

## Minutes from Board meeting - Non-Confidential held 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Attendance	Martin Surl (MS) (Chair), Trish Blain (TB), David Clowes (DC), Christine Gore (CG), Ian Mason (IM), Andrew Parfitt (AP), Cllr Richard Pineger (RP), John Rawson (JR), Steve Slater (SS) ( <i>attended remotely</i> ), Emma Wall (EW), Vicky Day (VD), Alison Salter (AS), Caroline Walker (CW), Bob Dagger (BD) ( <i>attended remotely</i> ), Louisa Foster (LF), Olivia Underhill (OU), Adam Waller (AW)
Recorder	Rhian Watts (RW)
Apologies	Cllr Glenn Andrews (GA), Sarah Godfrey (SG), Beverley Grimster (BG), Cllr Victoria Atherstone (VA), Stafford Cruse (SC)
Quorate?	Yes

Item	Notes	Action for
1	<p><b>Meeting commenced at 17:29</b></p> <p>Apologies received from GA, SG, BG, VA and SC.</p> <p>No declarations of interest.</p> <p>MS thanked colleagues for the high quality papers and highlighted their quick response following the events at Rochdale Boroughwide Housing. He commented that it was positive to have reassurance that procedures were in place to prevent this happening at CBH and noted that this would remain a priority area for the Board and CBH.</p>	
2	<p><u>CEO Report</u></p> <p>SS introduced the CEO Report and noted that the government's rent consultation had confirmed that rent increases for 2023-24 would be capped at 7%. He explained that CBC's Cabinet had met and will be backing this position which will be included in the consultation budget papers. SS highlighted that whilst this means £2.95m less income over 4 years against the 11% baseline, it does represent a positive for CBH and</p>	

	<p>the HRA compared with a lower rent cap as it will give us a greater buffer and more flexibility with our future ambitions, such as Carbon net zero. MS commented that this was better than had been hoped for and asked how this would be communicated to customers and partners. SS confirmed that this would be discussed with Councillor Peter Jeffries (Cabinet Member Finance, Assets and Regeneration) following the consultation to ensure that we release a clear, balanced message via the HRA budget papers that reflects our focus on supporting customers through these difficult times whilst managing significant inflationary pressures ourselves. The rental income we receive will enable the continued delivery of strong support services and in particular will enable us to support customers with the ongoing cost of living crisis.</p> <p>SS explained that a briefing note relating to damp and mould had been circulated to Board, CBC Members and CBC Officers and that a report was being prepared for the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) for the 19 December. He confirmed that this would explain our approach to identifying and managing cases, confirm the level of cases and will categorise cases. SS highlighted that a significant piece of work is being carried out to crystallise our position, which had identified 290 cases over the last 12 months which were being reviewed. He explained that this would include consideration of their seriousness, family make up, and health history. SS noted that we are not anticipating any category 1 cases as where significant cases have been found tenants have been moved to alternative housing immediately. He added that an additional report will be brought to Board in January which will build on the information provided to the RSH.</p> <p>IM noted that the inquest into Awaab Ishak's death had also identified issues related to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in how the family had been treated and asked what actions were being taken to ensure this wasn't the case at CBH. MS agreed that it was important to address both passive and subconscious biases that might prevent inclusion. SS agreed that addressing unconscious bias and understanding customers lived experience will play an important role in ensuring that we get our response to damp and mould right. He highlighted that this has been included within the HRA 5 Year Business Plan and it will be an important</p>	
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	<p>focus to include colleagues in the journey to ensure that EDI and Listening &amp; Acting are fundamental parts of CBH's DNA. MS agreed that it was vital to ensure that CBH is an inclusive and fair organisation that understands the needs of the wide range of customers and communities that we serve. EW confirmed that we are using data to improve the service we provide, ensure we communicate well and understand the makeup of customers who don't report issues such as damp and mould to identify any potential trends. TB commented that the Customer and Community Services Teams had done a fantastic piece of work at the start of Covid-19 where they had contacted vulnerable people to check on their wellbeing and needs. She asked whether it would be possible to do something similar again particularly as the financial challenges of heating homes could lead to further damp and mould issues. CW explained that the phone calls had been in place of regular visits due to Covid restrictions and that regular in-person contact had now been re-established, particularly for vulnerable customers such as the elderly. She added that damp and mould has been discussed with all teams that have customer contact and that this will aid with the identification of issues.</p> <p>CW explained that as part of the Warm Cheltenham initiative CBC and other partners have created a network of warm spaces across Cheltenham throughout the week, including 2 provided by CBH. She added that a Crowdfunder has also been created to allow people to donate the government's Energy Bills Support Scheme payments and had received £3k so far. CW noted that CBH are supporting CBC to donate this fund to charitable organisations in Cheltenham. She added that CBH has received £1,500 from CBC's Health &amp; Wellbeing fund to run healthy cookery courses (using slow cookers) with sheltered housing customers, which would help to reduce their energy bills. CW also thanked RP and other councillors for their support with our Levelling Up funding bid which hopes to secure £150k for St Pauls and £150k for St Marks. She explained that if successful this would be invested to support residents into employment and training and help residents overcome barriers to employment such as health and confidence issues.</p>	
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	<b>The Board considered and provided feedback on the content of the report.</b>	
3	<p><u>Feedback from the Audit &amp; Risk Committee</u></p> <p>JR introduced an update on the 10 November Audit &amp; Risk Committee meeting. He highlighted that it had been a very positive meeting and that the Committee had asked for a deeper review into how CBH identifies and supports vulnerable and isolated customers. JR explained that this had evolved from DC's work as the Board Champion for Risk. MS thanked the Committee for their very comprehensive work.</p> <p><b>The Board considered and provided feedback on the content of the report.</b></p>	
4	<p><u>Agree non-confidential minutes and actions of the 26.10.22 meeting and to note progress on current action points</u></p> <p><b>The Board agreed the non-confidential minutes of the 26.10.22 meeting as a true record and noted progress on current action points.</b></p>	
5	<p><u>Draft CBH budgets and performance targets 2023-2024</u></p> <p>SS introduced the draft budgets and performance targets for 2023-24. He noted that this covered the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the new HRA 5 Year Business Plan and highlighted that there was a lot of activity in the 1<sup>st</sup> year to give us a strong start to the priorities. SS explained that the budget also reflects a number of cost pressures including a potential increase in the pension cost base following the triennial pension evaluation which is currently being discussed with the pension fund. He noted to address the challenges of the recruitment market we will be further increasing the number of apprentices to "grow our own". SS added that this budget also includes the final year of savings for the Stronger Working Partnership Programme (SWPP) which had agreed that we would be making £487k of savings by year 3. He confirmed that the final £107k of savings had been identified and explained that these had been made</p>	

	<p>across services through natural movement and through reduction in office space.</p> <p>SS explained that the draft performance targets reflect the high level goals and measures of success established to 2028 in the HRA 5 Year Business Plan. He noted that the report includes key performance scorecard areas, benchmarking targets and details of the annual key performance indicators (KPIs) including the full suite of tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs).</p> <p>JR commented that despite the pressures that we are facing it was good to see a budget that still pushes progress. He highlighted the additional compliance officers, additional progress on Carbon net zero and the additional funding for the Help2 scheme to help tenants in difficult circumstances. JR noted that there has also been discussion of further investment in the Project and Change Team and suggested that it would be good to provide Board with an update on the progress of this Team in the future. SS confirmed that we had initially agreed for support for the Team for 2 years but that it would be vital for CBH to continue their work going forward if we can get the numbers right and drive efficiencies. He highlighted that we are seeing the impact of the Team through their work on Repairs and Maintenance, damp and mould and the HRA Business Plan. SS added that they will also play an important role in driving cultural change in CBH in the future by ensuring that we continue to listen to colleagues and customers. He agreed that we would continue to keep Board involved and informed.</p> <p>IM commented that Mark Way (Head of Building Services) had discussed in the past the rise in disrepair compensation claims. He noted that there had been concerns that additional focus from lawyers would lead to a rise in pay outs and a strain on resources. IM asked if we have seen an increase in these claims. SS confirmed that this was a challenging area which had seen a significant increase in engagement with tenants across the country. He noted that when complaints are upheld that the lawyers often take a significant portion of the compensation. SS confirmed that the £40k reflected in the budget is a mixture of compensation paid and fees to solicitors. He highlighted that we are</p>	
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	<p>ensuring that customers are informed that we have an open and transparent complaints procedure and will continue to support customers through the process. SS added that there has been lobbying by the National Housing Federation (NHF) and National Federation of ALMOs (NFA) in this area and they were aiming to engage with the Solicitors Regulation Authority on further regulation. EW confirmed that we have done social media campaigns and features in CBH News to raise awareness with customers.</p> <p>MS commented that it was good to see that we are continuing to increase our capacity, grow the business and deliver affordable homes even during challenging times. He asked how confident we are that this budget will remain intact over the next 5 years. BD commented that currently every business is doing its best to understand the treasury forecasts and that there are significant challenges before us, particularly with building cost and pay inflation. He explained that it is difficult to predict how inflation and interest rates will settle, and that there is uncertainty around the energy crisis and future rent increases. BD highlighted that we will likely be discussing questions of affordability and getting the balance right in the future but that hopefully we have done our best with the assumptions we have used. He added that we are currently working on the HRA budget and looking forward 2 years and noted that this is the most uncertain economic time we have seen. BD explained that a review of government rent policy is scheduled for 2025 which may have a significant impact in the future. MS asked that Board be informed of any deteriorations or changes as soon as possible.</p> <p>DC commented that it was good to see that we were prepared for the TSMs taking affect in April. He noted that the KPI relating to ' CBC Rent collected from current and former tenants as % rent due (excl arrears brought forward)' had scored very highly in 2022-23 but was still ranked as 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile. AW confirmed that this was a very narrow band and that it was difficult to move to a higher quartile.</p> <p><b>The Board:</b></p>	
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	<p>a) Approved the draft CBH budget and management and maintenance fee requests to CBC for 2023-24, pending any amendments to the assumptions if required.</p> <p>b) Reviewed and provided feedback on the draft strategic performance and satisfaction targets for 2023-24.</p> <p><b>BD left the meeting.</b></p>	
6	<p><u>Approve Meeting Schedule and Workplan for 2023-2024</u></p> <p>AW introduced the meeting schedule and workplan for 2023-24 and confirmed that it followed the pattern of meetings established in the current year. He noted that the main changes were the addition of a 2<sup>nd</sup> CBH Services meeting, that the Remuneration &amp; Nominations Committee would meet 3 rather than 4 times in the year, and that an additional Audit &amp; Risk meeting will be held in the diary in case budgets are delayed. AW added that there are likely to be some changes to the workplan during the year.</p> <p>JR commented that it had been discussed in the past that the Board could benefit from discussing the PESTLE and SWOT in more detail at a Board Away Day to understand the environment in which CBH is working and help shape our strategy. AW confirmed that we are aiming to schedule a Board Away Day in June to lead into business planning in the Summer. RP commented that it would be useful for NEDs to have advance warning of the Board Away Days to allow them to schedule time away from work.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> – Confirm schedule for Board Away Days.</p> <p><b>The Board approved the Board Workplan and Meeting Schedule for 2023-24.</b></p>	AW/RW
7	<p><u>Property Compliance Policy – Fire Safety Policy</u></p> <p>EW introduced the report and explained that this had been reviewed by the Audit &amp; Risk Committee, who had reviewed the updated Fire Safety Policy and the implications of the changing legislation. She noted that 2</p>	

	<p>changes had been requested by the Committee and were included in the attached version of the Policy.</p> <p>IM asked if the Estates Compliance Officer included in the Policy was a new role. VD confirmed that these were 2 new roles that would manage changes brought in by the fire safety regulations, including inspection of fire doors and communal areas. She highlighted that their introduction will improve the quality of our compliance management in the places where it matters.</p> <p>TB asked whether the legislative changes would have an impact on the budgets. VD explained that the requirements for Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) were now more rigorous and required domestic areas that had not previously been included to be inspected. She commented that we have created an action plan and an enhanced budget for fire safety enhancements following the FRAs. VD highlighted that this was a significant investment but was an important priority for CBH. She added that we also work closely with a consultant and the fire service to ensure that our response to the FRAs is effective and appropriate.</p> <p><b>The Board approved the Fire Safety Policy.</b></p>	
8	<p><u>Domestic Abuse Policy Review</u></p> <p>CW introduced the updated Domestic Abuse Policy and explained that previously this had been the Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Policy but it had been decided that this would be separated into 2 policies to highlight the importance of Domestic Abuse. She highlighted that the focus of the Policy is on communicating to customers what support they can expect. CW added that the Policy includes a clear EDI statement to ensure that it is inclusive of everyone regardless of gender or protected characteristics. She highlighted that the support is intended to be person centred, and provide reassurance and flexibility, to ensure that customers know they can seek support regardless of what position they are in and what action they are ready to take. CW explained that we have consulted widely with experts in the field and had held an equality panel with 3 individuals, 2 of whom had experienced domestic abuse.</p>	



	<p>She highlighted that they had fundamentally shaped and changed the Policy.</p> <p>CW noted that following feedback that social media and websites were not considered safe, information would also be provided using posters and paper leaflets. She explained that a draft leaflet had now been created and would be taken to the panel next week before being circulated widely. CW added that the panel had highlighted that they had been very fearful of the impact of early intervention with the perpetrator and that it was important that the victim feels safe before action is taken. She explained that for this reason there was no rush to remove the perpetrator from a tenancy until a victim is safe. CW added that the Policy has taken a light touch on safeguarding to ensure there isn't a fear that contacting CBH will lead to children being taken away.</p> <p>CW explained that we were taking part in the 16 days of action for Domestic Abuse to contribute to raising awareness. She highlighted that this includes publishing leaflets, awareness raising actions with colleagues, and a partnership event with CBC around the positive focus on male role models and male victims of abuse.</p> <p>CG thanked the team and highlighted how important this issue was and how vital it was for CBH to support victims any way we can. She commented that it was obvious that work and care had gone into creating the Policy and thanked CW for highlighting the EDI statement.</p> <p>DC noted that a lot of resources were available and asked if they were available for customers who were non-English speaking. CW confirmed that the Policy makes it clear that the purpose is to respond to an individual's needs and that we regularly provide interpreters. CW confirmed that we will include a language panel clarifying how to access translated copies of the leaflet.</p> <p>MS commented that more people die of domestic abuse in social housing than any other form of housing. He commented that some victims will come to CBH rather than going to the police, but others may go to other partners instead. MS suggested that the Policy should be</p>	
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	<p>shared with partners and the police to enable them to signpost victims to CBH when appropriate. CW thanked him for the suggestion and confirmed that the Policy will be shared.</p> <p>EW thanked CW and colleagues for their work on the Policy. She highlighted the value of the consultation that had been carried out with victims and other partners. MS passed on the Boards' thanks and asked that they be kept updated on the outcomes from the Policy in the future.</p> <p><b>The Board approved the CBH Domestic Abuse Policy 2022-2025.</b></p> <p><b>CG left the meeting.</b></p>	
9	<p><u>Draft HRA Business Plan (2023-2028)</u></p> <p>SS introduced the draft HRA Business Plan and explained that this had been shaped by great collaboration and engagement work with CBC, Board, customers, colleagues and key stakeholders. He highlighted that CBC and CBH had been on a journey together to create a powerful document that we both own. SS explained that the draft establishes the desired aims and measures of success for key goals and outcomes supported by performance targets. He highlighted that areas of focus include the SWPP, Listening and Acting for colleagues, customers and all our partners, the involvement of the Project and Change Team to galvanise change across the business, and to embed EDI and the value of our customers' lived experience in the DNA of CBH. SS explained that we will be delivering on the Business Plan by attracting and maintaining the best people, ensuring high quality and value for money, and ensuring 100% compliance. He noted that we will be reviewing the Business Plan on an annual basis to ensure that we keep an eye on the 5 year vision and that the HRA and 30 year plan remain viable. MS commented that the Business Plan was a great example of CBH and CBC working together to provide a service focused on our customers.</p> <p>JR commented on the section on Property Insight and noted at the NHF's Audit &amp; Risk Conference, the RSH had said that Boards should question</p>	

	<p>how much they know about the condition their properties. He highlighted that the focus on this area had increased with the current damp and mould conversation. JR noted that it was important that Board is satisfied that the data CBH holds can be analysed, interrogated and not compartmentalised. EW agreed that stock condition data is the backbone behind the investment decisions we make and that the work carried out on net present value (NPV) is being used to focus our attention on outlying properties. She highlighted that following the Service Improvement Programme (SIP) we are in a good position with our data and have the resources within the business to allow us to develop reports very quickly as needed and to access and analyse data easily. SS added that we will also be considering stock condition surveys as part of the Asset Management Plan coming to Board to ensure that our resources are focused in the right area.</p> <p>DC commented that the measures of success were very useful and would allow Board to challenge on delivery. He noted that one of the measures was to ensure “100% of customer facing processes are digitally enabled” and asked whether this recognised that some customers might not want to access services digitally. LF explained that we have already developed a digital service for customers and that the focus now is on developing process to enable efficiencies through colleagues working as effectively as possible. She confirmed that we will always ensure that access is not just digital to ensure we have accessibility for all. LF added that from January next year we’ll be progressing digital processes. RP noted that digital exclusion is an area for both CBC and CBH to watch for in the future.</p> <p>RP noted that the Business Plan states that we are publicly funded and suggested that this should be removed or adapted to avoid potential confusion around funding directly from taxpayers. MS agreed that this could be worded more clearly in the document. It was agreed that wording would be amended to clarify.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> – Amend wording in HRA Business Plan to clarify funding. AP noted the current economic challenges and asked whether there were areas in the Business Plan that could take a backseat if required. SS commented that during the previous rent reduction other registered</p>	<p>LF/AW</p>
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	<p>providers had reacted by cutting community investment services but that CBH had believed it was crucial to continue supporting community services and support services. He explained that there were other ways to address financial pressures over the 30 year plan, including considering the pace and scale of work carried out, using reserves and delaying capital programmes to keep the HRA viable whilst delivering on many fronts. SS highlighted that we will continue to stress test the HRA and monitor our financial position, and will continue lobbying for more funding. He added that there are areas such as net zero and regeneration where we will need government funding to fully achieve our ambitions.</p> <p>IM commented that the diversity statement included in the Business Plan is excellent and would be positive to include in all policies that come to Board in the future. SS thanked him for the feedback and agreed that this is an area where it is crucial that we get this right as an organisation.</p> <p><b>Board noted progress on the CBC HRA Business Plan and provided further feedback and comments on the proposed focus of the CBC HRA Business Plan.</b></p>	
10	<p><u>Quarterly Development Update</u></p> <p><b>Please see confidential minutes.</b></p>	

Meeting Closed at 19:25



Signed.....  
Chair of Cheltenham Borough Homes  
(Digitally signed)

Date: 25/01/2023