



**WHEATLEY HOUSING GROUP LIMITED**

**SC426094**

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**New Mart Road, Edinburgh**

**on Wednesday 13 November 2024 at 10.30 am**

Directors Present: Jo Armstrong (Chair), Jo Boaden (by video call), Lindsey Cartwright, Maureen Dowden, Bryan Duncan, Caroline Gardner, Bernadette Hewitt, Manish Joshi (by video call), Iain Macaulay, John McCraw and Alison McLaughlin.

In Attendance: Steven Henderson (Group Chief Executive), Anthony Allison (Group Director of Governance and Business Solutions), Pauline Turnock (Group Director of Finance), Frank McCafferty (Group Director of Repairs and Assets – item 5 only) and Laura Pluck (Group Director of Communities – item 8 only).

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Alastair Murray.

**2. Declarations of interest**

The Board noted the standing declarations of interest.

**3. a) Minutes of meeting held on 25 September 2024 and matters arising.**

**Decided: The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2024.**

**b) Action List**

**Decided: The Board noted the action list.**

**4. Group CEO update**

The Board were provided with an update on a range of matters including: the UK budget, the expected implications for Scottish Government funding and the impact of National Insurance; the Scottish Government's planned approach to rent control measures within the Housing (Scotland) Bill; the Wyndford Judicial Review appeal hearing; the Scottish Housing Regulator consultation on updates to the Annual Return on the Charter; and our Customer Service Excellence reaccreditation.

The Board discussed in further detail our planned response to the Scottish Housing Regulator consultation, in particular in relation to the clarity of health and safety-related measures.

The Board discussed the specific implications of the National Insurance increases for the care sector and Wheatley Care. The Board were updated on our initial estimate of the financial implications, including relative to the surplus levels.

## **5. Repairs update**

The Board were provided with an update on the arrangements to ensure continuity following the recent senior staff change at City Building (Glasgow). An update was provided on how staff have been engaged regarding the change and advised the focus has remained on improving the service to customers.

A further update was provided on the wider engagement with Glasgow City Council in relation to the strategic focus of City Building (Glasgow) following the wider review previously discussed by the Board.

The Board welcomed the smooth transition and the strong focus on staff engagement as part of the process.

**Decided: The Board noted the update.**

## **6. 2025 rent setting - consultation and engagement approach**

The Board were provided with a summary of the proposed 2025/26 rent and service charge uplifts. It was explained that they sought to reflect discussions by Boards across the Group over the year on our future asset strategy and focus on neighbourhoods.

The Board noted that the proposals considered our key principles of affordability, comparability, financial viability and consultation with our tenants.

The Board discussed our key areas of expenditure, the efficiencies we are assuming in these areas and the demand-driven areas. It was confirmed that we undertake regular reviews of our key areas of expenditure, as well as expenditure more widely, to identify any potential efficiencies.

The Board discussed the significant cost impact the National Insurance increase will have and how this impacts our proposal to tenants. It further discussed the consistent feedback from tenants that investment in their homes and neighbourhoods is a key priority.

The Board discussed affordability at length, including the support we have for tenants and the emphasis the brochure places on making this visible to tenants.

It was explained that we will continue to focus on engagement with tenants, such as through the rent campaign and being present in communities, to identify any issues and offer appropriate support.

The Board discussed the importance of ensuring that we can continue to invest in and maintain the quality of our tenants' homes and the key role rental income plays in mitigating the risk of stock condition deterioration.

The Board noted that our proposals remain subject to consultation with tenants before any decision is made.

**Decided: The Board**

**1) Agreed that we undertake an initial consultation with rent focus groups on a 6.9% increase with an additional option of 7.9% for the 2025/26 rent and service charge increase;**

- ## 7. Group strategy – 2021-26 refresh and 2026-31 pathway

The Board agreed that the changes reflected its, and Boards across the Group, feedback. It was agreed that the wording be further updated to make clearer the changes to our expectations for achieving a carbon-neutral corporate estate and the diminishing relevance of the impact of the pandemic.

- 1) Considered and approved the proposed updates to the Group strategy; and
- 2) Provided feedback on and agreed the proposed approach to developing our 2026-2031 family of strategies.

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The Board were provided with a summary of performance for the year to date and sector comparisons for the Annual Return on the Charter indicators following the publication of 2023/24 sector-wide data by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Classified as Internal

