



**MEETING of the
GOVERNING BODY OF
SCOTTISH VETERANS' RESIDENCES
On MS Teams, Friday 3 Sep 2021**

Record of Decisions

Present: George Lowder MBE, Chairman
Jonathan Tweedie, Vice Chair (VC)
Sue Bomphray (SB)
Troy Johnson (TAJ)
Tony Jones (TJ)
Sqn Ldr Derek Morrison (DM)
Isla Tabberer (IMT)
Maj Christian Taylor (CT)
Sandy Telfer (ST)

In attendance: Jeremy Chittleburgh, Treasurer (JC)
George Corbett (DCEO)
Susie Hamilton, Head of External Relations (HER)
Martin Nadin OBE, Chief Executive (CEO)
Gayle Templeton, MagentaHR (GT)
Susan Duthie, Company Secretary (Minutes) (CS)

Apologies: Rev Neil N Gardner (NG)
Richard Edlmann (RE)
Iain Lindsay (IL)
Clive Masson (CM)

	Subject	Raised by	Additional Documents	Decision
1	Chairman's Introduction	Chairman		
1.1	The Chairman welcomed Isla Tabberer and Maj Christian Taylor, from 51X, to SVR as new Governing Body Members. There was no dissent to the election of Isla and Christian to the Governing Body.			
1.2	The Annual Report for 2020 is now available in hard copy. Chairman underlined his message expressed in the report that he continues to remain impressed and grateful for the work involved that has resulted in the extremely low level of COVID-19 infection across SVR. Executive, managers, staff and residents have been compliant and he encouraged others to continue to do so.			
1.3	Chairman was at a ScotGov leaders' meeting recently where the message given was that the NHS will see severe challenges this winter and expected a rise in infection rates. The NHS is no longer catching up on the backlog of outstanding cases. All businesses must continue to take the measures needed to contain the virus.			

2	Apologies	CS		
	As noted above.			
3	Previous Minutes	SD	Minutes	Approved
	<p>Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting of SVR held on 28 May 21 were reviewed and accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. The afternote at serial 10.13; to pause the bowling green project was highlighted. This will form part of the sustainability discussion in serial 11. There were no matters arising.</p> <p>Minutes accepted: Proposed by: S Bomphray Seconded by: T Jones</p>			
4	Action Log	Chairman		
	<p>Actions:</p> <p>55. Risk Management Policy – the 3 residence managers will attend the IOSH course by the end of the year.</p> <p>63. Whitefoord House Bowling Green redevelopment – Referred to in CEO Report, c/f.</p> <p>66. Service updates, CEO will talk to the 4 services reps, c/f.</p> <p>71. TV advertising – Paused, c/f</p> <p>73. Bellrock Close Review – CEO updated separately.</p> <p>74. Art Club Business Plan – ACVC (Arts and Craft Veterans Club) is now a SCIO. They are currently negotiating a 5 year lease on the rental of their premises.</p> <p>75. Voids – CEO acknowledged that levels are high but there is an increase in activity. Managers are aware that the 10% civilian cap can be exceeded for appropriate referrals in mitigation of the increase to void levels.</p> <p>Bellrock Close Review Action List Ken Nisbet will start as the new Residence Manager of Bellrock on 6 Sep.</p> <p>Action 1 re staff safety is now on the Operational Risk Register. Action 2 re drug use is awaiting the new manager. CEO has contacted the Edinburgh Police for advice and contacts and will follow up with the Glasgow Police and drug awareness charities. This action is now on the Operational Risk Register.</p> <p>Actions 3, 4, 5 and 7 Awaiting new manager. CEO is revising the staff structure. A consultation period of 28 days will need to be included.</p> <p>6 & 9. Metrics – CEO met with Riverside and Launchpad who carry out similar work. Met on 2 Jun to look at appropriate metrics. 8, 10, 11, 12 cf. 13. Targets – CEO to bring proposed targets back for Governing Body consideration.</p>			

5	Chairman and Governing Body Member Tenure	CEO	Brief	
5.1	Chairman set the scene. CS reminded him earlier in the year that the Scottish Housing Regulator stipulates that a chair may not serve continuously for more than 5 years.			
5.2	CS had spoken to TC Young to investigate if the transfer of the SVR charity into the Housing Association in July 19 could be used as a reason to reset the clock for those Governing Body Members who had joined the new SVR in Sept 19. The response was that this does allow the 3 charity trustees who joined SVR to take their length of service from Sep 19 but does not apply to the Chairman and Vice Chairman as they were both existing members of the Housing Association at the time.			
5.3	Chairman advised the available options were to stand down and someone else became the Chair, allowing SVR to conform with the rules. The alternative was to extend his tenure if there was sufficient justification. This had been investigated with lawyers and the SHR to explore tolerances and scope for possible latitude.			
5.4	Chairman confirmed that the 5-year maximum tenure had come as a surprise and that he had expected to serve for longer. He would be guided by the GB. He said he would like to see through the governance changes and plans SVR has in train but was prepared to step down if the GB was in any way uncomfortable with any attempt to engineer an extension. Chairman felt that a lot has been achieved in the last 5 years and referred to SVR coming through the pandemic in good shape. An extension could be justified on the impact COVID-19 had on SVR in delaying projects and activity and would welcome leadership continuity as delayed activity was restarted and concluded.			
5.5	If the GB is uncomfortable with this proposal and felt that an extension is not justified he would step down. Chairman posed the question of a successor and if he were not extended who could be the next Chair. He felt that there was a good mix of new and experienced Members on the GB. The VC may be the obvious choice but working extensively in London, JT currently felt that it is not the right time.			
5.6	The GB was asked to decide if the current Chairman should stay or not. If not, then the GB should appoint a new Chair from within the current Members or select a new Chair from a broader base in which case GL would be happy to help. Chairman felt the next Chair should be appointed rather than anointed, potentially requiring a selection process.			
5.7	GT asked what the reason was for the 5-year limit. Chairman said it is an arbitrary number chosen by SHR as the maximum length of tenure. Historically a number had retained their position for significant periods resulting in detriment and poor outcomes for tenants and Housing Associations. CEO added that the Model Rules state that the term should be no longer than 5 years continuously so there could be a way round the rules if the Chairman was to step down and then step back up again but Chairman does not want to pursue this course of action.			
5.8	Chairman confirmed that to modernise the organisation he felt that it was not best practice to use that route to extend tenure.			

5.9	ST asked why the brief suggested an extension in role until 2 Mar 23 and why not longer, was 18 months sufficient. The Chairman acknowledged that our legal advice was to confirm the date of the maximum extension of tenure to the SHR. An extension of 18 months was judged to be appropriate as that matched the period of COVID restrictions. ST saw that SHR were behind the request.
5.10	GL suggested no more than 5 years since SVR changed its name ie 1Jul24.
5.11	TJ agreed with ST. The time limit was to stop people getting stale, abuse their power or becoming a dominating influence. SVR has a new structure and new projects and there is justification for an extension which allows time for a selection process to happen.
5.12	CEO noted that the period of 12 – 18 months was in his brief to SHR as an initial time period before the discussion.
5.13	SB agreed with the longer period suggested for the extension.
5.14	ST understand the need to put a break on power as Chairman but felt it would be overly restrictive for the Chairman not to enter into contracts using his delegated authority and Chairman should be able to utilise his powers in full.
5.15	Chairman will word a reply to SHR and pass it by ST and TJ before sending to the regulator. If others have any thoughts please send them directly to GL.
5.16	IMT felt there was a risk to the organisation by quickly appointing a new Chairman.
5.17	Chairman stated that he has already started thinking about a successor and whether this should be external or an existing Governing Body Member. Chairman thanked the GB for their support. Decision: Governing Body unanimously agreed that George Lowder should remain in role as Chairman for an additional period past his original end date of 2 Sep 21 which is to be no later than 5 years from the merger of SVR and SVHA which will be 1 Jul 24 and to keep his executive authority.
5.18	There was no dissent. JC added his support for the record.

6	Annual Assurance Statement to SHR	CEO	Brief	Approved
6.1	This is the 3 rd year that SVR has been required to submit a statement to confirm that it is compliant with the SHR Regulatory Framework. For the year to 31Oct21, SVR is compliant apart from 3 areas of non-compliance which require the completion of the Business Plan and Tenant Participation Survey to become compliant.			
6.2	CEO stated that he felt governance had improved in 2021. SVR now has an independent internal audit function which has assigned Reasonable Levels of assurance for the 2 areas audited so far.			
6.3	The CEO's paper set out the impact of COVID-19.			

6.4	Legal advice had confirmed that the extension of the Chairman's tenure was not material non-compliance.			
6.5	GB was asked to agree that it was satisfied that SVR meets the required standards with the 3 exceptions to the standards which are noted in the Appendix to the brief.			
6.6	CEO added that if TPAS reply before 31 Oct21 that the tenant participation strategy is satisfactory then that would remove the tenant engagement serial.			
6.7	If CEO can complete the business plan on receipt of the condition surveys before 31Oct21 then that would remove another serial.			
6.8	Chairman added that COVID-19 has taken some matters out of our hands.			
DECISION: The Annual Assurance Statement was approved to be submitted to SHR by the Governing Body with the current 3 caveats.				
7	SFHA Guidance Updates	CoSec	brief	Adopted
7.1	CS referred to the brief detailing the 10 updated SFHA guidance papers, most have been refreshed by SFHA updating the language and dates. CS advised that the updated documents are held in the library section of AdminControl for the GB to read. Changes are highlighted in yellow which will be removed for the final version.			
7.2	The Code of Conduct is to be signed annually by each Member of the GB and senior staff. These will be sent out after this meeting.			
7.3	All of the guides are extant for 3 years unless SFHA advise otherwise.			
7.4	The previous version of the Code of Conduct included guidance on conflicts of interest. That section has now been incorporated into the Model Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Guidance.			
7.5	The role descriptions are also updated within the suite.			
7.6	The new Governing Body Member's Guide has been edited to include information on SVR which is of information to new members or those considering joining and will form part of the induction pack.			
Decision: SFHA guidance documents 2021 adopted for use by SVR.				
8	Treasurer's Report	JC	Report	Approved
8.1	JC advised that the Quarter 2 accounts for April to June were not particularly healthy with a significant operating deficit driven by increased void levels. This had directly reduced income. Whitefoord House has since improved slightly. From a cash position there is still a small surplus after adjustment for depreciation.			
8.2	Focusing on debts. Restrictions on taking legal action against debtors due to COVID-19 have now been lifted and debtors can be pursued or removed.			
8.3				

8.4	There has been a delay in major repairs and the cost of materials has since increased significantly.
8.5	SVR continues to look at savings on utilities with some savings on contracts due to COVID-19.
8.6	The financial position will be improved by the end of the year.
8.7	ST asked if there was an anticipated rise in tenant arrears. JC confirmed that there are increases in technical arrears (i.e., housing benefits, delays with processing claims) and non-technical arrears (i.e., residents not paying where due).
8.8	CEO was taking steps to engage with debtors and put repayment plans in place to repay the outstanding amounts.
8.9	ST asked for the definition of when SVR turns an arrear into a bad debt. CEO replied that residents in supported accommodation owing money are sent a series of letters by the housing staff and they are approached in person. We are not talking about significant sums of money owed compared to larger HAs. The debt must be significant to be worthwhile pursuing through the legal process. The Sheriff may decide on a small repayment plan. There is a tipping point when the sum owed is worthwhile recovering. JC confirmed that we write off all former tenants' arrears; this year £69k will be written-off at the year end.
8.10	DCEO noted that a different policy applied for mainstream (SST) tenants. There are no evictions in course. Residents' debt usually relates to food and utility charges, elements that are not covered by Housing Benefit. DCEO would be reluctant to end a support agreement for such low amounts of debt.
8.11	Chairman asked if grants have been received to cover the continuing additional costs due to COVID-19. CEO confirmed that HER has applied to several COVID-19 funds. JC confirmed that £72,818 was spent on COVID costs with no additional grant funding received yet for 2021.
8.12	Chairman asked if SVR will get any of the additional spend back. HER noted that £25k was received at the start of 2021. JC agreed that COVID-19 related costs for last year were covered but the costs for 2021 so far have not been covered. Chairman pressed the priority for grant funding. Afternote: £55,101 received from Armed Forces Third Sector Resilience Fund post GB Meeting. Funding available up to March 2022 and can be used to offset costs of additional staffing, PPE, catering supplies and items for residents.
8.13	Chairman asked if the residence managers were aware that they can exceed the 10% civilian cap. What is being done and what is the plan to approach local authorities? CEO confirmed that there is a plan. Already mailing contacts and will re-start face-to-face contact soon. Chairman said this should be a priority as it was not inconceivable that restrictions could be applied again therefore, we need to reinforce the message when we have the opportunity. DCEO noted that care homes were due to receive compensation for financial losses through higher voids due to COVID-19. SFHA/HSEU (Housing Support Enabling Unit) are looking wider for those organisations including housing support services affected.
8.13	Chairman offered his and the GB members help if required to liaise with LAs.
9	Residence Committee Reports

9.1	<p>Bellrock Close – SB SB has not visited but is looking forward to getting back in to see the residents. There has been a period of transition as Pauline McHugh, the previous manager retired and the new manager Ken Nisbet arrives on 6 Sep 21.</p>
9.2	<p>Rosendael – IMT IMT had met with Neil Stewart who is doing an excellent job as interim manager of Rosendael. IMT and CM met the residents in June. The residents were in good form and said that they felt supported and protected. They stayed connected with those residents who were isolating. Their only concern was that there was a very small number of vaccine refusers. Graeme Watson, the new manager, will start on 20 Sep 21. IMT is happy to liaise with Dundee City Council or Fife council if needed.</p>
9.3	<p>Whitefoord House CEO noted that residents’ meetings would restart the following week. At least 95% of staff and residents are vaccinated. There is a plan to move the gym from the attic to the games room on the ground floor to make it more accessible. Whitefoord House will host the start and return of the ‘Walk for CALM’ event. From 18 to 26 Sep 21. This involves a 10k walk from Whitefoord House around Arthur’s Seat. A sessional arts worker is now in place and there are lots of activities on the go.</p>
9.4	<p>Chair asked if an appropriate send-off was given to the 2 departing managers. CEO confirmed the staff did as best as they could under the restrictions.</p>

10	CEO Report	CEO	Report
10.1	Scotland is now Beyond ‘Level 0’; however staff and residents continue to be cautious.		
10.11	Ken Nisbet, Manager Bellrock Close and Graeme Watson, Manager Rosendael will both start in their new roles in September. There were few applications for the roles, however both appointees are very experienced in supported housing and bring additional competencies to the organisation.		
10.12	COVID and Brexit have affected the supply chain which will delay certain projects until the markets recover to allow for reduced costs offering better value for money.		
10.13			
10.2	Chairman asked SB to meet with Ken Nisbet next week. IMT and CM to offer the same meeting for Graeme Watson once he starts. SB advised that she is looking for another volunteer as Kenny McCaskill is now focusing more on ACVC and Frankie Caldwell has not managed to come in.		
10.21	<p>DCEO Report Condition survey reports have been received for all properties. All properties are SHQS compliant and in fair to good condition. There are no significant items of cost required. There is a recommendation that the 4 lifts should be prioritised.</p> <p>During the repair work on the wooden windows in Whitefoord House it was discovered that the bay windows on the Canongate elevation are rotten and require complete replacement. There is also evidence of water ingress behind the windows that needs addressed at the same time. DCEO requested that the Governing Body approve an in-year spend of the estimated cost of £18k to replace the windows and deal with the water ingress as essential work.</p>		

10.22	Decision: Governing Body gave approval for the in-year spend of £18k + VAT to carry out bay window replacement and water ingress remedial work to the Canongate elevation.		
10.23	The Chairman confirmed that the windows were in a poor state. JC noted that he could see plants at chimney level in Whitefoord House. DCEO confirmed that this was in hand to be sorted.		
10.24	Repairs to the Rosendael external wall that runs along Victoria Road are being scoped for quotes. The surveyors re-estimated the value of the Lodge at offers over £350k on the open market.		
10.3	Chairman asked CEO if he can close-off the point of non-compliance on the AAS relating to condition surveys.		
10.4	Head of External Relations		
10.41	A legacy in the sum of c£90k has been left to Rosendael and is expected to arrive by the end of the year. Also £35k has been received to continue the funding of the JILWO (Join In Live Well Officer) post until Jul 22.		
10.42	Company Secretary		
	The annual returns required by SHR, FCA and OSCAR have all been completed.		
	Social Care Payment		
	The funds were received and paid out to the staff in July.		
	Equalities		
	The consultation paper was released in January regards the new requirement to collate and store the 9 protected characteristics. Since then, the SHR has advised of the option to collate the results anonymously, which greatly reduces the Data Protection risks and requirements. CS will now follow the guidelines for the anonymous route and will ask Governing Body Members, staff and service users to complete a form.		
11	Sustainability Paper	CEO	Brief
11.1	CEO stated that he believed that the continuity of Chairman is important to this project.		
11.2	He referred to the brief which recommends establishing a formal programme out to 2030 to deliver the number of projects required to reach net zero carbon emissions. Proposed in the brief is a 3-phase programme.		
11.3	In the scale of importance, this is the most significant objective to be achieved within this decade, second only to statutory and regulatory obligations. It will involve all 4 of our sites (including Gilmerton). It will require liaison and co-operation with multiple external organisations.		
11.4	CEO asks GB to approve establishment of a formal programme as the most appropriate way to deal with this issue.		
11.5	Subject to the following conditions:		

11.6	Cost expenditure to be calculated. This will need CEO and Property Services Manager's attention. To mitigate this the CEO proposes to hire an Operations Manager and a Projects Manager.
11.7	CEO asked for the GBs views to this being the most appropriate plan or to share their thoughts on a different approach.
11.8	Chairman thinks we need to do it. There needs to be a programme to understand the scale and cost of the full programme. There will be different requirements across all 3 of our council areas.
11.9	Chairman asked the following questions: Do we think we need to do this, yes or no? Do we do it now, yes or no? If now, is this the correct approach, yes or no?
11.10	This programme could be delayed until later but there is pressure to address now, also COP26 taking place soon.
11.11	ST asked to find out the cost, are we looking at using consultants or full-time staff and how much CAPEX are GB committing to.
11.12	Chairman advised that we are already spending time and cost on it now eg. on carbon literacy training. This possibly involves consultancy next. Chairman feels we do not need to hire an Operations Manager and Project Manager right now. Preparation and development work needs to happen to understand the cost for each location.
11.13	ST noted that his legal firm DLA Piper has been appointed legal adviser to COP 26.
11.14	TJ noted that 2 SVR buildings are not energy efficient, but it needs someone to outline the options needed, we can only do what we can financially do. Is it better to sell and move to a more sustainable building?
11.15	Chairman agreed that nothing is off the table. Looking for agreement from the GB to continue with Phase 1. ST asked if we are engaging with external consultants now. CEO replied that for WFH he is speaking to Edinburgh World Heritage Trust (EWHT). CEO has not yet sourced consultants for Dundee or Glasgow. Chairman is not proposing to allocate a budget until the costs are provided. Decision: Governing Body agreed for CEO to continue with Phase 1 and collect the information required to bring back to the GB.
12	Rosendael Lodge DCEO Brief
12.1	Since it was agreed at the previous GBM not to go ahead with the conversion of the Lodge, CEO has been looking at other options for its use.
12.2	Social landlords have recently been approached by councils in relation to the Afghan relocation and assistance and the Afghan resettlement scheme.

12.3	CEO and DCEO had showed Dundee City Council Housing Staff the Lodge, which is now empty incurring maintenance costs and receiving no rent. There is the opportunity to house an Afghan family who have worked with British Forces or the UK Government at a guaranteed social rent.
12.4	This would be subject to the following clearances: a) Confirmation that the constitution and allocation policy allow or can be amended to allow this use. b) Dundee City Council or LA must formally request SVR to use the property c) Legal position d) The proposed family have indefinite leave to remain in the UK e) Public funding is available to refurbish and cover rental.
12.5	The Lodge has not been occupied for 2 years. The conversion was cancelled and there was no uptake internally when previously offered to serving personnel. SVR staff are supportive. Rosendael residents are being consulted now.
12.6	SVR exists to support military veterans and these Afghan refugees supported UK operations. There is also the financial package which is an opportunity for SVR. To offer the property to an Afghan family given what SVR stands for is the right thing to do.
12.7	CEO requested that the GB agree in principle that the Lodge is offered to Dundee City Council for this use subject to the above clearances. Action: TJ noted that as it is a new risk the proposal should also be passed by the insurance brokers for public liability as it is a different category of tenant.
12.8	ST asked about the financial caveat, would SVR underwrite the costs if the funding package did not exist.
12.9	DCEO advised that the property is habitable now. There is work ongoing to update the smoke alarms and repair the external wall. The estimated cost is £2k which would have to be completed in any case.
12.10	Chairman noted that it has been empty for 2 years and could now receive market rent from the financial package available.
12.11	IMT advised that Rosendael residents would support. IMT asked if facilities would be restricted to the Lodge only or extended to include the gym etc. Chairman did not expect it would include the use of Rosendael house as we would not give access to the facilities at Rosendael to any other tenants. The relationship would more like that of a neighbour.
12.12	
12.13	GT would be an encouraging and positive message giving the distressing news coverage.
12.14	The Chairman thought that it was the right thing to do. There is some risk, but it is a good news story but needs to be managed presentationally to show the clear link to serving personnel in UK.
12.15	

	<p>It would be helpful to quantify how many Afghan veterans are in Rosendael. Care needs to be taken to avoid any potential negative reaction.</p> <p>Chairman raised the risk of setting a precedent that other properties could be used. Will councils expect SVR to fill more rooms with refugees.</p> <p>Decision: Governing Body agreed to proceed in principle with the offer of the Rosendael Lodge to DCC for rehousing an Afghan family. CEO to update.</p>			
13	HMS Barlinnie Community Placement Scheme	CoSec	Brief	Not approved
13.1	<p>CS referred to the brief and the history behind the scheme. The key points are that SVR cannot fully risk assess whilst SPS will not divulge full disclosure of the potential work placement. Also, SVR takes responsibility for supervision which is difficult to do with current staff levels.</p>			
13.2	<p>GT did not believe that the Data Protection should prevent disclosure for SVR to carry out a risk assessment. TJ added that SPS are required to disclose as it is an unexpired conviction.</p> <p>Decision: GB does not support continuing placements through this scheme. Action: CS to respond to SPS to withdraw SVR from the programme.</p>			
14	Strategic Risk Register	CEO	Brief	
	<p>CEO requested that Strategic Risk 001/21, Lone Working to be moved to the Operational Risk Register as it is appropriately mitigated against now.</p> <p>Decision: GB Agreed</p>			
15	KPI's	CEO	Report	
	<p>The standard information pack was shared. There were no comments.</p>			
16	Service Updates			
16.1	Royal Air Force – DM			
16.2	Army – CT			
	<p>Lack of time prevented comments from the services.</p>			
17	AOB			
17.1	<p>A military colleague of the CEO, Lt Col Rab Wallace, is moving back to Scotland before he retires from the Army in February. Rab wants to do charity work and approached CEO. Before Rab joined the Army he was homeless and would bring lived experience to the Governing Body. He has visited Whiteford, but will live nearer Bellrock. Rab is keen to be a mentor and would be delighted to join the Governing Body or to be a volunteer in a residence.</p> <p>Action: CEO to pass details onto SB to make contact and introduce him to the Bellrock Residents Committee.</p>			
17.2	<p>There was no other business, and the meeting was concluded.</p>			

18	DONM – Friday, 3 Dec 21, 12.00 - 2pm, Microsoft Teams and Whitefoord
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