



PUBLIC MINUTES

of the Board meeting

on Tuesday 20 October 2020 at 0930

Microsoft Teams Meeting (no members were together, and the meeting was deemed to have been held in London, the location of the Chair).

6 Remote and virtual participation

6.1 Any member may validly participate in a meeting virtually through the medium of conference telephone, video conferencing or similar form of communication equipment, provided that all persons participating in the meeting are able to hear and speak to each other throughout such meeting, or relevant part thereof. A member so participating shall be deemed to be present in person at the meeting and shall accordingly be counted in a quorum and entitled to vote.

6.2 A meeting shall be deemed to take place where the largest group of those members participating is assembled or, if there is no group which is larger than any other group, where the chair of the meeting is.

Present

Simon Dow (SD)	Interim Chair
Paul Smee (PS)	
Liz Butler (LB)	
Richard Hughes (RH)	
Ceri Richards (CR)	
Jo Boaden (JBo)	
Deborah Gregory (DG)	
Fiona MacGregor (FM)	Chief Executive

In attendance

Jonathan Walters (JW)	Deputy Chief Executive
Maxine Loftus (ML)	Director, Regulatory Operations
Richard Peden (RBP)	Director, Finance and Corporate Services
Will Perry (WP)	Director, Strategy
Harold Brown (HB)	Senior Assistant Director, Investigation and Enforcement
Emma Tarran (ERT)	Senior Assistant Director, Head of Legal Services and Company Secretary
Althea Houghton (AH)	Assistant Director, Registrations and New Entrants – for item 8
John O'Mahony (JOM)	Assistant Director, Corporate Services and Performance – for item 9
Chris Kitchen (CK)	Board Secretary, Minutes

1 Welcome and apologies

01/10/20 There were no apologies.

2 Declarations of Interest

02/10/20 There were no new declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the last meeting – 29 September 2020

03/10/20 The confidential minutes and the public minutes of the last meeting were AGREED subject to minor amendments.

4 Matters Arising

04/10/20 Members noted the updates to the actions from previous meetings. Members were given verbal updates.

5 Forward Planner

05/10/20 Members NOTED the forward planner. Management agreed to consider a Board away time when new Board members are appointed, as part of their induction.

FM

Chief Executive update

6 Covid-19

Latest Government announcements

06/10/20 Members noted the latest government announcements update in the slides. *Care Homes visits:* feedback from a recent meeting with providers who have care homes is that implementing the C-19 guidance is proving complex in some cases. Through conversations with providers it is evident that in most cases, additional operating costs and the impact of a slowdown in lettings, can be absorbed by the majority of providers. The current tier restrictions are difficult to manage for national providers who have homes in different parts of the country with different restrictions in play.

07/10/20 Members NOTED the £80m regeneration fund which has been announced and the relaunch of the cold weather fund. Members noted that ARA Venn have been appointed as licensees for the Affordable Housing Guarantee Scheme 2020.

General updates:

MHCLG

08/10/20 *White Paper:* a publication date is not yet finalised.

09/10/20 *Board Member recruitment:* the advert for the 3 new Board members was imminent. **Post Meeting Note:** the advert for the 3 members went live on 20 October 2020 and for the Chair on 12 November 2020.

Other:

11/10/20 *Short term lease providers:* these providers are an increasing focus of I&E resource, with publication of notices and judgements on rent issues among other findings, on the increase. We continue to liaise with a local Birmingham MP. A Birmingham Councillor has written to the Secretary of State

- 12/10/20 *Cladding and building safety:* there has been a lot of media coverage of this issue, particularly in relation to campaigns organised by leaseholders on ability to obtain EWS1 forms and mortgages and costs of remediation works. We do not have a remit on leaseholders, so are aiming to be clear about our focus. Separately there is due to be BBC East coverage of the inquiry into Stella Marris House and Inclusion's provision of long-term lease-based properties in Suffolk. JW was interviewed for the programme.
- 13/10/20 *Moody's Sovereign Downgrade:* members noted that Moody's had reduced the UK's sovereign rating, and that this could potentially feed through into the ratings of individual RPs. **Post-meeting note** – Moody's have not downgraded any providers as a result.
- 14/10/20 *Performance Review:* we are now progressing the IP panel.
- 15/10/20 *Regulatory Operations:* members NOTED the update and advised that the reduction in the number of published RJs was a result of the IDA programme being paused. However, this will change as the IDA programme has restarted.
- 16/10/20 *Grenfell Tower public inquiry:* members NOTED the update on the inquiry and the evidence heard in recent weeks. The third panel member has now been appointed.
- 17/10/20 *Publications, Media Coverage and Stakeholder engagement:* members NOTED the information provided. The recent meetings with the Sounding Board and care providers were very useful with the former in particular supporting our continuing co-regulatory approach in terms of Boards responsibility in relation to addressing diversity and inclusion issues in their organisations and communities.

7 Investigation and Enforcement update

- 18/10/20 HB introduced the I&E report which sets out more background to current cases and an update on Lease Based Providers, particularly the issues in Birmingham with short term leasing models in operation.

Consumer Regulation

- 19/10/20 Members NOTED the update on consumer referrals this year.

Case Reports – Lease Based Providers

- 20/10/20 We continue to engage with the Boards of these providers on compliance with standards and to provide assurance on compliance with rent setting requirements. RN's have been issued for Westmoreland and Trinity.

Short term lease providers

- 21/10/20 Members were given an update on the issues with short term lease providers in the Birmingham area. We will be using the SDR data to investigate if further expansion of this model is occurring in other geographic areas as well as Birmingham.

- 22/10/20 *Sustain:*

- 23/10/20 *Expectations:*

24/10/20 *Inclusion:*

25/10/20 *Prospect Housing:* the statutory appointees to their Board are now in place. We continue to monitor progress.

26/10/20 Members NOTED the other updates in the paper.

8 Decisions of the Assistant Director Registrations and New Entrants

27/10/20 AH joined the meeting and advised members who had NOTED the paper. There was a discussion about the increase in the number of applications being received. AH advised that a number of applications are being refused registration, mainly from small providers at the preliminary stage. The correspondence supporting a refusal sets out clearly and comprehensively the grounds for refusal.

28/10/20 In response to a question on why there has been an increase in applications, AH advised that we are receiving more applications from For Profit organisations than previously seen, but also from those providing lease-based accommodation or supported housing to vulnerable people. AH confirmed that the guidance in our publication "Becoming a Registered Provider" is very detailed and informative. The Chair thanked AH for a very informative and clear paper.

9 Equality Update

29/10/20 JOM joined the meeting and advised members that this was the first of the scheduled quarterly updates, following the publication of the Equality Objectives and Action Plan. There is a lot of work being carried out in this area and details of this are in the annexes to the paper. Member were given updates on the following areas:

30/10/20 *Learning from other organisations:* The team have had some very productive and informative discussions with other organisations which have proved helpful in testing our approach and getting suggestions of what has worked elsewhere. Such conversations have affirmed the importance of the collation of robust data.

31/10/20 *Recruitment:* this is an area where there has been a lot of changes which it is hoped will have a positive impact. We have reviewed where we advertise roles and are now adding several new job sites which have been recommended for reaching BAME job seekers. We have a linked policy where we will seek to ensure that interview shortlists have a minimum of 20% BAME candidates provided they have passed the benchmark. Blind shortlisting by the recruiting panel will continue, and the shortlist will be reviewed by HR in conjunction with diversity monitoring information. The Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is now live and we will be able to use this to collect recruitment data more efficiently and effectively than previously.

32/10/20 *Staff Engagement:* there is now a Woman's Network and a BAME Network within the organisation, set up by staff, and both are keen to engage with the Executive Group to help deliver our fundamental objectives. A channel has been established for them to report into REG. We have offered each a small annual budget. We have also had a series of small staff forum meetings where staff can engage directly with the CEO and DCEO and some of the discussions from these forums has fed into the equality action plan. The CEO confirmed

that these forums had seen a wide range of topics discussed. In response to a question about the range of staff who had taken up this opportunity, the CEO confirmed that there had been a mix of middle to junior staff who had taken part and that she had not had the impression that staff felt that the forums were restricted to any particular grade, but acknowledged that when the next series of forums are scheduled we will take account of whether there are any potential imbalances in terms of the grade and gender of staff that attend.

33/10/20 Members asked about our diversity monitoring data. RBP noted that incomplete data had been a long standing issue with staff not always providing this information however, supported by Unite, the organisation had made great steps and now essentially had responses from all staff members.

34/10/20 There was a discussion about how the RSH is perceived by potential applicants in relation to its inclusion and diversity. We will look to signpost to the recruitment pages/sites of the previously discussed advertising platforms as well as to ATS. Members thanked management and applauded the steps taken to date.

10 Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

35/10/20 The Chair updated the Board members on the ARAC meeting that had taken place the previous day. The meeting had been a productive one with the following key areas covered:

36/10/20 *Strategic Risk Register:* The reduction in the risk scores on resources, the impact of C-19 on provider services and the continued ability of the sector to secure funding was encouraging.

37/10/20 *Information Risk:* the ARAC had received a very detailed and informative report on the range and depth of information risk to the organisation with positive steps being taken to ensure we are compliant with legislative requirements and systems are secure.

38/10/20 *Internal Audit:* the reviews over the year had all scored either significant and moderate assurance and the overall IA conclusion was one of significant assurance. The IA team had commended management on their control measures and the Board on the level of challenge given to management.

39/10/20 *NAO:* they had reported a very positive audit and confirmed that this was near completion. An unmodified audit report was expected by the end of the week with no major adjustments identified.

41/10/20 The ARAC Chair confirmed that the IA report will be in the Annual Report along with the governance statement and accounts which will be reviewed by ARAC and recommended to the Board for adoption at the meeting on 26 October 2020.

41/10/20 The Board Chair thanked the ARAC Chair and members of ARAC for their hard work.

11 Finance and Corporate Services update

Management Accounts

42/10/20 RBP advised members that there were no variances across any cost headings as the paper set out the updated forecast for the remainder of the financial year which was built on actual costs to the end of August.

43/10/20 Members were given assurance that the figures for IT spend were prudent budget figure. Development of NROSH+ is continuing, however we are taking a fresh look at what our future needs will be.

12 Any Other Business

45/10/20 There was no other business for discussion. The Chair thanked management for an excellent set of papers and members for their input in the discussions.

Date of next meeting: 26 October 2020 for ARA sign-off. Next scheduled meeting of the Board – 24 November at 9.30am