

## PUBLIC MINUTES

### of the Homes England Board Meeting held at 11.00am on Thursday 25 July 2019 at Windsor House, London

Present:

Simon Dudley	Acting Chair	Except item 5
Stephen Bell	Chair for Item 5	Items 3, 12, 5
Keith House		Except 8 & 9
Richard Blakeway		
Teresa O'Neill		Except item 5
Nick Walkley	Chief Executive	

In attendance:

Lynda McMullan	Chief Financial Officer	
Isabella Freeman	General Counsel	
Christopher Kinsella	Interim Chief Financial Officer	
Mark Gray	Chief Risk Officer	
Mark Dabell	Head of Health and Safety and Facilities	Items 2 & 10
Amy Casterton	Chief of Staff	Item 3
James Gourlay	Head of Assurance	Item 3
Tracie Evans	Corporate Services Director	Item 5
Jacquie McGeachie	Interim HR Director	Item 5
Jackie Jacob	Director of Affordable Housing	Item 11
Mary Carter	Board Secretary	

### **Apologies**

49/07/19 Apologies were received from Ceri Smith and Duncan Sutherland.

50/07/19 Items were taken in the following order: 8, 9, 1, 4, 11, 10, 2, 6, 7, 3, 12, 5.

51/07/19 Members considered items 8 and 9, pending the arrival of a fourth non-executive member to make the quorum. Once the quorum was in place they agreed that, in line with the recommendations of the Board Transformation Plan discussed at Board on 30 May, the quorum of the Board should be three NEDs (reduced from four at present) and the quorum of all the committees should be two NEDs (reduced from three at present).

### **Item 1 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

52/07/19 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record, with a small amendment to paragraph 19/07/19.

### **Item 2 Matters Arising**

53/07/19 42/07/19 – The Chief Risk Officer submitted amended wording for the Gifts & Hospitality Policy, as requested at the 4 July meeting, removing the obligation for Board members to seek to seek prior permission from the Chair, if it was not practically possible to do so. Board members accepted this change, and asked for a further amendment, removing the requirement for Board members to report hospitality that was declined.

MG

54/07/19 The Head of Health and Safety and Facilities presented a paper updating members on progress with the Accommodation Strategy. Full Business Case approval had been received from MHCLG, OGP, PFG and Treasury for the preferred office locations. He now sought Board approval to the award of two contracts for fit-out works, and the commencement of procurement for office furniture.

55/07/19 The Chief Executive congratulated all the staff involved in getting these business cases successfully through the various approval hurdles.

56/07/19 The Board:  
a) APPROVED the award of contract to complete the fitout works for the new Newcastle Office;  
b) APPROVED the award of contract to complete the fitout works for the new Crawley Office; and  
c) APPROVED the commencement of procurement for office furniture using the CCS framework agreement.

57/07/19 Members NOTED the remaining matters arising.

### **Item 3 Spending Review and Homes England Transformation**

58/07/19 The Chief Financial Officer Director introduced the item, which set out progress with joint MHCLG and Homes England transformation, the Spending Review bid and Financial Autonomy development; and requested steers from the Board on progressing this work further.

#### **Item 3a) Joint Homes England and MHCLG Transformation**

59/07/19 The Chief of Staff set out the key principles and current progress on joint transformation of the MHCLG and Homes England relationship, including progress on the transfer of programme responsibilities, the new arrangements for assurance; the programme transformation 'waves'; and next steps in the transformation process.

61/07/19 The Chief Financial officer added that the new responsibilities would need to be set out in a new Framework Document and a review was underway jointly with MHCLG and UKGI, with a view to approval by Board, the CEO and the Permanent Secretary in 2020.

62/07/19 The Board welcomed the progress to date. They discussed the

readiness of Homes England to take on these responsibilities, and the challenges posed to the Department by this new relationship. They considered that it would be useful for the Board to engage with the MHCLG Board on these points, and asked officers to arrange a joint meeting.

AC

63/07/19 The Board AGREED to embed the principles set out in the paper within a revised Framework Document.

### **Item 3b) Spending Review Priorities**

64/07/19 The Chief Financial Officer updated the Board on the priorities and workstreams identified for the Agency's Spending Review offer and requested steers on progressing the work further.

65/07/19 Members recognised that the offer was highly ambitious but considered that it was credible and achievable. They discussed how the Board could help develop and build support for the SR proposals... and requested an update in time for the Board phone meeting on 22 August 2019.

LM/CK

### **Item 3c) Financial Freedoms and Autonomy**

66/07/19 The Head of Assurance introduced the paper, which invited the Board to consider the rationale for financial freedoms.

67/07/19 Members ... favoured a five year rolling budget, in line with the arrangements in Highways England.

68/07/19 The Board NOTED the three papers.

### **Item 4 MI Data Sharing**

69/07/19 The Chief Financial Officer sought the Board's approval to provide MHCLG officials with access to Homes England's Management Information Suite prior to its approval at Board. This would enable working level preparations for governance meetings; allow MHCLG to quantify its own overall performance on its housing objectives; and enable financial consolidation at MHCLG Group level. The MI Suite would not be used for any formal discussions on Homes England's performance with Ministers/Senior Officials, or for any public announcements until it has been approved by Board.

70/07/19 The Board AGREED to provide MHCLG officials with 'pre-Board approval' access to Homes England's MI Suite, for certain limited purposes.

### **Item 5 Pension Scheme Changes**

71/07/19 Simon Dudley and Teresa O'Neill declared an interest, as both had recently been Trustees of the HCA Pension Fund. They left the

meeting, and Stephen Bell Chaired the meeting for this item.

- 76/07/19 The Board:
- a) AGREED to proceed with the closure of the HCAPS final salary scheme to new entrants;
  - b) AGREED to the new Care Scheme to commence on the 1st September;
  - c) CONFIRMED that the recommended option would apply to the new Care Scheme; and
  - d) AUTHORISED General Counsel to take all steps necessary to complete the documentation in respect of the closure of the final salary scheme and the new Care scheme.

**Item 6 CEO Update**

77/07/19 The Chief Executive updated members on key events since the last board meeting, including senior staff changes and work on the Operating Model, restructure and accommodation. The Chair, Sir Ed Lister, continued to be on a short leave of absence as he carried out work on the Conservative leadership campaign. Simon Dudley continued to be acting Chair, in his capacity as the Senior Independent Director. Work was underway to prepare for the appointment of an interim, and a permanent Chair, if needed.

78/07/19 The agency had published its Annual Report and financial statements for 2018/19 – another important milestone following the strategic plan launch six months ago. The All Staff Conference in Gateshead had gone well, and he thanked those members who attended. Meetings with outgoing Ministers had been positive, and staff were now working on preparations for a new Government.

79/07/19 The Board NOTED the update.

**Item 7 Chair's Update**

80/07/19 The Chair presented a brief summary of his activities on behalf of Homes England since the last Board meeting. Four new members had now been appointed, and he looked forward to seeing them at the August and September meetings.

81/07/19 The Board NOTED the update.

**Item 8 Chief Risk Officer Report**

82/07/19 The Chief Risk Officer presented his report.

83/07/19

84/07/19

85/07/19 The Board NOTED the report.

**Item 9 Management Information Suite**

86/07/19 The Chief Financial Officer presented the key elements of Homes England's performance to the end of June 2019.

88/07/19 Members NOTED the report.

**Item 10 Health & Safety Monthly Update**

89/07/19 The Head of Health and Safety and Facilities gave a verbal update on activity since the last meeting. The key findings of the strategic health and safety review would be reported to the 26 September Board. MD

90/07/19 Members NOTED the update.

**Item 11 Strategic Partnerships Extension**

91/07/19 The Director of Affordable Housing informed members that the Communities Secretary had opened bidding for £2bn of longer term grant funding for existing Strategic Partnerships on 27 July 2019. She updated members on progress with the Partnerships to date, the action taken following the announcement to invite proposals for longer term funding, and the proposed timescales.

92/07/19

93/07/19

94/07/19

95/07/19 Members NOTED the report.

**Item 12 Committee Minutes**

96/07/19 Members NOTED the proceedings of the Investment Committee meeting on 11 July 2019.

**Item 15 Any Other Business**

97/07/19 There was no other business.

Date of next meeting: 26 September 2019.

**Chairman's signature:**

**Date:**