

## **RIVERSIDE GROUP BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS 14 DECEMBER 2023**

### **Chair and Chief Executive Matters**

The Chair welcomed colleagues from the Regulator of Social Housing to the meeting who were there to observe as part of the IDA and also welcomed the new Board members and Board Observer to the meeting. The Chair thanked Board members for their time in meetings the day before and went on to outline progress on CEO recruitment. Carol updated the Board on several rounds of consultations TRGL had been involved in, updated on a small number of referrals to the regulator including on relet rent, press coverage of an issue a customer had experienced around rats and on a maladministration finding from the Housing Ombudsman.

### **Customer Story**

The Board received the Customer story video in relation to a customer who had fallen into rent arrears and energy debt due to a sudden illness and had been in fear of losing her home. Through a call made to the Income Collection Team the staff member provided help, support and signposting to food and energy vouchers, and as a result had enabled her to clear her energy debt and significantly reduce her rent arrears.

### **Board Strategy and Outcomes**

The Board discussed a paper that set out the key events and outcomes from the Board Strategy session in Liverpool from 27 - 28 September 2023. They reflected on the discussions that had taken place noting in particular those that had led to some tougher and more prudent decisions that had fed into the strategy and budget planning.

### **Rent Review 2024/25**

The Board received the report that set out the proposal for rent increases (in England) across all Riverside tenancy types, to be implemented in April 2024. The Board noted that the Riverside Scotland Board approves rent increases for tenants in Scotland following a formal consultation process.

Hugh Owen presented the context around the rent review for 2024/25 along with the range of factors that had been considered in coming to the proposal of a 7.7% rent increase from April 2024. The Board recognising the two exceptions to that increase were for former OHG four bed homes, where a 6.7% (CPI only) increase should apply, and for shared ownership leases where the rent would be varied in accordance with the terms of the relevant lease, but subject to a cap of 7.7%. The Board also discussed the balance of priorities that needed to be considered in reaching a decision on the rent increase, the potential impact on customers and benchmarking information against other peers. Board approved the proposed rent increase.

### **Digital Strategy 2024 to 2026**

The Board received and noted the paper that set out the objectives and priorities of the Digital Strategy for The Riverside Group for the period 2024 to 2026. The Board noted the five key elements making up the three-year enabling strategy, and the way they underpinned many other strategies. The Board also noted that the strategic alignment against the direction of travel would be monitored via the Enterprise Architecture Review Authority and the strategy delivered through the Portfolio Steering Group.

### **Asset Strategy 6 Monthly Update**

The Board received the Asset Management Strategy that was one of 9 Corporate Strategies and addressed the Corporate Plan objective of warm and safe, decent homes. The action plan was currently on track to complete the 2023/24 tasks.

Ian Gregg reminded Board that the Asset Management Strategy had been approved by Board on 13 July 2023 and was built around the three key objectives of ensuring homes are safe, increasing the sustainability of the stock and providing decent homes. The Board then noted the highlights on the current activity under each objective and the assurance provided under the “Knowing our Homes” work carried out and detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

#### **Integration and Transformation Update**

The Board received and noted the report which provided an update on the Riverside Transformation Portfolio as at the end of November 2023. Tony Blows explained that there were currently 37 active or scheduled projects on the roadmap and that 3 had been closed during November, including OHG Fire Safety Data Improvements. Tony also provided the Board with some context around the 4 projects currently reporting a red RAG status, explaining they were trending positively, and mitigations were in place.

#### **Information Governance 6 Monthly Update**

The Board noted the paper that provided an update on the progress of the objectives of the Group-wide Information Governance Group (GIGG). The GIGG had held a total of 8 meetings since its inception in September 2022, with the final meeting of the year scheduled for December. The Board noted good progress on all of the actions noted in the paper, with all being either green or amber rated and no red RAG rated matters.

#### **Group Risk Register**

The Board spent time reviewing the risk register, noting that the most recent version of the Risk Register presented with the paper had incorporated all the changes between Board on 12 October and Group Audit Committee on 1 December along with a number of subsequent changes. Carol highlighted a number of areas including the work that had been done, principally by the Treasury team, securing the private placement, the work ongoing to achieve the carveouts for the financial year end and the progress being made to resolve the gas issue at OHG.

#### **Asset and Liability Register Annual Update**

The Board noted the annual update on the Group’s register of Assets and Liabilities (ALR). Board recognised it had also been reviewed by the Group Audit Committee. The Board noted the positive and professional approach being taken to compliance and assurance here, with the emphasis on engagement with colleagues and taking ownership and responsibility for the integrity of the data.

#### **Baycroft Transfer Update**

The Board noted the report that provided an update on a delay to the transfer of the Baycroft care homes to Country Court Care (CCC). The Board noted that the first three homes would now transfer on 8th January 2024 rather than 27 November 2023 as originally planned with the final three homes transferring by the end of January 2024.

#### **Operational Performance Report**

Performance against the key KPI’s was considered by the Board. Key highlights were pulled out and discussed by the Board members. The Board noted there had been some good improvements in many areas but did note some areas where further work was being undertaken to drive further improvements, which were detailed in the report, but included work to improve certain metrics within the OHG stock. Board also noted the good progress being made on OHG gas issues and the improvements in reducing overdue FRA’s but sought extra assurance around performance on high-risk overdue actions.

### **Financial Performance Update**

Board noted the financial performance report as at Period Seven of the 2023/24 Financial Year. Cris McGuinness explained that at the end of October YTD Operating Surplus was £30.39m compared to a Q2F of £31.85m, a variance of £1.46m. this represented an operating margin of 8.4% compared to a Q2F of £8.8m. Board noted the key variances around TRGL sales which was predominantly a timing issue and an adverse variation on operational matters within OHG, (in particular service charge expenditure and depreciation). Cris also explained that colleagues were focusing on aged debt to bring this down. Attention was also drawn to the 4 early warning signs detailed in section 1 and Appendix 2 of the report.

### **Customer Experience Improvement Plan 2023/24**

The Board noted the Customer Experience Improvement Plan 2023/24 which aimed to deliver the Year 1 actions within the Customer Experience Strategy. Board noted that the views and feedback from Executive Directors and the Customer Experience Committee, the Task and Finish Group and the Customer Experience Review Panel had been factored into the approved action plan.

### **Care Services Annual Summary**

The Board noted a report that gave an annual update on the Group Care Quality Commission (CQC) Registered services. The report and the format were a requirement of the CQC standards in terms of supplying an annual update, therefore the Board noted that the content reflected the key components as needed under the fundamental standards.

### **Other reports noted.**

The Board considered a number of additional reports including the annual review of Directors Duties, the 2023 Annual Appraisals outcomes, the regular Board Training Plan and the Committee and Subsidiary Board update paper. The Board also agreed the Board minutes from the meetings on 12 October and 20 November and noted the matters arising from previous meetings along with the written resolutions and chairs actions paper.

The Board also noted the Quarterly Treasury Report, the TSM update, and the paper on Consumer Regulation and Housing Ombudsman changes.