

ATRIUM HOMES

Minutes of Meeting of the Board held on Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 5.30pm Via ZOOM

Present: Joe Keen, Graham Piggott, Jim O'Neill, Ken Stewart, Ken Tudhope, Marie Coyle, David Sherlock, Alistair Reid, Carolyn Hope and Steven Fraser.

Attending: Stephen Black, Chief Executive; Celia Taylor, Director of Investment; Joyce McCroskie, Director of Operations; Valerie Wilson Head of Finance & Corporate Services

Observing: Gemma Rickman BDO (Internal Audit)

Chair: Joe Keen

The Chair opened the meeting asking everyone to confirm that they had read and understood the papers, which had been circulated via Dropbox the week prior to the meeting.

Confirmed

1	Declarations of Interest
	There were no declarations of interest.
2.	Apologies There were apologies from Jim O'Neill.
3	Minutes of Previous Meeting
3.1	Minutes of the Board Meeting on 27 October 2020 – The minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the Board held on 27 October were submitted for approval. There being no comments, the Board approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting and approved them for publication. <u>Approved for publication</u>
4	Matters Arising
4.1	Board noted the position with actions points from previous Board meetings. <u>Noted</u>
4.2	Compliance Report Board welcomed this new report. In response to a query staff reported that the ARC report would be issued to tenants in the newsletter scheduled for December 2020 and published on the website when available. <u>Noted</u>
5	Annual Assurance Statement 2020
5.1	Board noted the content of the draft Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) and in particular the sentence relating to gas safety certificates. It was noted that one certificate was still overdue and that ongoing efforts were being made to resolve this, which could affect the wording of the statement on this point. After discussion, the Board delegated authority to the Chair and Chief Executive to determine the final wording of the AAS to accurately reflect the position on gas safety and to submit the AAS to the Scottish Housing Regulator by the 30 November deadline. <u>Remit to Chair and Chief Executive</u>

6	Rent Consultation Process
	<p>Board received and discussed a report outlining proposals for consulting tenants on any rent increase to be applied from 1 April 2021.</p> <p>The report highlighted that Board had recently updated the Business Plan on the basis of an October RPI +0.5% increase and proposed that since this was what was required to ensure the BP was deliverable, this should be the only option presented to tenants. Consultation would take place in January with the extent of any increase being determined by Board at that point.</p> <p>Board asked a number of questions in relation to the proposal and challenged whether a sole option was appropriate. It was noted that a higher option could be presented but that a lower increase than RPI +0.5% would affect delivery of the HFF21CLS programme in future years. It was also noted that extensive consultation had already taken place on the HFF21CLS programme in 2018 and that tenants who expressed an opinion had endorsed an RPI+0.5% increase for the duration of the programme.</p> <p>Some members queried whether a rent freeze was affordable and staff stressed that at this stage we were discussing the consultation process only; that staff had modelled the impact of a rent freeze within the paper and Board noted that savings would be required elsewhere in the business plan to achieve that outcome.</p> <p>In response to a question on how the survey would be conducted, staff advised that the proposal would be put in context of our overall plans and that tenants would have as always the ability to add freehand comment. These would be reported to Board in full.</p> <p>After great deliberations, Board approved the proposal to consult tenants on a October RPI+0.5% increase in rents and to report to Board in January 2020.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Approved</u></p>
6	Internal Management Plan – Mid Year Review
6.1	<p>The updated and annotated plan was presented to Board for information and comment. Board noted and asked a number of questions including how tenant participation and consultation through the Tenant Scrutiny Group had been impacted.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the group had been heavily impacted by Covid and that we needed to consider some new/different ways to involve customers. It was noted that the Tenant Portal which was working and would be launched in the December newsletter could offer additional possibilities.</p> <p>It was noted also that the Customer Satisfaction Survey had been delayed to try to avoid what would be a truncated survey via phone. It was hoped that by holding it back until early summer 2021, a more normal face to face survey could be achieved.</p> <p>Discussions took in IT Infrastructure and the APS review and Board noted the positions. It was also noted that going forwards, we had adopted a more straightforward policy review schedule of 5 years or in response to legislative change.</p> <p>Board noted the position with progress against the IMP</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Noted</u></p>
7	Investment Report

7.1	<p>The draft Minutes of the Investment Sub-Committee of 11 November 2020 were presented for information. Board noted the content and the specific points which were highlighted.</p> <p>Covid Impact: It was noted that the recent move to Tier 4 restrictions had affected contracts involving work to occupied properties, including the HFF21CLS programme. These were delays rather than cancellations.</p> <p>Allanvale: the DoI advised that a possible solution to the impasse had been identified and discussions were taking place with the Contract Architect to see if it would work.</p> <p>SHIP Sites: It was noted that Atrium's Shortlees developments were still included within the local authorities Strategic Housing Investment Programme.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i><u>Noted</u></i></p>
7.2	<p>Void & Reactive Repair Working Group</p>
	<p>Board noted the report from the working group and that senior staff were working on a set of proposals to take forward the recommendations of the Arneil Johnstone report.</p> <p>No final decisions had been taken at this stage and the working group would seek to make any arrangements as flexible as possible.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i><u>Noted</u></i></p>
8	<p>Finance Report</p>
8.1	<p>The draft minutes of the Finance, Audit and Staffing Sub-Committee of 16 November were presented for information. Board noted the content and the specific points which were highlighted.</p> <p>Board noted the contents of the Key Financial Report, Management Accounts and Treasury Management Report.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i><u>Noted</u></i></p>
8.2	<p>Working from Home Allowance</p> <p>This additional report was presented by the Convenor of FASSC, proposing that Atrium pay all Homes staff the equivalent of the HMRC allowance for working from home.</p> <p>After discussion Board agreed the proposal to begin 1 December 2020 and continue to 31 March 2020¹ at which point it would be reviewed. The allowance would not be backdated but staff would be advised that they could pursue tax relief for the period from HMRC should they wish to do so.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i><u>Approved</u></i></p>

9	Operations Report
9.1	<p>The draft minutes of the Operations Sub-Committee of 12 November were presented for information. Board noted the content and the specific points which were highlighted.</p> <p>Service Charges: The proposal to incorporate some service charges into the rent pool, to remove anomalous treatments, was noted. The proposal will be added to the rent consultation exercise before final decisions are taken.</p> <p>Facebook Comments: A query was raised about recent adverse comment on Facebook relating to lettings incentives during November/December. These had been noted. It was also noted that other “rewards” had been approved by Ops Sub but had not yet been launched.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i><u>Noted</u></i></p>
9.2	<p>Rent Policy Review</p> <p>DoO presented an updated and simplified version of the Rent Policy. This would remove the need for the policy to be annually updated to reflect the points value being uplifted by the equivalent to the rent increase.</p> <p>It also included reference to the rent pooling of a number of service charges, addressed earlier.</p>
10	Policies for Review
	<p>Board reviewed and approved the following policies;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Expenses policy • Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members • Financial Regulations
11	Membership Policy
	<p>Board noted that the introduction of the Tenant Portal would offer an easy and straightforward route for tenants to become ordinary members of the company. This would require a minor amendment to the Membership Policy to permit applications via the Portal.</p> <p>Board approved the change.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i><u>Approved</u></i></p>
12	Membership Applications
	<p>Board approved a number of tenants as ordinary members of the company. Details were in the accompanying report.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i><u>Approved</u></i></p>
13	Eydent
	<p>The Chair advised members that the next Eydent meeting was on 30 November and that he would update Board on outcomes at the next meeting in January 2021.</p>
14	Date of Next Meeting
	<p>The next meeting will be on Tuesday 26 January 2021 at 5.30pm</p>

Chair:

Date: