

Viewpoint Housing Association Ltd

Report on Annual General Meeting 2021

Viewpoint Housing Association Ltd held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 21st September 2021.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic it was decided that this year the AGM would not be held in a venue that members would be able to attend. Instead, it was decided to hold the AGM virtually, using Cisco Webex.

8 Viewpoint members attended the AGM via Cisco Webex. 7 members nominated proxies to represent them, and 6 members attended in person. There were apologies from 36 members.

Minutes of the AGM will be produced and distributed to members prior to the 2022 AGM. In the meantime this Report updates on proceedings, and decisions, at the AGM.

Annual General Meeting

1. Welcome and Apologies

There being a quorum present, either attending in person, via Cisco Webex, or via nominated proxy, the Chair welcomed all and opened the meeting, noting also that there were apologies from 36 members.

2. Minute of previous meeting and matters arising

The minute of the AGM of 22nd September 2020 was proposed, seconded and approved.

3. Chair's report for the year

The Chair presented his report for the year 2020-21, as set out at Appendix 1 to this Report.

4. Financial statements for the year to 31st March 2021

The Chair invited the Director of Finance and Assets to comment on the financial statements for the period to 31st March 2021.

The Director of Finance and Assets presented on the financial statements for the period to 31st March 2021, as set out at Appendix 2 to this report.

5. Elections to the Board

The Secretary noted that, in accordance with Viewpoint's Rules (Rules 39.1 and 39.2) one third of Board Members (not including Co-optees or those appointed to fill a casual vacancy) required to retire at this year's AGM. These were the Board Members who had served longest since the date of their last election. The Secretary noted that this year the Board Members in this category were Ms Kate Kennedy, Ms Caroline Jardine, and Mr David McIntosh.

Further, it was noted that, in accordance with Rule 39.3, Board Members were also required to retire if, since the last AGM, they had been co-opted onto the Board under Rule 42.1, and that this year Mr Jack Clyne fell into this category.

It was noted that, in accordance with Rule 39.4 all four retiring Board Members had indicated that they were willing to stand for election to the Board, without nomination.

It was noted that, prior to this year's meeting, no nominations for appointment to the Board of Management had been received from members, and in accordance with Rule 40.1, given that there were fewer individuals standing for election than there were vacancies for Elected Members on the Board, it was not necessary on this occasion to hold a vote in relation to appointment to the Board. The Secretary therefore declared Ms Kennedy, Ms Jardine, Mr McIntosh, and Mr Clyne appointed to the Board of Management.

6. Appointment of the Auditor

The Chair noted that, under clause 72.1 of the Rules of the Association, the meeting was required to appoint a properly qualified auditor and to set their remuneration. The Chair advised that, in 2019-20 a tender exercise was carried out and Alexander Sloan was selected as preferred auditor for a period of 5 years.

The Chair noted that Alexander Sloan had confirmed that they were willing to be reappointed, and invited the meeting to agree to the reappointment of Alexander Sloan as the statutory auditor of the Association for the coming year. The re-appointment of Alexander Sloan & Co as auditor was proposed, seconded, and approved by the meeting.

7. Close of the Meeting

The Chair thanked all those who had participated in the meeting, either in person, via Cisco Webex, or via proxy, and the formal business of the meeting having been concluded, drew the meeting to a close, albeit with an opportunity thereafter for questions from members.

8. Questions from members

The Chair noted that the following questions had been received from members prior to the meeting:

- A member noted that about 25% of the Viewpoint flats at Kilravock were vacant, and asked what efforts were being made to fill them, as there was no evidence of any advertising. The Director of Housing and Support responded, advising that vacant flats at Viewpoint's Kilravock location were marketed via the Edinburgh Solicitors' Property Centre, as well as via Viewpoint's regular tenant newsletter, the local Grange newsletter, and also various noticeboards.
- A member also asked when quarterly meetings of residents with Viewpoint staff could be resumed now that the lounge at Kilravock was open for occasional use. The Director of Housing and Support responded, advising that estate walkabouts had been instigated at all Viewpoint locations, involving staff from both the Housing and Maintenance Teams, and that tenants would be notified of these in advance. With regard to common areas, the Director of Housing and Support advised that these had been open for about two weeks now, and officers were reviewing how this had progressed. The Director of Housing and Support noted that officers would continue to act in accordance with relevant guidance, and that officers would not introduce these meetings without appropriate measures in place.
- A member asked what percentage of care home residents were paying the full charge. The Director of Finance and Assets advised that the most recent figure reported to the relevant Short Life Working Group on behalf of the Board was (as at the 31 August 2021) 80% private/20% local authority funded.

The Chair invited questions from members in attendance at today's meeting, whether in person or via Cisco Webex:

- A member asked why the Housing Support review was taking so long, particularly as the outcome of the review might have a big impact on supported tenants. The Director of Housing and Support responded, advising that tenants would be written to shortly in relation to the outcome of the consultation. In relation to a follow up question in relation to Edinburgh lagging behind other local authority areas, the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Housing and Support noted that different local authorities took decisions on funding at different times, and that it was thereafter up to relevant providers to make decisions on how this would impact on the delivery of their services accordingly.
- A member noted that there had been an allegation of fraud within Viewpoint, which was concerning, and asked what this entailed. The Chief Executive Officer responded, advising that a Viewpoint staff member made an allegation in relation to a former staff member, which was independently reviewed, and found not to be proven. The Chief Executive Officer explained that this was part of the organisational whistleblowing process and, in response to a follow up question from the member, confirmed that there had been no finding of any financial loss resulting from the allegation.

Appendix 1

Annual Report from the Chair

Strategic Plan

It is important that we have a vision and an understanding of our strategic direction. Our progress with developing our Strategic Plan has been affected by the ongoing Covid pandemic, and the consequent change in the delivery of services particularly in the care and support of our most vulnerable tenants and residents. Undoubtedly these have been difficult times but as an organisation we have worked together to ensure we remain a strong organisation. Our current Strategic Plan, with links into business planning, strategic objectives and individual department plans, was published in March 2021, and clearly defines our objectives for this financial year. Our objectives are all interdependent with an overriding priority to ensure that our current properties and care homes are fit for purpose and that we deliver a customer focussed service. The current Strategic Plan, which is available on our website, sets out the objectives for this year with an indication of our intentions in the future. At a Board Away day in June this year each of the directorates presented the proposed draft strategy for their area of work for the coming three years and beyond. The work on the plan has brought a new focus to the whole organisation, giving each team clear direction and an understanding of what we need to do together to deliver our promises to tenants and residents. What we are striving for is corporate ownership throughout the whole organisation of what we need to achieve; what needs to be delivered whilst improving our customer focus.

Governance and the Scottish Housing Regulator

At the end of March the Scottish Housing Regulator published its Engagement plan for Viewpoint for the year 31 March 2021 to the 31 March 2022. This stated “Our current assessment is that Viewpoint is working towards compliance with the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management.” This was provoked by the findings of an investigation into an unsubstantiated allegation of malpractice from a former employee. The investigation showed up some weaknesses in internal financial controls and procurement processes. Throughout the last six months the Board set up a short life working group which has been supervising our Operational Governance Action Plan to address the identified issues. It is our intention that when Viewpoint supplies its Annual Assurance statement to the Regulator in October this year we will be able to demonstrate that Viewpoint complies with all the Regulatory Standards.

Assets and EESH2

We have many lovely old buildings in Viewpoint stock however some of these will be very hard to bring up to the energy efficiency requirements expected by the Scottish Government. With the COP26 conference coming to Glasgow we have all been made aware of our responsibilities to improve not only energy efficiency but to consider the legislative requirements of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) alongside the demands of the Climate Change Plan. To do this we will need to understand fully the levels of investment required within some of our most challenging properties. We are currently commissioning a new stock condition survey to provide up to date information on the condition of all our buildings and the levels of investment that will be required to fulfil the legislative standards. In the coming year the Board will have some difficult decisions to consider about the future investment in our stock whilst trying to keep our rents affordable.

Financial Resilience

During the pandemic Viewpoint has had to respond rapidly as the public health constraints impact on our ability to let empty properties, move new residents into care homes, and generally manage the other aspects of our daily life. These things impact the financial bottom line, and the Board set up a Financial Resilience Working Group to provide monthly monitoring of the financial figures to scrutinise the implications of the pandemic and the particular areas of concern with a clear aim of ensuring longer term financial sustainability. This has been extremely valuable in monitoring key areas of concern such as the increasing number of void properties and the number of care home vacancies. We continue to have a strong balance sheet thanks to careful stewardship of our resources.

Care Homes and Housing Support

The pandemic has had a detrimental effect on many organisations and in particular some of the care homes across the country. Viewpoint are extremely fortunate that in the current environment our three care homes are still very much in high demand. They are regularly inspected and have had even more scrutiny throughout the pandemic and are all rated 5 by the Care Inspectorate. The pandemic has put a tremendous strain on all of our staff but particularly the care home staff. During the most challenging times in the care homes we have retained our extremely high standards and ensured that the health, well-being and safety of our residents has remained the main priority.

As well as our care homes we also provide housing support and care @home to our tenants across our area. In the past few months, due to the removal of local authority funding, we have undertaken a thorough review of how this service is provided and how it can continue in the future. It is intended that this will be concluded by 31 March 2022.

The housing support staff and the Care Home staff, in fact all our staff, have shown outstanding resilience and performed over and above the call of duty during this ongoing pandemic. They have all been amazing in their dedication to our tenants and residents whilst following the national guidelines, and will continue to do so as restrictions continue to ease over the coming months.

Tenant Participation

Tenant involvement plays an important part in formulating and agreeing the Association's aims and objectives. We can only improve what we do if we listen to our tenants and communicate with them effectively. The tenant groups are the representative bodies for all our tenants and are recognised by the Board and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Despite the constraints of the Covid pandemic, tenants continue to be involved in the recruitment of new staff members, policy and service reviews, consultation, planning and editing our tenant newspaper, Newspoint, and how we can continue to improve our service delivery going forward. Connecting Scotland delivered 25 iPads which enabled 25 more tenants to become digitally connected. We are currently agreeing a timetable to restart regular tenant meetings, and we would like to hold a tenants conference later in the financial year. The Board continue to be pleased with the ongoing progress of the tenant participation strategy and the outstanding work of our TP Co-ordinator.

Another year of Covid

A report of the year at Viewpoint must include the impact the pandemic has had, and continues to have, on our work and our planned objectives. In common with other housing associations we have experienced slow take up of our empty properties, staff shortages and subsequent difficulties in

recruitment across the whole business but particularly care, an inability to engage face to face with our customers as well as a reduced maintenance service due to the necessary restrictions to keep our tenants and residents as well as our staff safe. Our tenants and residents, many of whom are single and elderly, have been frustrated at not being able to socialise with their friends and family. At the same time the constraints imposed by Covid have forced Viewpoint to assess how much of what we do that can be done remotely through digital links. In the future we can take advantage of this experience to increase our use of digital technology in ways that makes life easier for staff and tenants. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the additional effort made by all our staff through this difficult period, and to thank them for embracing the changes.

Outlook for next year

As we gradually move out of pandemic constraints, we have ambitious plans to catch up on our building maintenance, recruit to fill our vacancies and transform our housing support services. We will publish our three year strategy and business plan and take advantage of being able to meet face to face once more to improve the level of communication within the organisation and more importantly with our tenants and residents. Viewpoint has an exciting year ahead!

Iain Thompson
Chair of the Board

Appendix 2

Presentation by the Director of Finance and Assets

Review of Financial Performance

Income for Year		Last Year
• From affordable lettings	£8.6m	£8.6m
• From care homes	£9.1m	£8.7m
• Total Income	£17.7m	£17.3m

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joy in later years

Review of Financial Performance

Operating Costs for Year		Last Year
• From affordable lettings	£7.6m	£7.8m
• From care homes	£9.1m	£8.6m
• Total Operating Costs	£16.7m	£16.4m

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Review of Financial Performance

Surplus for Year

		Last Year
• From affordable lettings	£1.0m	£0.8m
• From care homes	<u>£0.1m</u>	<u>£0.1m</u>
• Operating Surplus	£1.1m	£0.9m
• Interest/Finance Charges/ Movement in investments	£0.4m	(£0.0m)
• Exceptional item	-	(£0.5m)
• Total Surplus	£1.5m	£0.4m

Review of Financial Performance

Net Assets as at 31 March 2021

		Last Year
Non Current Assets	£42.9m	£43.9m
Current Assets	£10.1m	£9.5m
Creditors	(£9.9m)	(£10.0m)
Deferred Income	(£12.9m)	(£13.5m)
Net Assets	£30.2m	£29.9m

Review of Financial Performance

Movement in cash balances in the year

Operating Surplus	£1.5m
Non cash items	£0.7m
Change in debtors/creditors	£(0.8m)
Investing in activities	£(0.7m)
Loans received/repaid	£(0.5m)
Interest received/paid	<u>£(0.1m)</u>
Increase in cash	£0.1m
Cash at beginning of year	<u>£8.4m</u>
Cash at end of year	<u>£8.5m</u>



Review of Financial Performance

Looking forward ...

Budget for 21/22 -

- Income £16.5m
- Operating Costs £16.4m
- Surplus £0.1m

The budget also included a further investment in our properties of £5.5m (including capital works of £3.2m)



Review of Financial Performance

Year ended 31 March 2021

Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 21st September 2021

Howard Vaughan Director of Finance and Assets

