



MINUTES OF BRIDGEWATER HOUSING ASSOCIATION

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Venue: Virtually Via Zoom

Date: 26th January 2022

Time: 5.30pm

Present:

John Paterson Chair, Frank Bradley Board Member and Heather Stirling Board Member.

In attendance:

Ian McLean Chief Executive, Ruth Brogan Head of Housing and Customer Services, Gary Stapleton Technical Services Manager(part), Stephen McGinley ICT Officer (part), Lesley Carr Minute Secretary.

Item	Details	Action
1.	Welcome and Chairs remarks	
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that members had received their papers on time. The Chair AGREED for the CE to manage the proceedings on his behalf.	
2.	Apologies	
	Apologies were received from Angela Westrop, Craig McGarry.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	Members were invited to declare any interest in any of the items on the agenda, in terms of the Association's published policy.	
3.1	There were no declarations made by those present.	
4.	Minute of the Minute of Scrutiny Sub Committee Meeting 27th October 2021 – for Approval	
	Members were invited to consider the minutes of the Scrutiny Sub Committee Meeting held on 27 th October 2021.	
4.1	Members APPROVED the minute of the Scrutiny Committee Meeting of 27 th October 2021 as a correct record of the meeting.	
MATTERS ARISING		
5.	There were no matters arising from the previous minute.	
	Members AGREED to bring Item 11 - ICT Update Report and Item 12 - Major Property Investment Programme – Quarter 3 forward on the Agenda to allow the ICT Officer and	

	Technical Services Manager to leave the meeting early.	
MATTERS FOR APPROVAL		
6.	There were no items for Approval.	
MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION, COMMENT AND NOTING		
7.	Key Performance Indicators – October to December 2021	
	<p>Members were invited to consider the Key Performance Indicators for October to December, the purpose of which was to provide the Scrutiny Sub Committee with quarterly management information in relation to these key indicators. The CE explained that this report covers a period of both relaxed and increased restrictions in daily life in Scotland because of the Covid pandemic. Consequently, it is not surprise that performance figures are affected, the constricted ability to provide services and deal with issues within the context of a changing and challenging environment it obvious.</p> <p>The CE explained that rent arrears continue to present a problem for the Association with, it would seem, tenants moving onto Universal Credit are making up a significant part of the arrears figure. At the start of the pandemic our arrears figure more than doubled and it has consistently hovered at similar figures throughout. The Housing and Customer Services Team have met with the Chief Executive to discuss ways in which we can make it easier for arrears to be more of a priority within the Housing Officers workload and to discuss innovative ways in which we can support our tenants financially.</p> <p>The TSM updated that the repairs expenditure at the end of this quarter was £20,000 above budget at this stage. This higher than anticipated expenditure is due primarily to a higher number of voids and increases in the amount of asbestos testing and removal. The cost of maintenance and repair work within the housing sector has been increasing steadily in real terms and it is likely that year-end expenditure will exceed the approved budget.</p> <p>The CE explained that the pandemic continues to have a significant effect on the Association’s performance in all of its activities, however, things could have been worse. Staff have gone above and beyond, whilst dealing with the impact of the pandemic on their own lives, to ensure that the Association continues to provide services as much to a level as customers have come to expect and over a gruelling two-year period.</p> <p>The CE updated that there is only one reporting period left in this financial year and things are beginning to improve in the country, however, we cannot be certain that performance will similarly improve. Bridgewater will continue to work in the wake of the pandemic for some time to come and will continue to have to make decisions to mitigate its effects and indeed it’s after effects.</p>	
7.1	Members NOTED the information contained within the KPI report.	
8.	Complaints Visual Report – Quarter 3	
	Members were invited to consider the complaint handling visual report, the purpose of which was to provide the Sub Committee with details of complaint received and what the complainant said and what we done to resolve their complaint. This report forms part of	

	the KPI report and will be uploaded to our Website.	
8.1	Members NOTED the information contained within this report.	
9.	Arrears Summary Report	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Head of Housing Customer Services, the purpose of which was to provide the Sub Committee with analysis of current tenant arrears performance and high arrears as at the end of Quarter 3 2021-22.</p> <p>The HOHCS explained that the total current tenant arrears figure at the end of December 2021 was £144,7022, which is more than double the target of £62,244. Arrears increased from £136,324 at the end of September 21 to £144,702, an increase of £8,378. The total number of cases had reduced by 3 to 228, however, the number of high arrears cases increased by 6 to 49, with arrears of over £1,000 totaling £81,184, this accounts for 54% of the total arrears. Full details are contained within Appendix 1 of this report.</p> <p>The HOHCS reported that arrears have continued to fluctuate, however, quarter 2 has seen the largest increase (10,494) for some time. Analysis of arrears in quarter 4 of 2019/20 against quarter 3 of 2021/22 and variances were provided to those present. A review of the Covid Arrears Strategy is underway to identify measures which will mitigate the risk of further increase in arrears.</p> <p>The HOHCS explained that the roll out of UC has meant that the case load of tenant's in receipt of UC has been increasing incrementally, and although not all cases will automatically fall into arrears (e.g. some accounts may be in credit at the outset of a UC claim), the range of claim start dates and time taken for UC payments to reach rent accounts mean that payments will generally not tie in with our debit periods, and arrears will accrue.</p> <p>The CE and HOHCS have arranged to meet to drill down further to identify the reasons behind the arrears and to identify how much are actually due to the delay in UC payments. Members will be provided with a more detailed report which will hopefully allow them to make decisions on the arrears cases that we can do something about. The HOHCS explained that this all ties in with our IT strategy to provide the right tools which will enable us to extract the information we need from the computer system to provide more accurate information and allow us to work smarter.</p> <p>A member agreed that we need to refocus our approach on rent arrears and welcomed The opportunity for members to look at different reports which will provide information on arrears and help the Board make decisions going forward.</p> <p>The HOHCS explained that the Scottish Government announced in December 21, the Tenant Grant Funding Scheme, which has been provided to Local Authorities to help residents who are struggling with rent arrears as a direct result of Covid. This fund is intended to help tenants most at risk of repossession and homelessness. Bridgewater has made an application to the Council on behalf of 54 of our tenants, decisions on these applications are pending. The CE updated that the Council are hoping to have made a decision on the allocation of this funding by the end of February.</p> <p>The HOHCS will continue to closely monitor and report to the Chief Executive on arrears</p>	

	performance.	
9.1	Members NOTED the information contained within the report.	
10.	Tenant Engagement/Survey Plan	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Head of Housing Customer Services, the purpose of which was to provide members of the Sub Committee with details of tenant engagement survey which are planned to take place during 2021-22 & 2022-23.</p> <p>These surveys will be carried out by CX Communication and Research Resource and results of the surveys will be reported to the Sub Committee.</p> <p>The CE explained that the reason for presenting the plan to the Sub Committee is so that members are aware of what surveys are being carried out and allow them to input to the questions that will be asked during the surveys. The results of the surveys will be presented back to the Sub Committee along with any actions that are required as a result.</p>	
10.1	Members NOTED the information contained within the Tenant Engagement Survey Plan for 2021-22 & 2022-23.	
11.	ICT Update Report	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the ICT Officer, the purpose of which was to provide members with information relating to the Association's Information Communication Technology Strategy and the improvements which have been made by the IT function of the Association as well as proposals for the next few months.</p> <p>The ICT Officer updated that whilst progress on plans continues to gather pace, the overall state of the Association's ICT infrastructure continues to be strong and robust, providing an excellent foundation on which to build and extend the availability of ICT services to all stakeholders.</p> <p>The ICT Officer highlighted the ICT Strategy as a main element in the plan, this aims to cover a period of three years. Initial consultation of the Strategy has been carried out with the CE and CSM and this has now been circulated to the Leadership team for comment. The Strategy includes some big ticket items which will be exciting and good for the Association. The final strategy will be presented to the Board at their meeting in February.</p> <p>A member asked what the big ticket items were, the ICT Officer explained one example, to look at moving to more cloud bases technology, which will provide better back up facilities as well as improving connectivity.</p>	
11.1	Members NOTED the content of the report and INSTRUCTED the ICT Officer to provide an update on progress at the next Scrutiny Sub Committee Meeting.	
	The ICT Officer left the meeting at this point.	
12.	Major Property Investment Programme – Quarter 3	

	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by Technical Services Manager, the purpose of which was to provide the Sub Committee with an update on the current Major Property Investment Programme.</p> <p>The TSM updated that the planned investment programme continues to be affected by the Covid 19 pandemic, but to a lesser extent since restrictions have been eased. Most notably the re-roofing programme, boiler installations, external wall insulation and fire/smoke/CO detector upgrades. Delays in completing the boiler installation and external wall insulation programmes will affect projected EESSH compliance reported through the ARC. These projects will be completed during the current financial year, Covid permitting.</p> <p>The Scottish Government has extended the deadline for complying with the new standards for fire/smoke/CO detection upgrades and electrical safety by a year, to take account of the impact of Covid. Bridgewater will meet this new deadline for its mainstream and Extra Care housing, however sheltered stock will not achieve the standard until April 2022. The fire detection systems in sheltered housing is integrated with the Dispersed Alarm System being installed in April, later than originally anticipated due to supply chain issues.</p> <p>The TSM explained that from a financial aspect the impact of these delays has generally been minimal although the recent kitchen replacement contract procurement was around 20% higher than had been anticipated. However, for the most part the Technical Services Team continued to manage contracts effectively during the pandemic and costs are being well controlled. Quality control is being monitored as closely and effectively as the current constraints will allow.</p>	
12.1	Members NOTED the update provided by the TSM.	
	The TSM left the meeting at this point.	
13.	Business Delivery Plan	
	<p>Members were invited to consider the Associations Business Delivery Plan (BDP).</p> <p>The CE reminded members that this an integral part of the Associations Business Plan, has been developed following consultation with Board Members, customers, management and front line staff and builds on the Association’s 2016-2019 Business Plan which was comprehensively reviewed in 2018. It sets out the objectives and business deliverables for the three years of business. It will be used to monitor activities and expectations in terms of business and service improvements which are the responsibility of specific Leadership Team members.</p> <p>The Delivery Plan will be reviewed at the start of each financial year to repopulate years two and three and the expectation is that this will become a rolling programme of priority activity for the Association’s ambition to continuously improve. However, in the context of the pandemic the plan was approved in 2021 with activities going in to 2022 and the expectation is that it will be comprehensively reviewed in 2022 to take account of lessons learned from the pandemic.</p> <p>This is a tracked version of the Plan showing anything which has been updated since the last Scrutiny Sub Committee meeting.</p>	

13.1	Members NOTED the Associations Business Delivery Plan.	
14.	Active Governance Statement	
	<p>Members were invited to consider a report by the Chief Executive, the purpose of which was to provide members with an update on the Active Governance Statement. The Active Governance Statement provides a context within which the Association's Board can make sound decisions about the future direction of the Association, its purpose and aspirations and how it is going to get to where it wants to be.</p> <p>The CE has made additional changes to the layout of the Plan which includes a table incorporating input from Board Members and this will be updated once actions have been completed.</p>	
14.1	Members NOTED the Active Governance Statement.	
15.	Policy Review Schedule - Jan 22	
	<p>Members were invited to consider the Policy review schedule for October 21, the purpose of which was to provide details of Policies and their review dates, some of which had not been met due to the current pandemic.</p> <p>As in previous reports anything which has been updated since the last Sub Committee meeting is highlighted in red.</p>	
15.1	Members NOTED the Policy Review Schedule.	
16.	Gas Safety update report	
	Members were invited to consider a report by the Technical Services Manager, the purpose of which was to provide members with information regarding the current position in relation to the servicing of gas appliances. This document provides assurance to the Board that servicing of our gas appliance is being carried out within the set timescales.	
16.1	Members NOTED the information contained within the report.	
MATTERS FOR BRIEFING AND INFORMATION ONLY		
17.	There were no items for briefing and information.	
REGULATORY ISSUES		
18.	Notifiable Events	
18.1	There were no notifiable events for consideration.	
ADMINISTRATION		
19.	Issues which the Chair has agreed as urgent	
19.1	There were no issues which the Chair agreed as urgent.	

20.	Meeting concluded - 18.35pm Date of next meeting – 27 th April 2022	
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Signed: _____(Chair)