

**WHEATLEY HOUSING GROUP LIMITED****SC426094****MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS****New Mart Road, Edinburgh****on Wednesday 25 September 2024 at 2.45pm**

**Directors Present:** Jo Armstrong (Chair), Maureen Dowden, Jo Boaden, Lindsey Cartwright, Caroline Gardner, Manish Joshi, Bernadette Hewitt, John McCraw, Alison McLaughlin, Alastair Murray, Bryan Duncan and Iain Macaulay

**In Attendance:** Steven Henderson (Group Chief Executive), Anthony Allison (Group Director of Governance and Business Solutions), Pauline Turnock (Group Director of Finance), Stephen Devine (Director of Assets and Sustainability – items 5 and 6 only), Laura Pluck (Group Director of Communities – item 7 only), and Lindsay Lauder (Director of Development and Regeneration – item 8 only)

**1. Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

**2. Declarations of interest**

The Board noted the standing declarations of interest. The Board noted that Manish Joshi had been appointed as a Non-Executive Director of the Scottish Government and was reminded of the Chair's role as Hub West Scotland.

**3. a) Minutes of meeting held on 28 August 2024 and matters arising.**

**Decided: The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2024.**

**b) Action List**

**Decided: The Board noted the action list.**

**4. Group CEO update**

The Board were provided with an update on a range of matters including: the Scottish Housing Regulator consultation on the proposed update to the Annual Return on the Charter; Wyndford regeneration; our Investors in Young People accreditation; the completion of the [redacted] loan; the upcoming staff awards; and the visit by the Minister of Housing Paul McLennan MSP.

**5. Grenfell inquiry findings**

The Board were provided with a summary of the findings from the Grenfell Tower inquiry, Phase 2 report, the key elements of our approach to fire safety in high-rise buildings, and our plans to further enhance our strong approach to fire prevention and mitigation in high-rise buildings.

The Board discussed the findings in relation to poor governance and the reporting and oversight we have embedded within our governance arrangements. The Board further discussed the role of culture in the issues identified and how we reassure ourselves, including through independent sources, on our own culture.

The Board noted that treating tenants with respect was a key failing identified during the inquiry. It was confirmed that as part of the last independent tenant pulse surveys in Wheatley Homes Glasgow and Wheatley Homes South tenants were asked an additional question on whether they agreed that we treat them fairly and with respect. It was confirmed both achieved a positive rating of over 92%.

The Board were updated on the Business continuity and response planning arrangements we have in place and that they are reviewed regularly.

The Board discussed the issue identified by the inquiry in terms of procurement processes, particularly in how specifications are agreed. An update was provided on our approach and it was confirmed we have a very low risk appetite in relation to untested products considered to be innovative.

The Board sought and received clarification regarding the approach to enhancing our information in relation to blocks in Milton and Cranhill. It was confirmed there are no issues at any of the blocks.

The Board discussed the potential challenges with access, either to individual properties or in the immediate vicinity of buildings. It was confirmed that we would engage with statutory authorities where necessary in terms of building access issues such as parking outside a building.

The Board were updated on our approach to physical surveys, including how we test at different levels of the building and that surveys are compared to our building plans to ensure there are no anomalies.

The Board discussed the proposed approach to instances of no access for flat door inspections. It was confirmed three visits would typically be over the course of a few weeks. The Board agreed that given very few cases necessitate forced access three was an appropriate threshold to progress to forcing access.

The Board noted that the Scottish Government was yet to formally respond to the inquiry findings and it was agreed it be updated should any response be published.

**Decided: The Board**

**1) Noted the contents of the report and our strong culture of fire safety;**

- 2) **Noted that inspections of flat front doors will move from annually to six-monthly from 1 April 2025;**
- 3) **Noted that we continue to apply Scottish Government guidance in respect of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS) in multi-storey flats, but that we will explore what further measures might be practicable in conjunction with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; and**
- 4) **Agreed that, in the event of three no-access visits for flat door inspections in multi-storey flats, we will move to a forced access process.**

## **6. Sustainability update**

The Board were provided with an update on progress towards our sustainability objectives.

The Board noted that our approach to reducing emissions will continue to evolve in line with emerging government policy including the Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS) requirements.

The Board was updated on the key drivers of our CO2 reduction, in particular the deployment of Minibems to increase the efficiency of our District heating systems.

The Board discussed the use of ground source heating in new build. It was explained that it was an option assessed but that air-source heating has generally delivered better value.

The Board discussed the importance of ensuring we factor in appropriate funding for ongoing maintenance in our systems, in particular sole PV. It was confirmed this was always considered and factored into our programmed maintenance.

**Decided: The Board noted the report.**

## **7. Delivering Personalised Services Strategy**

The Board were provided with a summary of the key principles set out in the draft strategy and the proposed immediate priorities of developing and delivering enhanced staff training, developing a formal approach to Reasonable Adjustments and a strong focus on having relevant, proportionate data.

The Board noted that the underlying principles sought to reflect our wider focus on delivering excellent services which are responsive to customers' needs. The Board discussed at length the balance of what data we have, what data we use and the context in which we use it.

The Board discussed the proposed focus on formalising our reasonable adjustments approach and reinforcing, through ongoing training and development, a staff culture of being responsive to customer needs provided a clear short-term focus.

The Board further discussed the range of activity proposed within the wider draft strategy. It was agreed that further consideration be given to whether this

should be set within the context of our next five-year strategy rather than a stand-alone strategy.

**Decided: The Board agreed that further consideration be given to the approach to delivering personalised services and an update be provided at the next meeting.**

## **8. New build performance report**

The Board were provided with an update on our new build development programme, the affordable housing grant funding context and the financial appraisal update for the Calton project.

The Board discussed the grant funding context and it was confirmed there were no indications this would change in the current financial year.

The Board discussed the principle of forward funding projects, where we would receive staged grant payments, and the level of risk it could give rise to. It was agreed that any project which proposed forward funding would continue to be reviewed in detail by the Wheatley Developments Board and that no additional approval be required at this stage. It was confirmed that as part of such consideration, the Wheatley Developments Board would take into account the overall number of projects which are front funded and the associated risk profile.

**Decided: The Board noted the report.**

## **9. Governance update**

The Board were provided with an update on governance-related matters.

The Board reviewed the Committee membership and our Intra-Group agreement within the context of its role in our compliance with regulatory requirements.

**Decided: The Board**

- 1) Approved the Committee memberships and Committee Chair appointments for the year;**
- 2) Delegated authority to the Group RAAG Committee to appoint one additional member of the Strategic Development Committee;**
- 3) Approved the Intra-group Agreement we have in place with our subsidiaries; and**
- 4) Noted the Board dates for 2025 and that they will be finalised based on any Board member feedback.**

## **10. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion update**

The Board were provided with an update on the implementation of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and the Annual Equalities Report.

The Board acknowledged the breadth of activity undertaken and welcomed the continued focus on practical measures for our customers and staff.

**Decided: The Board noted the report.**

## **11. AOCB**

There was no other competent business.

**Signed:** ..... (Chair)

**Date:** .....