

Homes in Sedgemoor Board Meeting

The primary purpose of the board meeting is to provide oversight and strategic guidance to the business, to address important matters, to assess emerging risks and trends, and make decisions.

APPROVED Minutes of the Non-Confidential Board Meeting held in the Sedgemoor Room at Bridgwater House on Tuesday 25 March 2025 at 1pm

Board Members:	Chris Fisher Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts (Co-optee) Cllr Kathy Pearce Cllr Lance Duddridge Cllr Pauline Ham Jen Vernon Marie Hide Oliver Keates Paul Hackett Paul Stephenson (Chair) Sarah O'Neill (Board member designate/co-optee)	Chris F Federica Kathy Lance Pauline Jen Marie Olly Paul H Paul S Sarah
In Attendance:	Ben Lane, Director of Finance & Performance Claire Tough, Director of Communities & Customer Service Naomi Macey, Director of Asset Management and Safety Louise Pither, Board & Governance Admin Assistant (<i>minutes</i>) Peter Hatch, Chief Executive (via Teams)	Ben Claire Naomi Louise Peter
Guests:	Charlotte Collins, Data and Investment Specialist Chris Hall, Executive Director Community, Place & Economy, Somerset Council Craig Green, Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) Kevin Walters, Data Operations Manager, Housemark Laura Wickens, People Business Partner Ros Griffiths, Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) Wendy Lewis, Housing Specialist, Somerset Council	Charlotte Chris H Craig Kevin Laura Ros Wendy
NO.	ITEM	
1.	Welcome Guest	
	Paul S welcomed all to the meeting.	
	Apologies	
	No apologies received.	
2.	Presentation Slot Corporate Strategy Theme: Customer Driven (Inspire Customers & Colleagues) Topic: Housemark Tailored Feedback 2023/24	
	Kevin presented the tailored feedback and welcomed questions from members. The presentation featured 2023/24 cost data (the most recent available) and year to date perception and performance data. Paul S highlighted key service areas, noting that maintenance management costs were above average. Maintenance will always be a priority, but Paul asked Naomi to investigate further.	

	<p>There was a discussion regarding the slight improvement in lettings performance. Chris H inquired about the bar chart that breaks down cost per unit, questioning whether this metric at 'above or below average' is beneficial or detrimental. Kevin explained HM avoid a polarity statement as this cost should reflect strategic priorities and could indicate that contracts are well managed, and assurance measures are in place. Ben mentioned that the movement of the bar chart directly corresponds to capital investment during those years. Paul S emphasised the importance of connecting the dots and ensuring that all elements align properly.</p> <p>Kathy asked if the in-house service had done the same exercise. Ben believes they do not engage with this costing aspect of Housemark's work.</p> <p>Kevin finished the presentation with his high-level summary – namely that the HiS data was demonstrating good outcomes, a good operating model, a good digital offer and good call handling, all capped off by high satisfaction levels.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>Naomi to investigate cost per unit management costs for maintenance and provide findings.</p>
3.	Declarations of Interest
	Noted and listed in the pack.
4.	Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2025
	<p>Members agreed that the minutes recorded are a true record of the meeting, subject to a couple of amendments.</p> <p>Item 21- Sustainability by Design: Marie noted this needs to acknowledge the impact that excessive visits have on finance and social, rather than it being a nuisance for tenants. Pauline to draft an alternative note and circulate to Marie for agreement.</p> <p>Jenny noted that, although the minutes read well, her comment was more around the richness of discussion about KPIs and not just the recording of the item. Jen also wanted to know <i>when</i> the outcome of customer service scrutinies would be shared.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>Item 21: Pauline to draft an alternative note and circulate to Marie for agreement.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED and APPROVED the minutes.
5.	Matters Arising from meeting held on 28 January 2025
	<p>Members noted the matters arising.</p> <p>Capital Programme Progress Against Budget: Ben explained that this item remained outstanding pending first draft of year end accounts.</p> <p>Sustainability By Design: following Marie's comment that the update seemed to imply a lack of action on sustainability, Paul S suggested that members leave the discussion until later as it was scheduled on the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the matters arising.

6.	Chair's Update
	No questions were raised.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
7.	Chief Executive's Update
	Following Olly's questions around the devolution issue, Paul S confirmed this item was on the risk register.
	Chris H noted that this was the national devolution agenda and outlined recent and forthcoming events including the ministerial visit happening in May. SC are progressing this agenda but are not part of the priority programme at the moment.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
8.	Chair of Audit & Risk Update
	Paul S expressed satisfaction with the analysis of the 2025 risk register survey. He also noted that the report referred to the <i>Vice Chair</i> , which should be corrected to <i>Chair</i> .
	ACTION
	Pauline to amend the report to show Chair of Audit & Risk Update.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
9.	Chair of Sedgemoor Tenants' Assurance Committee (STAC) Update
	Board discussed the recruitment timetable. Interviews for new STAC members are scheduled for 3 April. Sarah thanked Craig for chairing the February meeting at short notice and for his help in drafting the March Board report. Scott has resigned from STAC due to ill health, and the Board acknowledged his valuable contributions over the years.
	Paul S noted it is good to see Karen Wilce representing HiS on the National Federation of ALMOs Tenant Advisory Panel.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
10.	Chair of Development Committee Update
	Jenny noted that our achievements are down to colleagues, and it is a challenging task to unify everyone and work as one team, so it is advisable to monitor ongoing progress.
	Paul S extended his congratulations to Duncan Harvey on his new role.
	Marie inquired about the stock tour details - Olly confirmed there is a visit planned for the away day.
	RESOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the contents of the report.

11.	Final Budget Proposals 2025/26 – Revenue, Capital and Reserves
	<p>Ben advised that the initial part of the document includes two additional requests that have not yet been reviewed by the Board – allocation into a hardship fund from work related to rent service charges and energy costs, and a request for funding which is slightly lower than previously suggested.</p> <p>The second element was an addition to our partnership allocation, enabling a colleague to work with the Council on stock condition alignment.</p> <p>Marie noted that the garage reserves section was unclear. Ben explained that by 2027/28, we expect the reserve investment to be cleared in line with the original proposal.</p> <p>Jenny mentioned the roof issues at Westfield Close, noting that there might be additional problems we are not yet aware of and asked if we had any provisions to address these potential issues. Ben confirmed that no extra provision has been made in the budget, but we need to keep an eye on potential extra revenue costs. Ben felt that existing budgets could be used in the short term should this be necessary.</p> <p>Paul S expressed his gratitude to Federica and her team for their collective support during the recent budget proposal process.</p> <p>Ben highlighted that we are currently planning for an additional role of a part-time Governance Manager. It has become essential to allocate Ben’s expertise primarily to finance. Recruitment for this position is getting underway.</p> <p>Paul S raised the following clarification questions prior to the meeting and responses are recorded below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is it confirmed that as a wholly owned LA company, we do have to pay the increased NI contributions? Ben confirmed neither Local Authorities nor wholly owned companies of LAs are exempt from the National Insurance increases. £515m of funding has been given by the Government to Local Authorities of which Somerset Council are receiving £5.297m. Somerset Council are able to use some of this allocation to Credit the HRA. The calculated NI pressure for HiS is £80k. This has been allowed for in the Management Agreement Fee which is funded from the HRA. 2. Are there any concerns about the Capital Programme underspend elements? Ben confirmed we are confident that the carry forward request will be approved by SC. In terms of the works in question, the majority (£900k) relates to SHDF works. Due to some delays with some larger measures, we expect to complete works on 86 properties by March 2025 with the remaining 53 targeted for site completion by close of May 2025 which is ahead of the current SHDF 2.1 deadline of September 2025. The other works are underway but aren’t scheduled for completion by 31st March (roof replacement at Dunwear House and painting and window replacement at Moorland Road). Both works have been delayed due to the additional due diligence introduced following the Westfield Close roof incident, resulting in the need for a £173k c/f.

	<p>3. How will the additional Reserves resource for asset management be used and how quickly?</p> <p>Ben confirmed the Reserve request is to provide back fill for our Data and Investment Specialist (Charlotte Collins) to enable her to focus on a critical piece of alignment work in respect of Stock Condition. She will co-ordinate efforts across HiS and SC. We expect this arrangement to go on for 12 months and therefore expect the monies to be utilised by April/May 2026.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVED the 25/26 Revenue Budget Proposal. • APPROVED the 25/26 Capital Programme Proposal. • APPROVED the allocation of £366k from reserves in 25/26 (made up of a carry forward request of £165k, previously approved amounts of £131k and new allocation requests of £70k).
12.	<p>Sustainability Strategy</p>
	<p>Board members considered the proposal to extend the existing strategy for 12 months. Marie raised a question about the extent of Naomi's work on targets for EPC and whether we have taken a step back in response national changes? Naomi responded that we are focusing on a more strategic approach and collaborating with Savills on this matter so that we act in a sensible and proportionate manner.</p> <p>Federica asked if the amount of funding we will receive for Wave 3 has been confirmed. Naomi responded that it will be around 60% of what we bid for due to higher national take up.</p> <p>Paul S asked if we have sufficient internal resources to deliver the volume of work? Naomi noted we have recently recruited a Retrofit Coordinator who has a great deal of knowledge around the reporting mechanisms and standards and will strengthen our work in this area. We also have a third party supporting our delivery and we would keep resourcing under review.</p> <p>Jen asked if the requested delay in updating the strategy was down to trying to align with Somerset Council (SC). Naomi confirmed that this was the case as it is now more important than ever that both organisations are aligned.</p> <p>Marie asked have we considered raising national concerns from across the sector around this agenda with government? Paul S noted that the NFA (National Federation of ALMOs) is already lobbying on our behalf. Ben is attending the Chief Officers Conference in April and this item is on the agenda Paul S asked if this was something to bring to a future Partnership Meeting?</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVED the extension of the Sustainability Strategy renewal to 31st May 2026 • NOTED that current strategy objectives will continue in the interim

13.	Governance Framework: Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference
	No questions were raised.
	RESOLVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board APPROVED the updated Terms of Reference for the Audit & Risk Committee.
14.	Review of Safeguarding Effectiveness (Annual)
	<p>Sarah raised a question about the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) standard which was referenced in a previous report. Sarah questioned if this standard was still relevant for smaller organisations? Claire confirmed that we have been seeking this accreditation for several years, undergoing multiple assessments, however she felt that the DAHA organisation was not structured to support smaller housing providers. In December 2024, HiS had a meeting where we presented our perspective which was acknowledged by the new regional manager. We agreed to proceed with the process. A case review was conducted on 24 March 2025 which was positive, and we are inclined to continue our membership with DAHA. Paul S noted that it is important that such standards are fit for us.</p> <p>Marie asked about the increase observed in customer behaviour under our Unreasonable Behaviour Policy. Claire responded that there is a noticeable increase in challenging behaviours, and it is appropriate to monitor these developments closely. Marie asked if it would be beneficial to investigate further, to see if cultural factors might be contributing to this trend.</p> <p>Jenny asked about the measures we have implemented to address stress among our colleagues. Claire confirmed that we have integrated support through Care First, with various approaches tailored to assist individuals in managing their stress effectively. We are also using Clarity 4D profiling to support this area of work.</p> <p>Marie inquired whether housing officers with a substantial number of challenges on their patch would have their workload redistributed. Claire reported that a recent reorganisation of our patch management approach (Project Matrix) has made this more flexible and therefore easier for colleagues to support each other.</p> <p>Paul S noted the link to the Wellbeing Policy and commended the comprehensive nature of the annual report. He noted his gratitude to Cllr Pauline Ham for her input as Board Champion into this area.</p>
	RESOLVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
15.	Sustainability By Design Update
	<p>Charlotte joined the meeting for this item.</p> <p>Marie emphasised that a work plan in advance of major works may be beneficial to ensure tenants were not overloaded with visit requests from different contractors to access their property. Such a plan would also help manage customer expectations. Charlotte highlighted that lack of access is the main issue with regard outstanding EPC surveys, noting that while MD excels in gaining access, our EPC contractor struggles. The biggest challenge has been getting the contractor into homes. We are working to improve this with the "Every Visit Counts" initiative.</p>

	<p>Paul H raised the question about the viability and cost-effectiveness of certain properties and whether the properties at the bottom of the table were non-viable. A discussion followed on strategies to manage low performing properties and Charlotte confirmed that some may be non-viable but that the changes to EPC ratings may bring them back into viability. In terms of works, mid-floor insulation for flats and solar panels for top floors are possible, however we aim to ensure fairness across all properties.</p> <p>Paul S thanked Charlotte for the update.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
16.	<p>People Plan (Six Monthly review) including IIP Presentation</p> <p>Laura Wickens joined the meeting for this item.</p> <p>Paul S asked if Board could have sight of the ET mentoring programme, Bradford Factor and Behaviour Framework. He also noted there had been a lot of staff turnover lately – Laura confirmed there was no specific department or reasons given and leavers included three retirements plus one end of fixed term contract.</p> <p>Paul S appreciated the positivity at the People Forum and noted that colleagues feel supported. The IIP report is also very positive. Paul H asked if we were thinking of going for Platinum. Laura confirmed we are at a good standard, and it takes a lot of time and money to progress. ET are happy with our Gold accreditation for now. Paul H agreed that he was content with Gold. Marie asked about IIP accreditation dates and Laura will check these and confirm. Paul S noted that we need to ensure that IIP is right for the business going forward.</p> <p>Jenny noted the good progress on the People Plan and thanked the People Team for all their efforts in making it a success.</p> <p>Paul S raised the following clarification questions prior to the meeting and responses are recorded below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the reasoning behind not progressing the Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) model? Julia confirmed Laura has attended some training on this area, we reviewed the information available and have had to prioritise other areas for the time being. Julia is keen to ensure we have rolled out the training on resilience, dealing with and managing stress, getting vacant and new posts filled and ensure all areas are imbedded before we look at another model to work with. This also ties into the work we are doing with Leadership Team (LT) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) reviewing the merits of project matrix. Julia needed to fully understand the pressures across the customer facing teams more, especially in relation to the matrix way of working, so we can break down the silos and focus on this first. While we are not progressing PIE at this stage, this is something we will look at again later in the year. 2. What is the status of the Wellbeing Policy? Julia confirmed this was due to be launched in Q4 but as set out in the table in the report, this has moved to Q1 so looking to get something finalised by the end of June. While wellbeing is clearly a priority, it had to be delayed by a quarter due to the work Laura and Julia have done on P24. Julia will be working with the People Forum, Glen (the new Strategic H&S advisor) to get a draft to ET in May.

	<p>ACTIONS</p> <p>Paul S asked the People Team if Board could have sight of the ET mentoring programme, Bradford Factor and Behaviour Framework.</p> <p>Laura to check IIP accreditation dates.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
17.	<p>Management Accounts – February 2025</p> <p>Paul H confirmed that performance was better than expected and we have not run into any issues. He also felt that the real challenge was 2026/27 when SC's finances would be under even greater pressure. Paul S said he enjoyed the recent Spotlight session on this topic area. We have another session at Board away day for business plan modelling.</p> <p>Marie noted the ongoing expenditure at La Ciotat House. Naomi confirmed that the bulk of the heating update is now complete, with final works to the photo voltaic system, metering and general tidy up and finishing touches to be carried out.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the management accounts for the first eleven months of 24/25 (Apr-Feb 2025).
18.	<p>Key Performance Indicators – February 2025</p> <p>Ben highlighted key areas in the latest report and stated that since the report was written, the two months fall in Overall Satisfaction with Landlord Services has stabilised. ET have undertaken a root cause analysis, and we are awaiting input from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Peter mentioned that we will present a summary of this analysis at the next Board meeting, subject to the Board's approval, which was agreed.</p> <p>Paul S referred to the very positive Housemark presentation at the start of the meeting and asked Claire to convey the Board's gratitude to the team for their efforts in achieving the Housemark results.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>Ben to bring a summary of the root cause analysis of the dip in Overall Satisfaction with Landlord Services during January and February 2025 back to May Board.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the key performance indicators.
19.	<p>Property Compliance (February 2025)</p> <p>As Health & Safety Board champion, Paul S welcomed the recent appointment of a new Strategic Health & Safety Consultant and looked forward to meeting him.</p> <p>19a HiS Summary Report. The following questions were raised by Jenny:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Progress on MD site audits? Naomi confirmed these tasks were complete, however had been noted in the wrong section of the report.

	<p>2. Outstanding domestic asbestos surveys– plans for how we will catch up? Naomi reported that this is an access issue despite multiple attempts and patch teams are having a positive effect on the situation.</p> <p>3. Outstanding smoke detectors requiring a test? Naomi assured Board that we are actively discussing this issue with our contractors.</p> <p>19b HiS/SC Joint Compliance Summary Report – January 2025 No questions were raised relating to the joint SC/HiS compliance report.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the contents of the reports.
20.	Risk Register – February 2025
	<p>No questions were raised. Paul S noted he is looking forward to reviewing the information on Ideagen (Pentana). Marie confirmed that this new risk management system would be demonstrated to members at the June Spotlight session.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board NOTED the summary report.

Confirmed as a true record of the meeting

Signed: 

Name (Chair): Paul Stephenson

Date: 27 May 2025