

Meeting	FAR Meeting
Date	Thursday 6th June 2024
Time	1.00pm – 3.00pm
Location	Mt McKinley – Atria / Teams



Core Members:

Steve Robinson (SR)	Board Member and Chair
Tony Deakin (TD)	Board Member
Ros Bridges (RB)	Corporate Director
Paul Hayward (PH)	Co-optee Board Member
Tom Forty (TF)	Operations Director
Denise Jones (DJ)	Head of Finance
Jenny Daisley (JD)	Client Officer (Shropshire Council)
Harpreet Rayet (HR)	Managing Director
Barry Hanson (BH)	Audit Team (Shropshire Council)
Charlotte Burrows (CB)	Personal Assistant & Minute Taker

Presenters:

James McLaron (JM)	Grant Thornton
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Apologies:

Jane Trethewey (JT)	Assistant Director Homes & Communities (Shropshire Council)
Nicholas Burton (NB)	Grant Thornton
Kath Vose (KV)	Audit Team (Shropshire Council)

Item No.		Who	When
<u>1.</u>	<u>Apologies</u>		
	SR introduced Denise as it was her first meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. No apologies had been given.		
<u>2.</u>	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>		
	No declarations of interest were declared.		
<u>3.</u>	<u>Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising</u>		
3.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 5 th March 2024 were approved .		
3.2	The Vulnerability policy has been approved by the customer service committee and has now been rolled out. RB provided a rent setting report to the Board.		
3.3	Regarding the temporary accommodation strategy , HR, TF, and RB are collaborating with the local authority. This is part of a larger discussion where direct costs of dealing with TA properties	RB	Oct 2024

3.4	<p>needs to be addressed in the management fee. Systems need to be in place to record timekeeping accurately as while the number of cases is tracked, the number of hours STAR spend working on them is not. A full costing position in relation to TA to be provide by reporting period 6 for discussion and negotiation with the council</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>The AS policy has been approved, and with quality assurance, it has been moved to open housing.</p> <p>For Service Charges, DJ has appointed a dedicated management accountant to progress this matter and is establishing a working group to define its remit. SR enquired about the timing of the report, to which HR replied that it is expected towards the end of this year, with an interim report around November. Action - interim report to be issued by mid November for FAR consideration.</p>			
4.	<u>Health and Safety Update</u>			
4.1	TF gave an overview of his report.			
4.2	<p>PH expressed satisfaction regarding the inclusion of the lone working procedure, which had been a recurring concern for the committee. PH's request for clarity on the follow-up to the verbal abuse incident and the suggestion to add health and safety concerns to the risk register have been noted, with an action to include H&S risk in the risk register. Health and Safety to be added to the strategic register</p> <p>TF references the verbal abuse incident to lone working and mentioned that the neighbourhood and tenancy team are following up with appropriate measures like markers on the system and two-person visits. TF also welcomed the conversation about the risk register, indicating a need to assess if current measures are sufficient.</p>	HR		June 2024
5.	<u>Procurement Exemptions</u>			
	<p>RB reported that IT System and Project Support were in scope for this.</p> <p>The system itself has been procured via the KCS Framework and the project management was done under and exemption granted by HR as MD and ratified by Board in the virtual report circulated and approved on 25th March.</p> <p>GBS have also been appointed via a framework to undertake procurement activities (value £70k)</p>			

6.	<u>Finance & Performance Update Report – Q4</u>		
6.1	<p>RB and DJ gave an overview of the main headlines of the report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SR raised concerns about the budget and the sustainability of finding funds on an ongoing basis due to inflation and the position associated with the base budget. TD had questions regarding the main report and appendix A, specifically about the void figures, with 353 completed and 87 being TA. TD inquired if the TA costs would be identified to understand the additional cost pressure. RB to return with an interim financial position associated with TA. HR mentioned benchmarking with NFA and the need for clarification from finance regarding void costs and also the impact of costs associated with TA for ALMOs. HR noted the completion of a significant number of voids this year and how this may compare with a typical year which would be in the region of 200-240 homes. TD sought clarity on what is included in the management agreement and the costs incurred that are HRA or non-HRA. HR to confirm the wording in the management agreement associated with temporary accommodation PH expressed concerns about the strategic approach to using reserves. RB highlighted that according to appendix 1.4, there is a planned use of reserves with 1 million in outgoing activity for the current financial year and a closing reserve of 2.5 million. HR confirmed that there is a clear structure approved by the Board and AAB for applying reserves. TD supported the statements made and recognised the added demands on housing management. TD raised a question about the capital program budget for 40 LAHF properties, with 23 already bought or in process, and whether the funds are still available this year. HR responded to TD outlining 18 have been purchased and return of funds for 17 properties. TD asked about the dilapidations on Spruce, to which HR promised to revert with an estimated cost of around £20,000, mentioning that most of the work was done using their own staff. 	RB HR	Oct 2024 Sept 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PH questioned the delegation and the write-off limits seeking clarity on the committee's responsibilities. RB clarified that the Head of Finance is tasked with reviewing the financial rules framework. PH pointed out that the wording in the report did not reflect this responsibility. Additional concerns were raised about a new finance position in Purchase Ledger and why it had been previously overlooked. RB responded that the function is now better understood now that it is operating effectively after examining the volumes, processes and backlog. DJ added that the workflow in the ERP was not a smooth process. 	
<u>7.</u>	<u>Strategy Approval</u>	
7.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PH sought understanding and reassurance on the management of strategies. HR said that a Programme Board would be established, with updates to the SMT quarterly and to the Board biannually. TF discussed the strategy development plan over three years, advocating for a simpler way of managing projects with a review by the SMT if they exceed time or cost expectations. SR observed that most agenda items are for noting rather than decision-making, suggesting that agendas could be more focused, especially given multiple meetings in a week. SR questioned how to hold the SMT accountable and improve agenda setting for highlighting main points and decisions. 	
<u>8 & 9</u>	<u>2023/24 SC Audit & Risk Strategy & 2023/24 STAR Response to Audit Report & Forward Plan</u>	
8.1	<p>Barry gave an overview of his report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SR suggested bringing in Item 9 from the agenda for discussion. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PH welcomed the approach taken regarding complaints, noting a different message. • RB stated that the processes were robust in the complaints team, but there was a disconnect between the complaints team and the rest of the business. • HR acknowledged that STAR had made significant step changes with JD's help, but there was still much work to be done. • TD mentioned that the report from this committee to the board increased audit days and focused on known problem areas. He expressed concerns about the corporate governance audit, suggesting that the governance review could have been postponed for better use of funds in another area. • BH responded to TD's concerns, agreeing that corporate governance needed to be addressed in order to provide overall assurance. 		
<u>10.</u>	<u>2023/24 External Audit Plan – Grant Thornton</u>		
10.1	JM gives an overview of his report and picks up a couple of key points.		
10.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JM informed about an additional paper that has been added to the discussion. 		
10.3			
10.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PH raised concerns about the arrangements around reporting fraud, mentioning a case involving a former repair operative that he was not aware of, which he believes should have been reported to this committee. • HR discussed tightening measures, such as restrictions on booking out heavy tools, and confirmed that a full report and information have been sent to the Board. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was agreed to circulate the original report and minutes so PH can review the details. • TD emphasized that such incidents should be reported to this committee in the future, rather than directly to the Board. 	RB	Sept 2024

<u>11.</u>	<u>Strategic Risk Register Update</u>		
11.1	<p>HR gives an overview of the report and register.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SR raised concerns about the strategic positions and the decision-making process, questioning the implications if a post is vacated or if decisions are made by someone else, and the extent of delegations to STAR. 		
11.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR mentioned that the upcoming Anthony Collins workshop would be beneficial in addressing these concerns and establishing a clear framework for decision delegation. 		
11.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TD suggested scheduling another Board meeting as soon as possible, considering the use of external expertise instead of the council's risk personnel. 		
11.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PH emphasized the importance of setting milestones in the risk register to ensure it is fit for purpose. 		
11.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR noted the ongoing process of redefining risks and questioned whether D&M should become business as usual. The possibility of discussing certain items from the risk register with the Board was mentioned, along with the need to add Health & Safety considerations. 		
11.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was agreed to remove items 8, 11 & 12 from the risk register, with all present in agreement. ACTION HR to update the report to reflect the proposed changes to the risk register and recommend these changes to the board PH observed that all five ongoing risks could either be removed or combined. The committee decided to take away the items for further review and come up with recommendations and an update for the Board 	HR	June
<u>12.</u>	<u>Sewage Treatment Plants</u>		
12.1	TF gives an overview of his report.		

12.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TD expressed a desire to understand more about the company's intentions to manage the current situation. TF inquired if TF had reached out to the NFA to see if they are experiencing a similar situation. It was noted that Cornwall has responded, indicating they are in a worse position than STAR Housing HR outlined his preference to discount all our properties from sewage treatment plants and then confirm to existing users they would be required to make their own arrangements 		
<u>13.</u>	<u>AOB</u>		
	No AOB to be discussed		

Meeting	Shropshire Towns & Rural Housing FAR Subcommittee		
Date	5th March 2024		
Agenda Item	Action	Who	Status
	Matters Arising		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 4 - Budget commentary to be added in future papers 	RB	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 4 – Future Asset Management to be discussed at the Development Sustainability and Strategic Investment (DSSI) Sub-Committee group. 	LC	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 4 - Vulnerability Data and Vulnerability Policy. To be discussed at the Customer Service Committee. Reports are to be included in FAR papers moving forward. 	TF	On-going – Added to forward planner
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 6 - Rent setting report. Work ongoing. Report to be provided on rent collection methodology to explain the differences between weekly and quarterly reporting. 	RK/DJ	On-going – Rent setting paper went to SMT on 4 th June, has been provided to Board

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 6 - ASB Draft paper (quality of data). To be discussed at the first Customer Service Committee rescheduled to 3rd April 2024. 	TF	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action items. Include and update the outstanding action items list in future papers as part of Governance. Completed actions to be removed. (HR/RD) 	HR/RD	Complete
	Health & Safety		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update wording to say the Chair of FAR is the contact for health and safety, not champion. 	HZ	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include health and safety staff meeting minutes in future board reports 	TF	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Safety to be added to the strategic register 	HR	
	Q3 Performance Report 2023/24		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review temporary accommodation strategy and STAR's role, and provide a report to the Board in the next 6 months 	DM	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a clear explanation that benchmarking shows voids targets need revising, and provide supporting data 	DM	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure temporary accommodation costs can be accurately identified separately. 	DM	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints Compliance Policy to be discussed at the Customer Service Committee in April 	TF	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement improved antisocial behaviour (ASB) management - policy, procedures, quality assurance, metrics. 	TF	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR to provide the costs of what has been spent on Spruce as repair works 	HR	
	Q3 Capital Monitoring 2023/24		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear strategy for temporary accommodation is required with a paper that the Committee can refer to. 	HR/TF	On-going
	STAR 2024/25 Budget Approval		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate leaseholder service charges and insurance costs. 	TF	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget to be presented to the Board on 11 March 2024 for approval 	RB	Complete

	Audit Update		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final draft report to be approved by FAR prior to recommendation to Board. 	RB	Complete
	AOB		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee papers to be uploaded to SharePoint (not email) moving forward. 	RD	Complete
	External Audit		
	To provide the reports / smt minutes regarding the fraud of stealing tools incident from early 2023	HR	
	Strategic Risk Register Update		
	To get out another date for the risk workshop for Board	CB	
	Points 11 & 12 to be removed from the Risk Register	HR	
	Look into which points from the Risk Register can be combined or removed	HR	
	HR to update the report to reflect the proposed changes to the risk register and recommend these changes to the board	HR	
	Service Charges		
	Interim report to be issued by mid November for FAR consideration.	RB	
	Finance & Performance		
	RB to return with an interim financial position associated with TA.	RB	
	HR to confirm the wording in the management agreement associated with temporary accommodation		