

BARNSBURY HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Summary of Board Meeting held at 6.3pm on Thursday September 22 2022

Present: Board Members: Sean McLaughlin (Chair), Jonathan Bunt, Chyrel Brown, Annabel Grey, Micah Gold, Aaron Elliot and Janice Walsh (JW) (from 6.30)

Staff: Susan French (CEO), Yung Yung Lee (Finance Director), Michael Bunker (Asset Manager) Vivienne Astall (VA) (Homes & Communities Director)

1. The Board agreed that the main focus of the meeting should be on the cost of living crisis, performance and the impact on BHA of proposed government rent caps, because they wanted to strike the right balance between the longer-term needs of residents (and their homes) and their immediate cost-of-living pressures.
2. The Board approved the Financial Statements for 2021/12. BHA has made a surplus of £274k in 2021/22 and the auditors gave BHA a clean bill of health.
3. The Board were pleased to hear about the recent fun day and that so many tenants had attended what was the first fun day for three years.
4. On performance, the Board noted our arrears. These are now steady but high compared to others. The Board supported the work the team are doing on ensuring that tenants in arrears are contacted early, so that arrears do not increase to a point where they are hard to manage. They support the idea that tenants build up a 'buffer' against hard times by paying in advance, as required. At the next meeting the Board will look at cases where arrears are over £500.
5. The Board heard about how BHA is supporting tenants facing hardship with the Tenant Support Fund. Grants are being linked to budgeting and debit advice to try and make sure that the underlying issues are tackled.
6. The Board looked at a detailed report on the impact that the government's proposed rent caps: they are suggesting that rent increase in April 2023 are capped instead of raising by the rate on inflation which is almost 10%. The Board is concerned about the impact of rising living costs on tenants and want to take this into account in looking at how rents will be set next year. Because our costs are increasing at a faster rate than the proposed rent caps (due to inflation of building materials etc), this means that our budgets are very tight for the coming year, which means that the Board may have difficult decisions to make about how we spend our money next year. The report highlighted several possible scenarios, and in some of the more serious situations, we might need to look at the options of sale or merger. However, the Board agreed that it would always discuss such measures with tenants before making decisions.
7. The Board approved us extending our loan with Clydesdale Bank which would, among other things, be used to fund the garage conversion.