



PUBLIC MINUTES
of the Board meeting
on Tuesday 21 May 2024
PG49, 2 Marsham Street

10 Remote and virtual participation

10.1 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 Board 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.

10.2 A meeting shall be deemed to take place where the largest group of those Board 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

Bernadette Conroy (BC)	Chair
Deborah Gregory (DG)	
Richard Hughes (RH)	
Geoff Smyth (GS)	
Kalpesh Brahmhatt (KB)	
Sukhvinder Kaur-Stubbs (SK-S)	
Jo Boaden (JBo)	
Liz Butler (LB)	
Fiona MacGregor (FM)	Chief Executive

In attendance

Jonathan Walters (JW)	Deputy Chief Executive
Kate Dodsworth (KD)	Chief of Regulatory Engagement
Will Perry (WP)	Director, Strategy
Richard Peden (RBP)	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Emma Tarran (ERT)	Assistant Director, Head of Legal & Company Secretary
Karen Doran (KED)	Director of Regulatory Engagement (PRPs)
Angela Holden (AH)	Director of Regulatory Engagement (LARPs)
Harold Brown (HB)	Senior Assistant Director of Investigation & Enforcement
Jim Bennett (JB)	Assistant Director, Policy, Strategy and Impact (for CEO update)

Minutes

Christine Kitchen	Board Secretary
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1 Welcome and apologies

01/05/24 There were no apologies.

- 2** **Declarations of Interest**
- 02/05/24 There were no new declarations of interest.
- 3** **Minutes of meeting 16 April 2024**
- 03/05/24 The confidential and public minutes from 16 April 2024 were AGREED, subject to a few typographical amendments.
- 4** **Matters arising**
- 04/05/24 Noted. 05/02/24 and 36/11/23 will be carried forward.
- 5** **Board forward planner**
- 05/05/24 Members NOTED the forward planner. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) sponsor was unable to observe this meeting but will attend the July meeting.
- 6** **Chair's update**
- 08/05/24 *Chair appraisal:* BC requested that members respond to the email from Fiona requesting feedback on BC's performance for her appraisal.
- 09/05/24 *Staff Conference:* BC advised that unfortunately she had been unable to attend the staff conference, but invited DG who was there to give members an overview of the day. DG reported that the day had been very enjoyable and gave her the opportunity to meet and talk with staff during the table discussions and breaks. Overall, the day had been very positive with key messages of One RSH, objectives and values and cross organisational working landing very well and staff confirming they had enjoyed the day.
- FM agreed and confirmed that the conference feedback was mostly positive and congratulated the team who had facilitated every aspect of the day and individual staff who had shone on the day. There was positive feedback on the induction programme from new staff and positive messages from longer serving staff. The positive impact of having so many new staff was tangible, but there was a conscious effort not to create a separation between new and longer serving staff and the day had intentionally focussed on the organisation and our roles individually and collectively. Table discussions were good and messages about leadership and values had landed well. There have been requests that the next conference would benefit from an external view of the RSH which the team will consider for the next event.
- In response to a question on whether we have the capacity to keep up the momentum of the induction programme, KD confirmed that the programme is on-going. The need to have continuing "check-ins" was acknowledged so as to ensure long term satisfaction amongst staff.
- 7** **ARAC update**
- 10/05/24 LB gave members an overview of the April ARAC meeting.
- 11/05/24 ARAC received the RSH annual procurement and the annual fraud reports and two Internal Audit final reports on (1) Fee setting Model (2) For-profits audit, both

of which had been given a substantial assurance rating. The for-profits report shows that we are consistent in our approach to economic regulation and the fees setting model audit stated categorically that the RSH is acting within its remit and Board can take assurance that there is no blurring between our approach to fees setting for LAs and PRPs.

12/05/24 The Strategic Risk Register had been reviewed and ARAC agreed with the recommendation to reduce the scores for two of the risks.

13/05/24 BC thanked LB for the update, and it was AGREED that the IA reports will be shared with the Board.

CK

8 Chief Executive update

Key Issues:

14/05/24 *LUHC Select Committee report - Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector*: was published on 8 May 2024 and highlights the financial pressures on the sector and offers potential solutions for registered providers. The report calls for a review of grant funding, the Affordable Housing Programme and Shared Ownership. Stakeholder feedback shows that the RSH is operating well and is well placed to manage risk.

16/05/24 *Stakeholder feedback*: we are receiving positive feedback on our new regulatory approach, the inspection programme and our staff approach and behaviours. We expect to publish our stakeholder survey report during the second half of this year.

17/05/24 KD and AH reported on a constructive meeting with Kwajo Tweneboa and Richard Blakeway on LA approach to tenant services and our approach to inspections.

General updates

18/05/24 *RSH Fees to RPs*: the fee levels have now been confirmed to the sector and responses have been limited

Policy Updates

19/05/24

- *Awaab's Law* – closed on 5 March.
- *Competency and Conduct* - closed on 5 April.
- *Social Tenants Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs)* – published on 20 May, we await the policy statement and direction from DLUHC in due course.

20/05/24 The remainder of the CEO update was NOTED.

9 Regulatory Engagement Update

21/05/24 Members were advised that this is the first report since the implementation of the new regime. It was noted that the benchmark data will help shape our strategic direction going forward. The landlords being inspected in the first round have been informed and we have completed the scope of these inspections. Engagement with the landlords has begun.

22/05/24 Other work programmes are on-going and the paper set out the Q4 headlines which show repairs and maintenance spend is similar to the forecast in June 2023. Members noted the themes from the engagement meetings and section J of the report reflects the work we have done with C2 providers. We have invested a lot of time engaging with LAs.

23/05/23 Members noted the referrals process and acknowledged that the figures are currently high. JBo asked how the Consumer Regulation cases pre 1 April will be dealt with and AH gave assurance that we are continuing engagement. A query was raised on whether there was a sector risk around supplies and single contractor arrangements, and this was discussed. The Chair requested that Board receive exception reporting on the higher risk cases and suggested this could be a topic for discussion at a future strategic Board meeting.

AH

24/05/24 WP was asked about for-profit landlords looking into structures that would facilitate investment from local authority pension funds into homes within their region, and he advised that this was not an unusual approach.

10 Investigations and Enforcement update

26/05/24 HB presented the paper. He reported that the I&E team are working through cases and resolutions are on track before they are transferred to Regulatory Engagement.

27/05/24 Members NOTED the casework updates.

28/05/24 It was AGREED that we need to have a Board workshop on our approach to long-term non compliance and the associated risks. Management committed to find an appropriate meeting for this discussion.

HB

29/05/24 In response to a query on the lack of GUR cases since October 2023, HB advised that the reason for this was that we had worked through the weaker providers and identified them earlier and a lack of new GUR cases is not concerning.

11 Finance and Corporate Services update

30/05/24 RBP introduced the paper which included updates on year end management accounts and the 2024/25 budget allocation.

31/05/24 The full year end spend was favourable to budget reporting an underspend on payroll due to a later phasing of recruitment, digital and tenant survey allocations will now be incurred in 2024/25 and legal costs as a result of prudent budgeting practices. RBP gave assurances on the delay to digital services transfer confirming no negative impact to the business. Our main systems (Dynamics and NROSH) are secure systems and there was a discussion about the use of AI in the RSH. A board teach-in will be scheduled to provide clarity to members on the digital services and plans for data management and analysis. The HCAPS/pension costs were NOTED.

RBP

32/05/24 The process for budget allocation was explained and it was confirmed that our budget allocation has been confirmed and approved by DLUHC and HM Treasury. The allocation of the budget across the RSH was NOTED.

33/05/24 The paper NOTED the annex which set out the requirement of the Functional Standards to appoint (a) board member(s) with specific responsibility for the oversight of (1) safety and (2) security compliance. The scope has not been finalised, but members were invited to put themselves forward if interested based on the information in the annex. The role profile will be shared when finalised. SK-S has indicated her early interest. It was agreed that this approach should and will not take away the overall responsibility for these areas from the whole Board.

FM

12 Q4 Performance and Risk report

34/05/24 The Board NOTED the report which gave explanations for the three amber risks and the one red risk with assurance that increased resources and the new assessment team will positively improve the service standard figures. The updates on Business Plan targets were NOTED. There was a discussion about the reported data breaches and members were given assurance that these were not symptomatic of any worrying general trends. Members were advised that there is a strong compliance culture in the RSH and there is regular training provided to staff and guidance available to all.

13 Any Other Business

35/05/24 *Board meeting cycles:* Board discussed the structure of board meetings and it was AGREED that going forward operational updates (Regulatory Engagement, I&E, F&CS) will be submitted quarterly to the formal meetings starting from July 2024, with exceptional reporting, if necessary, on urgent matters. There will continue to be 10 Board meeting a year with meetings outside of these quarterly sessions taking a more strategic and workshop style format. It was also AGREED that papers from ARAC and N&RC meetings will be shared with all members.

CK

14 Review of meeting papers

36/05/24 Members were content with the quality of the papers and that they were received on time.

JBo was recused from the next item and left the meeting.

15 Private Finance update

37/05/24 WP presented the paper which was taken as read. The market is showing that finance is readily available for PRPs and they continue to be seen as a low risk investment. Capital markets are keen for further HA issuance. Banks remain generally co-operative in offering extensions to existing facilities.

38/05/24 WP responded to queries regarding:

- *Credit ratings*
- *Supported housing (SH)*
- *Bank waivers*

40/05/24 The Chair thanked all the officers for their papers and to members for their contributions to the discussions during the meeting.

Date of next meeting: 18 June 2024.