

HIGHLIGHTS OF IHA'S BOARD MEETING HELD ON 27 MAY 2020

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Board received a report in relation to the current services which the Association was able to provide, the current arrears position and the cash position of the organisation. The Board noted that recovery plans were currently being worked on and the "switch-on" of services would be timed with each phase of the government's guidance on the easing of lock-down restrictions.

CORPORATE PLAN AND RISK REGISTER UPDATE

The Board noted the report on the progress against the Implementation Plan for the final year of the Corporate Plan 2017/20 and the current Risk Register which had been agreed at the Special Audit & Risk Committee Meeting in April.

ANNUAL RETURN ON THE CHARTER

The Board approved the Association's Annual Return on the Charter for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

ANNUAL LOAN PORTFOLIO RETURN

The Board approved the Association's Annual Loan Portfolio Return for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

THISTLE HOUSING SERVICES

The Board agreed the proposed resolution by the Director of Thistle Housing Services to amend Thistle's Articles of Association and thereafter approved the proposed changes to the Articles of Association.

TREASURY POLICY

The Board agreed to adopt Group's Treasury Policy.

OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Board noted the operational report. They discussed in particular, gas safety compliance, customer satisfaction levels, future reporting of complaints

handling, arrears levels, target setting for 2020/21 and the future provision of on-line services.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Board noted the financial performance report, in particular variances which were attributable to capital works not being carried out due to lock-down restrictions. The Board discussed the likelihood and timing of works commencing in the year and the potential impact this could have on budgets.

MD'S REPORT

The Board noted the MD's Report which contained updates in relation to:

- The Corporate Plan 2020/23
- Proposed Rule Changes
- Special / Annual General Meetings
- Data Incident

WHOLE BOARD APPRAISAL

The Board noted the results of the Whole Board Appraisal survey carried out during March and noted that an Action Plan would be developed and presented for their consideration at a future Meeting.

ANNUAL WRITE-OFFS

The Board noted the schedule of write-offs which had been carried out at year end.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

The Board noted the updates given in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Monitoring Report.

FORMAL CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

The Board noted the contents of the Formal Customer Involvement Strategy Year One Update Report.

THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED

IRVINE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Two Hundred and Thirty Sixth Meeting of the Board held at 5.30 p.m. on
27 May 2020 by Blue Jeans video-conference.

Minutes

Present:

Mr D. McEachran (In the Chair), Mrs M. Burgess, Mrs M. Crearie, Mr G. Darroch, Mrs J. Galbraith, Mr R. Hill and Ms C. McGuinness.

In attendance were Mr P. Hillard, Mrs H. Anderson, Mrs D. Boyle, Mrs A. Fox-Smith and Mrs M. Hutchinson.

Apologies for Absence

Mr C. Bell, Mr C. Donohue, Mrs J. Murray and Mr D. Thornton.

Declarations of Interests

None.

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting – 235th Board Meeting held on 26 March 2020**

The minutes of the 235th Board Meeting held on 26 March 2020 were noted and approved.

3. **Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

4 **Covid-19 Pandemic**

Mr P. Hillard gave an update on current service delivery in relation to landscape maintenance, lettings and void properties. He advised that the team were working well together to deliver the services that it was feasible to deliver. The welfare calls to customers were being particularly well received and 1300/1400 calls had been made to date which had been a huge team effort.

Mrs H. Anderson, referring to the current arrears position, advised that the main focus of the housing officers had been the customer welfare calls. In addition, the tenancy sustainment team had been working with a high volume of customers to assist with new Universal Credit (UC) claims. The overall arrears levels the previous week were 3.06% whereas the previous week they had been 4.65%. This appeared to be at a level which could be maintained and it was hoped that the arrears position would align now with the cycle of UC payments moving forward. Prior to lock-down, there were approximately 15/20 UC claims being processed per month. Whereas, there had been 45 new claims processed in the first fortnight of lock-down. It was hoped that arrears would be safeguarded to an extent as a significant number of customers' rental payments would now be covered by UC payments, albeit there would be the usual delay of payments. In line the current government guidelines, no recovery action had been pursued and no evictions were sought for the 3 month period of lock-down.

Mrs Anderson stated that officers were beginning to consider the re-introduction of arrear recovery processes as the lock-down restrictions began to ease and in order to transition back to this service. Initially these discussions would be incorporated as part of the welfare calls. This transition would require to be dealt with in a very sensitive manner and internal training sessions would be arranged for Housing Officers and the Income Collection teams. It was intended that these conversations would be tailored to individual circumstances e.g. those who had historic debt and those who had fallen into difficult times due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



The Board agreed with the transition of the arrears recovery process, given that this was the Association's main source of income, however, these discussions would require to be handled very carefully. It was likely to be a long time before any return to normal and it was expected

that rent levels, arrears recovery and write-offs were likely to become very political issues moving forward, given that elections were due to take place next year. Mrs Anderson agreed that discussions with customers would require to be tailored around the circumstances of the customer.

Mr Hillard advised that the Association would align the switch-on of its services in line with each phase of the easing of lock-down, subject to safe methods of working being finalised. The development of plans would be subject to flexibility and all guidance around these matters would be closely adhered to. A critical service of the Association was the major repairs contracts. [REDACTED]

Current advice was that certain contracts could commence with safe methods of working adopted, whereas, this would prove more difficult for other contracts e.g. kitchen replacements. The Association may therefore require to revisit which types of works it was feasible to carry out throughout the year. The Board noted that contractor capacity may also be an issue.

Mr Hillard advised that Group's Facilities Management Team were currently assessing the office capacity to determine the number of staff who could safely work in the office whilst maintaining social distancing protocols. The Income Collection and Customer Service Centre Teams would be given priority of the office space due to their ways of working. It was likely that other staff would continue to work from home in the coming months. Mr Hillard highlighted that schools would be returning in August on a blended basis which meant that there would still be a degree of home-schooling. The Association would require to agree individual approaches with staff who would be in this situation. There was currently a significant number of staff with children of school age.

The Board confirmed that it was content with the current proposed approach in relation to the "switch on" of services. It instructed officers to continue to work on the detail of service delivery and provide regular updates on service provision and key health and safety issues to them.

Mr Hillard advised that it was likely to be at phase 3 of the easing of lockdown that there would be able to be a combination of video-conferencing and physical attendance at Board Meetings, with there likely being a limit of approximately 6 person capacity in the Boardroom. The governance implications of these arrangements would require to be considered moving forward.

The Board thereafter noted the content of the report.

5. **Corporate Plan and Risk Register Update**

Mr Hillard advised that the report gave an update on progress towards achieving the objectives in the Corporate Plan 2017/20. The vast

majority of which had been completed. The remaining outstanding actions would be incorporated within the implementation plan of the new Corporate Plan 2020/23 and completed when the easing of restrictions allowed for progress to be made.

The Board noted the Corporate Plan and Risk Register Update.

6. **Annual Return on the Charter**

After consideration, the Board approved the Association's Annual Return on the Charter for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

7. **Annual Loan Portfolio Return**

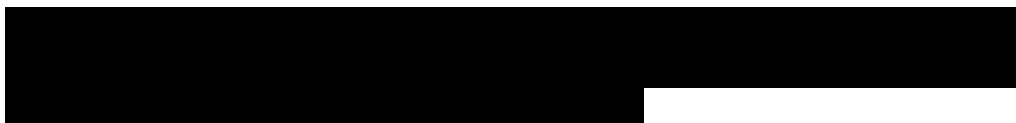


The Board thereafter approved the 2020 Loan Portfolio Return and authorised the Head of Finance & Planning to submit the Return to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

8. **Thistle Housing Services**

Mr P. Hillard referred to previous Board discussions in relation to the future use of Thistle Housing Services (Thistle). The Board noted that the Managing Director was currently the only Director of Thistle. Further to a review of Thistle's Articles of Association, changes were recommended in order to bring them up to date with current legislation and also to stream-line the process for the appointment / removal of Directors.

Mr Hillard advised that subject to the changes to Thistle's Articles of Association being approved, the revised Articles of Association would require to be registered with Companies House. It was intended that the Chair would thereafter discuss Board Member's interest in becoming Thistle Directors and proposed appointments would be considered at the Association's July Board Meeting.



The Board thereafter:

- a) approved the Director of Thistle Housing Services' proposed resolution to amend Thistle Housing Services' Articles of Association,
- b) approved the proposed changes to Thistle Housing Service's Articles of Association, and
- c) agreed to sign an Irvine Board resolution confirming agreement of the Director's resolution and approval of Thistle's revised Articles of Association.

9. **Treasury Policy**

Mrs M. Hutchinson stated that the Treasury Policy which Board had approved the previous year, had been reviewed and revised earlier this year. The draft of the revised Treasury Policy had been uploaded to the REX for Board to contribute to the consultation prior to Group Board's approval of the Policy at its Meeting in May.

The Board thereafter agreed to adopt Group's Treasury Policy.

10. **Operational Performance**

Mrs H. Anderson advised that the Gas Safety target, which was usually met, was currently outwith target due to access issues to customers' homes following them advising that they were ill or self-isolating due to Covid-19 restrictions. Officers were now making good progress arranging appointments for the required works to be carried out as and when it was safe to gain access.

Mrs Anderson advised that the customer satisfaction levels remained outwith target. A new customer satisfaction improvement plan had been agreed in November 2019. The actions which had been agreed in the plan had not been implemented fully due to the Covid-19 restrictions, however, the welfare calls had been well received during the current lock-down period and it was currently being considered that these types of calls may be carried out on an annual basis moving forward.

Mrs Anderson reported that the process for complaints handling was being reviewed in order to separate repairs complaints from formal complaints, which was more in keeping with the sector's approach. This would also allow greater detail to be provided on the issues behind the formal complaints and how these were being handled by staff. Further to a query from the Board, Mrs Anderson confirmed that repairs satisfaction reports would still be provided to Board and this new approach would also allow for the specific focus and action on repairs issues.

Mrs Anderson highlighted that the arrears dashboard should be green rather than red given the Association was currently within target, mostly due to the non-charging fortnight in April. Referring to the void loss

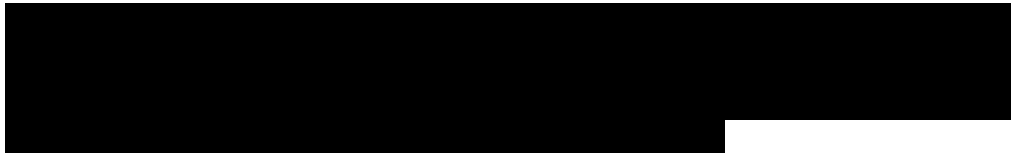
dashboard, Mrs Anderson stated that the Association was currently outwith target due only emergency lets taking place and not being able to carry out all void repair works due to the current Covid-19 restrictions.

Mrs Anderson reported that Board would usually have had sight of the proposed new targets for 2020/21, however, it was not realistic to provide this information until officers had a more accurate picture of what would be achievable during the year. It was also planned that there would be a change to the format of the reports moving forward and she planned to share these proposals on the REX for Board to review and provide any feedback they may have.

The Board enquired if there would be plans to implement more on-line services, given that due to the current restrictions in place, more customers were now accessing services in this way. A discussion followed on different ways that services were being provided during the period of lock-down and how these methods could be factored into future service reviews. Mrs Anderson suggested that providing facilities which enabled vulnerable customers to utilise on-line services may be something which was considered as part of any future social enterprise initiative.

The Board thereafter noted the Operational Performance Report for Period 1.

11. **Financial Performance Report**



The Board enquired if officers were able to estimate which works would now be carried out in the next financial year, particularly if there were contractor capacity issues. The Board suggested that it was possible that some works may require to be delayed permanently and the budgets re-visited. Mrs Hutchinson stated that it was likely that officers would have a clearer picture in this regard later in the year.

Further to query regarding the capital investment programme, Mr Hillard advised that officers would require to discuss what was now achievable during the year with the contractors. It was also possible that contract prices would be subject to change and this would form part of the reforecast work.

The Board thereafter noted the Financial Performance Report for Period 1.

12. **Managing Director's Report**

a) **Corporate Plan 2020/23**

Mr P. Hillard confirmed that following consultation with stakeholders, the draft Corporate Plan had been finalised and posted on the REX for comment by the Board. It was intended that the Corporate Plan would be presented to the July Board Meeting for approval. The Board noted that the proposed Year 1 Corporate Plan Implementation Plan would reflect what was viewed as achievable in the current climate of Covid-19 restrictions.

b) **Proposed Rule Changes**

Mr Hillard advised that further to previous discussions in relation to the proposed removal of the reference to the specific number of Tenant Board Members on the Board, the proposed changes were being prepared for consideration. As part of this process, changes to make the language in the Rules gender-neutral and also align with the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's model Rules, which the Scottish Housing Regulator would expect, would also be proposed. In order for the Board to consider the detail of the proposed changes, a Special Board Meeting was proposed for Tuesday 9 June 2020 at 5.30 p.m. Group Board would thereafter consider the proposed changes and would require to give their consent prior to the Association being able to call a Special General Meeting for the membership to consider the proposed Rule Changes.

c) **Annual / Special General Meeting**

Mr Hillard highlighted that the Association was currently unable to call a General Meeting due to the current Corona Virus legislation. It was currently envisaged that the Association may be able to call a Special General Meeting in August and then the Annual General Meeting in September. This would be at the Phase 3 easing of lock-down restrictions stage. Albeit, the Association would need to ensure that the venue could allow for attendees to socially distance. Officials would closely monitor the current guidance in this regard and would update the Board as appropriate.

Following a query from the Board, Mr Hillard advised that the current Rules stated that the members had to attend in person at a General Meeting in order for them to be counted for quorum purposes. Officers would consider the use of facilities which would allow the live streaming of the meeting for members who did not wish to physically attend the meeting.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Board thereafter noted the contents of the Managing Director's Report.

13. **Whole Board Appraisal**

The Board noted the contents of Whole Board Appraisal Summary Report and agreed to contact the Managing Director out with the meeting with any feedback which could contribute to the development of the Whole Board Appraisal Action Plan.

14. **Annual Write-Offs**

The Board noted the content of the schedule which detailed the write-offs for the year.

15. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan**

Mrs A. Fox-Smith advised on the current progress against actions detailed in the Action Plan and highlighted that some action deadlines may require to be amended, if it was not possible to progress certain actions due to the Covid-19 restrictions, however, other actions had progressed further than anticipated at this stage due to the restrictions e.g. the well-being calls to customers and staff.

The Board thereafter noted the contents of the 2020 Action Plan Monitoring Sheet.

16. **Formal Customer Involvement Strategy Update**

Mrs A. Fox-Smith reported that 81% of the actions identified in Year 1 of the Strategy had been completed. Officers would now develop the Year 2 actions to support the Strategy.

The Board noted that current scrutiny plans had been put on hold due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Officers were now considering carrying out a further scrutiny by the customer involvement panel via a virtual process in order to drive this important function forward.

The Board thereafter noted the contents of the Formal Customer Involvement Strategy Update Report.

17. **Minutes / Updates**

The Board noted the contents of the:

- a) Unconfirmed Audit & Risk Committee Meeting Minutes – 17 April 2020,
- b) Group Neighbourhood Services Committee Meeting Minutes – 27 February 2020,
- c) Group Board Core Brief – 12 March and 14 April 2020.

18. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business to be discussed.

19. **Date of Next Meeting**

Special Board Meeting – 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday 9 June 2020, by video-conference.

Board Meeting - 5.30 p.m. on Thursday 2 July 2020, by video-conference.

P. Hillard
Secretary
28 May 2020
PH/db

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