**Thursday 27 June 2024**

##### **Note of actions**

**Attendance**

Chair of the GBM forum Freya Lees (Grampian HA) welcomed 16 attendees to the first meeting of the forum.

**GBM Launch Event in April**

Alan Stokes (SFHA) thanked those who were able to attend the GBM forum launch event on 16 April 2024. Alan gave a summary [the group exercise](https://www.sfha.co.uk/download.php?file=2480) that took place on the day, identifying areas of success and challenges faced by governing body members. There was broad agreement with the points raised in the note, with the following additional challenges highlighted:

* The Housing Bill and its potential implications
* Expectations for housing associations to house more homeless applicants through section 5 referrals
* Staff well-being
* Requests to front fund developments

**Action 1 –** SFHA and Chair to consider the note of the group exercise and additional points raised in drafting future agendas for the GBM Forum.

**Draft remit of the forum**

Alan provided an overview of the [Draft remit of the forum](https://www.sfha.co.uk/download.php?file=2481) and asked for comment from the group. There was broad agreement on the majority of the content, with most discussion focussed on the frequency of meetings.

**Action 2** – SFHA to issue a poll to all members of the forum asking if meetings should be quarterly or every six months.

**Action 3 –** SFHA to ensure it considers content and timing of other conferences/training offered by other organisations (such as SHARE and CIH) when drafting the programme for the Governing Body Members’ Conference (to take place in Feb 2025). This is with a view to minimising duplication of topics and speakers.

**Action 4 –** SFHA to contact members who highlighted that they were unable to access the GBM Forum Teams channel and resolve any issues.

**Governing body member recruitment**

Attendees were split into four smaller groups to discuss the challenges faced in recruiting new governing body members. As outlined below, the group were given five questions to consider and fed back some key points following the discussion:

1. ***How do you identify any skills gaps on your governing body? Are there any particular skills or knowledge that you find difficult to attract to your board?***

* Approaches to identifying skills gaps varied, with appraisal, induction and board away days all highlighted as crucial mechanisms.
* Finance, Legal and HR were the skills some highlighted as particularly challenging to attract to their board.
* It was highlighted that when bringing those with professional skills onto the board, it is important to ensure they do not become involved in operational matters due to their expertise in that area. Some also queried whether some professional skills are needed on the board directly, due to the ability for the board to get independent advice.

1. ***What is the split of tenants and non-tenants on your board?  Do you have any difficulties attracting tenant members?***

* The split varied, with many highlighting that attracting tenant members had been a challenge. Some felt this was because many tenants just want to get their keys and be left alone, only wishing to contact the housing association when something is wrong.
* It was highlighted how the role of a GBM can appear daunting and can scare people off. Many had mechanisms in place when recruiting, such as an informal chat with office bearers, to try and help explain the role and support that would be available to new GBMs.

1. ***Do you have any issues achieving diversity on your board?  What steps have you taken to look at this, e.g. finding ways to encourage younger people to join the GBM; achieving gender balance; encouraging people from different ethnic groups to join.***

* Many highlighted how remote/hybrid meetings had helped to achieve a more diverse makeup on the board, as this had helped attract GBMs that would not otherwise have been able to join.
* Attracting younger members was highlighted by many as a challenge, but some noted that the average age of their governing body is decreasing.
* The importance of attracting a diverse membership to ensure a wide variety of perspectives was highlighted.

1. ***Are there any other issues you have encountered in recruiting GBMs or any good practice you would like to share?***

* Retention of existing members was highlighted as equally important, with induction, training and contact in between meetings essential to this. Such support mechanisms as “buddy” systems were also flagged up as useful to new GBMs.
* Ways of disseminating information electronically such as committee portals were highlighted as essential to ensuring GBMs have access to the information they need, and never feel isolated.

1. ***What guidance and support would you like to see from SFHA in this area?***

* Members of the group were keen to feed into SFHA’s upcoming reviews of its [Governing body member annual review](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/sfha-governing-body-members-annual-review) and [Governing body members succession planning and recruitment guidance](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/sfha-governing-body-members-annual-review).
* Alan also highlighted SFHA is hoping to refresh and establish its On Board register, which could be another source of new GBMs within the sector.

**Action 5** – SFHA to issue any prompt questions associated with group exercises to attendees in advance of forum meetings.

**Action 6 –** SFHA to input feedback received into its upcoming review of its [Governing Body Member Succession Planning and Recruitment](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/sfha-governing-body-member-succession-planning-and-recruitment-guidance) and [Governing Body Member Annual Review guidance](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/sfha-governing-body-members-annual-review).

**Get governance guidance review**

Alan Stokes provided an update of the ongoing review of existing SFHA Get Governance guidance, with two minor updates to be published in July to the [Model Role Descriptions for Governing Body Members](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/sfha-model-role-descriptions-for-governing-body-members-and-office-bearers) and [Governing Body Members’ Guide](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/sfha-governing-body-members-guide---slight-update) documents.

SFHA will next review the [Model Codes of Conduct for Governing Body Members](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/update-to-sfha-model-codes-of-conduct-for-staff-and-governing-body-members) and [Staff](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/model-code-of-conduct-for-staff-and-accompanying-guidance-april-2021), with a view to publishing updated versions in September. Three members of the forum volunteered to be a part of a small working group feeding into this review.

**Action 7 –** SFHA to share final versions of the [Governing Body Members’ Guide](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/sfha-governing-body-members-guide---slight-update) and [Model Role Descriptions for GBMs and office bearers](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/sfha-model-role-descriptions-for-governing-body-members-and-office-bearers) with members of the forum once finalised.

**Action 8 –** SFHA to seek volunteers from the forum to sit on a small working group of members considering an update to the [Model Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members](http://www.sfha.co.uk/our-work/policy-category/governance-and-regulation/sub-category/governance/policy-article/update-to-sfha-model-codes-of-conduct-for-staff-and-governing-body-members).

**SFHA events and forums update**

Alan highlighted the following upcoming SFHA events that may be of interest to members of the group:

* [SFHA Governance Conference (10 Sept)](https://www.sfha.co.uk/whats-on/event-details/governance-conference-2024)
* [SFHA AGM (18 Sept)](https://www.sfha.co.uk/whats-on/event-details/sfha-49th-annual-general-meeting-agm)
* [SFHA Risk Conference (25 Sept)](https://www.sfha.co.uk/whats-on/event-details/risk-conference-2024)
* [SFHA Leadership Conference (2 Oct)](https://www.sfha.co.uk/whats-on/event-details/leadership-conference-2024)
* [SFHA Finance Conference (12-13 Nov)](https://www.sfha.co.uk/whats-on/event-details/finance-conference-2024)

**Future topics for breakout discussions/presentations**

Freya highlighted some potential future topics, based on the note of the group exercise at the launch event:

* GBM remuneration
* Constructive challenge and its impact on relationships with staff
* Tenant voice/tenant participation

Some other potential topics were identified by the group:

* The GBM’s role as an employer
* How to be assured of the accuracy of data/what is being presented to the governing body

**Action 9** – SFHA and Chair to agree topic for group discussion/presentation from those identified and share with the forum in advance of next meeting.

**Next meeting**

The provisional date for next meeting is **Friday 6 December at 11am** (via Zoom), but this will be brought forward if the result of the poll is in favour of quarterly meetings.