

## LEEDS FEDERATED HOUSING ASSOCIATION

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### MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at 6.00 pm (via Zoom)

**Present:** Stuart Whyte (SW) Chair  
Sue Howlett (SH)  
Martin Warhurst (MWa)  
Claire Stone (CS)  
Kim Brear (KB)  
Jaedon Green (JG)  
Robin Machell (RM)  
Shaid Mahmood (SM)

**In attendance:**

Matthew Walker (MW) Chief Executive  
Stephen Blundell (SB) Director of Operations  
Jason Ridley (JR) Director of Finance and IT  
Megan Henderson (MH) Head of Corporate Services  
Kirsty Morgan (KM) Head of Finance  
George Nijjar (GN)  
Dedra Pokua (Observer)  
Innocent Moyo (Observer)  
Kate Suggitt (KS) Executive Assistant (Minutes)

<p><b>1 Conflicts of Interest</b> There were no conflicts of interest declared</p> <p><b>2 Apologies</b> There were no apologies</p> <p><b>3 Items for Decision</b></p> <p><b>3.1) Health and Safety Policy and H&amp;S Self-Assessment</b> <b>20.001</b> MH introduced the policy and clarified that the allocation of resources happens at operational level, Board approve the overall budget and headcount. JG commented that allocation of resources should be the overall responsibility of the Finance Director.</p> <p><b>20.002</b> It was agreed that 3.1.2 in the policy will be reworded to cover JGs point about the allocation</p>	<p><b>MH</b></p>
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**20.003** KB asked if the policies are accessible to everyone and MH confirmed that they are both on Connect for both staff and Board members

**20.004 The Board approved the Health and Safety Policy and Manual with the suggested amendments**

**3.2) Equality & Diversity Policy**

**20.005** MH introduced the policy explaining that it meets current legislative requirements. MH is currently taking advice around sex and gender identity in order to meet legislative requirements and to ensure the Origin2 system is able to have this as an option.

**20.006** SM raised an issue in regards to the Black Lives Matter movement. He suggested that LFHA look at the anti-racism agenda as it will transcend what is currently in the policy. SM stressed the importance of being responsive and that as an Association, we might need to review the policy within the next couple of weeks.

**20.007** MW clarified that LFHA have generally not got actively involved in such issues but that where approached we respond positively and supportively.

**20.008** CS highlighted that Board used to see Equality Impact Assessments on policies and procedures and suggested this practice should start again to ensure Board have oversight that nothing directly or indirectly discriminates against anyone.

**20.009** It was agreed that this issue will be considered further by the management team and then a report brought to the October Board meeting. It was stressed that if anything changes in the meantime then the Association will respond accordingly.

**20.010** KB suggested approving the policy with the addition that we will be proactive to any changes in the environment.

**20.011 Board approved the Equality and Diversity Policy.**

**3.3) HR Policy**

**20.012** MH explained that the policy has been updated to show the IIP principles that the Association will be assessed against. MH confirmed that the assessment for IIP will be carried out in September or October. MH also confirmed that the next culture index is going out this week and that findings will be reported to TWWW group. JG asked if the results can be sent out to the Board as soon as possible to give comfort. MH confirmed this could be done and reminded Board that the culture index is now part of BSC so will be seen by the Board at an overall level.

**MW/MH**

<p><b>20.013</b> It was agreed that MH would produce an interim report to show the Board how the staff are feeling in the current climate.</p> <p><b>20.014 The Board approved the HR Policy</b></p> <p><b>3.4) Communications Policy</b></p> <p><b>20.015</b> MH confirmed there are some changes to the policy. The emphasis remains on digital which includes social media, SMS and emails but also reflects that digital is a choice and hard copies will still be available.</p> <p><b>20.016</b> SH raised a query in regards to communicating with tenants. Email addresses have been asked for but email is not used as a means of communication and she wondered why. SB explained we can't currently filter on communication preferences but as Origin2 comes in, this will be something that can be improved and customers can select how they are communicated with.</p> <p><b>20.017</b> JG highlighted that he didn't feel that this policy has the depth of others. The policy doesn't explain what is being communicated or when and also raised a concern that the policy doesn't cover what would happen if people were to post inflammatory comments. MW did confirm that this is covered by IT policies but agreed that an amendment would be made to cover what JG raised along with the addition of the other medias.</p> <p><b>20.018 Board approved the Communications Policy and it was agreed it would be looked at more formally at its next review.</b></p> <p><b>3.5) Board and Committee Dates 2021</b></p> <p><b>20.019</b> MH presented the dates for the Board and Committee dates, She highlighted that the main change is the start time of 4pm.</p> <p><b>20.020 Board approved the Committee dates and amended time</b></p> <p><b>3.6) Annual Statutory Compliance Report</b></p> <p><b>20.021</b> SB introduced explaining that as they are key risk areas, the report is designed to summarise reporting from Operations Committee and the Board throughout the year and give some assurance.</p> <p><b>20.022</b> The fixed wire testing is still within the 5 year parameter but there is some risk that will start to arise from that around July.</p>	<p><b>MH</b></p>
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**20.023** SB confirmed that internal controls at level 1 and 2 have operated successfully and that the 3rd line assurance has come from the auditors.

**20.024** JG asked for it be noted that the progress against the implementation is on track as outlined by the report that was produced in October 2019 and so can't give full assurance based on that as situations may have changed. This was agreed.

**20.025 Board approved the content of this report and noted management comments as regards improvement actions where appropriate**

**20.026 Board noted that compliance with statutory and regulatory obligations in respect of residential health & safety during 2019/20 has been achieved**

### **3.7 Commercially Sensitive Item**

## **4 Performance**

### **4.1) Performance update**

**20.032** SB explained that the report shows where the Association was, at the end of April, he explained that the full impact of lockdown wasn't being felt at this stage. There were some properties moved from Shared Ownership to rent to buy so this has helped the properties still for sale after 5 months measure.

**20.033** In regards to gas compliance there are only 2 properties out of compliance due to a shielding issue.

**20.034** There has been no fixed wire testing during lockdown so the programme is behind but not currently out of compliance.

**20.035** SB explained they are in the process of remobilising in regards to bathrooms and kitchens. There is an expectation that most households are happy to do this with social distancing and safe ways of working.

**20.036** JG raised a query in regards to development sites and whether development should be continued or the sites mothballed. He felt this this could be a financial risk and suggested it come to Audit committee to look at it. SB explained we do have the option to change the tenure of schemes.

**20.037** RM commented that from his experience, we are not at the stage of closing down sites and that its longer term, in 6 months or the next year that we need to be concerned with.

**20.038** SW suggested an update at Audit committee, he agreed that in the current climate and for good governance we should

<p>review it. JR suggested it can be covered in a pre-audit training session and it was agreed this would be included.</p>	<p><b>JR</b></p>
<p><b>20.039 Board noted current levels of performance.</b></p>	
<p><b>4.2) Corporate Plan update (COVID-19 Draft Remobilisation)</b>  <b>20.040</b> SB explained that the paper sets out revisions to the Corporate Plan for Leeds Fed for 2020-21, taking into account both the disruption to normal business arising from Covid 19 and the remobilisation of services.</p>	
<p><b>20.041</b> JG raised a query in regards to the void properties that will be option appraised and asked if consideration had been given to sell these properties sooner rather than later and wanted the Board to give delegated authority. SB explained that work is ongoing at the moment and doesn't think that this can be accelerated. SW confirmed that he is happy to approve using chairs delegated authority if required.</p>	
<p><b>20.042</b> A conversation was had in regards to sickness monitoring and tracking Covid related sickness compared to regular sickness. MH confirmed that the Association has seen very low levels of sickness overall and even less to do with Covid. JG emphasised the risk of a 2nd and 3rd spike of the pandemic and it was agreed to monitor and differentiate sickness going forward</p>	<p><b>MH</b></p>
<p><b>20.043</b> Finally SB confirmed that rent arrears are being kept under review, the team are keen to keep the target as it is but also have a plan to bring in more Financial Inclusion officers to help.</p>	
<p><b>20.044 The Board approved the:</b>  - <b>2016-2021 Corporate Plan – Year 5 – 2020-21 COVID-19 update</b>  - <b>2020-21 COVID-19 Balanced scorecard revisions</b></p>	
<p><b>4.3) 2020-21 COVID-19 Draft 'Baseline' Budget &amp; Business Plan</b>  <b>20.045</b> JR introduced the report and hoped that it offered assurance to the Board. The scenarios were done at board request and consist of an extreme 'think the unthinkable', severe 'realistic' and 'mild' set of consequence.</p> <p><b>20.046</b> JG commented that the realistic scenario seemed sensible. He did highlight that there is mounting industry pressure to waive stamp duty and could this impact on the Association at all.</p>	
<p><b>20.047</b> KB suggested adding some of the detail on the scenarios from page 12 to page 11 of the report and this was agreed as part of next revision of the scenario document.</p>	<p><b>JR</b></p>

**20.048 Board reviewed and noted the COVID-19 Draft 'Baseline' 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan which will be updated and re stress tested at mid-year for approval at the October Board**

**4.4) 2019-20 Financial Performance including year-end treasury review**

**20.049** JR introduced the report and explained that there has been some impact from Covid19 in March due to the underspend in development. The performance has been dramatically affected by actuaries at SHPS which have increased in value again.

**20.050** In response to a question from MWa regarding property valuation JR advised that he anticipated that the auditors will issue a modified opinion as a result of the requirement to include an emphasis of matter disclosure in the accounts regarding the investment property portfolio and the reduced level of certainty provided by the Valuer due to COVID-19.

**20.051** JG had a query in regards to one of the THFC covenants on asset cover which JR explained is not an issue because they allow us to combine two of the facilities so together.

**20.052 The Board noted the financial results and treasury activities to 31st March 2020.**

**5 To Note**

**5.1) Chief Executives Report**

**20.053** MW introduced and highlighted the monetary donation that has been made to a food bank organisation within Leeds. He clarified that this felt like the right thing to do in the current climate and the Association is trying to offer a similar level of support in Wakefield and Harrogate also.

**20.054** MW also confirmed that he has been recently appointed as Chair of Placeshapers where he still has 3 years left on his term. The Board congratulated MW on his appointment.

**20.055** There will be delays to the Regulatory and Governance returns which the RoSH have acknowledged. They will now be due in September/October. MW has met with Fiona MacGregor from the RoSH and she is aware that the returns may have to be submitted before the Board have officially approved it due to timings of the Board meetings and is comfortable with that.

**20.056** MW updated on the Covid19 remobilising and all the work that has been done. He thanked SB, SE, CW and MH for all their work. The safe systems of work have been supported by both the Unions and the H&S consultant.

**20.057** SM raised a query in regards to how performance will be managed with people working different patterns. MW clarified that regular performance discussions were still taking place. Employees have been asked to detail what they can do and these will be pulled together, analysed and compared. Any outliers to the answers and management issues will be picked up.

**20.058** SM asked whether risk assessments have been carried out for employees from a BAME background. MH confirmed that risk assessments have gone back and forth including BAME employees. Safe systems of working are well beyond what is expected, PPE is being provided and working from home where possible is still being encouraged, along with avoiding face to face contact.

**20.059** KB suggested that the covering sheet to this report should contain more information as she feels it has a lot of really good information and it is undersold.

**20.060** The Board noted the report

**5.2) Annual Assessment against Regulatory Standards and NHF Code of Governance 2019-20**

**20.061** MH explained the Annual Assessment has been undertaken on Clearview by the relevant heads of service. She also highlighted that members can view this on Clearview if required.

**20.062** Board noted the Associations compliance with the RoSH's regulatory standards and NHF Code of Governance with the exception of one Board Member who was asked to remain in post to support and retain corporate memory during merger discussions.

**5.3) Board Effectiveness Questionnaire Survey 2020**

**20.063** MH presented the report, explaining that all Board Members either agree or strongly agree which is an improved position from last year  
MH drew their attention to the comments given and asked for clarification on what the Board may want to happen from these.

**20.064** It was discussed that the Board would like to see more in regards to communications, both tenant and employee. They don't want to see everything that is sent out but would like to get a feel. It was agreed that SW will speak with MH about staff communication and CS will pick up the tenant communications at Operations Committee.

**MH/SB**

<p><b>20.065 Board members discussed the results of the Board effectiveness survey.</b></p> <p><b>5.4) Vision 21 Update</b>  <b>20.066</b> GN ran through the presentation. She explained that they have had to change their approach in regards to the training that needs to be undertaken for staff and how to keep it fresh and interesting.</p> <p><b>20.067</b> The Association have the Regus office space in possession now and the office has been reformatted with social distance measures. Staff should be able to use the office from mid July.</p> <p><b>20.068</b> Microsoft teams is going live for everyone and they have taken on an automated post system for in and outgoing post.</p> <p><b>20.069</b> GN explained development management system is now live whilst Origin2 is progressing well. She advised that the Board can view these. SW said he would like to do this and MW agreed this could be done via screen share on Skype or Zoom.</p> <p><b>20.070</b> SH asked if the new system will have the ability to include the age of properties as it's a FAQ when getting home insurance. GN confirmed that this is possible but it is in bands rather than exact dates.</p> <p><b>20.071</b> JG raised a query in regards to learning from Covid 19 and are there any systems for work that can be improved or was there any learning. GN confirmed that due to some good planning and having systems for agile working in place, allowed us to gain efficiencies on this and be ready to work.</p> <p><b>20.072 The Board noted the report</b></p> <p><b>6 Board Minutes</b></p> <p><b>6.1) Minutes of the Board meeting held on the 31 March 2020</b>  <b>20.073</b> These were approved as a true record</p> <p><b>7 Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>7.1) Matters arising</b>  <b>20.074</b> These have all been actioned</p> <p><b>7.2) Matters arising rolling agenda 19/20</b>  <b>20.075</b> These were noted</p> <p><b>8 Minutes for Information</b></p> <p><b>8.1) Draft Operations Committee 12 May 2020</b>  <b>20.076</b> These were noted</p>	<p><b>GN</b></p>
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8.2)	<b>Closed Session Minutes of Board on 31 March 2020 (circulated separately)</b> <b>20.077</b> These were approved	
8.3)	<b>Draft LFPS Board meeting minutes 31 March 2020</b> <b>20.078</b> These were noted	
8.4)	<b>Draft Development Committee minutes 12 May 2020</b> <b>20.079</b> These were noted.	
9	<b>Risk Review of Board Pack</b> <b>20.080</b> MW explained that the top risks are in concern to Covid, Cyber Risk and Development.  <b>20.081 Board agreed to the increased risk score for Covid-19  and noted the rest of the paper.</b>	
10	<b>Any other business</b> There was no other business	
11	<b>Date of next meeting – 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020 at 4.30pm</b>	