

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING OF  
MID-WALES HOUSING ASSOCIATION HELD AT TY CANOL HOUSE,  
NEWTOWN ON WEDNESDAY, 20<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2017**

- Present:** Mr. Peter Swanson (Chair), Mr. Richard Martin (Deputy Chair), Mr. Vic Brown, Dr. Olivia Morris, Ms. Joy Garfitt, Miss Susan Havard, Ms. Liz Jenkins, Mr. Daniel Lewis and Mrs. Pamela Smith.
- Observers:** Cllr. J. M. Williams (Powys County Council).
- Visitor:** Ms. Patricia McCabe (Central Consultancy).
- Officers:** Mr. Shane Perkins (Chief Executive), Mr. Charles Brotherton (Director of Finance and Company Secretary), Mrs. Sian Howells (Director of New Business) and Mrs. Janet Price (Governance Officer – minute taker).

The Chair advised Members that former Chair Mr. Nick Hoskins had stepped down from membership of the Board due to ill health, much to the Association's regret. He wished to record his thanks to Mr. Hoskins for his encouragement to become Chair of the Board of Management and will visit him shortly to pass on the thanks of Board Members and staff alike for his commitment to the Association.

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<p>Apologies were received from Mrs. Morag Bailey, Ms. Elenor Bonner-Evans, Mr. Tony Bowron (Board Members), Cllr. Dafydd Edwards and Mrs. Sue Thomas (Ceredigion County Council), Mr. Aidan Ackerman (Director of Customer Services) and Mrs. Anna Orton (Director of Care &amp; Repair in Powys).</p> <p>The Chief Executive apologised that Ms. Maria Round, Regulation Manager, would not be able to attend for agenda item 6, but undertook to report back on his meeting with her earlier in the day.</p>	
<p><b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>Mr. Richard Martin declared an interest in agenda item 15b) and undertook to temporarily withdraw from the meeting during the discussion of that item.</p>	
<p><b>3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING HELD ON 12<sup>th</sup> JULY 2017</b></p>	

<p>It was agreed that the word 'prudent', within the penultimate paragraph on page 7, should be amended to 'imprudent'. Taking into account this amendment, Mr. Richard Martin proposed and Mr. Vic Brown seconded that the minutes of the Board of Management meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017 be approved as a true record.</p>	
<p><b>4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETINGS</b></p> <p>Members received the paper for information.</p>	
<p><b>5. PRESENTATION FROM PATRICIA McCABE ON THE BOARD MEMBERS' APPRAISAL PROCESS 2017</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Ms. McCabe to the meeting who gave a presentation on the Board Members' appraisal process which will take place throughout the Autumn.</p> <p>Ms. McCabe spoke about the one-to-one interviews with Chairs and the 360-degree questionnaire of fellow Board Members; Members who are 'new' to the Board and therefore feel unable to provide valued judgements on their colleagues may leave answers blank but conversely, the views of 'new' Members will be useful, as early observations, to ascertain skill sets of which the Association may be able to take advantage. A Member suggested that it would also be useful, not just in assessing competencies, but in evaluating the softer skills such as confidence and trust in each other.</p> <p>A Member felt that the role of Committee Members should be taken into account; Ms. McCabe agreed, saying that some Members displayed different behaviours on Committee than Board.</p> <p>Ms. McCabe commented on a period of 'high churn' on the Board and said that speed will be the essence in trying to build a new team over the next 12-18 months. A Member felt that the forthcoming Away Day in November, which incorporates an overnight stay, will be useful in making connections and getting to know colleagues better.</p>	
<p><b>6. FEEDBACK ON REGULATORY OPINION</b></p> <p>The Chief Executive informed the meeting that he was pleased to report that the Association had received a "standard/standard" regulatory opinion for Governance &amp; Service Delivery and Financial Viability. However, the Regulator will keep a close eye on several issues; notably the Cylch Caron development, the diversification into the EOM acquisition and the introduction of Universal Credit and other welfare reforms. Whilst the Regulator acknowledged the risks facing the Association, she was confident in the Association's competence</p>	

and capability to manage them and there is nothing adverse about the Association within the public report.

**7. FIRE SAFETY POLICY**

The Director of New Business informed Members that she had felt it prudent to produce a new Fire Safety Policy in light of the recent Grenfell Tower fire.

A Member questioned whether tenants should be informed of suitable means of escape from their properties; the Director of New Business replied that the Association should be doing more on general evacuation procedures but explained it was important to be proportionate in this approach and that full signage should be displayed in communal areas, for example. Over 800 Personal Evacuation Plans (PEEPS) and General Evacuation Plans (GEEPS) have been developed and digitally recorded in conjunction with the Mid and West Wales Fire Service (MaWWFS) and retained on their database should any fire break out in one of the Association’s properties. She added that individual tenants are deemed to be the “responsible person” within their own homes and is therefore responsibility for their own safety.

A Member asked the Director of New Business to elaborate on the reasons for a doubling of the budget; the Director explained that, as a reaction to Grenfell, the Association has improved the way in which assessments were undertaken and has provided clearer signage and plans for communal areas. The provision and replacement of fire board panels has also added to the budget.

A Member questioned the actions the Association is taking to ensure emergency exits are clear of obstruction. The Director of New Business replied that all visiting officers have a duty to report back on any accumulation of rubbish or items so that the Association may write to the tenants involved to state that it must be removed. She assured Members that it is always followed up and all properties receive a Fire Risk Assessment review by a qualified fire risk assessor.

A Member questioned the number of properties with mains operated smoke detectors. The Director of New Business said that all properties had hard-wired detectors; the Member asked for an audit of this issue. The Chief Executive replied that a programme of audits had been approved by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee and added that it would not be inappropriate for the Committee to specifically request such an audit.

A Member asked whether the Association has a “stay put” policy for it tenants who live in communal blocks. The Director of New Business

<p>replied that new signage needs to be developed but the Association has no properties greater than four storeys and she is confident that the properties will give an hour's safety before the fire rescue service arrives.</p> <p>A Member asked for ongoing assurance on fire safety and requested that it is recorded via a KPI on Covalent with adequate monitoring to ensure compliance.</p> <p>Mr. Daniel Lewis proposed and Ms. Liz Jenkins seconded that the Fire Safety policy be approved.</p>	<p><b>DoNB</b></p>
<p><b>8. GAS, OIL AND SOLID FUEL SAFETY POLICY</b></p> <p>The Director of New Business introduced the policy, saying that it had been strengthened to give clear guidance on what happens in relation to voids and mutual exchanges. She also highlighted the steps the Association will take to obtain access to properties where access has been denied.</p> <p>The policy also covers properties where propane gas is used.</p> <p>Mr. Vic Brown proposed and Mr. Richard Martin seconded that the Gas, Oil and Solid Fuel Safety Policy be approved.</p>	
<p><b>9. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE &amp; RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2017</b></p> <p>The Director of Finance commented that Board Members obviously share the same concerns as those of the Welsh Government, given that three of the key risks within the report replicate those mentioned in the Regulatory Opinion. The Deputy Chair commented that it would be helpful to know how the risks are scored; the Director of Finance undertook to provide this information within the matters arising.</p> <p>In paragraph 4.2.1, Members were informed of a typographical error, whereby the surplus should be stated a £619,000 and not £916,000.</p> <p>Mr. Vic Brown proposed and Mr. Richard Martin seconded that the following be approved:</p> <p>a) The restructured Risk Map as approved by the Finance &amp; Risk Committee and endorsed the Association's key risks as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability of rents;</li> <li>• Managing Welfare Reform;</li> <li>• Managing the Development Programme;</li> <li>• Cylch Caron; and</li> </ul>	<p><b>DoF</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any new project requiring investment of time and resource, e.g. EOM.</li> </ul> <p>b) The Quarter 1 Management Accounts, including a reduction in the budget surplus by £13,000 to £619,000;</p> <p>c) The Quarter 1 Treasury Management report;</p>	
<p><b>10. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3<sup>RD</sup> AUGUST 2017</b></p> <p>The Chief Executive highlighted poor performance with the void relet times, and the resultant pressure on the management accounts. Whilst some of this pressure has come from a number of ‘awful’ properties and ill-health within the Voids team, underlining the vulnerability of such a small team, he explained that Powys County Council’s Common Housing Register (CHR) is also ‘not fit for purpose’, causing delays in re-letting voids and, in some instances, having to approach as low as the 14<sup>th</sup> applicant on the waiting list for that property, given the lack of up-to-date details on the CHR. Their IT system has not been built to run the CHR and is administrated by housing officers who are not dedicated to the job. Members were informed that PCC’s email system is part of the NHS system which recently crashed and experienced a number of difficulties. By contrast, Ceredigion County Council’s CHR is a bespoke system which runs smoothly.</p> <p>It has been agreed that housing associations involved with the CHR will collectively write to the leader of PCC to state that it is not providing the service to applicants and causing financial loss to associations. The Association’s void loss budget is £50k, but is currently running at a project £70-80k loss; the Director of Finance commented that he would not be in favour of paying more money to the council to rectify the IT!</p> <p>A Member questioned whether more could be pulled back from capital works and put into void works; unfortunately, maintenance contractors EOM had released operatives for this work when the Association developed its in-house team and are now struggling to pick up the service again.</p> <p>The PCC observer to the meeting noted the comments raised and undertook to raise issues at the Council. The Chief Executive stressed that one of the most important issues is for PCC to recognise they are failing people most in need of housing; he added that the housing portfolio holder is aware of the situation but the Association has hinted that it may have to withdraw from the CHR but fundamentally, it is the correct way to manage a waiting list, if it works efficiently, he said.</p> <p>Ms. Liz Jenkins proposed and Mrs. Pam Smith seconded the Quarter 1 Key Performance Indicators, as recommended by the Audit &amp; Scrutiny Committee.</p>	

<b>11. USE OF SEAL</b>	
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The Use of Seal was circulated at the meeting. Mr. Richard Martin proposed and Mr. Vic Brown seconded that the Use of Seal be ratified. All Members were in agreement.	
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Cllr. Mike Williams left the meeting ahead of the discussion of confidential agenda items.

Agenda items 12 to 20 are recorded under the Confidential Minutes of the Board of Management of Mid-Wales Housing Association held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017.