

Homes in Sedgemoor Board Meeting

The primary purpose of the board meeting is to provide oversight and strategic guidance to the business, to address important matters, to assess emerging risks and trends, and make decisions.

Minutes of the Non-Confidential Board Meeting held via Teams and in the Sedgemoor Room at Bridgwater House on Tuesday 28 November 2023 at 1.15pm

Board Members:	Chris Fisher Cllr Kathy Pearce Cllr Lance Duddridge Cllr Pauline Ham Jen Vernon Marie Hide Olly Keates Paul Hackett Paul Stephenson (Chair)	Chris F Kathy Lance Pauline H Jen Marie Olly Paul H Paul S
In Attendance:	Ben Lane, Director of Finance and Performance Claire Tough, Director of Communities & Customer Service Naomi Macey, Director of Asset Management and Safety Pauline Kelly, Executive Assistant (<i>minutes</i>) Peter Hatch, Chief Executive	Ben Claire Naomi Pauline K Peter
Guests in person:	Chris Hall, Executive Director – Community Services, SC (<i>joined at Item 8</i>) Craig Green, STAC member Julia Paling, Head of People & Communications (<i>joined for the Presentation slot & Confidential Item 32</i>) Laura Wickens, People Business Partner (<i>joined for the Presentation slot</i>) Pauline Hayes, STAC member Ros Griffiths, STAC member Sarah O’Neill, STAC Chair	Chris H Craig Julia Laura Pauline Ha Ros Sarah
NO.	ITEM	
1.	Welcome Guests	
	Paul welcomed Board members, attendees, and guests to the meeting.	
	Apologies	
	No apologies to record.	
2.	Presentation Slot	
	Customer Driven: Inspiring Colleagues – People Plan Six Monthly Update	
	Julia and Laura gave a six-month update on the People Plan, under the Customer Driven theme (from our new Corporate Strategy) on inspiring colleagues. A copy of the presentation will be uploaded on the portal.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	There were no further declarations other than those previously recorded on Board Members’ Declaration of Interests Forms.	
	ET have an interest in confidential item 32 and will be asked to leave the meeting while Board members carry out their discussions.	



4.	Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2023
	All members agreed that the minutes recorded are a true record.
	RESOLVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED and APPROVED the minutes.
5.	Matters Arising from the meeting held on 26 September 2023
	Members noted the matters arising from the Board meeting held on 26 September 2023.
	RESOLVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED and APPROVED the matters arising of the meeting recorded on 26 September 2023.
6.	DRAFT Minutes and Matters Arising of the AGM held on 26 September 2023 (for review)
	Members had reviewed the minutes recorded on 26 September 2023.
	It was noted that the AGM matters arising were missing from the pack. These will be added when the pack is updated with the signed, approved minutes from the September Board meeting.
	Marie raised the question around Board having access to the reward scheme to enable members to thank colleagues. Peter confirmed that Board will have access to the new benefits platform (launch due early 2024). In the meantime, if members would like to give points to any colleagues, they can contact Peter or Julia.
	Peter will also arrange for Julia to give Board some guidance on how the points system works.
	ACTION
	Peter to arrange for Julia to give Board some guidance notes on how the points system works.
	RESOLVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board REVIEWED and NOTED the minutes and matters arising of the AGM meeting recorded on 26 September 2023.
7.	Chair's Update
	No questions were raised regarding the report.
	RESOLVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.
8.	Chief Executive's Update
	No questions were raised.
	Peter informed members that the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) contacted HiS about the possibility of hosting someone from DLUHC for a visit, as an opportunity for DLUHC staff to learn more about the experiences of social housing providers. HiS will be joint hosting along with the SC inhouse team.
	DLUHC may want to speak with Board and once a date has been confirmed, Peter will update members.
	RESOLVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.

9.	<p>Chair of Audit & Risk Annual Performance Review 2022/23</p>
	<p>Ben updated members on the two questions raised by Paul S via email.</p> <p>Limited Assurance Audits – Service Charges and Programme/Project Management: Paul S asked what our plans are to address the two areas of limited assurance. Ben confirmed findings and agreed actions for all audits are managed through the ARC. In respect of the Project Management internal audit findings and agreed actions, good progress has been made. Daniel Olowoyeye, our part time Project Manager, has been focused on developing a project management framework for review at ET in December. He has also addressed several of the other findings in the audit already. The December ARC meeting will receive updates against the actions and will see the good progress made.</p> <p>With regard to the service charges audit, Ben noted that the Service Charges role had been difficult to fill however Carla McQueen joined the organisation in November. Progress against the service charge audit findings has been delayed due to this key role being vacant. Work has been done with Carla and the internal auditors to revisit the findings and original agreed actions. Several actions have now been completed, with revised completion dates for other actions. All actions are due to complete by 31 January 2024. December ARC will be provided with the latest update against each action.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the contents of the report.
10.	<p>STAC Update</p>
	<p>No questions were raised. Sarah thanked Claire and Naomi for hosting the Stock Tour on 21 November. The accompanying pack was full of information and STAC members who attend were appreciative of this, giving attendees as much information as possible. Ollly also commended and thanked officers for organising the recent stock tour.</p> <p>Paul S raised a question via email on 27 November asking for an update on the current IT situation for STAC members. Ben confirmed the issuing of devices had been delayed due to a sign off process being proposed by the SC IT team. Sign off has been received. All STAC members have chosen their preferred devices, and these are ready for issue.</p> <p>Craig, Pauline Hayes, and Ros took receipt of their devices at the end of the meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the contents of the report.
11.	<p>Customer First Strategy</p>
	<p>Rachel confirmed nothing had radically changed within the document but that the launch of the new corporate strategy had necessitated some amendments. Rachel will be working with colleagues to ensure we are embedding this. Paul had raised a question regarding training. Rachel confirmed that all new starters will receive information on our Customer First (CF) approach and spend time with our Customer Service Team (CST) as part of their induction. Refresher training takes place on an annual basis with colleagues and contractors.</p> <p>Paul S had also asked if we are happy with the model for creating and assessing social value. Rachel confirmed we measure social value using the HACT modelling tool associated with our core housing management activities including reducing homelessness, reducing debt, and reducing social isolation. Due to resources involved this has been scaled back in recent years and we consider core activity only. Information and targets are recorded on Pentana.</p> <p>Rachel confirmed that Service Standards will be reviewed with SLT/LT by the end of January 2024, and can be provided to Board as Information paper if required.</p>

Paul raised a question (prior to the meeting) relating to STAC having the responsibility for overseeing all aspects of the Customer First Strategy and that perhaps this should be a Board responsibility. Claire confirmed Board have responsibility for the Corporate Strategy; the CF strategy sits below this and therefore STAC, as part of their assurance responsibilities, are responsible for oversight of this strategy. This can be amended if required by Board.

Claire also confirmed that our involved tenants are fully trained and skilled up to carry out the roles we are asking of them fulfil with regard to the CF Strategy. Training is supported by Tpas and via Spotlights which are fully evidenced.

Paul S raised a pre-meeting question (via email) asking if our current systems enable appropriate data storage and analysis to respond to vulnerability. Claire noted that we have recently reviewed all vulnerability indicators to ensure they are appropriate and meaningful for staff to provide relevant support. New tenant calls are ensuring that all vulnerability information is clearly flagged on OPEN, and this will also link in with the tenancy audit/customer insight work.

Board asked how we will evidence "through our tenancy audit" and "we are committed to understand". Rachel replied that we are using the new temporary Customer Focus Assistant post to embed a culture of making every contact count. We have a process for identifying low/no contact customers and ensuring a targeted and planned approach to tenancy checks. The tenancy audit/customer insight form is now available on Total Mobile and will be launched to all customer facing colleagues over the coming weeks to support improvements to our customer information.

Peter reminded Board that the comprehensive performance information the Board receives from both internal and external sources should give members added assurance of our customer first approach. Marie acknowledged this but felt that as a Board, we should still keep pushing for the highest levels of service.

Paul S thanked Rachel for her excellent report.

RESOLVED

- Board **APPROVED** the Customer First Strategy.

12. Data Protection Policy

Ben confirmed the Data Protection Officer (DPO) resource was provided by Somerset Council under the SLA. It is their guidance that wraps around this policy, and certain areas required Board approval.

Jen asked if the Board receives sight of any breaches. Ben confirmed it depends on the severity of the breach as to which audience receives an update.

RESOLVED

- Board **APPROVED** the refreshed Data Protection Policy.

13. Safeguarding Policy

Senior team, Heath & Safety Forum and involved customers have all worked on this policy. Claire confirmed she had also spoken with SC inhouse colleagues around good practice. Policy updates have been driven because the environment regarding vulnerability change post covid and has also been impacted by publicised cases of negligence hence the policy is now more robust. Kathy asked who the point of contact is regarding any issues that arise. Claire confirmed that she is that first point of contact.

Paul S asked if the Board Safeguarding Champion (Pauline Ham) has been consulted on the revised policy. Claire confirmed that Pauline has seen it in advance and didn't have any comments.

	<p>Paul questioned how we keep aware of progress or action on referrals. Claire stated this can be difficult due to the nature of the safeguarding issues. We share information on the SC family support system which enables teams to check to see if any updates have been logged. Board are also supplied with referral numbers via the Monthly Compliance Report.</p> <p>Paul S followed up asking if managers document training for safeguarding. Claire confirmed this is completed via our eLearning platform which is automated to let colleagues know when training is required.</p> <p>Marie thanked Claire for a great report which was easy to read.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board APPROVED the Safeguarding Policy 2023-2026.
<p>14.</p>	<p>Proposed Dates for Board Member Attended Meetings April 2024 – March 2025</p>
	<p>No questions raised. October Away Days to be added and a revised copy under its own heading to be uploaded onto the Board area on the website. As feedback was inconclusive, away days will remain on Thursday and Friday.</p> <p>Following a suggestion by Jen, Board members were in agreement to revise the start for all meetings to 1pm and to start, where applicable, with an information presentation aligned to key strategic strands.</p>
	<p>ACTION</p>
	<p>Pauline K to amend the timetable to include October BAD and new start times.</p>
	<p>Pauline K to upload a copy of the timetable to the Board area on the website.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board APPROVED the proposed dates and times for the various meetings.
<p>15.</p>	<p>Governance Framework Review: Board, Committee and Chair Effectiveness Questionnaire</p>
	<p>Ben gave a brief update and the following was noted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all STAC members have completed a form. Ben will circulate a copy of the document to all remaining committee members. • Board members to approve the areas of focus that has been identified from the survey. • Chair and Vice Chair will tackle the themes that have arisen from these results and work out the best way to take anything forward. Spotlight session could be used to discuss the findings. • Deep dive to re-categorise some areas. • Marie noted that we should look favourably on feedback on the Board from external stakeholders being higher than that among Board members. The Board are good at what they do and need to continue to improve in those areas where scoring has lowered. There is always room for improvement and it is important to avoid complacency. • Jen requested that the narrative on Page 2 read <i>lower</i> rather than <i>low</i>. Jen questioned if the STAC date was wrong in the table contained in Appendix A, Section 3 (should it be November 2022 or 2023). Ben confirmed this should read 2023. • Sarah O noted that not all STAC members had completed the questionnaire, and they wouldn't spend too much time on the results until everyone had completed it.

- Sarah O also asked if it would be of use to have some wider information on Board and STAC composition sent in advance of the next questionnaire, particularly featuring diversity characteristics.

ACTION

Ben to circulate the questionnaire to those STAC members who have not completed it.

Ben, Paul S and **Jen** discuss the themes that have arisen from the survey results and work out the best way to take forward.

Ben to amend the narrative on Page 2 to read *lower* rather than *low* and correct the table in Appendix A.

RESOLVED

Board:

- **NOTED** the summary findings from the annual effectiveness questionnaire
- **NOTED** the update against the action plan produced following the previous questionnaire
- **NOTED** the next steps proposed
- **APPROVED** the areas of focus identified in response to the latest questionnaire results.

16. Update on Reserves and Request to Fund Partnership Activities

The recently launched Corporate Strategy has a commitment to enrich partnerships and a request of funding from reserves is proposed. In considering this request, Board will need to be assured that reserve balances will remain above the Board’s approved minimum reserve level.

Funds requested are detailed below.

1. £100k to support the Enriching Partnerships
 2. £19k to support the Sheltered Housing Review following a tendering process
 3. £20k for the creation of a Winter Warm Fund for 2023/24.
- Paul H noted that reserves are HRA ringfenced and benefit needs to be seen to come back to the HRA.
 - Jen asked if Board would receive reports on how the funds will be spent, value for money and what it will provide. Would all spend be in the furtherance of HiS objectives? Ben confirmed that they would be.

Peter noted ET would be happy to bring a six-monthly report to Board. Jen noted her interest in what we will be doing with the funds but didn’t want to unnecessarily slow things down.

Paul S requested that Jen (for information) and Paul H (as Board Champion) be included in discussion outcomes and processes.

Following discussions, Board approved the following.

- £19k for the Sheltered Housing Review
- £20k for the Winter Warm Fund.
- £100k for Enriching Partnerships, with six monthly updates coming to Board. Ben to provide advance notice of key spend requests before major commitments are made.

	<p>ACTION</p> <p>Pauline to add Enriching Partnerships six-monthly update to the forward plan.</p> <p>Ben to arrange for the funds to be allocated.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTED the updated reserve position. • APPROVED a £100k allocation from reserves to support the Enriching Partnerships strand of the Corporate Strategy. • APPROVED a further £19k allocation to support the Sheltered Housing Review following a tendering process. • APPROVED a £20k allocation from reserves for the creation of a Winter Warm Fund for the 23/24 winter period.
17.	<p>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Report (Annual)</p> <p>Sarah O questioned why our internal ethnicity KPI was 1.6% yet the former SDC population figure was 3.4%? Peter replied that we were starting from a very low point and setting the target at 3.4% would have been unachievable.</p> <p>Paul had raised a question regarding recruitment and the switch during the past year from 99% to 66% for white applicants -what actual numbers do these percentages relate to? Similarly, the same for the disability switch to 7.2%. Julia answered this question in her presentation at the start of the meeting.</p> <p>Picking up on the previous discussions from the People presentation, Peter explained that the February Spotlight session will feature a speaker from the Housing Diversity Network (HDN). This will cover HDN’s recent report on Board diversity. All agreed that a review of Board diversity would be useful in advance of this session. This could be via a survey.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>Peter to facilitate a Board diversity review (ideally ahead of February Spotlight).</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the contents of the report.
18.	<p>Compliance Summary and Dashboard – October 2023</p> <p>Naomi gave a brief update, and the following highlights were noted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lift servicing remains an issue. • Asbestos found in a communal roof during a RAAC survey. • Surveys have been carried out on nine blocks and up to now, no RAAC has been found. • Paul S advised Board that he had attended the recent Health & Safety Forum. Two RIDDOR incidents had occurred in recent weeks, both of which concerned contractors and were not due to HiS colleagues’ neglect. <p>Marie asked if due diligence and support had been carried out in relation to the asbestos incident namely the cleaner and any tenants who may have been exposed to the asbestos. Jen questioned if the contractor had supplied their risk assessment and method statement. Naomi confirmed that we had.</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jen queried the works to lifts at Westfield House as these are contained within the compliance report. Naomi explained the challenges we are facing with this project and the complexity surrounding renewing lifts in a high-rise building. Jen requested a report on this project to ARC. Naomi to discuss the timescale for the report with Jen. Naomi confirmed we have followed up with the cleaner, working with her to give extra support. The vacuum has been removed and safely disposed of. Jen requested that lessons learned be brought back to Board. <p>Jen requested a lesson learned briefing paper on the damp, mould, and condensation (DMC) deep dive work.</p> <p>Jen asked how the RAAC surveys were progressing. Naomi confirmed that nine buildings have been surveyed to date and no RAAC has been found. The remaining surveys may take longer to as the contractor is on pause pending an investigation into the RIDDOR incident.</p>
	<p>ACTION</p> <p>Following the RIDDOR incident concerning asbestos, Naomi to bring a lesson learned report back to Board.</p> <p>Naomi to bring a lesson learned briefing paper on DMC to January 2024 Board.</p> <p>Naomi to produce a report for ARC on the Westfield House lift renewal project. Naomi and Jen to agree the timing for the report.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.
<p>19.</p>	<p>Board Member Appraisal Feedback Report</p>
	<p>Paul S gave a brief up and the following highlighted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul S thanked Board colleagues for their honest conversations. Members discussed and agreed three individual objectives for the year ahead. As Pauline H, Chris and Olly are new members, Paul S will hold individual conversations with them to set their three objectives for the year. Following discussions, both Paul S and Sarah are in agreement for Sarah to have an appraisal with set objectives. <p>As noted at the end of the paper, Jen asked if there was any update on the workshop being held with SC colleagues. Peter confirmed he and Chris B have pushed this back to January 2024 – they are trying to organise a mutually convenient date to accommodate as many colleagues as possible.</p>
	<p>ACTION</p>
	<p>Pauline to organise individual meetings with Pauline H, Chris and Olly, for an objective setting discussion with Paul S.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.

20.	Sustainability Strategy Update
	<p>Naomi gave a brief update, and the following was noted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was some concern about completion of the Wave 1 retrofit programme, with some issues around accreditations for our delivery team. This has now been resolved. <p>We also have a two-month extension if required, ensuring the programme will be completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An external resource has been appointed to assist with external works and help streamline processes.
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the update on our Sustainability Strategy.
21.	Proposed Approach to Mock Inspection
	<p>Claire is leading this work which will link to the new regulatory regime. Our new Projects Manager will be helping Claire in pulling this project together. Claire asked members if anyone would like to participate; with Jen noting her interest. Ros from STAC will also be on the working group.</p> <p>Jen asked if we have considered support from other consultancies. Claire replied that at this early stage we have just had an indicative conversation with one but it was something for the working group to decide.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.
22.	Customer Focus Review (Six Monthly Report)
	<p>Paul S commended the breadth of the report.</p> <p>Marie queried the category 'housing' on the complaints table. Claire confirmed that this includes all aspects of housing management including ASB.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board NOTED the contents of the report.
23.	Key Performance Indicators – October 2023
	<p>Ben introduced the papers and appendices which included some useful external performance comparisons.</p> <p>Lettings: Board asked, excluding lettings at La Ciotat House, are there any developing trends across the stock we should be concerned about?</p> <p>Claire confirmed lettings are monitored each week, so we have early recognition of trends impacting on our performance.</p> <p>La Ciotat impacts on wider lettings due to time and resource implication. Positive comments received from colleagues where the sensitive let management and preference for new tenants in employment has assisted with the overall dynamic in the block. Investment of time gaining the right tenant is proving very positive for future tenancy management relationships. Initially La Ciotat had high levels of refusals however following the setup of the show flat by the team, this is improving.</p> <p>Wider letting considerations include the Sheltered Housing Review that will identify letting issues in sheltered housing. Opportunities to invest, dispose or repurpose are being considered and linked to our partnerships work.</p>

	<p>Major Voids continue to be high value and challenging for teams to turnaround quickly. This is apparent in the pressure on the capital budget.</p> <p>Claire informed the Board that the first homes purchased by Somerset Council (SC) under the Displaced Persons initiative were coming to us shortly.</p> <p>Paul S raised the performance regarding the completion of emergency repairs within target. Is our target comparable? Ben explained that our internal target is 4 hours whereas peers state 24 hours. Therefore, we may be unduly harsh on ourselves. Ben and Naomi are already reviewing this.</p> <p>Ben raised the issue of publishing timely TSM data on the website and asked members if they would approve the introduction of a 2-week window for members to view TSM data prior to external publication on the website. This would primarily occur on months where there wasn't a Board meeting. Members agreed to this, and Marie also suggested including STAC too. No feedback will be considered acceptance of the data.</p>
	<p>ACTION</p>
	<p>Ben to publish TSM data on Board and STAC portals and allow members two weeks to review it before it is published on the website.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the contents of the report.
<p>24.</p>	<p>Management Accounts – October 2023</p>
	<p>Paul S had raised some questions in advance via email and ET replies had been noted. He questioned why Board had not been sighted sooner on the pressures facing the capital budget</p> <p>Paul S proposed that rather than a lengthy discussion in this meeting, Board request that Ben bring a report of sufficient detail to December ARC outlining the current challenges facing the capital budget and mitigations. Ben to also bring an update to January Board.</p> <p>Ben assured Board that mitigations were already in place and clarified that the figures being presented were forecasts within our mitigations. Paul S was assured that a considerable amount of work was already underway.</p>
	<p>ACTION</p>
	<p>Ben to bring an update paper to ARC.</p>
	<p>Ben to bring an update paper to January Board.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the management accounts to month seven of 2023/24 (April to October).
<p>25.</p>	<p>Debtor Balances and Write-Offs (Six Monthly Report) (ARC)</p>
	<p>Jen sought clarity on the debt relating to Aspen House which Ben explained is the market rent building we manage on behalf of SC. Ben confirmed that he has raised this debt at the Aspen Board meeting and there was no dispute over the sum.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board NOTED the position concerning the write-off of rechargeable repairs, rent & service charge debt levels and commercial debt levels for the first half of the 23/24 financial year.



26.	<p>Risk Register (ARC) (Emerging Issues since August Version)</p> <p>Board approved the proposal put forward to only have the new summary provided at future Board meetings in the knowledge that the full register is monitored and reviewed by the ARC.</p> <p>Jen requested that we avoid using the acronym ARC. Ben to amend <i>ARC</i> to <i>Audit & Risk Committee</i>.</p> <p>Jen asked if in light of falling customer satisfaction across the sector, do we need to review our targets? Ben confirmed that he would be bringing the annual KPI targets paper to January Board as per the usual cycle. He would reflect on this question when considering next year’s targets.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>Following a request from Jen, Ben to amend <i>ARC</i> to <i>Audit & Risk Committee</i>.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTED this summary report following a full review of the refreshed risk register at the Audit & Risk Committee in August. • The Audit & Risk Committee was content with the register and is therefore able to provide assurance to the Board accordingly. The register is reviewed at each Audit & Risk Committee and by the Executive Team (ET) in advance of each meeting. • Board APPROVED the proposal to only have the new summary provided at future Board meetings in the knowledge that the full register is monitored and reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee.
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