

Meeting **Shropshire Towns & Rural Housing Limited Board**

Date **15 September 2025**

Time **13:00-17:00**

Location **Ptarmigan House, Board Room**



Members Present:	
Tony Deakin (TD)	STAR Board Chair, Independent Board Member
Steve Robinson (SR)	Independent Board Member
Lynn Fonseca (LF)	Tenant Board Member
Kathy Jones (KJ)	Independent Board Member
James Owen	Housing and Leisure Portfolio Holder
Richard Amos (RA)	Tenant Board Member
Irina Wood (IW)	Independent Board Member
Rebecca Royle	Odgers
Rebecca Wilmot (RW)	Tenant Board Member
Mark Owen	Council Board Members
Duncan Kerr	Council Board Members
Paul Hayward (PH)	Co-opted STAR Board Member
Non-Members Present:	
Harpreet Rayet (HR)	Managing Director
James Wood (JW)	Operations Director
Ros Jones (RJ)	Corporate Director
Jo Grivell (JG)	Executive Assistant and Office Manager/Minute Taker
James McGlone (JM)	Governance Manager
Laura Fisher (LaF)	Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living (Shropshire Council)
Jenny Daisley (JD)	Client Officer (Shropshire Council)
Apologies	
Laura Tyler (LT)	Assistant Director - Joint Commissioning (Shropshire Council)

Agenda Item	Agenda Item	Who	When
1.	<p>Welcome & Apologies & Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all attendees, including the new Board Members, Duncan Kerr and Mark Owen and proposed new Board member Rebecca Royle.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Laura Tyler from Shropshire Council.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest raised.</p>		
2.	<p>Minutes of Meeting on 16 June 2025</p> <p>The minutes were circulated in advance of the meeting. The Board did not review the actions individually but were asked to flag any mistakes.</p> <p>The Board members approved the minutes as an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p>		
3.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance appraisals. Over the summer TD has been speaking to individuals about performance and the intention is to put them into a report as there are some common themes and that will then be shared with the Governance Manager to take forward. Action: TD to circulate performance appraisal report to Governance Manager. TD asked if contact had been made with Zurich. RJ stated they are covering STAR for liability and motor and have now got a contact for that, and a meeting is being set up via the Council for that. 	TD	15/12/2025
4	<p>AI Presentation – John Cocker Platform</p> <p>The presentation with John Cocker did not take place due to technical issues on his side.</p>		
5.	<p>Performance Update</p> <p>The report was taken as read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TD stated that reading the report there is too much information to do it justice and suggested that we pick up any questions or concerns that members have. He suggested in future making use of the Customer Services Committee who can do a deeper examination into the reports and KPI's. Action 37: TD further recommended that there would be a deep dive of any particular topic and recommendations coming out of the committee during the lunch prior to the next Board meeting in December. JMc to arrange for the session during lunch. DK said he is concerned about the Voids in Oswestry. TD suggested exploring Voids now and note the way forward for future performance reviews. JW provided an update and said there had been a spike over the summer 	JMc	15/12/2025

on Voids, both in temporary accommodation and standard properties. The main reason was down to compliance and contractors. The business historically had a different take on asbestos, but when JW came into post, he didn't believe the asbestos process offered the right level of assurance for the safety of operatives and incoming tenants, so we moved to a full refurbishment survey. That process since implemented in March has led to a 22-day delay for the property to be surveyed. That is now down to 20 days for the results to go to a laboratory and removal undertaken. In short that is a large part of the explanation for the spike in Voids. STAR cannot break the law, so it was the right thing to do.

- That also meant a spike for temporary accommodation which has a knock on to the Council in terms of the general fund. Over the summer have done the refurbishment in a high percentage of our temporary accommodation properties and they will be live now. For TA tend to get a turnover of 3-4 times a year so those Void times will be massively reduced to between 5-10 days because we have the data.
- Minor works are undertaken in house and majors where there is a high level of work are contracted out to subcontractors. JW was uncomfortable with the quality of the subcontractor base, so we decided to go through a procurement exercise to appoint contractors that were the right size and fit for purpose at STAR.
- Voids are monitored at the Strategic Asset Management Committee and as of this morning we have 69 voids, and the spike was 110 and we are coming down now. I can see the forecast we will return a further 15 this week. We have had a further 11 voids come in but overall, the total is still reducing.
- Over 50% of the Voids have an EPC rating that has improved from D to C. The ambition is to not let a D rated property unless it is on a planned programme.
- The target is to reduce the 20 days to 10 or 7 days, and we are out to tender for that now. Last year was 56 days and are targeting to be below that this year.
- DK asked if it was possible to do the asbestos work in house. JW advised that anything of that level of risk STAR is much better served to use a specialist contractor. It is their core business.
- IW asked how many properties needed an asbestos survey. JW said it changes daily but there are 69 properties in the void process and all but 1 will need an asbestos survey.
- PH said what the Board needs to know is to understand what we are doing about the red KPI's. He is unclear what the issues are and what is being done about them from the report. The Board needs to know what the performance issues are and what is being done about them.
- PH said he was particularly disappointed with the Complaint that indicates severe maladministration. He would like to understand what learning we have taken from that and what will be implemented to stop it happening again. Communication is also an issue, and we need a deep dive on that.
- HR said that one of the biggest issues has been keeping the customer informed and we now have a CRM system where information can be updated which will help. Repairs are also a source of many complaints, and we now have a repairs operative starting and his sole focus will be to focus on complaints. A lot of the complainants say they don't want to raise a complaint they just want it resolved. The operative will now go out and work with the customer to resolve the issue.
- There is a training issue with operatives and contact centre too. We are

	<p>trying to embed workflow, so the passing of information is automated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TD asked about what will be done to provide more transparency on the actions being taken to address the issues. HR said to give assurance that it will be added to the report in future. • JW said there is a bit of lag in the reporting, and it does not show some of the cultural work that has been done regarding complaints handling and proactively contacting customers and that should start to have an impact. • JW said that STAR does include complaints from neighbours, and the regulator says we don't actually have to do that. • RJ said root cause analysis has been in place since April. They are reviewed by JW/RJ every month to understand what needs to be done and determine actions that will go into their improvement plans. • There is a new Complaints manager starting with STAR who has worked with Wolverhampton Homes so should be able to bring some local experience. 		
6.	<p>Financial Statements 2024-25</p> <p>The report was taken as read. RJ gave the following update:</p> <p>The statements have been to the FAR committee who recommended the Board approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The headlines are the statement continues to document STARs' journey of transformation. It was necessary to dip into reserves but not to the extent budgeted. • The auditors have reviewed the statements and are happy that they have not found any material issues. The statements are not fully complete as we are still waiting for the pension audit to complete before it can be signed off and we are still waiting for some information from Shropshire Council. • We don't anticipate any issues resolving those outstanding items prior to the accounts being lodged in December. • The next step is for the Board to approve delegated authority for Ros Jones to make any changes between now and the AGM on 13 October when they will be signed off. • TD said the feeling at FAR was it was a good set of accounts and congratulated RJ and the Finance Team. <p>The Board approved RJ to make changes ahead of the AGM.</p>		
7.	<p>Compliance And Property Safety Update</p> <p>The report was taken as read. JW provided an update as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had quite a reset on Compliance since Feb, recruited a whole new compliance team. We have now got a hard handle on compliance areas. • On overdue FRA's we had a historic service level agreement with a provider that did a lot of work for schools when they were closed and our FRA's were timed at the same time. We are in the process of smoothing out the work. • We have zero high risk, 187 medium risks that we are fully sighted on and are in the work programme and 47 low risks. • PH said it is good that HQN are coming back in October, and they will be able to give the Board assurance on the position. • The Board confirmed they are happy for HQN to be used to validate things. TD said the underlying question is how good the data is. Is there an audit planned on the quality of the data? If one is not planned, could it 		

	<p>be scheduled. We are doing some work looking at data in the business and are working with Red Olive who are leaders in this area. Tenant's personal data, the property data in terms of asset management and financial data. Data is held in multiple places, but we now have One Housing system so we will be able to have one version of the truth. Action 38: Harpreet agreed that an audit would be planned in for Q1 next year. The audit can look at the plan of what we are doing with the data.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the report.</p>	JMc	15/12/2025
8.	<p>Awaab's Law The report was taken as read. JW provided an update as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is game changing regulation for the social housing sector. We have got a plan, but it's been difficult stress testing the plan because of the time it is being implemented. • We have got 127 open, damp and mould cases, 55 have jobs raised that will be completed within 2 weeks, 41 are no access getting into properties is a challenge. 27 with surveys booked, 3 awaiting surveys to be booked and 1 that is having a triage visit. We know our numbers. • STAR's general approach is to get to the root cause of the issue. There is no point going out mould washing we need to understand our stock. High percentage is relatively simple architypes. We know a high volume of our cases come from windows wo we have a heavy window replacement programme where we will replace it with triple glazing. • We have recruited additional skills into the DLO to allow us to do more in-house. • PH asked about the four additional performance indicators. JW said he is comfortable with the proposed metrics. There is always a challenge getting into the properties. • TD asked if we have factored enough in terms of costs. JW said that we generally have relatively easy stock to deal with. • RA asked if the relationship with Shropshire Council is up to handling this activity. HR said things had got better but there have been some changes recently so we need to get them up to speed. There has always been a bit of blurred position so there is bit of work that we need to do with JD and LF to help move us forward with the legal services team. Awaabs Law will apply to Shropshire Council and us. • DK asked whether there will be problems with the new house we are building. If we are putting a kitchen and living room together where there is moisture in the small space. HR said there are heat recovery systems in all our properties that will extract any excess moisture. 		
9.	<p>Housemark Presentation on TSM Performance – Tom Beeson</p> <p>Tom Beeson gave an overview of the TSM performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is tailored feedback done every year. • The performance metrics was compared to a peer group less than 5K outside London and the national average. • All the results can be found here. 09. Housemark Presentation on TSM Performance - Board - 2025-09-15.pdf • TD asked why there might be more repairs than peers. TB said it can be how they are reported. Some landlords treat repairs job separately or bundle all the tasks right first time. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TD said the information raises questions which need more insights. • There has been sizeable improvement in perception measures. There are improvements in a lot of the metrics. It is a consistent service from what he can see and improvements over last year. • Action 39: It was recommended to have a follow up session to understand more and go through in more detail. It is important to use the free text on the surveys and analyse the surveys to understand what the tenants is saying. 	RJ	15/12/2025
10.	<p>Big Check-In Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JW stated it felt as a team member to be a resounding success. From a cultural perspective he has not heard a single negative comment. • Everyone enjoyed doing it. • The other success was our tenant base is changing, Shropshire is changing, and it is good for colleagues to see. It also allowed us to gather a huge amount of tenant data. • We were concerned about an avalanche of repairs, but it was not too bad and was a reassurance that our homes are in quite good condition. • RJ said that the cost was minimal and only staff time and that has been outweighed by the benefits. All the customer data is held in One housing. HR said it was interesting the number of people who said they preferred to phone up and did not want to use digital channels. IW suggested it is because if they phone, they get an immediate response and they call when it suits them whereas if it is online they might wait for a response or are called at inconvenient time. HR said it reemphasised the importance of having a good working call centre. • RA asked about protective data. HR said that staff had access to tablets with Optimise that has all the data that has sensitive information that might be needed on any vulnerabilities. • MO asked how much training people have on safeguarding. HR said that each back-office member of staff was paired with a frontline staff member who has been trained. There was also a safeguarding lead within the organisation that was on hand for any referrals. We have safeguarding training for all our frontline staff. <p>The Board noted the contents of the report.</p>		
11.	<p>Complaints – Annual Statutory Submissions for Approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RJ stated that the Complaints submission gives an overview of complaints in 2024/25, the self-assessment that STAR is required to do annually and an update of our service improvement plans related to the learnings. • STAR achieved everything it set out to in the action plan. There has been a marked improvement in complaints. • PH said he would dispute that the Customer Committee is discussing complaints in any detail. Complaints are discussed at EMT. RJ said that it can be changed to say that it is an ambition to review the complaints at the CSS going forward. • PH said there are three Housing Ombudsmen cases and asked if they are additional or the same complaints. • DK asked how tenants provide positive remarks. Are there systems to record them. The CRM system is in place, but we are so focussed to meet the regulatory framework. The TSM reflects that our tenants are feeding back that STAR is doing a decent job. HR said we need to get better at 		

	<p>recording what is making people happy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 40: TD suggested that there could be the use of case studies that give information and advertise the successes. HR said that could come through the Scrutiny panel as they look at what works and what doesn't. EJ to ask the scrutiny panel to focus on this. • RA asked about whether there are accessible versions. The marketing team is looking at the way we communicate with our tenants and finding better ways if people are interested in accessing the information they need. <p>The Board approved the contents of the report.</p>	EJ	15/12/2025
12.	<p>HQN Feedback – Presentation Virtual Damian Roche and Wayne Hughes from HQN.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HQN provided an overview of their Consumer Standards review. The review was carried out in June so the picture may have changed since then. • HQN did a desktop exercise of key documents first then met with the people and involved tenants to see how things worked in practice. • There was lots of positive reflection between the Council and the ALMO. The Council said they had seen huge improvement in the relationship. HQN facilitated a tenants focus groups, and this was one of the more positive experiences. Generally, very positive about the service, they recognised there has been a huge improvement in customer focus and delivery of the repairs service. Communications were flagged up for improvement area. • Did around 30 reviews covering the Safety and Quality section of the consumer standard. Safety and Quality is the standard that gets most organisations into hot water. In June HQN spoke to key managers and have been able to get updates on progress that has been made particularly in the area of health and safety. The role of the Council is a bit of an issue and the stock that sits in the General fund. Overall, the stock quality is in a good place, and levels of decency. • An area for improvement is the visibility of the Board on certain aspects of the requirements of the Consumer Standards. • All the results can be found in this document: 12. 2025 09 15 STAR Board CS review summary.pptx • TD said it was a very comprehensive presentation and gives the Board a lot to think about. As far as STAR is concerned there is nothing that HQN have seen that is not fixable. DR said there was nothing in the three standards that he looked at and would be confident STAR would get a compliant rating. WH said all the weaknesses are manageable. C1, is you meet the standard but there are caveats, C2 is you meet the standards and there are weaknesses that are manageable, C3 is you failed to meet the standard and there are serious improvements required and C4 it is a mess. As far as Safety and Quality you are on the cusp of a C2 and C3. The things that were identified in Health and Safety take a lot more of the regulator's attention. If the progress suggested has been made STAR should be in a C2 situation. • The regulator says whenever they find serious issues in organisation's they can always track them back to poor governance. Examples of the questions are "How does your governing body receive assurance that" or "How often does your governing body receive assurance and from where". 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 41: WH said there are a series of questions that the regulator would ask and that can be sent to STAR. TD said that would be very helpful. JMc to follow up with WH for that information. • TD asked about the review of the Council at the same time. He asked if when the regulator makes a judgment they look at the whole or would they be treated separately. DR said it is likely to be the Council who is the inspected body as they are landlord and STAR are the managing agent. • JD said they are working through the findings and have had further legal advice, and it does appear that 99% of the properties would be exempt from the regulator. That doesn't mean the Council is not doing the work to address the issues but is a relief. 	JMc	15/12/2025
13.	<p>Support Service Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR stated that have been working with LF's team to determine what the support offer needs to look like. We have got to an agreed position. • Sustain is becoming commercially unviable for STAR. Subject to Board approval the plan is to serve notice that the Sustain contract will end at the end on 30 December 2025. LF and her team remodel the service and take that on. • Temporary Accommodation homes many of those are sitting in the HRA, and the proposal is that because STAR is taking on the investment compliance and repairs that would also take on the Intensive Housing Management support. IHM is funded through Housing Benefit. • We are confident that we can manage the staff by either TUPE or retaining staff to work on the IHM support. There are 22 members of staff 18 worker in total, we have a lot of agency staff and people retiring. • PH asked what happens to the service user during the transition period. HR said it would be reviewed on case-by-case basis. All new referrals will be triaged by LF and HR. • LF said the contract is not a statutory contract. A local authority will try to keep as much as possible. The other providers had the opportunity to bid for it but didn't. • HR said that people need to be tenancy read. The new TA process is that we will have very accurate records and checks that can be shared with other RPs. <p>The Board was all in support of the approach.</p>		
14.	<p>Policies Update The report was taken as read. RJ gave the following overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are around 100 policies and a number of which are out of date. We reset the landscape and put some pressure on the business to deliver the updated policies and have them approved. • We have a clear schedule now for when the policies will come through. • The report is asking for approval of the approval routes defined. We have spread the policies amongst the various committees and depending on the policy it would go to the most relevant committee and only go to Board for any escalation. • We also asked you to note that we need to get through a lot of policies approved at an accelerated timeframe so would like approval that they can be approved virtually instead of waiting until the next committee or Board. • It was also requested that they be externally reviewed to get some understanding of where others have been caught out and we have made 		

	<p>a recommendation of which ones should have that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KJ said she believed there are some that need to be seen by the Board, policies like compliance policy or lettings, or rent setting there are some that make sense and the Board needs to be sighted on them. • PH said it is an opportunity to approve things at Committee. • Action 42: There are a lot of policies coming through in November and December. Harpreet said will work with the Committees on the plan. <p>It was agreed to have some virtual approvals and come back if there are any comments.</p>	HR/JMc	15/12/2025
15.	<p>Strategic Risk Register and Opportunities Register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A risk workshop is being planned. • Beever and Struthers did a risk session last year. Best practice is that every year the Board should review the risk register. This year Ark will facilitate the session. • The paper is more of a holding paper, and it is recognised there are a lot of emerging risks. • There was some discussion about the risk ratings/scoring and relevance of some of the risks and it was agreed that the risk session would cover all of this. • RR raised that there is a big risk around cyber security. It was agreed that the review doesn't just look at what is on there but also what isn't like cyber security. It is an opportunity to review them for relevance. <p>The Board fully supported the idea of the risk session to devote enough time to the important topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the time of the meeting the risk session was planned for 30 September 2025 using a Hybrid approach. It has subsequently been changed to 7 November 2025 to allow more Board Members and the Facilitator to attend in person. 		
16.	<p>Annual Terms of Reference Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to ensure the terms of reference for each STAR Housing subcommittee and its Board remain appropriate and effective, and annual reviews are an important way to monitor the suitability of this area of governance. The sub-committees have all covered the same process and recommend no changes except for the new Board members that will be joining the committees. There are no material changes. • TD highlighted that the Chair is appointed for a period of 4 years and that time has now elapsed. • TD left the meeting while the Board members discussed the situation. The TOR also states that the position can be extended to 6 years. Given the transformation and the number of Board members that have recently left, and new members joined it makes sense to keep TD in place for a further 2 years for continuity. • TD rejoined the meeting. • Action 43: It was unanimously agreed that the Board TOR could be updated to state the Chair (TD) could serve 6 years. The TOR states it can be extended past 4 years already but needs to be more explicit. <p>The committee TORs were also approved.</p>	JMc	15/12/2025

17.	<p>Sub-committee Update-FAR RJ provided the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAR met and received information on H&S policy and improvements being implemented throughout the business. • There was also an update of procurement and the large-scale procurements that are taking place at the moment. • They noted the financial position at Q1 relating to STAR and HRA. STAR has a pressure of £153K. The HRA is also forecasting an overspend due to the loss of rents for the affordable homes not coming across sooner. It is not a concern and the HRA does remain stable. the budgeting issue on the rents. • They also reviewed the STAR financial reports and there was an update on the audit on schedule. • They also highlighted the issues that we have experienced in terms of governance and the updating of the action tracker in a timely and accurate way. <p>The items highlighted were noted.</p>		
18.	<p>Sub Committee Update – Customer Services PH gave the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JW updated the Committee on some operational issues that meant a few papers were missing from the original pack. Action 44: JW has committed to providing the missing reports on Complaints and Neighbourhoods by the end of September. • Action 45: There were a couple of outstanding matters arising around customer contact centre, and data on diversity. It was committed to have an update at the next committee meeting in December on profiling and the contact centre, in terms of call abandonment. • Operational performance was reviewed in detail, and the committee looked at some of the targets on operational metrics. It was discussed to amend some of those targets. • The Operational risk register was reviewed. • Action 46: There was some discussion on the challenges with recruitment and PH suggested that it would be good to cover in the planned Risk session. JMc to note that. • There was a positive update on the Big Check In and it being a very positive experience. We discussed what gaps we have in household data and what percentage we have got and how that can be improved. • There was positive feedback on a couple of tenancy changes; 52 weeks and service charges. It was approved with the caveat around having more details shared with the tenants on the 53-week rent update. • The Strategy projects appear to be on track. • The committee discussed the TOR's. • There was some discussion about Board member's induction, and how it could be improved. • LF raised a good point about the actions plans to come out of the Scrutiny Panel and have agreed to a Forward Plan for more areas that the panel can look at. <p>The items highlighted were noted.</p>	<p>JW</p> <p>JW</p> <p>JMc</p>	<p>30/9/2025</p> <p>15/12/2025</p> <p>6/11/2025</p>

19-25	Exempt items not for public discussion		
16	AOB Linked to Action 41: PH said it is important to make sure the HQN report is circulated, and the actions are taken forward. It is hoped the actions will be closed or in progress by the next Board Meeting. KJ asked for a list of all the meetings. Action: JMc to send calendar invites are sent to all the new people based on the proposed committee makeup.	JMc JMc	15/12/2025 31/10/2025