

Meeting **Shropshire Towns & Rural Housing Limited Board Meeting**
Date **11 March 2024**
Time **10:00-16:30**
Location **Board Room – Mount McKinley**



Members Present:	
Tony Deakin (TDk)	STAR Board Chair, Independent Board Member
Julia Buckley	Shropshire Council, Board Member
Paul Hayward (PH)	Co-opted STAR Board Member
Vince Hunt (VH)	Shropshire Council , Board Member
Eleanor Rayers (ER)	Tenant STAR Board Member
Steve Robinson (SR)	Independent Board Member
James Woods (JW)	Independent Board Member
Non-Members Present:	
Harpreet Rayet (HRa)	Managing Director
Tom Forty (TF)	Operations Director
Ros Bridges (RB)	Corporate Director
Rosanna Davenport (RD)	Governance Manager
Mark Barrow (MB)	Director of Place , Shropshire Council - Agenda Item 5
Leela Cottey (LC)	Assistant Director of Assets, STAR - Agenda Item 8
Mitch Allan (MA)	Assistant Director of Housing, STAR - Agenda Item 13
Kate Barkley (KB)	HR Manager
Lucy Heath (LH)	Shropshire Council
Debbie Gauntlett	Independent Minute Taker

(DG)	
Apologies	
	Yordan Tolev, Jane Tretheway, Paul Weston

10.30am	Presentation	Acuity – Results of Tenant Satisfaction Survey	
		<p>Pete Lomax and Hannah Kew from Acuity had been invited to the meeting to provide feedback and results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey carried out in October 2023. In total, 522 residents had been contacted (523 by phone, 7 completed the survey online). The aim of the survey used TSM measures to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide STAR with residents' perception of how they feel about STAR as a landlord and whether they feel fairly treated and with respect. • Compare results against similar surveys. • Compare results with other landlords. <p>Key metrics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89% of tenants were satisfied with the overall service. • 89% felt they were treated fairly. • 88% felt safe in their homes. • 10% were dissatisfied with the service. • 8% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied. <p>Overall satisfaction was reported as up by 81% compared to 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oswestry C – most satisfied. • Bridgenorth E – least satisfied. <p>A question was raised about the patches/border areas i.e. Bridgenorth 1, Bridgenorth 2 and HR/TF reported they would check the mapping. Action.</p> <p>Keeping Properties in Good Repair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 82% of tenants were satisfied their home was well maintained. • 80% were satisfied with the service. • 72% were satisfied with the time it took to complete repairs. 	

The Board highlighted the importance of treating customers fairly and with respect and discussions included the time it takes to complete a repair and the satisfaction of the service.

Responsible Neighborhood Management

- 29% of tenants live in a building with communal areas.
- 73% were satisfied with communal areas.
- 73% were satisfied with their contribution to the neighborhood.
- 86% were satisfied with how easy it is to deal with the Council.

Respectful and Helpful Engagement

- 83% of tenants felt well informed.
- 75% felt their views were listened to.
- 89% felt treated fairly.
- 17% said they had made a complaint.

The validity of the percentage of complaint handling was questioned and it was noted the difficulty in distinguishing between complaints and service requests. It was suggested the question be rephrased to focus on complaint handling, rather than the outcomes. HR added that there was some variation in figures across the areas. Four/Five complaints had been received in January 2024 and had been resolved over the phone. It was noted that the number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 was small.

Well Being of Residents

- 87% of tenants were not concerned about the cost of living, whilst 40% were very concerned.
- 30% were concerned about damp and mold.

Overall, there had been a general increase in satisfaction and benchmarking figures (60 landlords in Cohort) reported that STAR Housing was doing ‘really well’ compared to other landlords.

Recommendations

- Complaints and how they are dealt with.
- Repairs and Maintenance handling.
- Rising satisfaction. The challenge will be maintaining this, and it was recommended regular data analysis to improve customer base insights.

		<p>The Chair thanked Acuity for the presentation.</p> <p><i>The presenters left the meeting at 10.40 am.</i></p> <p>A general discussion took place regarding repairs, complaints and the disparity amongst different areas and understanding why this was. The Chair of FAR Committee confirmed discussions were taking place regarding the repairs and TF advised the survey results would be a standing item for discussion on the Customer Services Committee agenda. Ensure customer committee regularly considers customer satisfaction Action.TF</p> <p>Benchmarking information will be published by the regulator for comparison to enable the STAR Board to continually monitor and discuss at future Board meetings as part of the performance review and updates on TSM.. Action. RB</p>	<p>TF April 24</p> <p>RB June 24</p>
Minute Number			Agreed Action
1.	Welcome & Apologies	<p>The Chair welcomed attendees,</p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted.</p>	
2.	Declarations of Interest	There were no new Declarations of Interest received.	
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting	<p>The minutes from the previous meeting dated 4th December 2023 were reviewed. The minutes were approved.</p> <p>Agreed Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Action items to be updated and deleted from the list if complete. The recording of action items to be changed in line with Governance. Action. RD 	RD
4.	Matters Arising	<p>There were no matters arising recorded.</p> <p>Agreed Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future matters arising to be recorded as part of new Governance changes. Action RD and HR 	RD/HR

5.	Council Update	<p>Presentation: MB</p> <p>MB summarised Council updates, the Council budget and care services as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Shropshire Council faces a £62 million shortfall in addition to the £51 million shortfall in the current year. • 80% of spend is restricted to adults and children's care, and there is a significant increase in the number of children in care with a focus on specialist provision. • MM notes that housing is a key enabler for improving health outcomes, particularly for adults with disabilities, and that affordability is a major concern in some areas of the County. • The council is facing a structural challenge in providing temporary accommodation for children, and new initiatives are underway to address this issue. • The council is limiting access to the Housing Register for a year to address temporary accommodation needs, while also exploring creative development opportunities to maximize public benefit. <p>The Chair said STAR Housing recognises it is part of the Council Group and the Board and Executives seek to balance supporting the Council with ensuring value for money in temporary accommodation costs. HR reported that the management agreement includes KPIs for temporary accommodation, with a focus on turnover and measurement.</p> <p>A concern was expressed regarding the Council's lack of a long-term strategy to address issues, despite focusing on immediate budget problems. The Chair acknowledged the concern about the local government's finances and reminded the 30-year Business Plan now in place and he believed this would enable STAR Housing to address some of the issues and hopefully grow the organisation.</p> <p>MB talked about what drives the decisions and highlighted the challenges of providing support to vulnerable people, and the importance of prioritising resources and making difficult decisions to address the challenges, despite the lack of easy or quick solutions.</p>	

		<p>A question was asked regarding the headline of closing the Housing Register. The Council advised that the 'door is not being closed' on people who are newly high need and homeless. It was requested that communication needs to be very clear regarding this.</p> <p>MB summarised that the County Council has a full commitment to STAR Housing and is keen to see it continue to grow and develop as part of the 30-year Business Plan.</p>	
6	Performance Update	<p>Presentation: RB</p> <p>A report had been circulated in advance and taken as read. The purpose of the report was to update the STAR Housing Board members on STAR's performance against its management agreement performance indicators.</p> <p>HR reported on a better position compared to the 12 months previous with improved performance and efficiency in core activities including a focus on regenerating consistency for future reporting.</p> <p>RB agreed the picture was improving and TF highlighted progress in reducing voids and repairs with a focus on quality improvement.</p> <p>The Chair of FAR Committee confirmed discussions had taken place in detail at the Committee level which had been encouraging, particularly around anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>The Chair noted it would be key for the Board to receive the benchmarking details and TF confirmed that the team was working with Pulse on obtaining real-time data.</p> <p>The STAR Board noted the performance of the organisation in relation to its obligations through the management agreement.</p> <p>Agreed Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● STAR Housing to explore the Housemark benchmarking point to understand if up to date performance information can be contained within the performance report. Action RB 	RB June 24

<p>7.</p>	<p>Tenant Satisfaction Measures. Outcome</p>	<p>Presentation: RB</p> <p>A report had been circulated in advance and taken as read. The purpose of the report was to update the Board members on STAR’s improvement plan following the Tenant Satisfaction measures.</p> <p>RB reported that the organisation is working on communicating the results of the survey to residents, including those with damp and mold issues, and is using a flag system to immediately respond to these concerns.</p> <p>The Board sought reassurance that residents who raised damp and mold issues will be addressed proactively and the organisation is working on communicating back to residents with rich and important information. TF clarified that the 300 individuals were already known about, with only 20 additional residents discovered.</p> <p>It was noted that data highlights regional differences in repair times, suggesting specific site issues. HR agreed and mentioned the importance of using data to understand specific issues and make decisions and the need for centralised data to ensure analysis is conducted and used effectively within the organisation.</p> <p>Further discussion continued regarding the importance of addressing residents' concerns about damp and mold, whilst recognising the need to balance data-driven solutions. TF reported that a surveyor had been appointed to identify issues.</p> <p>TF highlighted the potential benefits of using thermal boards to address cold spots in some cases, rather than more disruptive and costly structural work. TF highlighted the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of previous investments and addressing issues with properties, such as humidity and moisture.</p> <p>The Board recommended presenting the results internally and externally while considering how the information is presented. HR agreed that communication with residents' complaints would continue to be a priority including works to the repairs and maintenance service. A case study had been drafted to help with discussions.</p>	
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		The STAR Board noted the contents of the report.	
8.	Property Safety Update and Action Plan	<p>Presentation: LC</p> <p>A report had been circulated in advance and taken as read. The purpose of the report was to update the SMT on STAR's property safety and compliance performance across a number of key statutory areas to the end of January 2024. The report was taken as read.</p> <p>A discussion took place regarding the gas capping. LC highlighted the challenge of contacting customers who have been capped for years, whilst also ensuring that they are not contacted too much. It will be important to work with the Housing Officers to oversee this.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding those living in overcrowded conditions. TF advised that the Housing team aims to reintroduce annual tenancy checks to address resident concerns whilst improving and understanding the local population.</p> <p>The STAR Board noted the current performance around safety and compliance.</p>	
9.	Sub Committee Update - FAR	<p>The Chair of the FAR Committee highlighted the importance of health and Safety updates with a focus on getting a written report and appointing a health and safety champion. The Chair of FAR will be the lead on this.</p> <p>The Committee and Executive team had discussed the need for robust challenges and improved communication, with a focus on compliance issues and policy updates.</p>	
10.	Sub Committee Update – Development, Sustainability & Strategic Investment	<p>The Chair of the Development, Sustainability and Strategic Investment Committee summarised the challenges the organisation is facing regarding a contractor insolvency, impacting schemes and delivery times.</p> <p>HR reported that the organisation faces complex group structure and warranty issues, with a goal of completing site work within 6-7 months.</p> <p>HR discusses using a managing agent to manage subcontractors and mitigate risk, potentially</p>	

		increasing costs but reducing exposure to issues.	
11.	Sub Committee – Customer Services	<p>Presentation: TF</p> <p>TF advised the first Customer Service Sub Committee had been postponed to 3rd April 2024. Agenda items will include a review of membership, including the importance of connecting with residents.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding the Staffing Committee. The Chair confirmed that the HR & Remuneration Subcommittee had met and HR advised that updates would be covered in later agenda items.</p>	
		Lunch Break 12.00 pm – 12.30 pm	
12.	Operational Update	<p>Presentation: TF</p> <p>A report had been circulated in advance and taken as read. The purpose of the report was to update the Board on key activities and emerging issues within the Operations Directorate. The report does not intend to provide a detailed overview of all areas, rather it intends to keep the Board up to date with key operational activity and events for awareness and to support effective oversight and scrutiny as well as inform the planning of forward agendas.</p> <p>TF summarised five properties that have been in a "feasibility category" for five years, with no action taken; the properties will be brought back into non-data reporting to comply with regulations.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the importance of connecting with residents. HR suggested conducting due diligence to understand the net present value of the units and potential liabilities. The Board emphasized the importance of transparency and disclosure in the transaction.</p> <p>The STAR Board noted the forward plan.</p>	
	Exempt Items not for public discussion		
19.	Any Other Business	<p>Carparking issues were discussed.</p> <p>With no further items for discussion, the Chair thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed at 2.40 pm.</p>	

		<p style="text-align: center;">Dates of Next Meetings at STAR Offices, Mt McKinley, 1.00 pm – 5.00 pm Monday 24 June 2024 Monday 16 September 2024 Monday 9 December 2024</p>	

