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| **Meeting** | **Shropshire Towns & Rural Housing Limited** |
| | **Board Meeting** |
| **Date** | **16 June 2025** |
| **Time** | **13:00-16:30** |
| **Location** | **Ptarmigan House, Board Room** |

| **Members Present:** | |
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| 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 |
| 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 |
| Jenny Daisley (JD) | Client Officer (Shropshire Council) |
| **Apologies:** | |
| Richard Amos (RA) | Tenant Board Member |
| Rachel Connolly (RC) | Shropshire Council, Board Member |
| Irina Wood (IW) | Independent Board Member |
| Rebecca Wilmot (RW) | Tenant Board Member |
| Laura Fisher (LaF) | Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living (Shropshire Council) |
| Laura Tyler (LT) | Assistant Director - Joint Commissioning (Shropshire Council) |

| Agenda Item | Agenda Item | Who | When |
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| 1. | **Welcome & Apologies & Declarations of Interest**<br><br>The Chair welcomed all attendees.<br>Apologies were received from Richard Amos, Rachel Connolly, Rebecca Wilmott, and Irina Wood. Laura Fisher and Laura Tyler from Shropshire Council also sent their apologies.<br><br>James Owen, the new Housing and Leisure Portfolio Holder from Shropshire Council was officially welcomed.<br><br>There were no declarations of interest raised. | | |
| 2. | **Minutes of Meeting on 17 March 2025**<br><br>The minutes were circulated in advance of the meeting. The Board did not review the actions individually but were asked to flag any mistakes.<br><br>The Board members approved the minutes as an accurate reflection of the meeting. | | |
| **3.** | **Matters Arising**<br><br>**Action 1.** Board Governance review. Tony asked when the new training modules for Board Members would be available. The platform will be launched 1st August. Almost all board members now provided confirmation of training/certs. JM is following up with AM and 3 new members IW, KJ and RW. Any previous training that has been done by members will be carried over until the next annually required review.<br><br>**Action 5.** Performance appraisals are scheduled in. There is the need to do an induction of new Board Members. James Owen had already received an induction.<br><br>**Action 17.** Away Day. HR advised will be arranging a further away day with the new members of the asset assurance board before 31 October. Plan to invite other portfolio holders to that session.<br><br>**Action 22.** Abandoned call issue. It has been established that the way the system is configured it is not handling the calls correctly. It will be reconfigured and can then report the numbers. Damp and Mould is covered under Agenda 6. | <br><br><br>**JM**<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>**JM**<br><br><br><br>**HR/JM**<br><br><br><br>**JW** | <br><br><br>**15 Sep 2025**<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>**15 Sep 2025**<br><br><br><br>**15 Sep 2025**<br><br><br><br>**15 Sep 2025** |
| 4. | **Council Update**<br>The report was taken as read. JD gave the following update:<br><br>• Shropshire Council has set a balanced budget for 2025/26.There is ongoing work to save approximately £57m during 2025-26 financial year.<br>• All areas of procurement and contracts are in the process of being reviewed and aligned with the new operating model to identify savings options.<br>• The Council is in the process of planning for the Local Government Association (LGA) peer review from the 14 – 17 July 2025 which will focus | | |

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| | on finances, performance and governance as well as other areas.<br><br>**Action 27: SR asked if there is a pre-draft of the plan of what will be covered in the peer review. The thinking is it will be on Adult and Social Care. KJ said at Nottingham they focused on the misuse of the HRA and the Section 114. It would be good to get a brief of what will be covered. JD to get the document and circulate to members.**<br><br>• There have been some structural changes in the Council. The Assistant Director Homes and Communities post ended March 2025, and responsibility for overseeing Housing is now divided between Paula Mawson, who heads up Communities and Customer Service, and Laura Tyler who oversees the performance of key contracts, such as the Management Agreement with STAR Housing.<br><br>• The Liberal Democrat Party took control of the Council with Cllr Heather Kidd as the elected leader in May 2025. Cllr Alex Wagner is the deputy leader and Cllr James Owen is the portfolio holder for Housing.<br><br>• Temporary Accommodation – by September three new temporary accommodation projects – Coton Hill House, Parish Rooms and 70 Castle Foregate will be opened which will reduce the use of B&B to zero in 2025.<br><br>• A revision of the Council's Housing Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 5 March 2025. Discussions are in process with the new administration as to whether they wish to make any further amendments before it goes out to consultation.<br><br>• TD asked about the Council's asset rationalisation, assuming various buildings sit within the general fund. Some will be easier to sell than others. He wondered if any on the list might be of interest to STAR.<br><br>• **Action 28: TD asked if it is possible to visit the Temporary Accommodation Schemes when they have their open days. JD/HR to provide more details when the schemes are open.**<br><br>The Board was asked to note the contents of the report. The report was duly noted, and JD was thanked for her update. | JD<br><br>HR/JD | 14 July 2025<br><br>15 Sep 2025 |
| 5. | **Performance Update**<br>The report was taken as read. RJ gave the following update:<br><br>• Performance Period 12 – 80% of the management agreement KPIs were within tolerance or above target an improvement on last year when 50% was achieved<br>• A lot of progress has been made in terms of automating the KPI processes and we now have Power BI performance snapshots feeding through to the Performance Portal. This will be expanded to add the damp and mould and the tenant satisfactions measures.<br>• Key areas missing the annual target include: the percentage of appointments kept, the percentage of emergency and urgent repairs completed on time, the number of new homes delivered, and the percentage of properties receiving annual contact. In addition, KPIs relating to SAP energy ratings have also underperformed. Many of the KPIs which | | |

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| | have been missed such as SAP energy ratings and new developments have not been achieved due to STAR pausing work to replan using Wave 3 funding and other funding avenues.<br>• TSM results have improved. STAR sits in the upper quartile for all measures except complaints and have performed favourably against the sector.<br>• The plan for TSMs in 25/26 will be again done in two waves but with a mix of email, online and telephone in response to findings from this year's surveys.<br>• The TSMs are providing good information from our customers that can be used to improve services, and the Acuity report had some good recommendations.<br>• JW explained that the repairs results are partly impacted by the changes that have been made to the DLO. The DLO has been right-sized, and performance reviewed. The feedback generally shows that communication throughout processes needs to be improved. Surveys are a point in time and are people's perception. In terms of volume in 2022 there were 6000 repairs completed compared to 12000 in 2024, so the feedback has continued to improve during that period. There was a performance dip last summer when the changes were made, and through the storms during the winter. We want to come back with a comparison on the cycles of TSMs. | | |
| | • **Action 29: Corporate Services and Operations now have service improvement plans and the resulting actions from the TSMs will be added in to the SIPs.** | RJ/JW | 15 Sep 2025 |
| | • TD said that it would be helpful to see what the trends were on the complaints. Is there a pattern of the types of complaints. RJ advised that we will be breaking down the complaints reports to add a sub-category which will help identify the core reason for the complaint. Currently it is repairs and communication but will be able to refine the information and report that back. **Action 30: RP to add the subcategory to the reporting of complaints and to provide some trend analysis** | RJ/MP | 15 Sep 2025 |
| | • **Action 31: The Board requested detail of all the cases with the Ombudsmen and the compensation amounts.** | RP/MP | 15 Sep 2025 |
| | • JW said that their Complaints and disrepair manager has conducted a review, and there has been an improvement in record keeping, and every member of SMT oversees a Stage 1 complaint. The team has access to CoPilot which helps in writing the responses and to ensure consistency and language used. There is now a CRM system which has workflows and case managers. There has been a focus on culture change, and the introduction of more data and technology and more oversight at senior level so we understand what is being said in complaints. Overall, there has been incremental but quite considerable changes in how STAR handles complaints.<br>• RJ said that we will never eliminate all the complaints but having better record keeping it is possible to track actions taken. Each team has service improvement plans that are compiled of actions of strategic importance, what the source was (complaint, or an audit) and all staff have objectives to deliver these improvements, and we have a balanced scorecard to have good visibility on achievement of these objectives. The regulator wants to see a service improvement plan that shows you know what your problems are, and it shows what you are doing about it. | | |

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| | • The Big Check in is planned for 3/4 July where we aim to make contact with residents and gather more information that will help triangulate data and to understand our customer more.<br><br>**The Board noted the performance of the organisation at the year end point in relation to its obligations through the management agreement and TSM reporting.** | | |
| 6 | **Compliance And Property Safety Update**<br>The report was taken as read. JW provided an update as follows:<br>• Compliance – the Council have asked for support in tackling their compliance activities for properties that are not within the HRA. These are reported separately at Appendix A.<br>• TD suggested it is a risk for STAR to be doing their compliance work and it is stretching STAR resources in doing so. HR confirmed that STAR would be implicated if it were found that there were serious issues on those council properties. The regulator would treat as one organisation, so it is in STAR's interest to support.<br>• JW advised the compliance team were able to recruit quickly and it has stretched the team, but resource constraints is not a risk.<br>• If there was an issue found at Shropshire Council, all parties would get the same grade. There has been a concern in the general needs properties – and it makes more sense that residential stock is managed by a single structure. It is in STAR's interest to help the Council. There is the potential for the properties to be transferred into the HRA from the general fund.<br>• It was raised that the more you self-refer the sooner you are likely to get an inspection sooner. This will be the Council's second referral.<br>• JD confirmed that there is a project group on the Council side and is on everyone's radar, there is a very clear action plan, anything that was Cat1 was done, and Cat 2 are being dealt with now. The Council has pledged support if needed.<br>• It was discussed that one of the things the regulator will look at is whether the Board has the information it needs. There is an action plan with dates to complete the works, and this is on the performance portal so anyone can access the information.<br>• **Action 32: It was stated that generally the discussion on these types of activities is pushed down to the committee to discuss and highlight up to the Board if required. Compliance is one area where the Board would like to have greater oversight due to its importance. It was confirmed that STAR has a plan, knows all the numbers and data related to compliance. DM to arrange for all Board members to have access to the Portal.** | DM | 15 Sep 2025 |
| 7 | **Health and Safety Policy Approval and Presentation**<br>Kate Barkley and Mark Dyche of Safety For gave the following update:<br>• Safety For were brought in to review the Health and Safety policy and processes, due to some concerns. MD said it was clear that a lot of effort had been put into the previous Health and Safety policy, but it was quite disjointed and there was not any joined up thinking. The first step was to simplify things and get people working in a different way.<br>• Safety For reviewed the policy and policy in itself was fine. It was OK but it didn't follow the clear criteria Plan Do Check Act.<br>• There were a lot of things in place and people have done what they thought was the right thing to do. The policy was doing more than it needed to, and | | |

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| | covering how things should be done too. It needed a management system putting in place not just the policy.<br>• The amended Safety, Health & Environmental (SHE) Management System, is far-reaching, and explicitly cites STAR's application of the Plan, Do, Check, Act methodology. It also contains Foundation Polices, and Policy Arrangements, within one document. This reduces the number of separate Policies within STAR, and reduces duplication and repetition, with all being contained in one Management System.<br>• MD was asked what accreditation Safety For has and proof that the recommendations were best practice. Safety For have got industry wide clients who have considerably larger business and assets than STAR and industry accreditations.<br><br>The Board were requested to:<br>• **Action 35: Approve the New SHE Management System. This was approved with the caveat that the policy includes a statement on how the Board is given assurance.** | KB | 15 Sep 2025 |
| 8 | **Policies Update**<br><br>**Action 33: TD questioned whether it was a good use of Board Members' time to review 50 policies. He asked that SMT go out for some quotes to review them. It was raised that there is not one organisation that could quote to review and so suggested to work with HQN in order to give everyone assurance that these are suitable policies.** | JM | 15 Sep 2025 |
| 9 | **Strategic Risk Register and Opportunities Register**<br>The FAR subcommittee had reviewed the Strategic Risks and it was considered there should be a risk referring to in year budget pressure risk reinstated, and finance and also external changes that might have an impact for example the change in the party leading the Council.<br>The STAR Housing Board is requested to:<br>• Approve the updates contained within risk register as at the end of May 2025<br>• Note the lack of change to the overall risk environment for the company<br>• Approve the updated version of the Risk Management Policy<br><br>The Board were happy to note and approve the recommendations from FAR. | | |
| 10. | **2025-26 Budget Approval**<br><br>• The FAR subcommittee considered the outturn request for the approval of extra use of reserves in the total of £227k. There has been much less use of reserves than was anticipated during 2024/25. It is a good position to be in compared to last year.<br>• **Action 34: TD asked about the HRA and the insurance, which is covered by the Council's policy with Zurich. TD asked to establish who the account managers are for Housing and get support to benchmark certain things to see if there are pressures and anything STAR can do proactively to manage risk.**<br><br>STAR Board was requested to: | RJ/JM | 15 Sep 2025 |

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| | • Note the contents of the report including virements and debt write offs processed during 2024-25.<br>• Make a decision on approving further reserves drawdowns as shown in para 2.14 and amounting to £0.227m.<br>• Agree to commence the Rent Clear Week Review proposal for 2026-27<br><br>The Board were happy to note and approve the recommendations from FAR. | | |
| 11. | **Subcommittee Update-FAR**<br>SR provided the following update:<br><br>• STAR has brought in external people to assist with what good looks like in relation to compliance and health and safety risks. A report is due to go back to the FAR subcommittee in September which will give more confidence and assurance and clarity on responsibilities.<br>• Procurement exceptions were scrutinised to make sure that staff were not avoiding property planning by not putting these contracts out to tender and found them to be fair and justified.<br>• There were concerns about the number of audit recommendations from the previous year that had not been implemented. There will be further update at the next FAR meeting.<br>• **Action 36: TD clarified that Beever and Struthers are covering audits now for STAR, but in terms of the HRA it will stay with the Council? It was decided to take the discussion offline so that there was not duplicated work.**<br>• Discussed changing from 48 week rent payment to 52 weeks. It was agreed this must be communicated to customers. | RJ/JM | 15 Sep 2025 |
| 12. | **Subcommittee Update – Customer Services**<br>**PH gave the following update:**<br>• At the customer services committee the performance was reviewed and there was praise for the improvements made.<br>• There is still more to do in the areas of customer insights and data gaps but the intent of the Big Check In is to address large gaps.<br>• The Scrutiny Panel review recommendations were to be reported back at the next CSS with details on the actions taken.<br>• Protected characteristics in particularly around anti-social behaviour and Housing Ombudsmen data is to be included in the reporting going forward.<br>• The move from 48 week rent clear to 52 week was discussed and the recommendation was to move forward with implementation in 2026/27 consulting and keeping the customer informed. | | |
| 13-17 | **Exempt Items not for public discussion** | | |
| 16 | **AOB**<br><br>The Board were asked about their availability for the Big Check in. No-one was available to attend.<br><br>The Board were given a tour of the new offices at Ptarmigan House. | | |