

**Homes in Sedgemoor Board**

The purpose of Board meetings is to make decisions, to set and evaluate strategy, to review the company's performance and to direct its affairs.

**APPROVED Board Minutes of the in-person Board Meeting  
held in 3North at Bridgwater House on Tuesday 25 July 2023 at 1.15pm**

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr Lance Duddridge Jenny Vernon Marie Hide Paul Stephenson (Chair)	Lance Jen Marie Paul S
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Ben Lane, Director of Finance and Performance Naomi Macey, Director of Asset Management and Safety Pauline Kelly, Executive Assistant (minutes) Peter Hatch, Chief Executive	Ben Naomi Pauline K Peter
<b>Guests:</b>	Chris Hall, Executive Director – Community Services Sarah O'Neill, STAC Chair Craig Green, STAC member Ros Griffiths, STAC member Chris Fisher, Prospective Board Member Steve Handley, MEL (via Teams)	Chris H Sarah Craig Ros Chris F Steve
<b>NO.</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome Guests</b>	
	Paul welcomed Board members, attendees, and guests to the meeting.	
	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Apologies from Claire Tough, Pauline Ham, Kathy Pearce, Paul Hackett and Olly Keates.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Presentation Slot: Great Services to Customers: MEL report on STAR Customer Satisfaction for 2022/23 (Annual Update)</b>	
	Steve Handley, Quantitative Research Director from MEL joined via Teams to give an overview on the STAR Customer Satisfaction for 2022/23 (Annual Update).	
	Members discussed the largely positive results and the challenges faced during the last 12 months. Board noted the emerging TSM data on landlord's approach to handling of complaints and requested further investigation into this area. Board and STAC requested a copy of the full report.	
	<b>Action</b>	
	<b>Pauline</b> to upload the MEL presentation and full MEL report on the Board and STAC portals.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	There were no further declarations other than those previously recorded on Board Members' Declaration of Interests Forms.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2023</b>	
	All agreed the minutes recorded where a true record subject to the following amendments:	
	7. Governance Framework Review Minute to state 'smaller organisations, NFA and TPAs'.	
	9. Board and Committee Member Succession Planning Statement – Minute to state that Ben would arrange a pre-meeting with Marie to discuss succession planning.	

	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> and <b>APPROVED</b> the minutes of the meeting recorded on 30 May 2023.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Action</b></p> <p>7. <b>Pauline</b> to update minute to state 'smaller organisations, NFA and TPAs'.</p> <p>9. <b>Pauline</b> to update minute to state that Ben would arrange a pre-meeting with Marie to discuss succession planning.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising of the meeting held on 30 May 2023</b></p> <p>Members noted the matters arising from the Board meeting held on 30 May 2023 and the following update.</p> <p><b>May Mte 9. Board &amp; Committee Member Succession:</b> Ben to upload the Board Members' Welcome Pack onto the portal once available.</p> <p><b>March Mte 19. Sustainability Strategy Update:</b> Naomi confirmed that the carbon footprint assessment will be carried out in Q3.</p> <p><b>January Mte 23. New Corporate Strategy Naomi:</b> confirmed the team have identified the issue and the team will work to recast the information. Deadline is Q3.</p>
	<p><b>Action</b></p> <p><b>Ben</b> to upload the Welcome Pack onto the Board portal when available.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> and <b>APPROVED</b> the matters arising of the meeting recorded on 30 May 2023.</li> </ul>
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>STAC Update</b></p> <p>Highlights noted from the STAC update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>STAC has recently welcomed Ros Griffiths to the committee.</li> <li>Customer Engagement Action Plan: STAC role defined as reviewing the data, to monitor, to access and provide assurance rather than be responsible for implementation.</li> <li>Complaints: focussing on second level details in September.</li> <li>STAC had an update on the capital investment programme. It was good to hear it was progressing. Noted that 25% of tenants have refused any refurbishment. It was also noted that 35% of tenants feel retrofit would be too disruptive.</li> <li>Discussions held with Naomi regarding the concerns about the heating and servicing contract.</li> <li>A thank you to Ben who ensured STAC that will receive the right IT equipment to carry out their committee duties.</li> </ul> <p>Following discussions, there was a joint recommendation to include the Chair of Board, Chair of ARC and Chief Executive reports back into the Board pack rather than the Information Pack.</p>

	<b>Action</b>
	<b>Claire</b> to liaise with STAC and work out a plan for scrutinies to be carried out.
	<b>Pauline</b> to add Chair, Chair of ARC and CEO reports back into the Board Pack.
	<b>RESOLVED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>7.</b>	<b>New Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2026</b>
	<p>Highlights noted from the update included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is our strategic plan for the next three years. It is the final iteration of the summary discussed at the April 2023 Board away days.</li> <li>The inception of a new shareholder in Somerset Council presents opportunities to work beyond the traditional boundary constraints of SDC.</li> <li>The team are now working on developing the associated delivery plans.</li> <li>Our values stay the same.</li> </ul> <p>Jen noted that she was very impressed with the new strategy and our approach. Jen requested that we specifically state our enduring commitment to customer empowerment and customer ability to shape services within the document</p> <p>Paul S had some minor wording suggestions which he will share with Peter</p> <p>Peter confirmed the launch would be during Q3, starting in September at our Colleague Connect session. The strategy will then be showcased over the next three months, with an update at the October Board Away Days. Julia and team are working on drafting a comms plan.</p>
	<b>Action</b>
	<b>Peter</b> to make necessary amendments to the final document.
	<b>RESOLVED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>APPROVED</b> the new Corporate Strategy 2023-2026 and the proposals for monitoring progress.</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Medium Term Financial Plan (Annual)</b>
	<p>Highlights noted from the update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultations with Board members were carried out in the June Spotlight session, as well as discussions held with ARC and Somerset Council clienting colleagues. This is a fluid document and is monitored on a regular basis.</li> <li>Marie asked if the acceptable reserve level is still at the same level after the merging of the HRAs.</li> </ul> <p>Ben confirmed that HiS sits separate to this, with our reserve level sitting at £1.1m. The MD pension retainer is also back in the HiS account; therefore, we now have a higher level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marie requested that jargon such as S151 should be explained in plain English in future.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jen asked about garage sites (approved by Board in 2018), as funds were taken from reserves to improve selected garage sites.</li> </ul> <p>Ben confirmed that the initial phase of this work was successfully completed and yields additional revenue to both SC and HiS. As costs were increasing, this improvement plan was stopped. However, we are reviewing the development opportunities of remaining sites. A Development Officer was appointed for this purpose and work is underway.</p> <p>Naomi confirmed that garage site improvement was on the forward plan and is included year on year (funding dependant).</p>
	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>APPROVED</b> the refreshed Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the period 2023-2028 and the proposals for monitoring progress.</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Westfield House Building Safety Case</b>
	<p>Naomi gave a brief update, and the following highlights were noted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New regulations in the Building Safety Act note that every building over 18 metres or seven storeys high needs to have a Building Safety Case in place by 30 September 2023.</li> <li>We are working with Savills and can note all technical and structural surveys have been completed.</li> <li>Westfield House needs to be registered by 30 September 2023. The Regulator will then make contact between 2024 and 2029 to carry out an inspection of the building.</li> </ul> <p>Naomi asked Board if they would approve for the building to be registered. A copy of the building safety case, once completed, will be made available to Members on request.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are in regular liaison with SC on this matter and it forms part of our LGR project work.</li> <li>Jen asked if we need to carry out checks of Westfield House in the period between registration and likely inspection before 2029.</li> </ul> <p>Naomi confirmed that statutory compliance checks will continue to be completed and noted in the monthly compliance report. The overall safety case is a living document and will be continually reviewed and updated.</p>
	<b>Action</b>
	<b>Naomi</b> to make available to Members access to the Building Safety Case once completed.
	<b>Naomi</b> to confirm progress on registration at the September Board meeting.
	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>APPROVED</b> the request to register Westfield House with the Building Safety Regulator as soon as the Building Safety Case is complete and by no later than 30 September 2023.</li> </ul>

<b>10.</b>	<b>Final Annual Report and Financial Statements, Key Issues for Discussion and Letter of Representation (Annual) (ARC)</b>
	<p>Ben gave a brief update, and the following highlights were noted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met with the Auditors in June to discuss final stages. HiS received positive comments following a smooth audit.</li> <li>Auditors received all the documentation they required from SC IT colleagues.</li> <li>Letter of Representation and Statement of Accounts on post balance accounts to be signed and posted to the auditors.</li> <li>We received assurance back from SC who have no plans, in the next 12 months, to change Homes in Sedgemoor.</li> <li>The documents will be presented at the September Board AGM where a SC member will approve the accounts.</li> </ul> <p>Marie queried when the composition of the Board was formally changed as the statements note the old composition. Ben confirmed the change came into effect from 1 April 2023 and recordings in the documents are up to and including 31 March 2023. Ben will double check this for absolute certainty.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p><b>Ben</b> to provide final confirmation that the statements relating to Board composition contained within the accounts are correct.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>APPROVED</b> the Annual Report and Financial Statements, and its signature by the Chair on behalf of the Board, in advance of the Annual General Meeting (AGM).</li> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> the 'Key Issues For Discussion' of the Independent Auditors.</li> <li>Board <b>APPROVED</b> the Management Representation Letter, and its signature by the Chair on behalf of the Board.</li> </ul>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Compliance Dashboard Summary – June 2023</b>
	<p>Highlights noted from the update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Performance:</b> Paul S noted the good overall performance. He also attended the June Health &amp; Safety Forum meeting, where Naomi had updated the group regarding the heating and servicing contractor issues being experienced. Although the contractor did not hit their target date (for improvement) of 30 June, significant progress had been made.</li> </ul> <p>New processes are in place to ensure performance continues to improve, as we need to ensure all outstanding works are completed during the summer months to prepare for autumn/winter.</p> <p>Paul S thanked Naomi and the team for their continued hard work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Access Issues:</b> Marie asked if the out-of-date service for the CO detectors were due to contractor performance or access issues. Naomi confirmed these were access issues.</li> </ul>

	<p>Jen noted that all organisations were struggling with capacity and workforce issues and asked if there is more they can do beyond current efforts to improve performance? Naomi confirmed the contractor is experiencing 40% no access on the first visit and the team are looking to improve the practice to free up operatives for more productive works.</p> <p>Marie asked if the contractor has acknowledged that the no access on the first visit was their communication issue and not the fault of customers? Marie also asked if compensation is being paid by the contractor?</p> <p>Naomi confirmed that the contractor needs to improve their understanding of how our customers want to be communicated with. The team are working with the contractor to increase their knowledge and monitor their commitment to improving their communication methods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Compliance Deep Dive:</b> Paul S noted that within the ARC report, the committee would be carrying out a compliance deep dive in Q3. Paul S asked for the Health &amp; Safety Forum to be updated.</li> <li>• Paul S noted that following discussions with Board colleagues at the April Away Days and June Spotlight session, training is more useful at Spotlight Sessions rather than the e-Learning route. Paul S requested that a programme of related issues be drafted and be delivered at the December Spotlight Session.</li> </ul>
	<b>Action</b>
	<b>Peter</b> to organise a training programme for the December Spotlight Session.
	<b>RESOLVED</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Health &amp; Safety Six Monthly Performance Update</b>
	<p>Highlights noted from the update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>La Ciotat House:</b> Jen asked how these were progressing.</li> </ul> <p>Naomi confirmed the primary heating contract had been completed and snagging is being carried out.</p> <p>Phase 2 involves work in the corridors and completion of the fire alarm system to improve the overall look for residents. We are also looking to improve the outside grounds.</p> <p>The next phase will be to introduce a metering system rather than a communal service charge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bed bugs:</b> a huge amount of work has been carried out by the team to decrease the number of cases. We are still working with the contractor (who are on a fixed price contract) until the bugs have disappeared. The trunking has been treated and properly sealed. There are a few voids at LCH and Mark Woodward (Housing Team Leader) is designing a process for the checking of each property and a comprehensive pre-relet process.</li> <li>• <b>The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents:</b> Marie congratulated the organisation on achieving silver in the RoSPA Awards. Peter wanted to record his</li> </ul>

	<p>thanks to Pauline and Alan Turner in particular for steering this project. Peter also confirmed that there is an action plan underway to address any feedback in the assessment.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>13.</b>	<b>Sustainability Strategy Update</b>
	<p>Highlights noted from the update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>EPC Rating:</b> Marie asked if there is a geographical trend relating to the E-G ratings? Naomi noted the properties tend to be in the more rural areas.</li> </ul> <p>Jen noted that as Board Champion for Sustainability she is now receiving plenty of information (thank you to Katy Barry, Sustainability Team Leader, for this). Jen also informed Naomi that she will have more availability as Board Champion, as she will be retiring from full time work in October this year.</p> <p>Paul asked if Somerset Council has been involved in the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund works? Naomi confirmed we are working closely with SC to align as they have some good practices. Phase One is not yet completed due to significant issues with contractor availability. We are working with residents to ensure all the improvements work for them, as well as improving the quality of their home.</p> <p>Sarah noted that she would like to see the tracking of individual EPC ratings and not just broader groupings like A-C. Naomi will include this in future reports.</p> <p>Marie asked if there were any underlying trends in the homes rated D-G? Naomi confirmed that there were not trends beyond property type and location.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p><b>Naomi</b> to include individual tracking performance for EPC ratings in future reports.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>14.</b>	<b>ICT &amp; Digital Strategy (Six Monthly Review)</b>
	<p>Highlights noted from the update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marie noted that she was still experiencing issues with the payment link and has to log out of the main site.</li> <li>Jen noted there has been a 44% increase on website traffic and asked how many customers this equates to? Peter said he will confirm the figure.</li> <li>Following the recent departure of our application support analyst, interviews for a replacement were planned however the number of shortlisted candidates reduced to one and we may need to out to advert again. Ben will be discussing this with the People team.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p><b>Ben</b> to investigate the issue, as experienced by Marie and other tenants, where if you are logged into your account the customer needs to log out then click the link to pay rent.</p> <p><b>Peter</b> to investigate how many people are using the website.</p>



	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>15.</b>	<p><b>Key Performance Indicators – May 2023</b></p> <p>Marie questioned the 0% target for homes not meeting the Decent Homes standard and whether this was always achievable? Peter confirmed that meeting 'decency' remains a regulatory requirement and hence the target will always be 0%.</p> <p>Paul S noted the strong and positive performances in the Housemark data and the seven additional KPIs in the Management Agreement suite.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>16.</b>	<p><b>Management Accountants (ARC) - May 2023</b></p> <p>Members noted that there were no accounts provided in the Board Information Pack. Ben replied that this seems to have been a glitch when uploading the pack.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p><b>Ben</b> to provide a copy of the accounts to Members.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>17.</b>	<p><b>Debtor Balances and Write-offs (Six Monthly Report) (ARC)</b></p> <p>No questions were raised.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>18.</b>	<p><b>Risk Register (ARC)</b></p> <p>Highlights noted from the update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ARC members meet for a risk register catch up prior to every Board meeting, this is proving very positive to keep a live handle on risk. Paul S welcomed the reduction in risks.</li> <li><b>Business Continuity Plan:</b> Paul S asked what feedback Somerset Council gave following the major incident exercise?</li> </ul> <p>Ben confirmed that as SC had been readying themselves for vesting day by collating business continuity plans from the districts, ours got swept up unintentionally. Further review noted that the SC plan was punchier, with ours being heavy on content. ARC have since reviewed and refreshed the document from the one we submitted to SC last summer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>New Home Development Service:</b> Paul S noted the comment that new home development approvals are currently on hold pending a review by SC of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capacity.</li> </ul>



	<p>Peter explained that there are currently two schemes awaiting sign off. We are preparing more evidence for Chris Brown and his team to review and approve. Looking into the future there will be more demands on the single HRA funds and there is an update in the confidential minutes.</p> <p>Peter confirmed a meeting had been held to explain which schemes SDC had signed up to, how there were approved and how they would be financed. External consultant Altair now has this information is assessing capacity in the HRA. This information needs to be reviewed and ready by November for the budgeting process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ET Risk Thoughts:</b> Jen noted an ARC request for the committee to view notes from ET minutes around risk to see what the internal thoughts are and to see if ARC agree with ET. As a result, ARC had split the Property and H&amp;S Regulation risk. ARC had also updated the 'Treat or Tolerate' section.</li> <li>• <b>GDPR:</b> This needs to go back on the register as a key corporate risk. Ben to action.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p><b>Ben</b> to action changes to GDPR risk.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>20a.</b>	<b>AOB: Board Portal</b>
	Paul S commended ET on the new Board Portal and asked how members were finding the portal. All agreed it was a positive step forward.
<b>20b.</b>	<b>AOB: Jargon Buster</b>
	The Tpas jargon buster included in the Information Park was a useful point of reference. Although slightly out of date, it is a starting point for new Board and STAC members. We can also add our HiS acronyms to this.
<b>20c.</b>	<b>AOB: RSH Mock Inspection</b>
	<p>With a new regulatory inspection scheme coming into play from April 2024, Peter sought Board approval for HiS to prepare for an internal mock inspection. If in agreement ET will draft a plan and discuss with SLT.</p> <p>Jen asked if it were more important to ensure the services we carry out are what the customers want. Peter confirmed the inspection is around what we do internally i.e., are documents up to date. Peter would also look to involve some customers and members of the inhouse SC team. Jen confirmed she would be interested in being part of the work group.</p> <p>Marie asked if it would be better to carry out a mock inspection by department due to current staffing levels and colleague work capacity? Peter confirmed this first session would be a high-level view.</p> <p>Board approved for ET to draft a plan for a mock inspection. Peter will bring this to November Board.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p><b>Peter</b> to share a draft mock inspection plan at November Board.</p>

<b>20d.</b>	<b>AOB: Board Agendas</b>
	Jen asked if the colouring on Board agendas could be removed as some items are hard to read. Peter agreed to remove colouring for the agenda items. Pillar table colour identification would remain for clarity.
<b>20d.</b>	<b>AOB: Jen Vernon</b>
	Jen gave her apologies for the September AGM and Board meeting as she will be on holiday.

Confirmed as a true record of the meeting:



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Signed

Paul Stephenson (Chair)

**Date:** Tuesday 26 September 2023