



Minutes of the Board Meeting held on Tuesday 19 January 2021 at 10:00 am via **Microsoft Teams**

Present:	Mr R Martin (Chair)	In attendance:	Mrs H Bayne
	Mr C Allan		Mr J Turner
	Mr I Dickson		Mr N Pollard
	Ms C Cuthbertson		Mr N Hall
	Mr J Flaherty		Mr C Culross
	Mr D Mackie		Mrs J Green
	Mr A Smith		Ms S Smith
	Ms P Biberbach		Miss Megan Paton (minutes)
	Mr B McDougall		
	Mr D Bittleson		
	Ms S Blackhall		

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Ms Blackhall declared an interest in item 9.2 Rent Increase. Mr Martin confirmed to Ms Blackhall that whilst she could not participate in the discussion she could remain in the meeting for the item.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ms Donaldson.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2020 were approved.

Moved: Mr McDougall

Seconded: Mr Mackie

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 November 2020

4.1 Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Policy

Mr Hall advised the Board both references to placing responsibility on Link to ensure that purchasers solicitors have carried out their required anti-money laundering checks has been changed such that is no longer incumbent upon Link to do that. Proof of identity was also more flexible for lower level AML matters.

4.2 Funding Proposals

Mr Hall advised the Board the Audit & Risk Committee met on 18 December 2020 and considered a funding report by the Group Finance Director.

The Board approved the following;

- ***An extension to the Royal Bank of Scotland Revolving Credit Facility from £25M to £30M for a minimum term of 5 years***
- ***A new Term Loan of £60M to be in place by March 2021 with RBS.***
- ***To develop proposals, which may include ESG terms, for up to £100M with a deferred drawdown profile and for this facility to be executed not later than October 2021.***
- ***The further development of the proposals for the resolution of the legacy debt position for RBS and Bank of Scotland***

4.3 Any Other Matters Arising

None.

5. CHAIR UPDATE

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

Mr Turner advised the Board the new Group Leadership Team structure had been implemented in December 2020 and the Board agenda now includes standing items for updates from the Group Directors. As a result, the Chief Executive Update has been amended to focus on group wide issues with strategic directorate matters to be discussed during the wider agenda.

Mr Turner confirmed two Board positions have been offered to Weslo one being a tenant and other professional representation. Mr Turner advised a CV has been received from one professional however there has been no further communication on a tenant representative. Mr Turner agreed to provide an update to the Board at the next meeting.

JT

Mr Turner advised the Board a Board Liaison Group meeting would be set up to start a 'Board to Board' dialogue between Link Group and Weslo.

JT

7. FOUNTAINBRIDGE UPDATE

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report. Mr Turner advised the Board in December 2020 an external review on Link Group Ltd and Private Sector Leasing gas processes and procedures had taken place and was carried by CORGI Technical.

The CORGI report had concluded that Link operated in a compliant and safe manner with regard to gas safety and that gas safety was taken seriously by the organisation. There was however scope to build on the current good position and the CORGI report had recommended areas for improvement to make processes and procedures more robust. These recommendations were in the course of being implemented.

Mr Turner explained the further dialogue that had taken place with the HSE Inspector and he also advised that a meeting had been set up with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to respond to the questions posed by the SHR as well as provide an update on the recent audit.

The Board approved the final clarification letter for submission to the HSE and noted the ongoing work in this area.

8. PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Weslo Update

Mr Turner advised the Board that the stage one consultation process is currently taking place with tenants and approximately 1700 tenants to date have been contacted over the phone and feedback has been positive. Mr Turner further advised the stage one consultation will continue throughout January and into February after which the second stage consultation will begin and when that is completed the formal ballot will follow.

JT

Mr Turner agreed to circulate the Consultation documents to the Board.

GROUP UPDATES

9. COMMUNITIES

9.1 Communities Verbal Update

Ms Smith advised the Board after being appointed Group Director of Communities work has taken place to embed the new management strategic leadership structure in LinkLiving. Ms Smith further advised the Board that in February 2020 LinkLiving's 5-year strategic plan was launched. Full implementation was however delayed due to COVID and it was noted that work has now resumed on this 5-year plan.

Ms Smith noted the LinkLiving pay structure has been reviewed to ensure LinkLiving remain an employer of choice in the care and support sector, with the objective being retaining and recruiting high-quality staff to deliver a high-quality service. Ms Smith informed the Board that LinkLiving's current client management system Carista has gone out service, and a new system was in the course of being implemented. It was noted that work is taking place to transfer all LinkLiving's data and systems of work before the Go Live date on 1st April 2021.

Ms Smith advised the Board the Chair of LinkLiving Board Elizabeth Jarvis would be presenting a solution focused Self-Help Coaching module at the Conveners meeting which has been developed with Link Housing leads to support tenants with mental health issues. It was further noted that Mr Turner and Ms Smith met with the Housing Services Leadership Team for a presentation on the Housing with Heart Strategy and that is moving towards completion.

Mrs Green joined the meeting.

9.2 Rent Consultation

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

It was noted that Link had consulted tenants on two potential rent increases, designed primarily to allow all existing services to be delivered at current levels, the increases consulted on were 2.25% and 2.5%.

The Board noted that the recent survey indicated that 85% of tenants considered their rent to be "fairly" or "just about" affordable.

The Board approved the recommendation to implement a 2.5% rent increase from April 2021 with an allocation of 0.25% of the increase to be set aside and used to fund services to support tenants in financial difficulty.

Mr Martin agreed to obtain Ms Blackhall's feedback on the consultation at their next catch up and Mr Turner and Mrs Green agreed to meet with Ms Blackhall to look at the information provided in the Rent Consultation document and timings of the Consultation.

9.3 Gas Safety Policy

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

Mrs Green advised the Board the main change in the Gas Safety Policy is to record that Link Property had been appointed as gas contractor. Mrs Green further advised the Board that recent recommendations received from CORGI Technical Audit will be

crossed referenced with the Gas Safety Policy and the final policy will be updated as appropriate. **JG**

Mrs Green agreed to confirm why Horizon Housing Association do not share the Group wide Gas Safety Policy and will provide the Board with an update at the next Board meeting.

JG

Mrs Green agreed to review the policy and correct typographical errors.

The Board approved the Gas Safety Policy.

Mrs Green left the meeting.

10. COMMERCIAL

10.1 Commercial Verbal Update

Mr Culross informed the Board the Scottish Government has increased the Affordable Housing Supply Programme 2021/2022 from £300 million to £500 million. Mr Culross explained there are 3,200 homes planned to be delivered in the next 5 years.

Mr Culross advised the Board Link was quoted as the biggest recipient in grant received for social housing £63.58 million. Mr Culross assured the Board that although planned maintenance on kitchens, bathrooms and windows were postponed due to the Government restrictions, once Government guidelines are updated planned maintenance work will resume immediately.

Mr Culross provided an overview of the PSL service and confirmed that as a result of a number of operational changes he anticipated that PSL would achieve a profit this year.

Mr Culross agreed to circulate a written update to the Board.

CC

10.2 Butterbiggins Land Disposal

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board approved the disposal of the Butterbiggins land as set out in the report

10.3 PSL Write Off's

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report

The Board approved the Private Sector Leasing write offs amounting to £20,088 and landlord recharge debt totalling £4,573.

11. CORPORATE SERVICES

11.1 Corporate Services Verbal Update

Mr Hall advised the Board work was taking place with Team Directors to review the functions within corporate services and where these are best placed. A further update will be provided in due course.

11.2 Unite Pay Claim

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board noted that the pay claim was specifically related to the inflation related pay award but that in addition consolidated and non-consolidated pay awards are made also, and both awards have a total 2% budget forecast.

The Board noted that historically December's official inflation figures have been an agreed reference point and further noted Consumer Prices Indices (CPI) for November 2020 was 0.6%, down from 0.9% in October 2020.

The Board agreed to offer 1% as an inflation related pay claim and in addition to delegate authority to the Group Leadership Team to manage the collective IRPA and Performance Related Pay budgeted within the 2021/2022 forecast budget of 2% of salaries.

11.3 Finance Report

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

Mr Pollard left the meeting.

11.4 HR 6 Monthly Report

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

11.5 Annual Freedom of Information Report

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

Mrs Bayne left the meeting.

POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

12. **Group Structure Update**

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

The Board approved the workplan to rationalise the group structure and therefore to move the structure closer to what was envisaged following the Strategic Services Review.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

13. Board Remuneration

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

The Board noted the Link Group Remuneration Panel will reconvene to decide which Board Members should be paid in addition to the Chair and at what level.

Mr McDougal advised that he did not agree with paying Board Members.

The Board approved the proposal to pay up to another four Board Members as set out in the report bringing the total number of Board Members receiving remuneration to 5. The Board further approved to delegate authority to the Board Remuneration Panel to decide the scope of duties and to agree a level of remuneration commensurate with the duties involved.

14. Business Planning – Year End Approval Process

The considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board agreed to hold an additional Board Meeting in February to approve the Group Member's Business Plans.

15. Membership Application

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board approved the application for membership from Ms Shona Blackhall.

16. Board Membership

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board approved the appointment of Ms Blackhall to the Link Group Board to fill a casual vacancy.

The Board noted the appointment of Dr Rachael Docking and Ms Jane Petty to the Board of Horizon Housing Association Ltd.

17. Any Oher Business

None.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 16 March 2021 at 10:00.

Meeting Closed at 12:24.