

**CARE AND REPAIR SCOTLAND
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 2nd October 2020
BY ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL**

Present: Blair Allan, SFHA (Chair)
Gerry Power, The Alliance
Gerry Begg, ALACHO
Stewart Wilson, Region 1
Andy Douglas, Region 2
Angela Brunton, Region 3
Elizabeth Eadie, Region 4

Robert Thomson, National Director

1. Welcome and Apologies

Blair welcomed Board members to the meeting. There was an update on how the Board and staff were coping with the coronavirus crisis.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minute of 19th June 2020 meeting was approved without amendment.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

The Angus tender was won by Caledonia Housing Association. Stuart McKandie is taking forward the new service. It was noted that the Highland group had not responded to the regional meeting invitation and that attendance had been low due to holiday arrangements and other issues. Aberdeen reported that their broadband had problems and were unable to dial into the meeting. However those who did attend did not find that Zoom hindered discussions.

5. Regional Meeting Reports

The Board discussed two reports that gave detailed updates on the regions attending the meetings. Some offices submitted reports along with their apologies. The reports showed that each area is at different stages of returning to work. Care and Repair is caught between the two different approaches of the private and public sectors. Public sector workers have embraced the 'new normal' concept and are working from home. Offices have reported that building standards will not make home visits, which has impacted on grant payments. Angela advised that in East Lothian this has helped speed up payments. OTs were slow to return but most areas report that the service is now back to normal and adaptations are proceeding. The regional representatives reported that their services are back to normal with the main change being that staff work from home and call into the office only to use equipment or access files. Some clients are happy using technology like Zoom to hold meetings.

Robert advised that, with the exception of Glasgow, funding seems to be stable around the country. Edinburgh reported that there is a greater demand for the service and they have employed additional staff and had productive meetings with ECC about the future. Stewart reported that Dr Ron Culley left the position of Western Isles IJB Chief Officer in April. Ron was a supporter of Care and Repair and so there is a period of uncertainty until a new CO is appointed.

Andy asked if any of the previous Angus staff will be employed in the new service. Robert advised that one member of staff had phoned him to ask for details of the new employer.

6. National Director's Report

The Board approved the report.

Glasgow Review

Following a decision by Glasgow City Council to withdraw funding from a number of external organisations, Glasgow Care and Repair is being reviewed. Robert is a member of the review group which will report to the Council Members in early November. Currently the group is conducting a widespread stakeholders survey. It is likely that the group will recommend that a strategy group is set up to enable the service to develop city wide. The Board noted that after 30 years Glasgow and Edinburgh should be flagship services in Scotland as Manchester is in England.

Standard Life Bid

Care and Repair England, Cymru and Scotland made a joint bid to Standard Life Foundation to fund a two year national project. The bid was rejected because SLF felt that, 'there were a number of unknowns around the project, for example the modelling of financial implications of home ownership, the project was rather expensive and it was felt that as the issue is reasonably well-known, the project would have to deliver a lot to justify the sums'.

Equity Loan Scheme

Scottish Government had commenced a review of the scheme, which was interrupted by the lockdown in March. It was decided to fund the pilot for a further year until March 2021 until the review could be completed. There are now considerable challenges with this scheme. In June, EST advised the managing organisations and CRS that Scottish Government had cut the budget by 1/3 to reflect lockdown savings. The managing organisations, EST and CRS held a Zoom meeting to discuss and EST agreed to send out new Memorandum of Undertakings. The managing organisations have not signed the MOUs complaining that the new terms could not be met, particularly the KPIs.

The officers in Glasgow, Argyll and Perthshire then had their working hours reduced by the managing organisation from 5 days to 3. Subsequent discussions with Scottish Government revealed that this was not an expected outcome, as the reasoning was that managing organisations had no costs to meet during lockdown apart from staff salaries. This discussion/debate continued during August with the result that the officer in Perthshire, has resigned and the officer in Glasgow is considering his position. CRS has been contacted by a contractor who has listed 14 people awaiting loans/payments.

The Board agreed that the equity loan scheme is an ideal bridge between owners taking responsibility for their property and Government providing support to enable people to remain in their own homes. It is liked and trusted by homeowners and it is very unfortunate that EST and Anderson Strathearn have not provided adequate support. However the current situation is damaging to the reputation of Care and Repair and were it not for the outstanding cases, we would withdraw our participation from the scheme.

Annual Conference

The conference held in March was poorly attended and was just financially viable. Half of the Care and Repair offices did not send a representative. Care and Repair Cymru and England have ceased to hold annual conferences because of financial risk issues. The Board has previously indicated that it would like to see Scotland continue with the conference. Recent discussions with Big Bright Star and various hotels indicate that there are too many financial risks around a conference in March/April 2021. In , the Scottish Parliament elections in May will mean that the purdah period begins six weeks before the scheduled election date. Since our discussions, UK and Scottish Government have published tighter coronavirus restrictions and therefore we do not think it is advisable to hold a conference until at least September/October 2021. It would be possible to hold an online seminar event in March and this can be arranged nearer the time depending on interest.

Action: Gerry Power will circulate the Glasgow survey to the relevant members of the ALLIANCE network. Robert will explore with the remaining equity loans officers if they have the capacity to take on the Perthshire case work until the review is completed. Gerry and Robert will meet with the ALLIANCE technical staff to discuss how we could organise an online event in March/April that could perhaps take place over a number of days.

7. Financial Statement

The Board noted and approved the Financial Statement. The Board approved the Annual Accounts to 31 March 2020. The auditors, A9 Partnership, have confirmed they will accept digital signatures. It was noted that Scottish Government have sent a covering letter advising that it is understood that Covid-19 may affect spending and performance against targets.

Action: Robert will organise with Gerry and Elizabeth to sign accounts and return to A9. He will notify the Board when accounts are submitted to OSCR and Companies House.

8. Board Membership

The auditor has reminded us that we should hold elections for the four regional representatives and also reconfirm the nominations from external bodies.

Blair has decided to retire. His last day at Lochaber Housing Association will be 30th November. 2020. Blair is currently representing SFHA on the CRS Board and, as he will no longer be employed by an RSL, he wishes to resign from the Board and the position of Chair. Therefore 2nd October is his last meeting.

To enable a smooth transition, Gerry Power, who served as Interim Chair, was elected by the Board as the new Chair of Care and Repair Scotland. He will bring a health and Third Sector perspective to the role of Chair.

The Board thanked Blair for his major contribution to the world of Care and Repair since 1990. It was acknowledged that Blair has steered the Board through difficult times. The Board also agreed that a supportive member of SFHA could be considered as a replacement for Blair. It is essential that the person has an interest in supporting Care and Repair.

Action: Robert will write to the regional members asking for nominations. If none are offered then it will go to a vote to re-elect the existing regional reps. He will discuss

with Gerry Power and Gerry Begg how best to approach their organisations. Robert and Gerry will hold Chair/National Director meetings by Zoon for the foreseeable future. Gerry and Robert will liaise about an SFHA representative and report back to the Board.

9. Note from Denton's Solicitors

Dentons advise of a case development relating to Section 75 pension dscheme debt. Of particular note is the broad point that the case has highlighted, that the section 75 regime does not adequately take account of small employers, which may have different legal structures from typical DB scheme sponsors, and the fact that easements available to deal with employer debt may not be suitable for non-associated employers in industry wide schemes.

Action: Robert will continue to liaise with Dentons and report any new developments to the Board.

10. A.O.C.B

There were no other items of business.

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held by Zoom on either Friday 4th or 11th December.