Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes of a meeting held at 3.30pm on **Thursday 29 January 2026** via Microsoft Teams.

Present	Robin Blacklock, Ashley Campbell, Nicola Cooper, Chris Elliott, Christa Reekie (joined meeting at 3.40pm) Rob Rowe, James Rowney, Alan Stewart, Andrew Watson (left meeting at 5.15pm) Margaret Whoriskey (Chair), Bryony Willett
In attendance	Angela Currie (Chief Executive), Steven Good (Director of Asset Management), Donna Henderson (Director of Strategic Finance), Wendy Russell (Director of Business Support & Transformation), Esther Wilson (Director of Customer Services)
Apologies	Adele Erwin, Kathleen McAdams

1.	**Introduction & Apologies**
	The Chair welcomed Board Members to the meeting.
	All Members were happy for the meeting to be recorded.
2.	**Declarations of Interest**
	RR declared his interest (as a tenant) in Agenda item 5.2 Annual Budget & Rent Increase 2026-27. The Chair confirmed that she was happy for RR to remain in the meeting for the discussion.
	WR declared interest on behalf of the Executive Leadership Team in item 5.1 Pay Review Proposals 2026-27.
3.	**Minutes**
3.1	**Board Minutes (BRD30 Nov 25)**
Discussion	The Board Minutes (BRD30 Nov 25) were discussed, and the Board queried if there was any feedback from the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) who had attended the meeting, AC had noted that there was not any feedback received to date and would communicate to Board when received.
Decision	The Board Minutes (BRD30 Nov 25) were agreed and **approved** as a correct record and signed by the Vice Chair following the meeting.
Decision	The Board **noted** the update.
3.2	**People Committee Minutes (PPL13 Dec 25)**
Discussion	(CR joined meeting at 3.40pm) The Chair of the People Committee provided Board with an update, noting: • People Committee fully reviewed and endorsed the Pay & Benefits Proposal for 2026–27, including an increase to the Pension 1 contribution and the introduction of annual leave sell-back, with a review planned for the end of 2026. • The new Conflict Resolution Policy was approved, replacing the former Grievance Policy, and has been implemented with training underway. • The Committee noted improved employee turnover and continued effective management of employee absence. • Good progress was reported on delivery of the People & Engagement Strategy, with assurance that sufficient resources

	and external support are in place, including for implementation of a new HR and Payroll system. • The Committee welcomed the positive Investors in People assessment outcome and discussed the potential to achieve Platinum at an earlier stage, subject to resources. • Proposed changes to the ELT portfolio were considered, as outlined in the Governance Matters paper (item 8.2).	
Decision	The Board **noted** the update.	
4	**Matters Arising**	
4.1	**It's Good to Know**	
Report Summary	This provided Board with an update on key issues happening in Hanover that are not included in Board papers through the formal Board or Committee meeting cycle.	
Discussion	WR provided a brief overview, and the Board discussed the pilot designated call service and EW explained that Hanover currently does not have a single designated contact centre; instead, non-repairs calls are currently handled by staff across three housing teams on a rota basis. This pilot approach was introduced to reduce abandoned calls and has so far shown positive results, with staff engagement and learning as it develops. The Board discussed the Rubixx system implementation and potential risks (such as interfaces). DH noted that progress is well advanced and testing largely complete ahead of the planned 1 April go live and acknowledged potential risks discussed, noting that Hanover is developing contingency planning as part of the final go-live preparations.	
Decision	The Board acknowledged the update.	
4.2	**Board Actions**	
Report Summary	This provided Board with an update on outstanding Board Actions.	
Discussion	AC provided Board with an update on the manifesto work and sector engagement, noting that a meeting is planned for the end of February 2026 with Chief Executives of specialist housing associations to explore shared objectives, opportunities for collaboration, and more effective engagement with representative bodies to influence policy. The Chair and Board members gave their strong support for this, and AC will provide an update at next Board meeting.	**AC**
Decision	The Board acknowledged the update.	
5.	**Strategy Spotlight**	
5.1	**Pay Review Proposals 2026-27**	
Report Summary	This paper sets out proposal to enhance our pay & benefits offer to employees from 1 April 2026. These proposals have been scrutinised and are now recommended to Board by the People Committee. These proposals have been designed to build on the major changes that were made 3 years ago and have been developed in conjunction with our employee representative group, Our Voice.	
Discussion	The Board sought clarification that the benchmarking comparisons were made on a like-for-like, pro-rata basis to reflect different working hours, which WR confirmed.	

The Board queried (via Board Platform) if the impact of the SLW, including the additional uplifts for staff moving one or two steps up, is comparable with similar organisations in Scotland, WR confirmed that it was.

The Board sought clarification on whether the financial impact figures were cumulative across years; DH explained that year one includes implementation costs, which are then built into the ongoing pay and salary framework and rebased in future years.

The Board suggested (via Board Platform) that the impact of any changes should be measured. WR explained that measures are already being put in place, and this will be brought back to People Committee through reporting on the People Indicators.

Decision

The Board **considered and approved** the pay and benefits proposals along with the resource implications for the specific elements impacting the budget in 2026/27 with the key costed elements being:

- Pension 1 Employer Contribution uplift from 3% to 4%
- Shorter annual leave cycle to reach the maximum
- Sell Back of Annual Leave
- Increase Health Cash Plan level

5.2 **Annual Budget & Rent Increase 2026-27**

Report Summary

This report presented Board with the forecast out-turn for 2025/26 as well as the proposed budget for 2026/27. There is a base budget proposal with various scenarios modelled for consideration.

Discussion

DH presented the budget slides which have been uploaded to the Board platform following the meeting, highlighting the rationale for the proposed rent increase and key assumptions underpinning the budget. DH explained that the budget had undergone multiple iterations and scrutiny, considering different rent levels, asset spends, and salary increases, with ELT recommending a 5.5% rent increase. Key changes since the November assumptions include higher maintenance and remodelling costs, increased pay and salary costs due to the SLW and differentials and reduced achievable savings. DH noted ongoing pressures such as past service deficits, National Insurance changes, and telecare deficits, and explained that a minimum 5% increase is required to maintain covenant compliance and support long-term stock investment, although this would tighten covenant capacity.

EW summarised the rent consultation results, noting a 16% response rate, with most tenants—including those not receiving assistance with housing costs —considering the proposed increase affordable or manageable, and highlighted welfare support as a safety net for any tenants facing difficulty.

The Board noted that the proposed 5.5% rent increase is above the sector average and questioned whether any forecast surplus could be used to reduce the increase, emphasising the need to keep rents as low and affordable as possible for tenants. DH explained that surpluses are required to meet covenant requirements, support provisions for service charge write-offs, bad debts, and insurance, and that cash flow is largely being directed to maintaining existing properties, with limited capacity to offset rent increases.

The Board noted the current focus on investing in existing stock reduces debt capacity for new developments and increases interest

costs, suggesting that in future years the organisation should consider balancing cash flow to generate surpluses for capitalised maintenance and new investment. DH provided context on prior funding strategies that had used cash flow for developments rather than draw down funding.

The Board queried the significant increase in cyclical maintenance, noting that property numbers and attributes remain broadly unchanged. DH explained part of the increase reflects the rent-to-service-charge transition, while SG added that higher cyclical costs also stem from catching up on previously deferred maintenance, regulatory changes, and new health and safety requirements, including fire safety and damp/mould mitigation.

The Board queried variations in covenant projections between providers, and DH clarified that differences arise from differing treatments of depreciation and amortisation.

Decision

The Board:

- **Considered** and **commented** on the report and **approved** the proposed base budget and considered the scenarios provided.
- **Discussed** the slide presentation and **approved** the proposed rent increase.

6. Happy Customer

6.1 Care & Support Matters

Report Summary

This report provided an overview of key areas of strategic operational focus in the care and support function of the Customer Services directorate.

Discussion

EW provided a brief overview noting that the report presented the headline results from the customer satisfaction survey alongside an update on changing contractual arrangements in very sheltered housing.

Focusing on customer satisfaction, it was noted that a change in survey methodology limits direct comparison with previous years, but results show a clear upward trend, reflecting the impact of the Happy Customer strategy implemented over the past two years. Performance is improving across several indicators, broadly tracking national post-Covid satisfaction trends and sitting around peer benchmarks, with an expressed ambition to exceed this over time; the headline measures will be used in the ARC return, with fuller detail made available for further scrutiny via the Board portal. **EW/SO**

The Board discussed what “being the best” means for Hanover, noting that while customer satisfaction is improving, performance remains below average in some areas. Board reflected on how success should be defined across customer experience, affordability, financial strength and efficiency, recognising that it is not possible to lead in every area. There was agreement that a broader strategic discussion is needed to clarify priorities and ambition.

EW provided an update on the ongoing transition of very sheltered housing services, noting that contract changes are being managed across six local authority areas as the organisation moves to a self-funding model. Discussions with housing benefit teams are ongoing to ensure that eligible tenants remain protected as costs transfer into service charges, with progress being made despite differing local authority approaches.

The Board was assured that residents and families are being closely engaged throughout the process, recognising the high levels of frailty and support needs within very sheltered housing. Hanover is focused on retaining these essential services, working with local authorities and tenants to ensure continuity of support and reassurance during the transition.

Decision

The Board:

- **Considered** and **commented** on the priorities and risks identified.

7 Desirable Homes

7.1 Assets Update

Report Summary

This report provided an update on the Asset Management service to provide an update on the range of activities and challenges faced.

Discussion

SG provided a brief overview, highlighting key points around development and sustainability. SG noted that planned developments are now progressing, and the Arneil Johnson modelling work on the Asset Management Strategy will inform future business plan decisions. SG noted ongoing uncertainty with net zero and indicated that high energy efficiency standards and sustainability measures will remain a significant capital plan consideration.

In relation to the Fire Safety update, SG addressed the Scottish Fire and Rescue-related queries (via Board platform) clarifying that Hanover is responsible for compliance with fire compartmentation and “stay put” requirements, with breaches being identified and rectified internally. SG stressed that fire safety monitoring is continuous and supported by strong liaison with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, while acknowledging variability in regional approaches.

The Board discussed the Leonchoil new development and SG explained that it is progressing faster than originally expected, with a key milestone being planning consent anticipated later in February 26; once that’s secured, a more detailed project plan can be developed.

The Board praised the success of the Barrland remodelling project and asked about similar opportunities. SG noted that while the organisation has a clear understanding of potential remodelling projects, progress is limited by funding and capacity constraints, though support from the local authority may help.

Decision

The Board **considered** and **commented** on the:

- New build and remodelling projects
- Asset Management Strategy and integrated asset management project
- Capital Programme
- Sustainability and net zero
- Review of stay put and evacuation procedures

7.2 Disposal of Property – Dewar House

Report Summary

This report is seeking approval to dispose of Dewar House which is a vacant property that was built as a care home next to a development we own in Hamilton.

Discussion

SG provided a brief overview explaining that remodelling or conversion was not financially viable due to high costs, small unit numbers, and the structure of the property. SG noted the first option

	would be to offer it to other providers in the sector, but if that didn't work, a sale would be the recommendation. The Board queried whether the option of refurbishment had been fully explored. SG clarified that informal discussions with the local authority indicated funding would not be available and, even with some support, the project would not be financially viable. The Board discussed losing potential affordable housing and questioned the certainty of a £500k sale receipt given market volatility. SG confirmed there had been prior interest from buyers, supporting the valuation. AC clarified that the property had never been social housing, but a small care home built alongside very sheltered housing, which explains the cost and structural challenges for conversion.	
Decision	The Board agreed for additional documentation to fully support the recommendation prior to formal approval. ***Post Meeting Note:*** *A subsequent report was submitted to Board for approval on 10th February 2026 – Board approved the proposal to dispose of this property.*	**SG**
8.1	**Annual Procurement Report 2024-25**	
Report Summary	The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 requires RSLs with a qualifying annual spend of £5 million review their procurement strategy (now called Corporate Procurement Plan) on an annual basis and publish an Annual Procurement report.	
Discussion	DH provided a brief overview noting this would be published on the Scottish Government website as required. Activity during the year included the rollout of the Community Benefits Framework, increased use of pre-procured frameworks, and a review of terms and conditions with TC Young. The previously included action plan was removed this year as it was considered overly operational. The Board discussed payment performance via the Board Platform, which was acknowledged as below target due to manual processes; DH explained that improvement is expected following the implementation of the Rubix system. The Board also welcomed progress on collaborative procurement, including recent discussions with Bield and Trust and exploration of joint procurement approaches, reflecting the wider opportunities for collaboration across the sector. The Board **considered** and **discussed**: • the Annual Procurement Report for 2024/25 prior to its submission to the Scottish Government. • the progress of the Procurement Action Plan now incorporated into section 3 of the Annual Procurement Report.	
8.2	**Governance Matters**	
Report Summary	The Governance Matters paper sets out updates and decisions required on various governance topics now and for the year ahead.	
Discussion	WR provided a brief overview of the paper noting that she had responded to the query via the Board Platform surrounding the detail on a Notifiable Event regarding a settlement agreement.	
Decision	The Board **considered and commented** on progress of the: • Current Notifiable Events	

- Trust Tenure Properties change of Trustee
- Disclosure applications for Board Members
- ELT Portfolio Review
- Duty of Candour Report 2025
- CEO Success & Development Review

8.3 **Governance Review & Board Development**

Report Summary This paper provided an update on the Governance Action Plan progress and proposed Board Learning and Development Plan for 2026-27. The paper also provided feedback on recent consultation with Board on the Board Platform Protocol, and on the Board Strategy Day arrangements

Discussion The Board welcomed the range and flexibility of the Learning & Development sessions, noting that varied formats, timings and the availability of recordings would support better engagement.

The Chair also updated the Board on initial discussions regarding the appraisal process, including consideration of externally facilitated support alongside options for delivering elements in-house

(AW left meeting at 5.15pm)

Board discussed continuing two strategy events per year, including an hour board-only effectiveness session at the end of the October day with external facilitation, as per the appraisal proposal. Board noted that an overnight option may be added once per year, probably in October to enhance interaction.

Decision The Board **considered** and **commented** on the:

- Consolidated Governance Action Plan
- Update on the Board Platform Protocol
- Board L & D Programme for 2026-27
- Updates to the Board Code of Conduct and Membership Policy

And **approved** the proposals for the:

- Board Appraisal Process
- Board Strategy Day arrangements

8.4 **Health, Safety & Wellbeing Q3 Report**

Report Summary This report provided an update to the Board on all Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) reporting for Quarter 3 of 2025-26

Discussion WR provided a brief overview and noted that she addressed the comment via the Board Platform surrounding medication areas, confirming the low number and robust internal scrutiny.

Decision The Board:

- **Considered** and **commented** on the current data and performance levels around Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSWB) and the progress on the HSWB Plan 2024-27.

9. **AOCB**

Discussion None

Chairperson: Margaret Whoriskey

Date: 19 March 2026