

BOARD UPDATE
BOARD PERFORMANCE MEETING
WEDNESDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 2023



CUSTOMER STORY

Our November Board meeting opened with a customer story where we heard about one customer who was struggling to afford their energy bills. Through our Independent Living team, the customer was supported in achieving a reduce rate for their energy costs which reduce the anxiety and stress the customer had been suffering.

This opened up a wider discussion by the Board about over 100 other customers who had been referred to the warm prescriptions scheme to help them with energy costs over the winter. The Board agreed that continuing investment in this area was of vital importance to ensure the wellbeing and safety of GCH customers.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Chief Executive's report provided members with a broad overview of some of the current issues affecting us at GCH as well as the wider housing sector and highlighted progress we have been making on our priorities. We noted:

- An increasing number of works were now being brought in house and support was also being provided to contractors to ensure that the winter demand could be met.
- Two Multi-trade Operatives (MTOs) would be starting in November 2023 and recruitment was now proving successful in vital roles.
- Previously, managing empty homes had been focussed on turnaround times, however there was now a greater focus on maintaining quality.
- Gloucestershire Live had recently covered the Damp and Mould roadshow and it was hoped another Facebook Live event could take place soon.
- An enhanced package had been agreed with Gloucestershire County Council for Clapham Court residents and this had resulted in increased levels of staff on a rota basis enabling more support for residents. In addition, there was also a dedicated out of hours service now available.
- A suicide awareness campaign had recently taken place internally.
- GCH were part of the House Proud scheme and had been an award winner at the recent Best Place to Work awards.
- The recent exhibition at Clapham Court had highlighted the community spirit and feeling around Clapham and its impact on the area.

PERFORMANCE REPORT

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The Board had a focused conversation reviewing our combined quarterly performance report, reflecting both on those areas where we continue to see strong performance as well as seeking to better understand areas where we have seen performance dip below our target.

Key points discussed included:

- Repairs satisfaction was increasing but Board recognised that the key time for repairs was now approaching (winter) and sought assurance from staff that sufficient resource would be in place to manage demand. Officers confirmed that a combination of additional and new staff, alongside supporting contractors would all help to meet the expected demand.
- Board discussed the importance of monitoring health and safety compliance and the current challenges in overseeing electrical compliance.
- The Board asked for the report to be referred to the Customer Experience Committee to enable the Committee to look more closely at the current reporting on complaint measuring and deadlines.
- Board praised the current combined agency approach to compliance, particularly around electrical testing.
- Recent concerns from the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee relating to lift inspections had since been investigated and resolved by the compliance team.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Board reviewed the Management Accounts. Board reflected upon the RAG (red, amber and green) status which made the accounts easier to understand and gave a good overview to Board.

The Board noted and questioned the rising number of voids and why this was happening. Despite review, there had been no clear reasons for the increase, but this would be continued to be monitored.

RISK MANAGEMENT QUARTERLY REVIEW

The quarterly report provided an update and overview of emerging risks and risks on a wider national context, specifically relating to the Consumer Standards Update, Building Safety Act 2022 and recent concerns within the sector regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). The wider Risk Register was also reviewed by the Board.

A new Risk Strategy had been reviewed by the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee at its October 2023 meeting.

Board recognised the importance of cross referencing to recent deep dives. Previous deep dives had also been shared with other Committees such as the Damp and Mould deep dive with the Customer Experience Committee.

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30 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN INCLUDING STRESS TESTING AND VALUE FOR MONEY

A review of stress testing scenarios had taken place in summer 2022 and the Business Plan had been presented to Board in May 2023. Stress test scenarios were updated, e.g., for interest rates changes, to ensure they remain relevant.

Board noted that there were various mechanisms to monitor potential triggers such as budget and business plan work, management accounts and quarterly reporting to the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee. This helped to ensure that there were no unforeseen risks with the Plan. Board also recognised that whilst stress testing was an indication, there had been lots of good work undertaken on the Plan and therefore this would help mitigate matters if a major issue arose.

Board also recognised that the organisation was proactive with disposals and that this was an important part of mitigation. Board felt there should be a specific measure for measuring this and the associated attempt to reach net zero.

BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions being reviewed were for next year's Business Plan.

Board noted the salary increase recommendation for staff which would be decided by Board following review by Colleague and Culture Committee at its November 2023 meeting.

The GCH Rent Task and Finish Group would be re-established temporarily during November 2023 to enable a recommendation to Board in December 2023 for the rent increase due to the continuing high levels of inflation and concerns for affordability for customers.

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT AND HO SELF-ASSESSMENT

The annual report was based on the outturn in 2022-23. In the last year substantial work had been undertaken around the management of complaints and it had been recognised that improvements in the consistency and quality of our approach had been gained from the formation of the new customer satisfaction team.

Board praised the new approach to complaints and the importance of recognising that complaints provided key opportunities for improvement going forward.

The self-assessment had been enhanced following review at the August 2023 Customer Experience Committee meeting and more emphasis had been placed on the quality assurance approaches that have been introduced.

It was recognised the intention going forward for Board members to be involved in reviewing complaints after they had been resolved to provide an opportunity for members to gain assurance and look at the team's workings.

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Whilst the Board approved the self-assessment, this was subject to the Customer Experience Committee undertaking a final review at its meeting on 30th November 2023.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND BOARD ASSURANCE STRATEGY

The Strategy was presented in a revised format following discussions on risk appetite at the October 2023 Board Strategy Day. The new Strategy was now a more high-level document and had been reviewed by the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

Board felt the Strategy was well presented and dynamic and could be actively used in the management of risk.

BOARD APPRAISAL OUTCOME REPORT

All Board members had undertaken an appraisal during the summer. These provided the opportunity for members to focus on their specific development outcomes and those of the wider Board.

The appraisals reflected that there had been a large amount of change in the organisation over the past couple of years with a new CEO and Chair of Board, alongside new Board members.

Board recognised the importance of undertaking annual appraisals to focus on Board member's objectives and how these linked to GCH's aims as well as ensuring the Board benefited from a diverse range of skills.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

As three Board members would be reaching the end of their term in December 2023, a recruitment process had recently been undertaken to recruit replacement Board members specifically with skills in data and HR to start in January 2024.

The interviews had taken place in October 2023 with a panel of both Board members and senior officers alongside a separate panel of officers and customers.

Two members had been recommended out of those interviewed for appointment and Board agreed that these members should be appointed subject to any final HR checks and references.

INTERNAL AUDIT TENDER

A tender process had recently been completed for the provision of internal audit services. Following the tender and review by the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee a new provider had been recommended for appointment and Board agreed this appointment to commence from April 2024.

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COMMITTEE MEETING UPDATES

Towards the end of the meeting Chairs updates were received from each of the Board committee meetings held over the last quarter and the Board action log and Workplan was reviewed.

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