

**Meeting**                      **Shropshire Towns & Rural Housing Limited Board Meeting**

**Date**                         **16 September 2024**

**Time**                         **11:30-16:30**

**Location**                   **Board Room – Mount McKinley**



<b>Members Present:</b>	
Tony Deakin (TD)	STAR Board Chair, Independent Board Member
Vince Hunt (VH)	Shropshire Council, Board Member
Steve Robinson (SR)	Independent Board Member
James Woods (JW)	Independent Board Member
Yordan Tolev (YT)	Tenant Board Member
Siobhan Johnson (SJ)	Co-opted STAR Board Member
Rachel Connolly (RC)	Shropshire Council, Board Member
Lynn Fonseca (LF)	Tenant Board Member
Paul Weston (PW)	Co-opted STAR Board Member
Richard Amos (RA)	Tenant Board Member
Paul Hayward (PH)	Co-opted STAR Board Member
<b>Non-Members Present:</b>	
Harpreet Rayet (HR)	Managing Director
Tom Forty (TF)	Operations Director
Ros Jones (RJ)	Corporate Director
Rosanna Davenport (RD)	Governance Manager
Leela Cottey (LC)	Assistant Director of Assets, STAR
Jo Grivell (JG)	Executive Assistant and Office Manager/Minute Taker
Jane Trethewey (JT)	Assistant Director Homes & Communities
Denise Jones (DJ)	Head of Finance
<b>Apologies</b>	

		Jenny Daisley and Andrea Martin		
11.30am	Presentation	Risk Management Workshop Beever & Struthers		
Board Meeting commenced 1.00pm				
Minute Number			Who	When
1.	Welcome & Apologies	The Chair welcomed all attendees, and asked each attendee to introduce themselves and their roles as there are several new attendees, including two new Board Members: Councilor Rachel Connolly and Richard Amos. Apologies were received from Jenny Daisley and Andrea Martin who were unable to attend.		
2.	Declarations of Interest	There were no new declarations of interest received.		
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting	<p><b>Minutes presented by TD</b> The minutes were circulated in advance of the meeting and Board members were asked to approve the minutes as an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>TD invited the Board to comment on the minutes.</p> <p><b>Q: TD raised concern over the speed that the minutes are issued following Board meetings and that the draft minutes from 14<sup>th</sup> June were issued with the Board pack but had not been seen by the Chair in advance. Further concerns have been raised in respect of the accuracy of the minutes.</b> HR acknowledged the concern raised and advised that he has appointed new personnel to take the minutes going forward.</p> <p><b>Q: TD asked if his comments on the draft minutes from the previous meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024 had been incorporated.</b> RD confirmed they would be incorporated and re-issued to the meeting attendees following the meeting.</p> <p><b>Action: RD to reissue minutes from 14<sup>th</sup> June for approval following the Board meeting</b></p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b> The minutes to be reissued for approval following the meeting. <b>Agreed</b></p>	RD	Oct

4.	Matters Arising	<p><b>Presented by TD</b></p> <p>The matters arising were shared in advance of the meeting and taken as read. Officers were asked to provide an update on progress.</p> <p>HR confirmed due to leave it had not been possible to get dates in the diary for training on the Development Appraisal Model. This will be arranged before the next Board meeting in December.</p> <p><b>Action Ongoing.</b></p>	HR	Dec
5.	Performance Update	<p><b>Report Presented by RJ</b></p> <p>A report had been circulated in advance and taken as read. The purpose of the report was to update the Board members on STAR's current performance against its Management Agreement performance indicators.</p> <p>RJ gave an overview of the papers and invited questions from the Board.</p> <p><b>Q: PH flagged his concern regarding the response to complaints. The report states STAR did not meet the target due to staff sickness.</b> PH stated this is unacceptable given the importance of this area. If there is a single point of failure within the organisation, this needs to be addressed to avoid it happening again.</p> <p>RJ advised the single point of failure issue has been rectified. The team has been restructured and new processes put in place. A new Complaints &amp; Disrepairs Manager has been appointed to work through a service improvement plan including staff training. RJ stated that the overall complaints target will be met by the end of the year.</p> <p><b>Q: PW queried the 90 properties classified as non-decent, and how the numbers appear to be unchanged.</b> TF explained the number will be reduced to a few properties by the end of the financial year, but at the start of the new financial year another set of homes will have reached the threshold where work is due to be done on them.</p> <p>TD clarified that when a property comes to the end of its expected lifecycle, where it has met the standard, it would then go onto the list for replacement of a component such as a fitted kitchen.</p> <p><b>Q: TD queried why new build properties would not already have been built to decent homes standard.</b> HR clarified it is a system issue, where new properties have to be added to the system</p>		

		<p>before they can be advertised, and because of this system issue it shows that the house isn't decent. The upgrade to the new system removes that issue. However all new properties are decent and we will add a note moving forward confirming the number of homes in the figures which relate to new build homes.</p> <p><b>Q: RA asked what steps STAR are taking to build relationships with tenants.</b>  HR stated that there is a lot more to be done, in getting customers more involved with the processes. The level of engagement is low currently. The TSM results are good, and when we engage customers are happy. The Customer Involvement strategy and improvement plan aim to deliver more ways for residents to be involved at all levels of the organization.</p> <p><b>Action: RA asked for a plan on customer engagement work at the next Board meeting.</b></p>	RJ	Dec
		<p><b>Q: JW asked what is being done with staff to embed a tenant centric culture. Is there any training in place for front line staff?</b>  RJ stated that every member of staff has been invited to mandatory training sessions on complaints handling. In addition, more feedback from frontline staff will be gathered.</p> <p>JW highlighted it is important that the focus isn't only at the Board and Executive level and the culture needs to be driven through the entire organisation. There is a need to listen to what is happening on the frontline. TF explained that the staff forum is being developed to allow communication between front line staff and SMT.</p> <p>VH stated he used to do monthly walk arounds with the Community Engagement officers, to listen to some of the concerns being raised. VH would like to start this again but does not have a list of current housing officers. TF advised contact details would be passed to Board members.</p> <p><b>Action: TD asked that each Councilor receives a list of the housing officers in their patch.</b></p> <p><b>Q: SR asked if there is a digital strategy for engagement with customers.</b>  TF confirmed that part of the resident engagement strategy, includes digital communication channels as well as face to face meetings and inspections. RJ added there is customer profiling work being carried out which will influence how we approach engagement.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b>  The Board was requested to note the performance of the organisation in relation to its obligations through the management agreement. <b>AGREED</b></p>	TF	Dec



7.	Subcommittee Update – FAR	<p><i>DJ joined the meeting</i></p> <p><b>Verbal update presented by SR/RJ</b></p> <p>Supporting reports were circulated in advance of the meeting and FAR recommended Board to approve the new Strategic Risk Framework, delegated authority for the Chair of the Board to sign off the Financial Statement 23/24 and changes to the current risk register.</p> <p>SR gave an overview of the papers and invited questions from the Board.</p> <p><b>Q: PW flagged that there is a lot of information on the Strategic Risk Framework and it needs to be kept simple for staff to engage with it.</b> JW highlighted the importance that the information shared by Beever and Struthers in the workshop before Board is acted upon . JW suggested a follow up session before the next Board meeting to build on the workshop.</p> <p><b>Action: HR agreed to plan an away day before the end of the financial year to look at risks and the business plan in order to have a more comprehensive discussion.</b></p> <p>The Strategic Risk Framework and Policy were approved by the Board.</p> <p>The Board approved delegated authority for the Chair of the Board to approve the Financial Statements 23/24 following the AGM in October.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b> Approval was received to make the recommended changes to the Strategic Risk Register. <b>AGREED</b></p> <p><i>DJ left the meeting</i></p>	HR/RD	Dec
8.	Subcommittee Update – Development, Sustainability and Strategic Investment	<p><b>Verbal update presented by HR/JW</b></p> <p>Supporting reports were circulated in advance of the meeting and DSSI recommended Board approve the contract with J Harper &amp; Sons for 70 Castle Foregate Street and the Parish Rooms, the purchase of 4 affordable properties from Boningale Homes, the use of grant funding in the form of right to buy receipts and the planned property disposals.</p> <p>HR gave an overview of the papers and invited questions from the Board.</p> <p><b>70 Castle Foregate and Parish Room Paper</b></p> <p><b>Q: TD raised concerns about Shropshire Council capacity and expertise to negotiate residential</b></p>		

		<p><b>deals with sellers compared to other RPs and STAR Housing and the need to align with Shropshire Council Strategy.</b> HR advised that it had been agreed that STAR would own the process of acquisition and then go to the Council for approval and highlighted the need for more temporary accommodation particularly in the center of Shrewsbury.</p> <p>JT endorsed this stating The Parish Rooms ,70 Castle Foregate and The Tannery, will resolve the Council's temporary accommodation issues resulting in significant savings for Shropshire Council.</p> <p><b>Disposals Paper</b></p> <p><b>Q: SJ asked if the money from property disposals could be reinvested in the areas the properties are sold from.</b> HR advised LC is working on a formal policy around disposals.</p> <p><b>Q: RA asked how many disposals there has been in the past and what the threshold is for property disposal .</b> HR confirmed that no property disposals have been carried out previously and it was not an area of work that had been considered before. HR stated a lot of work had been carried out over the last 12-18 months on stock data and development appraisals to inform decisions on stock retention. HR confirmed that disposal is only considered as a last resort and full investigations would be carried out on each property before being considered for disposal.</p> <p><b>Q: RA asked what the communications would be to the local community and if the properties being considered for disposal were near other STAR properties .</b> HR advised there are some other STAR properties close to the proposed disposals. HR agreed to ask the Housing team to reach out to customers living near by with information.</p> <p><b>Action: The Housing Team to reach out to tenants in the area to assure them that STAR is not looking to sell properties on mass but just specific cases.</b></p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b> The recommendations to enter into contract with J Harper and Sons for the refurbishment of 70 Castle Foregate Street and The Parish Rooms, and the disposal of 5 properties were approved. 4 affordable properties to be purchased from Boningale Homes, with the use of grant funding in the form of right to buy receipts was also approved. <b>AGREED</b></p>	TF	Dec
9.	Sub Committee Update – Customer	<p><b>Verbal update presented by PH/TF/RJ</b></p> <p>No supporting reports were circulated ahead of the meeting. Approval was sought for the Annual Report to be sent for virtual approval ahead of the AGM.</p>		

	Services	<p>TF &amp; RJ gave an update of Customer Services Subcommittee in September and invited questions from the Board.</p> <p>Approval for the Annual report will be sent for approval virtually prior to the AGM. RJ confirmed the annual report is still being drafted and will be sent out by email for comments as soon as it was ready. HR confirmed this would be by the end of the week. It was suggested last year that the report should be more interactive and so there is a video alongside the report which will be shared at the AGM on 8<sup>th</sup> October.</p> <p><b>Action: Issue the annual report as soon as it is ready after today's meeting.</b></p>	RD	asap
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**Chair of the Board:**

**Date:**

**Managing Director:**

**Date:**