hebridean housing partnership

Making our house your home

Agenda Item 4.1

HEBRIDEAN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Board

Minutes of Meeting held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 20 May 2020 @ 2.00pm

	ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES
1	**Attendance & Apologies** Present Norman Macleod (Chair) Calum Mackay (Vice-Chair) Roddy Nicolson David Blaney Fiona Macleod Paul Finnegan Roddy Mackay Gordon Macleod Norman A Macdonald* Iain Macmillan* Alasdair Mackenzie** Staff & Consultants In Attendance Dena Macleod (Chief Executive) John Maciver (Director of Operations) Donald Macleod (Director of Finance & Corporate Services) Anna Coyle (Company Secretary) Jonathan Fairgrieve (Corporate Services Officer) Tina Cook (Training & Development Officer - Minute Taker) *Norman A Macdonald and Iain Macmillan joined the meeting at Item 7.1. Apologies Alex Gardner **Alasdair Mackenzie lost connection shortly after meeting commenced and issued apologies.
	PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS
2	**Meeting Protocol** The Company Secretary noted this was the second remote Board Meeting and the meeting protocol would be similar to the previous Board meeting on 29 April 2020. Members were asked to mute their microphones during the meeting and to use the new hand raise function if they wished to speak, or to make use of the existing chat function to indicate to the Chair that they wished to speak. Members were reminded the meeting would be recorded for the purpose of drafting the minute but the recording would not be made publically available.
3	**Declaration of Interest** No declarations of interest were made.
4.1	**Minute of Board Meeting 18 March 2020** The Vice-Chair queried whether the 18 March 2020 minute, which itemises the approval of the updates to the Business Plan, the 2020/21 Annual Financing Strategy and Budgets will be affected in light of the current COVID-19 situation. The Chief Executive clarified the minute is an account of the discussions and decisions that were made on 18 March 2020 and the COVID-19 Report at Item 8.1 would cover any updates required to these previously approved items. **The minute of the Board meeting of 18 March 2020 was submitted and approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of the meeting.**
4.2	**Action Sheet** No further update to the report. **The Action Sheet was noted.**
5	**Date of Next Meeting** The date of the next meeting will be 23 June 2020.
6	**Health & Safety** Health & Safety is covered in the COVID-19 Report at Item 8.1.

ITEMS FOR DECISION	
7.1	**<u>Annual Return on the Charter 2019/20</u>** The Chief Executive presented our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) 2019/20 which included our Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESSH) to the Board for consideration and approval. The report summarised performance on arrears, voids, repairs, lettings, neighbourhood and community, housing quality and energy efficiency standards indicators. A full dataset from previous years was also provided for comparison. Despite the Regulator extending the submission deadline from 31 May 2020 to 31 July 2020 in light of COVID-19, the preparation and completion of the return has been managed within original timescales and the Chief Executive extended her thanks to all staff involved for their contribution to this. Overall, our performance has improved, and although arrears were up, this was expected due to the ongoing impact of Universal Credit. Increased arrears is the main reason that 2019/20 is the first year we have not collected over 100% of rent due. The Director of Operations highlighted that repairs were in line with previous years - average length of time to complete repairs improved significantly over recent years, and we compare particularly well across the sector for the completion of non-emergency repairs. Voids have considerably reduced, with the disposal of Cnoc Mor and Braehead contributing to this. Rent loss appeared similar to previous years but when the rent increase was taken into account, it marked an improved figure. Anti-social behaviour was significantly reduced and there was also a low level of abandonments throughout the year. The increase in supported housing lets was primarily down to new build properties and relets with specialist wheelchair accommodation becoming available. The Director of Finance & Corporate Services noted that former tenant arrears have reduced year on year, and advised the specific accounts which contributed to this reduction. The Board expressed their appreciation to all staff for their efforts and hard work which has gone into the improved performance figures, and for the work that went into producing the ARC within the original timescales, despite working from home in challenging circumstances. **The Board approved the draft Annual Return on the Charter 2019/20 for submission to the Regulator.**

MONITORING & UPDATE REPORTS	
8.1	**COVID-19 Report** The Chief Executive presented the COVID-19 report to give members an update on all action taken and ongoing in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. 'Our Services at a Glance' infographic was reviewed and the Chief Executive advised it will take some time to move our services from closed or postponed back to normal. We are continuing to look at how we deliver services in line with all Government guidance. We are tracking arrears on a weekly basis and can see an upward trend. Managing arrears will continue to be high priority for the Management Team and Housing Officers. The Chief Executive attended meetings with other Highlands & Islands Housing Associations, all of whom are reporting a significant increase in arrears. The Director of Operations advised that Housing Officers have been contacting as many tenants as possible to establish if any require any additional support. We have spoken to circa 1600 tenants, 80% of those spoken to have reported no change to their financial circumstances at this time. Those that have lost income have been sign posted to the local DWP to discuss Universal Credit options. Food parcels are being arranged for those who require them across the Outer Hebrides, utilising our Handyperson and alongside local CAB and Salvation Army services. Tenant feedback on the efforts has been positive. All Tenants have received a letter update and we continue to attempt telephone contact with those we have not spoken to. Fiona Macleod asked if information on rehoming for domestic abuse victims was reaching those who may need it. The Director of Operations clarified that we are unaware of any specific requests. The Chief Executive noted that it will prove challenging to hit targets set out in the Business Plan - in particular voids, arrears and new build units are going to be significantly affected. Some targets will be delayed rather than undelivered. Progress will be monitored on a monthly basis. Recruitment is something which is to be reconsidered, as other Housing Associations have proven that it can be completed successfully using video-conferencing. The Executive Office are in the process of investigating possible options for the AGM, which is due to take place in August. A comprehensive plan for the office return will be outlined in a detailed Re-engagement Plan. Staff preference for home working is mixed. The Flexible Working Policy is under review and it is likely that we will see some long term changes post lockdown. It has been a steep learning curve but overall a positive experience and we will review what we have learnt and ask staff to consider what we can improve on. Iain Macmillan stated the detailed Re-engagement Plan should be approved on its' own as we will be working with it for many months to come. It was agreed it will be issued to Board Members and all staff as soon as available. The Vice-Chair noted how encouraging it was to see positive community efforts in these challenging times. **The Board:** **a) noted the actions taken in response to the COVID-19 outbreak;** **b) approved the summary Re-engagement Plan; and** **c) noted the detailed Re-engagement Plan would come before the Board for approval.**
8.2	**Policy Review Schedule** The Company Secretary assured the Board that the Policy Review Schedule is being considered. Agendas for the most recent Board Meetings were kept deliberately brief and for urgent items only while we tested the technology and remote method of meeting, in line with initial guidance from SFHA. To ensure there is no substantial backlog, policies are being reviewed and prioritised, the most urgent of which will be brought to the June and August Board Meetings. The Company Secretary advised a process of reviewing the overall Policy Schedule is underway. This will ensure policy reviews are as effective as possible, with groups of related Policies being reviewed together. A full report on Policies will come to the Board following this review. **The Board noted the update on the Policy Review Schedule Report.**
8.3	**Staff Engagement Survey** The Chief Executive presented the results from the recent Staff Engagement Survey, the vast majority of which were positive. Out of 47 invites, 35 responses were received and the number of staff who believe HHP is a much better place to work has increased by 32% since the last survey in 2015. An Action Plan has been developed alongside staff and we will work to implement these actions to continue to see improvement in the survey results. There will also be smaller staff surveys carried out, for example about the working from home experience. Question 24 which asked whether the Board have a clear vision for the future of HHP saw a number of staff disagree or strongly disagree, which is inconsistent with the same question asked about the Executive and Management Teams – however, as their vision comes from the Board, there appears to be a disconnect which we need to remedy. One of the actions noted in the plan was that a Board Member may wish to come to a staff meeting to explain the role of the Board. Fiona Macleod highlighted the importance of all staff fully understanding the vision of the organisation, and role of the Board in creating that vision. **The Board noted the:** **a) result of the 2020 Staff Engagement Survey; and** **b) Improvement Action Plan.**

MEETING WENT INTO PRIVATE SESSION

Chairperson	Mr Norman M Macleod
SIGNED	…………………………………………………………
DATE	…………………………………………………………