homes, but to make strategic decisions about when selling a property could allow Soha to reinvest in higher-quality homes & better-located properties.

Kate invited residents to provide initial feedback on the proposals, explaining that the framework would be presented to the Board the following week before being tested over a three-month trial period using real examples of homes that may be kept or sold.

Questions

JG - Does Soha consider the expected lifespan of homes when building or purchasing properties, and whether alternative housing types are being explored as part of future planning?
They referred to the increasing number of traditional brick-built developments and questioned whether more modern approaches — such as modular, prefab or container-style homes — could offer lower repair costs, defined lifespans and greater flexibility.
JG suggested that temporary or modular homes with shorter planned lifespans could potentially provide a more cost-effective solution in some locations, where homes could later be replaced or redeveloped as needed. The question formed part of the wider discussion around Soha's long-term housing strategy, sustainability and future investment decisions.

KW - Kate responded that Soha does not intentionally purchase homes that are expected to have a short lifespan. However, she acknowledged that temporary or modular housing could be an interesting option in certain situations, particularly on sites that remain unused for long periods , and it's an area worth exploring further, particularly given the high local demand for temporary accommodation. KW explained that Soha currently supports temporary housing needs mainly by allowing councils to use some existing permanent homes temporarily before returning them to general housing stock.

BD - Are we building any four bedroom houses or taking on any four bedroom houses?

KW explained that Soha has a clear intention to increase the number of four-bedroom homes it builds, recognising the significant demand for larger family properties

10. SP47 Environmental Management Policy by GL – approved.

GL summarised the key points of Soha's environmental policy, focusing on the organisation's goal to bring all homes up to EPC Band C by 2030. He reported that progress is ahead of schedule, with an initial programme improving 100 homes and a further grant-funded scheme currently upgrading 179 more properties. These works are expected to be completed around 18 months earlier than planned, and the Board has approved additional funding while Soha awaits the outcome of another grant application for approximately 100 further homes.
He explained that Soha is also funding some improvements directly, particularly smaller works such as loft insulation top-ups, where the administrative cost of securing grant funding would exceed the value of the work itself.
GL stressed that achieving EPC Band C by 2030 is only the first stage of the organisation's long-term plans. By 2050, Soha expects to work towards even higher energy efficiency standards, with some homes potentially reaching EPC Band B or A.
Alongside improving energy efficiency, Soha is also focusing on reducing its wider environmental impact by:

- Using more sustainable and durable materials,
- Reducing waste and landfill use,
- Promoting biodiversity and sustainable resources across estates,
- Complying with environmental legislation and standards.

The presentation concluded with residents confirming they were satisfied with the update and approved the policy.

11. Co-Opted vacancies by AMOS

2 Members Co-opted in
Karen Chandler
Margaret Buckell

AOB

None

Next Members Forum meeting – July 16th