



Minutes of the Board Meeting held on Tuesday 18 January 2022 at 10:00 am via **Microsoft Teams**

Present:	Mr R Martin (Chair)	In attendance:	Mr J Turner
	Mr D Bittleston		Mrs H Bayne
	Mr I Dickson		Mr N Hall
	Mr D Mackie		Mr C Culross
	Ms C Cuthbertson		Ms S Smith
	Mr C Allan		Mr D Mackenzie
	Mr P Kerr		
	Ms P Biberbach		Miss Megan Paton (minutes)
	Mr A Smith		

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ms Pritchard and Miss Blackhall.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16 November were approved.

Moved: Mr Martin

Seconded: Mr Smith

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 30 November were approved.

Moved: Mr Martin

Seconded: Mr Mackie

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 16 & 30 NOVEMBER 2021

None.

6. CHAIR UPDATE

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

Mr Dickson joined the meeting.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

Mr Turner advised that the tribunal to consider whether the inducement claims made by staff as part of the pay dispute with Unite were time barred, would meet in early March 2022.

GROUP UPDATES

8. CORPORATE BUSINESS

8.1 Rent Increase Consultation 2022

Mr Mackenzie joined the meeting.

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 3% and 3.5%.

The Board noted the high levels of tenant engagement with 1,336 responses received from tenants, 72% of whom had favoured a 3% rent increase as opposed to a 3.5% increase.

The Board discussed the current levels of inflation and the likelihood of CPI remaining above 3% for much of the 2022/23 financial year. It was also recognised that as Unite would not enter into discussions regarding an inflation related pay award for 2022/23 this remained an uncertain cost.

The Board acknowledged that tenants would be directly affected by fuel and heating cost increases and increases in food prices and agreed that a rent increase beyond 3% would cause tenants hardship.

The Board approved the recommendation to implement a 3% rent increase from April 2022.

The Board thanked all the teams involved in the consultation process.

Ms Biberbach left the meeting.

8.2 Inflation Related Pay Award 2022

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board noted the current position with Unite, in particular the recent proposal for current RPI to apply as the 2021/22 inflation related pay award, which at the time the proposal was made, would mean a 7.1% pay increase.

The Board discussed the position and agreed that when the 1% pay award was originally proposed (in early 2021) it was an above inflation pay award and was in line with other pay settlements in the housing sector e.g. EVH. Current inflation was relevant but only in relation to the 2022/23 pay award and the Board again expressed disappointment that Unite would not enter into negotiations for the current year.

The Board re-iterated its concerns of the impact that this would have on staff who would not receive a pay award in April 2022, particularly given that the £400 per person pay award had not been accepted either by Unite.

The Board agreed that the Chief Executive and Group Leadership Team would continue to engage with Unite on the Board's behalf.

The Board further agreed the Board subgroup created to monitor and discuss the ongoing Unite situation should continue weekly discussions.

The Board noted the position and proposals in relation to the LinkLiving IRPA situation.

The Board agreed that in all the circumstances the 1% pay award for 2021/22 was a fair and reasonable offer which had been above inflation at the time it was made.

The Board approved the recommendations to discuss and consider the 2022 IRPA award budget at the Board meeting in February.

9. COMMUNITIES

9.1 Communities Update

The Board discussed and noted the previously circulated report.

Ms Smith advised the Board the Welfare Advice Team had been successful in securing two amounts of funding to assist tenants and service users with fuel costs:

- Social Housing Fuel Support fund – Total of £61,180 secured, money is available to tenants' group wide and a flat payment of £100 will be made via bank transfer. Funds to be spent by the end of March.

- HACT Energy Redress Scheme – Link tenants, PSL tenants, LinkLiving service users and Commercial services tenants can access a voucher to support with fuel costs in the amount of £28 or £49 depending on circumstances.

The Board noted Link had been successful at the Scottish Housing Awards 2021 and announced as overall winners in the housing provider of the year category for excellent tenancy toolkit, shaped by Link staff to offer training around topics including trauma-informed practice, money advice, fuel poverty and mental health awareness.

9.2 PSL Write Off's

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board approved the recommended write-off off's totalling £84,354.

10. COMMERCIAL SERVICES

10.1 Commercial Services Update

The Board discussed and noted the previously circulated report.

The Board noted the total number of handovers as of 31 December 2021 was 936 with number expected to rise to 1,134 by the end of the financial year.

Mr Culross highlighted the extent to which the profit from commercial activities had exceeded budget and the Board noted the progress regarding the launch of C~urb and the progress of the property acquisition programme for the PSL service.

11. CORPORATE SERVICES

11.1 Corporate Services Update

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

Mr Allan left the meeting

11.2 Chair Recruitment

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board agreed a Chair Recruitment Sub Committee would be created with the following Members: Ms Cuthbertson, Mr Allan, Mr Bittleston, and Mr Mackie.

The Board agreed Aspen and Campbell Tickell would be shortlisted and interviewed by the Committee, It was noted the recruitment of Chair should not be limited to candidates from the housing sector. The outcome will be reported to the February Board meeting.

The Board approved the recommendation to appoint two recruitment agencies for interview and approved the recommendation to appoint a sub-committee to undertake the interviews. The Board further approved the recommendation for the subcommittee to work with the selected agency to draft a job description for the role of Chair.

11.3 Finance Report

The Board discussed and noted the previously circulated report.

11.4 Complaints and Customer Feedback Report

The Board discussed and noted the previously circulated report.

11.5 Board Membership

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

The Board noted the resignation by Mr John Flaherty from the Board of Link Group Ltd with immediate effect due to increased work commitments along with the role of Chair from the Link Housing Association Ltd Board.

The Board expressed its thanks to Mr. Flaherty for the number of years' service on the Boards of Link Group and Link Housing.

The Board further noted the resignation by Ms Susie Fitton from the Board of Horizon Housing Association Ltd. Ms. Fitton remains a member of Horizon's Accessible Housing Group.

Mr. Hall confirmed a review of the Membership of Link Housing Association Board will take place with the intention to recruit more Members to strengthen the Board.

The Board approved the recommendation to appoint Mr Donald Caskie to the C~urb 6 Ltd Board.

POLICIES

12. Disciplinary Policy

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

Mr Hall confirmed the policy would be updated to reflect the change from Senior Management Team to the Group Leadership Team.

The Board approved the updates to the Disciplinary Policy.

13. Any other Business

The Board requested a report be provided at the February meeting detailing plans for future in person meetings if restrictions and COVID19 guidance allows. **HB**

Mr Hall advised Members that the Board training sessions which had taken place in the autumn of 2021 had been recorded and had been uploaded to the learning hub for viewing. Mrs Ferri and someone from the Learning & Development team would be in touch with Board Members explaining how to access the hub.

Mr Martin advised the Board Mrs Ferri will be in contact to schedule Board Member mid-year reviews.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 24th February 2022 at 10:00

Meeting Closed at 11:58