

Annual Report from the Chair of the Board 2022 - 2023

Introduction

My purpose in reporting to you this afternoon is to give you more detail and understanding of our business over the past year but also the current direction at Viewpoint. Viewpoint is an organisation that exists to help people whether that be in the provision of housing or specialist care and support, and the formal Board of Trustees report doesn't do justice to the person to person interaction that makes Viewpoint what it is: a person-centred, forward thinking, high performing organisation. There are two sets of people who are responsible for the planning and delivery of our business through the challenging times we continue to face. First is our Executive Team led by Jean Gray our CEO. Their vision, knowledge and understanding of the sector continues to improve performance and achieve outcomes whilst continuing to work closely with our Regulators. . Secondly is our Board of Trustees, who as the governing body continue to be strategic, supportive and challenging with a real focus on the future of the organisation and our tenants and residents.

I would like to thank all of these people for their work supporting the aims and objectives of Viewpoint over the past year.

Board meetings and membership

There are currently 10 Board members, 2 of whom are retiring at this AGM. During the year there were 8 regular Board meetings in addition to our 2 away days. These away days are a great opportunity for the Trustees and Executive team to consider opportunities and plan our strategy for the coming years together. The Board has two committees, the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and the Operations Committee both meet 4 times a year. The committees discuss their strategic and operational remits in greater detail at these meetings, consequently enabling the Board to have a strong focus on strategy throughout the year.

Governance and the Scottish Housing Regulator

At the beginning of the reporting year, following the submission of our Annual Assurance Statement, the Regulator agreed that Viewpoint was compliant with the regulatory standards. This marked the successful completion of a long process to satisfy the regulator and ourselves that we had corrected the governance issues identified in earlier years and enabled the organisation to move forward. The Board and Audit Committee regularly reviews the risk register and the risk appetite as well as other areas of compliance within the organisation to continually assure ourselves that we remain compliant.

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.

Tenants continue to be involved in the recruitment of new staff members, policy and service reviews, consultation and planning and editing our tenant newspaper, Newpoint. Over the past year the Customer Service Standards Review Group completed a major piece of work which resulted in a report to the Board. Members of the Review Group presented their findings to the May Board meeting, and the Board approved their recommended new Customer Services Standards. Board members were very grateful to the Tenants Group for their hard work in preparing the report.

It is important that as an organisation we continue to have tenant participation. It is a huge commitment as legislation is always changing. We are fortunate at Viewpoint that we have a core group of tenants who are willing to get involved, their voice is important and as I said as a Board we are grateful for all they do.

Housing Services

Our welfare rights service continued to provide invaluable support to our tenants, assisting our tenants to secure an overall financial gain to their benefit of just over £1million in 2022/23. We continue to work with our ARCHIE partners to deliver additional services, such as access to debt advice and worked during 2022/23 to put in place an energy advice service for the new financial year.

Our housing team restructured on the 1 April 2022, following the regrettable withdrawal of funding to provide support services to our tenants in sheltered housing, by the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership.

We concluded work on our Tenant Satisfaction Survey and our tenants started scrutiny activity on our customer service standards. We also reviewed our Tenant Participation Strategy and approved our strategy for the next 3 years, seeking to build further on our work to date.

In anticipation of the analogue to digital switchover at the end of 2025, we started a programme to upgrade our telecare to be 'digitally ready'.

Assets and EESSH2

We have many lovely old buildings in the Viewpoint stock however some of these will be extremely difficult to achieve the energy efficiency requirements expected by the Scottish Government. Over the past year we have continued to survey our buildings which will enable us to create a detailed portfolio of our stock to inform future decisions. We continue to

invest over £5 million per annum into our stock in response and planned maintenance carried out by the Assets team.

Financial Resilience

During the pandemic Viewpoint had to respond rapidly as the public health constraints impacted on our ability to let empty properties; move new residents into care homes and generally manage the many other aspects of the services we deliver to our tenants and residents. Ultimately these impact on the financial bottom line, and as a result the Board set up a Financial Resilience Working Group to monitor the financial figures and to scrutinise the implications of the pandemic and the identified areas of concern with a clear aim of ensuring longer term financial sustainability. During the past year, with business returning to more normal operation, the Board decided to wind up the Resilience working group and incorporate its responsibilities into the remit of the Audit and Risk Committee, now called the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. The valuable indicators of financial performance that were prepared for the Resilience WG are now being made available to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

Care Homes

The pandemic has had a detrimental effect on many organisations and in particular many of the care homes across the country. Our Care Home in Trinity, Lennox House, following the pandemic became reliant on agency staff. The recruitment and retention of staff across the care sector was and still is a national issues. As a Board we continued to monitor the situation closely. As well as the staffing crisis the building itself was not fit for purpose to provide care to future requirements. In consideration of these things together, the Board after a lengthy process decided that Lennox House should be closed as a Care Home. The closure of Lennox House was carried out smoothly, and in collaboration with the Local Authority all the residents were relocated into new care homes by December 2022.

The future of Care in Scotland remains under review as the Scottish Government considers its National Care Strategy. At the moment we cannot predict what impact this will have on Viewpoint's care services so for now we continue to plan for the future and will consider any changes as they are agreed.

All our staff, have shown outstanding resilience and continued to provide services over and above the call of duty both during and post pandemic. They have all been amazing in their commitment and dedication to our tenants and residents whilst following the national guideline and on behalf of the Board we are grateful for all that they do.

Yet another year of Covid

It is important that in this report includes 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, significant staff shortages and subsequent difficulties in recruitment across the whole business but particularly in care. Despite a feeling of normality, Covid infections are still high in the Edinburgh area and we must remain extremely vigilant, especially with respect to our vulnerable tenants and residents.

Outlook for next year

We are now in year two of our current three year strategy and business plan, and we are now considering what we aim to do in the subsequent three years and beyond. Our CEO and Executive Team continues to inspire us with their ideas of how Viewpoint can continue to improve and grow in the future whilst remaining compliant in all that we do.

Thanks and farewell

Before I finish I must record my thanks to three people who made a large contribution to Viewpoint over recent years. In December 2022 Ann Wood, our Director of Care moved on and we are grateful for all she did for the organisation especially throughout the pandemic. A special thank you to both Carol Lumsden and Kate Kennedy, who are stepping down from the Board. Carol brought a wealth of experience to our Board discussions particularly related to health and social care as well as taking on the role of Chair of the newly formed Operations Committee. Kate is a current HR professional, and her presence has been extremely valuable to the Board particularly in relation to staffing matters and the challenges we face in recruitment and retention. Thank you very much for your contribution and support during your time at Viewpoint, and best wishes for your future.

The housing and care sectors continue to face significant challenges. At Viewpoint we remain focussed on continual improvement and a clear person-centred approach for our tenants and residents. As well as our tenants and residents our staff are key in all that we do and from the Board we would like to thank them for their continued hard work to deliver the high level of services we do.

I would also like to give a personal thank you to the Board who continue to give me support and ensure that as the governing body we discuss and deliberate matters making important decision to benefit Viewpoint in the future.

Iain Thompson
Chair of the Board