

Homes in Somerset (HiS) 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 26 May 2026 at 12.33pm

Board Members:	Cllr Pauline Ham Cllr Lance Duddridge Craig Green Marie Hide Oliver Keates Paul Hackett Paul Stephenson (Chair)	Pauline H Lance Craig Marie Olly Paul H Paul S
In Attendance:	Alice Pearce, Governance Manager (minutes) Ben Lane, Director of Finance & Performance Claire Tough, Director of Communities & Customer Service Naomi Macey, Director of Asset Management, Safety and Development Pauline Kelly, Executive Assistant (admin support) Peter Hatch, Chief Executive	Alice Ben Claire Naomi Pauline K Peter
Guests:	Chris Hall, Executive Director Community, Place & Economy, Somerset Council Damian Roche, Director, HQN Denise Reeves, Head of Transformation and Integration, HiS Duncan Smith, Interim Head of Housing Growth and Regeneration, HiS Julia Paling, Head of People & Communications, HiS Wayne Hughes, Senior Consultant, HQN Greg Trimmer - observer	Chris Damian Denise Duncan Julia Wayne Greg
NO.	ITEM	
1.	Welcome Guest	
	Paul S welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Chris, Damian, Denise, Duncan, Wayne and Greg. Greg was observing with a view to possibly becoming a co-optee.	
	Apologies	
	Apologies were received from Sarah O'Neill, Wendy Lewis, Cllr Kathy Pearce and Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts.	
2.	Presentation Slot Strategy Theme: Thoughtful Enterprise/Good Governance Topic: Mock Inspection Feedback (10k – both HiS and SC Services)	

Damian and Wayne from HQN set out the terms of the work and the outcomes of how Homes in Somerset (HiS) and Somerset Council (SC) meet the consumer standards, including the assurance provided to the governing bodies. To recap, this was a follow up to HiS' mock inspection in 2024 and the first mock inspection for SC 'in-house' services. They set out their findings in the presentation (attached to Board Portal). Conversations beyond the information contained in the slides is set out below.

Governance: they highlighted that although the Governance standard was not applicable, good governance runs through all areas and was essential to meeting the other standards.

Safety and Quality Standard: All social rented properties should have smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. There were also 89 properties with capped gas. Some tenants ask for gas to be capped due to costs, but the Regulator says we should not cap gas, and we should be supporting tenants to heat their homes. Some of the homes had been capped for up to 9 months, and some contained vulnerable households. The council needs more visibility of these issues.

Repairs and maintenance: Both organisations were found to be in good order. HiS had 181 no access cancellations. HQN enquired why so many were being cancelled and what were the knock-on costs of not being able to do repairs. There were some risks in that some SC planned repair programmes had not been started.

Assistance with adaptations: As we cannot evidence cooperation with tenants, data, or KPIs going to Board or SC, HQN felt there was a gap for both organisations. HQN's report sets out details of what should be covered. Claire raised that currently adaptations were SC's (Adult Services) responsibility, however, we work closely with them, particularly on the back log. Our role was and will continue to be supportive. To ensure Board was fully informed of the current position, it was agreed to bring a position statement to July Board.

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard: HQN felt that HiS needed a strategy around collection and use of household data.

HQN reiterated that HiS and SC both had strong, passionate, committed engagement groups. Some members were concerned about continued influence under the new arrangements, meaning we needed to be careful how we bring the the two groups together.

Complaints: Reasons to escalate to stage 2 of the complaints process at SC were sometimes actions agreed at stage 1 not being completed.

	Recommendations had been implemented at HiS after its mock inspection two years ago. Neighbourhood and Community Standard: The Regulator focuses on ASB and hate incidences. Joint policies were in progress. Once implemented it would be key to evidence reporting and learning from them. Paul S. highlighted that the report was vital information to support the transition to a single landlord. SC clienting implications were also important going forward. Processes were complicated and there was a lot of information, SC needs to be able to answer the Regulator's questions on how the Council gains assurance. SC Exec had reviewed property compliance data 12 months ago; however, we were working with them on which data they should receive, especially in crucial areas such as compliance. Marie thought that we assume SC colleagues all understand the information presented to them, but it may not be so. This had been highlighted for her at the last "meet and greet" with SC Councillors. Not only was it a case of needing to understand the data, it was also important to understand what was going on behind the data and the implications. She suggested educating a smaller group of Councillors may be a good way forward. Chris admitted that he had been aware of some of the areas where the in-house services were performing at a lower level, however some of the findings were new, and this was uncomfortable. He would be working on how the Council gained robust assurance. ACTION Claire and Naomi to bring a position statement to the July Board meeting, setting out the situation with Adaptations and how we work with SC to support the applications they receive. Damian and Wayne left the meeting at 13.38
3.	Declarations of Interest
	The declarations listed in the pack were noted. Pauline, Olly and Craig declared an interest in item 13a but would remain in the meeting and participate.
4.	Minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2026
	Members agreed the minutes recorded were a true record of the meeting.
	RESOLVED The Board NOTED and APPROVED the minutes of 31 March 2026.
5.	Matters Arising from meeting held on the 31 March 2026
	RESOLVED The Board NOTED the matters arising.
6.	Chair's Update

	No questions were raised.
	RESOLVED • The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
7.	Chief Executive's Update
	No questions were raised.
	RESOLVED • The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
8.	Chair of Audit & Risk Update
	There had been no formal meeting since the last Board. Marie and Ben had kept in touch to discuss global events and Project Fusion/options appraisal risks. ARC in June would receive the year end accounts. Olly will be attending the Audit and Risk Conference 2026.
	RESOLVED • The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
9.	Chair of Sedgemoor Tenants' Assurance Committee (STAC) Update
	No questions were raised.
	RESOLVED • The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
10.	Chair of Development Committee Update
	There had been no formal meeting since the last Board. Olly introduced Duncan Smith, Interim Head of Housing Growth and Regeneration and highlighted two important pieces of work. • the development appraisal assumptions had been worked on and would be agreed with Kerry Prisco and SC (Somerset Council). • Duncan had been working on aligning HiS and SC's Risk Registers.
	RESOLVED • The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
11.	New Corporate Strategy 2026-2031 (10K)
	Peter responded to Paul S. questions raised prior to the meeting. • Peter explained the double headed icon beside the Exec Summary symbolised the transfer of knowledge between two people or organisations. It would be removed. • The Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) included was taken from the last approved version presented to Board in July 2025 and as such is the current SWOT. He would insert a date to clarify the point in time it was approved. This explained why it did not capture the Options Appraisal outcome, it would be included in the version scheduled for July 2026 Board. • Peter explained that success around "Values" tends to be less tangible in terms of management, but we would gauge success via colleague

	surveys and the culture work. At the recent Board Innovation Day all three values featured strongly in the word cloud created by staff. - In relation to our “Purpose”, measurement would be more challenging on account of it being an enduring goal. We would bring a final review of the current strategy to July Board and would try to cover how we met the last purpose. If this works for members we can develop it for the new strategy. - Six monthly updates would come to Board going forward.
	RESOLVED The Board APPROVED the new Corporate Strategy.
12.	Asset Management Strategy (10K)
	In relation to questions from Paul S prior to the meeting, Naomi responded with the following: - following Board review, the Strategy would also require approval through the appropriate SC governance routes (Scrutiny Committee and SC Executive Team). It had been included in SC’s Forward Plan and will progress if Board were happy to approve the Strategy. - Board Risk Champion roles had not been included. The document will be reviewed to ensure the Board Risk Champion role was referenced where appropriate, particularly in relation to oversight of strategic asset risks and assurance arrangements. Paul H. enquired if we were looking at divestment of other properties beyond those already approved by Board. Naomi explained we were not at that stage, but our policy does acknowledge that was the direction of travel. With aging stock, and non-traditional properties, we would need to plan what we do with them. We will work to understand individual performance, how easy properties were to let, costs and energy use to make informed decisions, resulting in a clear path for every home for the next 30 years. We had recommended some disposals to SC and four had been sold. We were now considering the next group of properties. Peter noted that Board had approved the recommendation for disposal to SC of a small number of properties in the last 18 months. Paul H. also raised that we need to be mindful to consider other areas beyond pure asset performance, such as the community, and what would happen to properties we were considering for disposal.
	RESOLVED The Board: APPROVED the Joint Asset Management Strategy 2026–2031. NOTED that a formal review will be undertaken in 2029 to reflect evolving regulatory, financial and organisational contexts.

	• ENDORSED the governance and assurance arrangements set out within the Strategy.
13.	Governance Framework Review
	a. Remuneration & Nominations Committee (RemNom) Terms of Reference (10K) Members who were proposed to be Committee members declared an interest and remained in the meeting. The need for a RemNom Committee had come from Board discussions at the last Board Innovation Day (BID). Those listed within the report had confirmed they were happy to be on the Committee. Paul S. Peter, Alice and Julia met prior to today's Board to discuss first steps. RESOLVED The Board: • APPROVED and adopted the Remuneration and Nominations Committee Terms of Reference. • Considered and APPROVED the following appointments to the Remuneration and Nominations Committee (RemNom): i. Cllr Pauline Ham (Council Board Member) ii. Craig Green (Tenant Board Member) iii. Oliver Keates (Ordinary Board Member) iv. Sarah O'Neill (Ordinary Board Member; Chair) b. Scheme of Delegations (10K) No questions were raised on the strengthened '10k ready' document. RESOLVED • The Board APPROVED the refreshed Scheme of Delegations. c. Financial Regulations (10K) The financial regulations were also now 10k ready and had been strengthened. It was proposed to increase the approval thresholds to reflect the larger organisation and management levels. Prior to the meeting Paul S. stated he fully supported the proposed variations but given the importance, suggested a 6-month review by Executive Team (ET) to ensure the variations were effective. We could then move to the normal three yearly review. Ben agreed to review thresholds at March ET, six months after go-live. By then we would have additional Heads of Service in post and would be able to reflect on how the Financial Regulations were working. If required, they would then come to Board. Paul S also enquired if a reference to Board Champions should be included within "definitions"? Ben explained that currently there is no reference in the document to Board Champions. However, reflecting on the role that the Board Champions would play, it would be helpful to include a reference in the Roles & Responsibilities section. ACTION Ben to reference Board Champions in the Roles and Responsibilities section of the Financial Regulations.

	RESOLVED The Board: • APPROVED the refreshed Financial Regulations • NOTED the strengthened governance framework to support transition to a 10,000- home organisation • NOTED that a tracked change version is available on request d. Contract Standing Orders (10K) The Contract Standing Orders were now 10k ready and had been strengthened. Amongst other changes, it was proposed to increase the approval thresholds. There were no questions raised. RESOLVED The Board: • APPROVED the refreshed Contract Standing Orders. • NOTED that the changes ensure HiS's procurement framework remains compliant, proportionate, and robust in advance of expansion to c.10,000 homes.
14.	Annual TSM Submission 2025/26 (4K) Members noted that the satisfaction rates were really positive, especially in the current climate. Listening and acting on tenants' views, and complaints handling had marginal declines, which we would monitor. There had been improved performance in repairs and maintenance and safe homes. It was noted that the number of properties not meeting the Decency Standard had increased from 0.4% to 0.53%. The figures had been impacted by the results of stock condition surveys. We had taken a cautious approach and were addressing any issues found, by repairs, disposals and retrofit work. RESOLVED • The Board APPROVED the Homes in Somerset Tenant Satisfaction Measures for 2025/26 for submission to Somerset Council for consolidation with the in-house results, prior to submission to the Regulator of Social Housing by 30 June 2026.
15.	Policies The policies presented were Tier 1, of strategic importance, and hence needed approval at Board. The Board had previously approved funding for a policy role which has not been used on account of SC having a resource in place for both landlords. a. Joint Tenancy Policy (10K) A tenancy policy was a regulatory requirement. The strengthened policy had been reviewed and updated by customer consultation groups. Following Board approval, the tenancy policy would be live within HiS and would go to SC for approval to be active from Sept. b. Complaints & Feedback Policy (Annual) (10K) HQN had reviewed and approved the changes. The main changes were to provide clarity, for

	example setting out when we would extend a deadline, and what would not be included as a complaint. We had seen increasing numbers of complaints going to stage 2. Claire clarified, in response to Paul S questions, prior to the meeting, that we: • use the Housing Ombudsman’s definition of a complaint, and this is set out in the policy. Within the Complaints Handling Code this is a requirement and therefore used across the housing sector. • were seeking approval for this joint Complaints Policy which we would implement immediately. The policy will be scrutinised by the Council ahead of its adoption within the in-house service prior to 1 September. RESOLVED • The Board NOTED the proposed changes and APPROVED the Tenancy Policy • The Board NOTED the proposed changes and APPROVED the Customer Complaints & Feedback Policy.
16.	Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code Annual Self-Assessment 2025/26 (4K) This work was around the “so what”; how does the work over the last year make a difference to our tenants. The work presented had been supported by HQN and demonstrates continuous learning. The changes included strengthening tracking of resolutions and ensuring they were actioned, training for the Board Member responsible for Complaints and for the Tenant Board Champion. The Housing Ombudsman Annual Complaints Performance and Improvements Review report would be presented to July Board. Marie enquired about learning from ASB cases. Claire explained that we do learn from our cases. One area of learning is our communication during ASB cases, and this needs to be improved. We also need to ensure that ASB cases are managed through the ASB process and not the complaints process and manage expectations. All of this needs to be evidenced appropriately. RESOLVED • The Board APPROVED the annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code. The meeting broke at 14.17 and reconvened at 14.32pm
17.	Value For Money Strategy (VFM) (4K) Ben noted that HiS has had considerable external focus on VFM this year (options appraisal, Housemark, mock inspection). Paul highlighted it was good to note the positive external viewpoints presented and it was important they all tell the same story. a. Annual VFM Report b. National Federation of ALMOs (NFA)/Housemark Value For Money Review of the ALMO model report

	Ben set out for Paul S, that the new 2027-2030 VFM Strategy would be developed during Q3 for presentation to November Board. The timeframe will enable the strategy to be framed in the context of a 10k organisation. RESOLVED The Board NOTED both the Value for Money Annual Report 25/26 and the NFA/Housemark VFM Review of ALMOs
18.	Risk Register Update (4K) Paul S had been considering the top risks and the work with Board Champions. He asked how we can equip them to challenge in their areas. As well as Champion areas, the Regulator may ask about how well sighted members were of the Project Fusion risks. Marie requested that members review the details of Project Fusion risks at the next meeting, after consideration at June ARC. Ben outlined the work with HiS and in-house colleagues to identify and address risks. Marie also suggested that we close the loop with conferences and training and ask Board members to share learning via a feedback form. It shares knowledge and shows VFM. Olly outlined that when the ARC met prior to the Board meeting, they discussed succession planning, as a number of members were leaving next year, including the Chair and Vice Chair of ARC. Paul S noted that housing associations were continually considering the balance of investment on new build versus existing stock. Many were reducing new builds as a result. Greg explained this was partly driven by new developments in London. Regulations around Towers blocks were more difficult post Grenfell and required significantly more funding. ACTION Ben to bring the Project Fusion risk register to July Board. RESOLVED The Board NOTED this summary report.
19	RSH Consumer Standards Review (Six Monthly) (4K) Paul S. highlighted this was an important piece of assurance the Board needs to understand. In response to a question, prior to the meeting, Claire explained how we will achieve "strengthened Board oversight". The feedback particularly referenced; oversight of aids and adaptations, allocations and anti-social behaviour. As an ET we had discussed how we could use Board Champions to support these areas of work. Annual reports and Spotlight sessions for service activity and delivery would continue to be included in the Board forward plan. RESOLVED The Board NOTED this report.

20	Customer Influence and Engagement Framework (10K)
	Claire explained that the recommendations from TPAS would need to be shaped into a plan for our engagement framework, while dealing with the emotions and supporting people to work together. It will take time to build a new committee. It was vital the new committee was effective as soon as possible to continue to provide the quality and assurance that STAC currently deliver. During the planning we will also take into account the recommendations from Savills in their options appraisal report. It will be an iterative process, but overall, the ET believe this was an opportunity. The board discussed the importance of not losing valued 'lived' experience in both organisations which has taken time and effort over many years. Claire noted that we would have a pool of c.12,000 more customers and can recruit the best people to support the Board. We don't want to lose involved residents, so will encourage those unsuccessful in applying for the new committee to do other things within the framework, for example scrutiny or service improvement. RESOLVED - The Board NOTED the proposal to: - Adopt the recommendations of the TPAS review for a combined Customer Influence and Engagement Framework as a 10k organisation. - Through co-design to work with HiS and Somerset Council in-house involved tenants to co-create a framework for customer influence and engagement.
21.	Board and Committee Attendance Report (Annual)
	Olly enquired if a minimum of 40% attendance was too low, especially now members were being paid. It was requested that Alice research what level other ALMOs set for minimum attendance and consider this in the next scheduled review of the Articles of Association. ACTION Alice to research what level other organisations set for minimum Board attendance and consider in the next scheduled review of the Articles RESOLVED The Board NOTED Board and Committee attendance for the 25/26 financial year.
22.	Board Member Tenure and Term Update (Annual)
	No questions were raised. RESOLVED The Board NOTED the Board Member Annual Tenure and Term Report
23.	NHF Code of Governance 2020 Self-Assessment (Annual) (4K)
	No questions were raised. RESOLVED The Board NOTED the NHF Code of Governance self-assessment 2026.
24.	Statutory and Other Registers Update (Six Monthly Report) (4K)
	No questions were raised.

	RESOLVED The Board NOTED the Statutory and Other Registers Update.
25.	Sustainability By Design Update (4K) Prior to the meeting Paul S. stated it was great to note the increase to 76.9% of homes meeting EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) Band C but enquired how many were EPCs were out of date. Naomi set out that we currently have 197 overdue EPCs. A proportion of these homes were already progressing through retrofit works, with EPCs to be updated on completion. Others had been surveyed and awaiting certificates. We are working with our external contractor to ensure we have an in-date EPC for every property by the end of 2026. We are reviewing options for the future to deliver energy assessments via the stock condition survey programme supporting our journey to MEES (Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards) compliance.
	RESOLVED - The Board NOTED the progress made in delivering the Sustainability by Design programme and movement towards EPC targets; and - The Board NOTED that this will be the final regular standalone sustainability update to Board, with future reporting incorporated into Asset Management Strategy performance and annual reporting.
26.	Key Performance Indicators Paul S praised the team for these exceptional results. Following Stockport Homes we were leading the ALMO sector. Prior to the meeting, Paul S. enquired were there any lesser performing areas that ET feel Board should be concerned about? Claire explained we were obviously concerned about the dissatisfaction associated with complaints. However, we were mindful that the TSM was a perception survey and invariably those expressing dissatisfaction had not expressed their complaint through the formal process. We investigate all expressions of dissatisfaction and respond as appropriate. We ask if they wished to go through the formal process. Often, they decline and were satisfied as we had resolved their issues. ASB can be the exception. Failure to manage an ASB issue within our associated policies and procedures would trigger a complaint as defined in the policy.
	RESOLVED The Board: NOTED the HiS 2025/26 year-end KPIs. NOTED the Q4 SC Corporate reporting KPIs. NOTED the 10k KPIs as at the end of April 2026.
27.	Debtor Balances and Write-offs (Six Monthly Report) (4K) No questions were raised.
	RESOLVED The Board NOTED the debtor balances as at 31st March 26 and the debtor and write off values for the period 1st April 25 to 31st March 26.
28.	Management Accounts – Draft Year End 2025/26 (4K)

	Naomi highlighted that lift maintenance costs were high, as there had been a larger number of unexpected remedial repairs. Work was underway to reduce the costs and we had put contingencies in place so we are more on target this year. Prior to the meeting, Paul S. enquired about the overspend and reserves mentioned in "Enriching Partnerships" implications section. Ben explained that the Enriching Partnerships (Managed Use Of Reserves) budget for 2025/26 was set at £125,450, representing the remaining allocation carried forward from the previous year. During the year, £161,570 of expenditure relating to partnership activity was charged to this budget, resulting in an overspend of £36k. This overspend is largely offset by a £34k underspend on Project 24 Due Diligence. Both budgets sit within the wider scope of partnership working aligned to the Enriching Partnerships strand of the Corporate Strategy. A table setting out this information was also provided. RESOLVED The Board NOTED the draft management accounts for the year ending 31st March 2026
29.	Compliance Summary & Dashboard – April 2026 (4K)
	No questions were raised.
	RESOLVED The Board NOTED the contents of the report.
30.	Stock Condition Survey Programme (Monthly) (10K)
	Stock condition surveys had been completed on 84% of the 10,000 properties. The remainder were due to "no access". We had reviewed the process and tightened up on addressing the issues. Our recent work with Savills had highlighted the need to accelerate block inspections for HiS and SC, which was progressing. Property data was progressing well, but we still had a lot of work to do on person data. Peter explained that, as requested by members, future reports to each board would cover both stock and person data. Marie enquired if we could still make plans by inferring stock information for the no access properties, while simultaneously trying to get access. Naomi explained that we needed to be careful of "cloning data" or getting anywhere close to cloning. She also confirmed if we thought there were any issues in one of the "no access" properties we would prioritise getting access. Greg considered that it was possible to work with some property assumptions while setting plans. However, with the RSH looking for a detailed knowledge of properties we need to have 100% stock condition surveys or a clear track to get to 100%. Marie went on to raise that some assumptions were more likely to be accurate. For example, two adjoining properties, or a property in the middle of a terrace were likely to have similar roofs and/or similar asbestos contents, however their kitchens could

	be very different. She felt while still trying to get access for stock condition surveys, using the data from these sorts of assumptions could be a step forward. Naomi explained that we do things like external assessments to gain some data and if we had a property where the data was over its 5 year date we will assume that it is non-decent. Paul S also highlighted that “no access” does not equal no information, and it would be useful to use the other data that we hold on a property. Marie reminded the team that too many access appointments can make it harder to get further access. We need to plan access to minimise the number of times a year we want to entry to a property. Naomi agreed. We do want to streamline the process to reduce inconvenience. It is hard though with a lot of interdependences, especially where we had different contractors for these jobs. HiS were at 90% coverage and were working on SC properties. We could also tie in surveys with repairs and were addressing the properties where we were not permitted access for a repair or a survey. RESOLVED The Board: • NOTED the update on progress of our Stock Condition Survey Project. • NOTED (subject to Board approval of the new Corporate Strategy) the proposal that from July 2026, this report will provide a position statement on both stock condition and customer insight data (“using customer and insight effectively”).
31.	Westfield House Safety Assurance Update (Six Monthly) No questions were raised. RESOLVED • The Board NOTED the progress made in delivering the phased approach that was agreed by Board in November 2025.
32.	Fraud Review (including Whistleblowing/Bribery Act Reporting) (Annual) (4K) Ben explained that tenancy fraud was moving up the agenda again. We work with the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) and we had recently had a case highlighted by the process. Paul S asked, prior to the meeting, as this was a critical item for Board, how will we keep it under review in the short/medium term? Ben explained that the ARC would continue to monitor and review fraud activity and mitigations and will report to the Board after each meeting through the Chair of ARC updates. The ARC forward plan includes review of the Fraud Risk Register, which is also managed by the Senior Leadership Team, every other meeting. If there was any material fraud activity between meetings it would be raised at the next available ARC or the Chair/Vice Chair of ARC would be informed if it was urgent. RESOLVED • The Board NOTED the contents of this report.

33.	AOB (<i>to be notified in advance</i>)
	There was no other business notified.

The non-confidential meeting finished at 15.27

Confirmed as a true record of the meeting

Signed:



Name (Chair): Paul Stephenson

Date: 28 July 2026