

Open minutes of Tower Hamlets Homes Board Meeting
Thursday 20 May 2021 **4:05pm – 6:05pm**
Via Microsoft Teams

Board Directors Present:

Ann Lucas (AL & Chair)	-	Chair, Independent Board Director
Claire Tuffin (CT & Vice Chair)	-	Resident Board Director
Andrew Bond (AB)	-	Independent Board Director
Safia Jama (SJam)	-	Independent Board Director
Nikesh Shah (NS)	-	Independent Board Director
Simon Hart (SH)	-	Resident Board Director
Mahbub Anam (MA)	-	Resident Board Director
Asma Islam (AI)	-	Cllr Board Director
Tarik Khan (TK)	-	Cllr Board Director
Sabina Akhtar (SA)	-	Cllr Board Director

Co – Optees Present:

Pam Haluwa (PH)	-	Co-Optee to Gov.& Remuneration Committee
Iain Lawson (IL)	-	Co-Optee to Finance & Audit Committee
Yasin Ahmed (YA)	-	Co-Optee to the Finance & Governance Committee

Officers Present:

Susmita Sen (SS)	-	Chief Executive
Paul Davey (PD)	-	Director of Business Transformation
Neil Isaac (NI)	-	Director of Finance
Ann Otesanya (AO)	-	Director of Neighbourhoods
Will Manning (WM)	-	Director of Asset Management
Darren Cruice (DC)	-	Head of Asset Management & Compliance
Ben Schofield (BS)	-	Head of Comms
Sameena Raouf (GO)	-	Governance Officer

In Attendance:

Nojmul Hussain (NH)	-	Senior Resident Feedback Officer
Gulam Hussain (GH)	-	Scrutiny & Resident Feedback Manager
Steve Phillpott (SPh)	-	Head of People Services
Hilton Armand (HA)	-	Customer Access Strategic Advisor
Rupert Brandon (RB)	-	Head of Housing Supply at LBTH
Karen Swift (KS)	-	LBTH Divisional Director of Housing & Regeneration
Cllr Danny Hassell (DH)	-	Cabinet Member for Housing

Observing:

Sabrina Jamil (SJ)	-	Graduate Trainee
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Apologies:

None

1.	Welcome	
1.1.	AL welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Cllr DH. It was noted SJ is a graduate trainee and would be observing.	
2.	Declaration of Interest	
2.1.	CT, PH, IL and SH declared their interest as leaseholders of Tower Hamlets Homes.	
3.	Questions from Members of the Public	
3.1.	None received.	

4.	Minutes of the Open Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 25 February 2021	
4.1.	<i>The THH Board AGREED held on 25 February 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.</i>	
5.	Introduction to Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Housing	
5.1.	DH introduced himself to the Board and gave a brief overview of his career thus far. Round table introductions were made from Board Directors.	
5.2.	SS commented it has been a pleasure working with DH and that they have had a lot of strategic discussions already.	
5.3.	It was noted the 'Shard Services Update' would be deferred to the confidential part of the Board meeting.	
6.	Involving Residents During Major Works	
6.1.	NH presented this item to the Board. The paper presented provided recommendations from, and an action plan in response to, a scrutiny review on Involving Residents During Major Works.	
6.2.	The review sought to explore the existing processes in place to support resident involvement during major works schemes, how to strengthen communication, identify opportunities to improve our current approach and to ensure reasonable expectations of residents are met. It was noted nine out of ten recommendations made during the review were agreed by the Executive Management Team.	
6.3.	It was noted that following a discussion on the implications of recommendation six which encourages THH to explore sharing the role of Chair at steering group meetings, the Executive Management Team agreed that taking forward this recommendation risked undermining THH's ability to engage residents and reasonably manage expectations and that this in turn could negatively impact project timelines and affect THH's ability to comply with building requirements.	
6.4.	IL commented that a reflective composition of the steering group is hard to achieve and queried what THH intend to do to try and achieve this to which PD responded the recommendation primarily relates to ensuring there is an appropriate balance of tenures within the steering groups themselves. In line with the actions outlined in the action plan, officers will work closely with other front line services that may have better local intelligence and can aid in forming links with known residents to enable steering groups to better reflect the local distribution of tenures.	
6.5.	CT suggested it would be helpful to better understand the reasons for not accepting recommendation six and queried whether this is based on previous (negative) experience to which PD responded THH needs to retain control of meetings in order to ensure expectations can be appropriately managed. There is a need to strike an appropriate balance between the need for capital investment in our stock and meeting resident demands for alternative specifications for components. Needing control is likely to introduce challenges where resident expectations cannot be appropriately constrained resulting in an overall negative impact on the Capital Delivery programme. Rejecting this recommendation does not mean that we are not open to reasonable conversations and there are examples which can be pointed to where schemes have been revised based on resident input.	
6.6.	AL and the Board commended the Residents Panel on the excellent report and thanked the Resident Scrutiny Team for all their contributions to the report.	

6.7.	<i>The THH Board NOTED the draft Scrutiny Review Report.</i>	
7.	Residents' Panel Annual Report	
7.1.	NI presented this item to the Board. The report provided an overview of the THH Residents' Panel Annual Report 2020-21. In February 2020 the Panel undertook a review exploring how THH can strengthen co-regulation in light of emerging changes to regulation in the social housing sector. The review, supported by Anne McLoughlin from Campbell Tickell Consultancy, made four recommendations. The recommendations included calls for a closer working relationship between the Panel and Board through initiatives such as joint away days and the publication of an annual report to highlight the Panel's achievements. In line with this recommendation, the Board is asked to note the Panel's Annual report for 2020-21.	
7.2.	Since March 2020, the Panel has operated virtually due to the onset of the pandemic and the introduction of public health measures to control the spread of COVID-19. Despite this transition, the Panel has seen an increase in the level of engagement from its membership and has been able to significantly increase interest from a wider resident body. Over the course of the year the panel has welcomed a number of observers and has seen the diversity of representation also improve.	
7.3.	Since May 2020, the Panel has adopted a cyclical spotlight model to ensure all parts of the business receive equal coverage. Service heads from all services areas were invited to present updates on their programmes of work, discuss future priorities and to hear feedback from members. To date, services which have participated in these spotlight sessions include Property Services, Repairs, Environmental Services and Leasehold Services. Building on its successful track record of scrutiny reviews, the Panel has concluded a review on Involving Residents During Major Works and is currently exploring further topics for review.	
7.4.	AL commented the report gave a really good demonstration of what work we are doing and queried how it will be published to which GH responded it would be published online and made reference to in the next addition of 'Open Door'.	
7.5.	<i>The THH Board NOTED the progress of the Residents' Panel and its work activities as outlines in its Annual Report 2020-21.</i>	
	<i>GH and NH left the meeting at 4:15pm</i>	
8.	Asset Management Plan	
8.1.	DC presented this item to the Board. The report introduced the draft Asset Management Plan 2021-24. It had been written to accompany the draft THH Business Plan and reflected the LBTH Strategic Plan. The plan also considered current and anticipated future legislation in respect of the Fire Safety Bill, Building Safety Bill and the Social Housing White Paper.	
8.2.	It was noted an action plan has been produced for the next 12 months and that we want it to be specific and meet challenges head on.	
8.3.	CT commented that she noted our ambition is to be a leading organisation in this area and queried how we will know and measure this? She added we have many of the same challenges as other ALMOs/housing associations over the next few years and queried how we know that our particular approach to these challenges will make us a 'leading' organisation? PD responded we will do this by comparison of our KPIs through benchmarking organisations and other industry groups that we are	

	members of i.e. London Housing Directors fire group etc.	
8.4.	WM added, working with other Councils gives us an idea of where we are as an organisation. From his experience, THH have always been ahead in tackling fire safety. We are amongst the top quartile in performance, however we must continue. CT agreed we have done much work on this and that it was important we reflect it.	
8.5.	CT also commented that the tone of the plan feels a bit heavy on the forthcoming challenges and areas for improvement and that it may feel a little more balanced to have a section on 'progress made so far' and/or opportunities. PD responded the forthcoming challenges are a true reflection of what we have to do in the next few years and particularly the requirements of new fire building safety legislation. However, we recognise that the plan would benefit from recognising more of the successes we have achieved to date so we will include a section on our successes as suggested. We will also look at the suggestion of highlighting the opportunities the plan provides.	
8.6.	NK commented he really liked the action plan and that it was very clear. He added there are three key points in the year – September, December and March and queried how we are planning to resource this activity? WM responded we cannot deliver everything as we are working now. We have compiled a resourcing report for the Executive Management Team to consider at the end of May. There will be some growth and development opportunities in the Asset Management Team. Some will involve adjustments to existing roles, and some will involve bringing in expertise. He added LBTH will have to agree on how it wants to go forward and agree to a restructure as they will be funding it.	
8.7.	NK also suggested having key outputs next to the actions as they may be dependent on other workstreams. DC responded there are quite a few workstreams, we are confident and taking a realistic view on what we can achieve.	
8.8.	IL advised that if a leaseholder gets a repair completed by THH and an issue arises, they do not know who to contact. If THH were able to add a service specifically to leaseholders, they may be in a better position to maintain their properties. WM responded we can look at having an arrangement in place whereby the leaseholder contracts directly with the contractor. It would also be an opportunity to charge and build into the contract.	
8.9.	ACTION: Asset Management Plan to be presented to the Asset Management Taskforce for review.	WM/SR
8.10.	<i>The THH Board APPROVED the Asset Management Plan 2021-2024.</i>	
9.	Shared Services Update	
9.1.	<i>Deferred to confidential part of the meeting.</i>	
10.	CE Report	

10.1.	SS presented this item to the Board. It was noted the addendum to the CE report would be discussed in the confidential part of the meeting. The CE report provided an update from Neighbourhood Services, Asset Management and the Business Transformation division.	
10.2.	<i>The THH Board NOTED the CE Report.</i>	
11.	People Strategy	
11.1.	SPh presented this item to the Board. The paper introduced THH's new People Strategy for 2020-2026 – “We are THH”. This replaced the previous People Strategy (2017-2020) which is now expired.	
11.2.	It was noted that this is a refresh of our People Strategy and addresses issues like equality and diversity and the desire to have a diverse workforce. It was noted the demographic changes we are facing also affect us. We have five generations in our work force, they will have different ways of working and we need to be responsive to that. We also need a response which respects the diversity of our workforce.	
11.3.	It was noted the second half of the strategy acknowledged challenges and presented a consolidating view.	
11.4.	PH queried how we measure whether the strategy is working to which SPh responded there are many ways we can measure the impact of the strategy. For example, KPIs can measure whether satisfaction goes up, turnover of staff and sickness levels are also measured.	
11.5.	With reference to agile working, NK commented it is really important to put some principles in place. He emphasised the challenges of ‘switching off’ when working remotely. Around the People Strategy, he suggested having a direct link to the diversity of customers we serve. The way in which customers are different so that we can optimise the service we provide to customers.	
11.6.	SH added his place of work has been 50/50 field based since 2014. The pandemic exposed the other half of the organisation to remote working for the first time and offered to share the organisational experiences. He added robust mobile digital systems and services are critical.	
11.7.	SPh responded there are significant risks to agile working, we are conscious we need our staff to have parameters and the right to switch off is a live issue. There are discussions being had with staff about this.	
11.8.	<i>The THH Board APPROVED the People Strategy 2020-2026 – “We are THH”.</i>	
12.	Wellbeing Strategy	
12.1.	BS presented this item to the Committee. The report brought together all the initiatives currently in place within THH, to highlight areas for development and to identify measures by which the impact of those initiatives can be assessed.	
12.2.	The strategy supported the business plan pledge to <i>work hard to attract, retain and look after our staff</i> and THH's people strategy ambition of creating <i>an inclusive organisational culture where everyone is valued for what they bring to the table as individuals and as part of a team and is clear on the purpose of their involvement.</i>	
12.3.	It was noted the pandemic has had an impact on all of us, whether mentally or physically. A wellbeing strategy would support the easing of lockdown and help with overcoming concerns about returning to offices and provide a reason for	

12.4.	returning to them. Healthy employees have been shown to take less sickness absence and have greater engagement with their work. CT commented that she was really impressed with the range of activities for staff.	
12.5.	<i>The THH Board NOTED the Wellbeing Strategy.</i>	
13.	Digital Update	
13.1	<i>The THH Board NOTED the Digital Update.</i>	
14.	Collingwood Estate – Grindall Boiler Room Disruption	
14.1.	<i>The THH Board NOTED the Collingwood Estate – Grindall Boiler Room Disruption report.</i>	

Actions Log: Open Board Meeting
20 May 2021 4pm – 6.05pm

Item	Action	Who	Due	Status
8.9.	Asset Management Plan to be presented to the Asset Management Taskforce for review.	WM/SR		Completed

Chair

Date