



## Minutes of Meeting

**Meeting Name:** Shropshire Towns & Rural Housing Limited

**Meeting Location:** Spruce Building, Shrewsbury

**Date and Time:** 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018 – 2.00pm

Members present:

**Chair** – Margaret Wright (Independent) MW  
Charlotte Parry (Tenant) CP  
John Wood (Independent) JW  
Paul Kelly (Shropshire Council) PK  
Emma Jones (Staff Board Member) EJ

**Vice Chair** – Nicki Barker (Tenant) NB  
Ann Maltby (Tenant) AM  
Richard Grounds (Independent) RG  
Cllr Robert Macey (Shropshire Council) RM

Non-Members  
Present:

Sue Adams (STAR) SA  
Melanie Smith (STAR) MS  
Teresa Dagnall (STAR) TD  
Martin Whitelegg (STAR) MWH  
Dean Carroll (Shropshire Council) DC

Steve Ogram (STAR) SO  
Claire Allen (STAR) CA – for GDPR Item only  
Angela Douglas (STAR) AD  
Lee Chapman (Shropshire Council) LC

1.	Apologies	<p>MW opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. MW thanked NB for chairing the last Board meeting in her absence and welcomed EJ again as the staff board member.</p> <p>Apologies were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Elliott Lynch</li> </ul>		
2.	Declaration of Interests	<p>The Board were asked if they had any interests to declare on any items on the agenda.</p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>		
3.	Minutes from STAR Board Meeting 27 <sup>th</sup> February 2018	<p>All members confirmed that the previous minutes had been received and were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>The minutes will be signed and placed on the minute book.</p>		
4.	Matters Arising	<p>The matters arising from previous Board meetings were circulated for information.</p> <p>There were no further matters arising.</p>		
5.	VfM Self-Assessment	<p>At the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016 the Board approved the Value for Money (VfM) Strategy 2016 – 2019. It was agreed that the self-assessment would be brought back annually for approval.</p> <p>As an ALMO we are not required to complete a VfM Self-Assessment, but thought this would be good practice.</p> <p>The self-assessment brings together financial and operational performance information and documents to form a view on</p>		

		<p>the extent in which the Company delivered value for money in 2016/17.</p> <p>The pension's liability figure has been adjusted and the capital programme has been taken out as these distort the true trading position.</p> <p>The company's expenditure has risen, and this is due to an investment back into services and service developments, but also there has been an increase in the use of subcontractors.</p> <p>The self-assessment shows that STAR has delivered VfM and has made cash savings. Notably, efficiencies have been made through mobile working and STAR has continued to provide the Housing Support Service after absorbing a cut in grant funding.</p> <p>STAR are also responsible for the stewardship of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and this made a surplus of £3million. This is ring-fenced to the HRA, it cannot be used for any other purpose. . We have utilised this for the development programme and to reinvest back into the housing stock.</p> <p>In terms of benchmarking, STAR subscribes to Housemark, which shows our position relative to a group of similar organisations. This data has been replicated within the self-assessment and shows that STAR features in the top quartile in several indicators. Where STAR are not performing as well, we are looking at those organisations who are in order to learn from them.</p> <p>It was noted that those Council targets that are outside tolerance, are only just outside of this range. One particular</p>		
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		<p>target that is weak is the perception that we don't listen to views. This is an area that we are tackling including developing a new CRM system.</p> <p>The self-assessment also considers the social value of the work STAR does. LC is involved in a social value group and will forward a copy of the new national framework for monetising to SO for information.</p> <p>RG noted that some Registered Providers are moving to the new sector scorecard. SO has looked at this and it is more relevant to housing associations. Some of their measures have been included in the self-assessment. SA noted that these have also been discussed at the ALMO group.</p> <p>Two issues that stood out in terms of improvement for MW were the issues around mobile working and void performance. It is important to note from a Board perspective is that the areas where performance identified as requiring improvement are ones that the Board is that are focused on.</p> <p>It was noted that our overall satisfaction with STAR has risen</p> <p><b>The Board approved the VfM Self-Assessment 2016/17.</b></p>	<p>Forward a copy of the national framework</p>	<p>LC</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Service Standards</p>	<p>MWH joined the meeting. The service standards pre-date STAR and it is time to review them as they are not as user friendly as they could be.</p> <p>The standards have been broken down into various sub-sections and these are closely linked to our Customer Approach.</p> <p>The following comments were noted:</p>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Page 2: Mentions we will respect tenant's homes etc., however, this was felt to be too ambiguous. The Board agreed that this would be changed to <b>Respect You and Your Home</b>.</li> <li>• Page 3: This talks about estate inspections. It was noted that a lot of inspections are picked up by the pop-up events. The Communal Areas Inspector, along with various other staff are regularly out and about on the estates. There is also a programme of inspections in place for communal areas to identify fire risks and to maintain records.</li> <li>• AM commented that she has had two reports recently about a member of staff in the Bridgnorth office being rude to tenants. AM is to liaise with MWH with further details so that this can be looked into.</li> <li>• MW has some drafting recommendations and will follow up with MWH.</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that any further comments should be made to MWH within the next week.</p> <p>The Service Standards will then be amended and taken back to the Area Panels for comment.</p> <p>Once this has happened a final draft is to be circulated around Board before the standards are published.</p> <p><b>The Board approved the draft service standards subject to the above amendments and process.</b></p>	<p>Amend service standards</p> <p>AM to liaise with MWH</p> <p>Any suggested changes to MWH within the next week. Incorporate changes and take back to Panels.</p> <p>Circulate final draft to Board.</p>	<p>MWH</p> <p>AM</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>MWH</p> <p>MS</p>
7.	STAR Survey Action Plan	The Board last reviewed the STRA Survey Action Plan in September 2017, and this was brought back to note progress.		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grass cutting is an important issue to many tenants and NB queried how the new contract would be monitored moving forward. It was noted that Kier have appointed a subcontractor called Assist to carry out the works. MWH has met with the relevant personnel and bi-monthly meetings will take place whilst the contract is bedding in. It was acknowledged that cuttings will not be collected due to cost implications, however, MWH is looking into the possibility of some schemes having this as an optional. A new complaints system has been implemented that will hopefully improve communication and feedback to tenants.</li> <li>• MW suggested that information about the contract is included in the next tenant newsletter and tenants are made aware that cuttings will not be collected. So that tenants expectations can be managed.</li> <li>• AM queried if the same contractor is also responsible for tree maintenance. MWH advised that this is a separate contract. AM to liaise with MWH outside of the Board meeting regarding this.</li> <li>• RM noted that actions 1.12 and 3.2 are quite similar looking at stock breakdown and profile of tenants and asked if anything was being done to deal with longer term bigger issues, such as the lack of parking in some areas and provisions for children. It was confirmed that there are a series of neighbourhood project in place that looks to tackle these issues where it is possible to do so, however, it will not be possible to put measures in place in all areas. We will update the STAR Action Plan to cross-reference where there are plans in place to tackle some of the issues raised.</li> <li>• LC asked if action 2.1, where there were issues with void properties and adult social care was still outstanding. MWH confirmed that this has now been</li> </ul>	<p>Place article in next tenant newsletter</p> <p>Liaise with MWH regarding issue with trees</p> <p>Cross reference Action Plan with Neighbourhoods Projects and other plans</p>	<p>MWH</p> <p>AM</p> <p>MWH</p>
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		<p>resolved, and the properties in questions were all tenanted in January. LC advised that if a similar situation arises, please contact LC to see if anything further can be done.</p> <p><b>The Board thanked MWH for the update and noted the contents of the action plan.</b></p>	Contact LC if any further issues with voids and ASC	MWH
8.	VOID Action Plan	<p>The void action plan was a result of the scrutiny work carried out in this area by members of the Area Panels. The Panels made a series of recommendations and these have been picked up in this action plan.</p> <p>It was noted that there have been an issue with voids in the Oswestry area. This is partly exacerbated by other social housing providers building new properties in the area. Where STAR struggles to let via HomePoint, alternative methods are used such as social media.</p> <p>RG noted that we are not the only housing provider experiencing lettings issues and a lack of demand. A wider discussion took place about improving the standard of properties at the void stage and potential of using one of the hard to let flats as a show home.</p> <p><b>The Board thanked MW for the update and noted the contents of the action plan.</b></p>		
<b>ITEMS 9 – 12 EXEMPT FROM PUBLIC DISCUSSION</b>				
		<p><b>Date of next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018 at Spruce Building, Shrewsbury</b></p>		