



Minutes of the Board Meeting held on Tuesday 18 May 2021 at 10:00 am via **Microsoft Teams**

Present:	Mr R Martin (Chair)	In attendance:	Mrs H Bayne
	Mr I Dickson		Mr J Turner
	Ms C Cuthbertson		Mr N Pollard
	Mr J Flaherty		Mr N Hall
	Mr D Mackie		Mr C Culross
	Mrs J Prichard		Ms S Smith
			Ms K Evans
	Mr D Bittleston		Miss Megan Paton (minutes)
	Ms S Blackhall		
	Ms C Donaldson		

Mr Martin advised the Board the running order of the agenda had been altered to accommodate staff joining and leaving the meeting.

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Smith, Ms Biberbach, and Mr Allan.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES HELD ON 16 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2021 were approved.

Moved: Mr Martin

Seconded: Mr Dickson

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES HELD ON 21 April 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2021 were approved.

Moved: Ms Donaldson

Seconded: Mr Martin

Mr Bittleston advised that he had joined the meeting after the approval of the resolution of Weslo transferring into Link however did agree with the approval, but he wasn't present when the resolution was passed.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 March 2021

None.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 April 2021

None.

7. CHAIR UPDATE

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

8. CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

Mr Turner advised the Board the HSE have now closed the investigation into the Fountainbridge fire. The Inspector had confirmed that it had not been possible to determine the cause of the fire as the building had been so badly damaged. She had recommended to the Procurator Fiscal that no prosecution against Link should be made. A 'lessons learnt' session would be held with the Audit and Risk Committee and communicated to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Board queried whether there were any plans to bring in gas monitoring sensors. Mr Culross confirmed at this time no work was taking place in this area. Mr Turner agreed to contact the SFHA to determine if there were plans to introduce such an initiative.

Mr Turner advised the Board that Graeme Bruce, currently Operations Manager in West Highland Housing Association, had been successful in securing the role as new Head of Sustainability.

GROUP UPDATES

11. CORPORATE SERVICES

11.1 Corporate Services Update

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

11.2 Finance Report

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

Mr Hall advised the Board the overall financial position had been strengthened by Gift Aid, being significantly ahead of budget although

this had been largely offset by reduced rental income which was lower due to the pandemic delaying development completions.

Mr Dickson queried why the Balance Sheet reserve detailed in the report was £67.1mio however the number provided on the comprehensive income report was £69.1mio. Mr Hall advised he would look into this and provide the Board with an update via email.

11.4 Quarterly Loan Covenant Compliance

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

The Board noted that Link had not breached any of its loan covenants in the period to 31 March 2021. It was further noted that it was not anticipated that Link would fail to meet any of its covenants in the period until the next review is due as there were no circumstances foreseen that would cause any covenant breaches.

11.5 Scottish Housing Regulator Annual Financial Returns

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

Mr Hall advised the Board the Loan Portfolio Return is not yet available to submit online due to technical issues however the Return will be submitted once the system is live.

The Board approved the submission of Link's 5 Year Financial Projections and Loan Portfolio Return to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

11.6 Treasury Management Strategy

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board approved the Annual Treasury Management Strategy.

11.7 Group Structure

The Board discussed and considered the previously circulated report.

Mr Hall advised the Board the changes detailed in the report originated from the Strategic Services Review and some have arisen as a result of Weslo joining the Group. The various changes proposed reflect good practice, were designed to improve governance and will allow more flexibility for future expansion of the group.

The Board discussed the proposals in detail and it was noted that much of the work could run in parallel although the completion of the changes could be influenced by resource limitations, including the integration of Weslo into Link.

The Board acknowledged that whilst there was much work to be undertaken to convert Link Housing Association into an RSL it did create the environment to more easily transfer the properties into Link housing but that itself would require a positive tenant ballot to take place.

The Board agreed that it would be consider the matter in more detail once the RSL status had been achieved.

The Board approved in the proposed legal and structural changes to the group structure but deferred a decision on the transfer of assets from Link Group to Link Housing Association.

11.8 Board Annual Reviews

The Board discussed and considered the previously circulated report.

Ms Cuthbertson noted the skills listed on the Skills Matrix did not reflect her skills. Mr Martin requested all Board Members contact Mr Hall if there are any omissions in the Skills Matrix which would be updated accordingly.

Mr Hall advised the Board the three main areas identified where Board Members considered they could improve their knowledge being, Finance, Development and Welfare Reform. The Board noted several training sessions will be arranged to cover the identified areas and consideration is being given to hosting these at the end of the working day and each will last approximately 45 minutes.

Mr Hall advised the Board that the Scottish Housing Regulator was considered to be in favour of Boards adopting a 9-year rule on the maximum length of Board Member service.

Although it is considered good practice to limit the length of service to 9 years currently the Model Rules do not prohibit Board Members serving for more than 9 years provided they can demonstrate their continued effectiveness as a Board Member, to the satisfaction of the Board, before they can stand for re-election.

The Board agreed the importance of attracting new Board Members to allow for fresh independent views and to expand equality and diversity on the Board.

The Board agreed there are opportunities across the Group for Members to join Committees and Boards which would enable their expertise and experience to be retained within the group after serving a 9-year period on a particular Board.

The Board agreed to follow the 9-year rule as a guide however agreed a matrix/method was required on how to measure effectiveness and skills past the 9-year period if there were

circumstances that made sense for a Board Member to continue after the 9 year period.

Mr Pollard joined the meeting

The Board approved the following recommendations:

- ***Training to be put in place on Finance, Development and Welfare reform.***
- ***Board Members would be encouraged to attend other meetings of group members to get a better understanding of the work that goes on across the group.***

11.9 Standing Orders

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

Mr Martin advised the Board Mr Smith is currently looking into the role of the Conveners Group and work was taking place around this.

The Board approved that changes would be made to the Standing Orders at the July Board.

11.10 Application for Membership

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board approved the application for membership from Mr Paul Kerr, current Chair of Link Property.

11.11 Board Membership

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board noted the appointment of Ms Mareta Greig to the Board of Larkfield Housing Association Ltd and the resignation of Mrs Sheralee Miller (Chair). The Board further noted the resignation of Ms Sandra Panton from the Board of Link Housing Association. The Board noted the successful recruitment of 6 new LinkLiving Board Members.

The Board approved the appointment of Mr Paul Kerr to the Link Group Board to fill a casual vacancy. The Board approved the appointment of Ms Janette Harvey to the Link Housing Association board

11.12 Key Performance Indicators

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report. The Board also noted the new format of the KPI reporting template which would apply from this point onwards.

11.13 Chairs Actions

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

The Board noted between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 the chair had used his delegated authority to approve:

- 2 Mid-Market Rent applications
- 3 LiFT Applications
- 3 First Home Fund applications
- 1 Link Housing Tenancy.

The Board further noted staffing decisions were approved with regard to:

- 5 staff settlements
- 1 Retirement contribution

11.14 Nationwide Bank Mandate

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board noted as of June 1st, 2021 Link Group will take over the Weslo loan from Nationwide Building Society. As Link Group currently do not have a relationship with Nationwide a Mandate must be signed to enable them to take instructions in relation to the loans.

The Board approved the resolution and agreed to delegate authority to the Group Director of Finance to manage the Nationwide loan agreement and associated accounts.

11.3 Unite Pay Negotiations

Mrs Bayne joined the meeting

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

Mrs Bayne advised the Board an additional session will be held on 24th May with Unite and Union Members to present Link Group's financial position in more detail. Mrs Bayne further advised work was taking place on the consolidated and non-consolidated award recommendations and this would be communicated to the Union, however, she had emphasised this was separate from the Inflation Related Pay Award (IRPA).

The Board noted the feedback received from Union Members and following detailed discussion concluded that the 1% IRPA award remained a fair and reasonable inflation award. The Board also noted that in their view the negotiations with the Union had been conducted in line with previously accepted processes and did not

accept the position outlined in the Unite paper that appropriate consultation and negotiation had not taken place.

The Board noted that there are a number of areas raised in the paper that are outwith the IRPA discussion and noted the officers were continuing a dialogue with the Union on these areas.

The Board appreciated the openness of the feedback provided and thanked the union for passing this on.

9. COMMUNITIES

9.5 Annual Return on the Charter

Ms Evans joined the meeting

Mrs Bayne reported some indicators had shifted as a result of the COVID Pandemic. The Board noted the 2020/21 Scottish Average will be released in July.

The Board noted tenant satisfaction with the quality of their homes had dropped since 2017/2018. Ms Evans advised the figure had been taken from the 2020 Customer Satisfaction Survey. Mrs Evans agreed to look into the stock affected and report back to the Board.

The Board acknowledged that a significant number of the indicators have been heavily effected by the pandemic. Mr Turner commented that in particular the Repairs 'Right first Time' indicator looked adverse to prior years but this is due to having to log instances where it was not possible to complete repairs in line with internal timescales set prior to the pandemic as failures and this is not representative of the quality of work undertaken.

The Board acknowledged the quality of both the supporting paperwork for the ARC data as well as the level of scrutiny and validation undertaken and asked for thanks to be passed on to the teams involved in this challenging piece of work.

The Board approved the Annual Return on the Charter 2020/21.

Mrs Bayne and Ms Evans left the meeting

9.1 Communities Update

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report

9.2 Link Housing Write Off's -Q4

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board approved the proposed write offs of £30,320.50.

9.3 PSL Write Off's – Q4

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board approved the proposed write offs of £25,165.

9.4 Asset Management Health and Safety Report – Q4

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

10. COMMERCIAL

10.1 Commercial Update

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

10.2 Development Sub Committee

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board noted that the Development Sub Committee had met on 23rd March 2021 and approved the following 2 projects;

- **Pre Tender Risk Assessment – Dalmarnock Phase 3, Glasgow**

The Committee approved the request to conclude the Commencement Agreement of the Partnering (PPC(S)2000) contract with McTaggart Construction Ltd, which will conclude the tender for the delivery of 80 units for social rent and 49 units for mid market rent at Dalmarnock Riverside, for the sum of £25,064,742.

- **Pre Tender Risk Assessment – Ravenscraig Phase 2, Inverclyde**

The Committee approved the request to enter into a Partnering (PPC(S) 2000) contract with McTaggart Construction Ltd. for the delivery of 49 units for social rent, a mixture of 1 & 2 bed cottage flats, 2, 3, & 4 bed terraced houses including 3 wheelchair exemplar properties for the sum of £7,929,690.

POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

11. Any Oher Business

None.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

**Tuesday 20 July 2021 at 10:00am
Meeting Closed at 12:02**