

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOME GROUP SCOTLAND BOARD HELD ONLINE ON 5 FEBRUARY 2026

## Present:

Susan Deacon	Chair
Jackie McIntosh	Board Member
Emmanuel Asante	Board Member
Mark Henderson	Board Member
Gavin MacKenzie	Board Member
Helen Meehan	Board Member
June Wylie	Board Member
Andrew Wilmot	Board Member
Catherine Wood	Board Member

## In attendance:

Austin Woods	General Counsel
Will Gardner	Exec Director of Development & Investment [Items 2313/4]
Jeremy Kape	Interim Exec Director of Property and Asset [Item 2310]
Paul Walker	Executive Director of Repairs and Maintenance [Item 2311]
Bryony Willett	Director of Scotland
Chris Hopkins	Director of Finance [Item 2307 & 2308]
Helen Young	Head of Audit [Item 2318]
Ruth Corless	Governance Business Partner

## 2300 Chair's Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Grant Campbell and Robyn Inglis.

The Chair steered the Board to the focus and attention for the meeting. Changes to the running order were advised for Item 4.5 and 5.2.

## 2301 Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations were received. The Board commended Jackie on her appointment to the role of Chief Executive.

## 2302 Draft Minutes of Previous Home Group Scotland Board Meeting held 26 November 2025

The minutes of the previous meeting were considered and agreed as a true record. Amendments were made to confirm the retirees and reappointments names recorded for the AGM minutes and the November minutes. The AGM minutes would be updated to reflect the change.

The Board **APPROVED** the minutes of 26 November 2025.

## 2303 Action Points

The action updates were noted. Andrew advised the meeting with Kitson had not taken place. Action 2285 would remain open.

Bryony updated the Board on the background to Kingdom's role in Fife and historic discussions that had taken place. The continuing structure remained in place and this was not something that Home Group would want to participate in at this time. Options had actively been reconsidered.

**Action 2254** was updated to return in November 2026.

**Action 2296** and **2252** were combined and would be addressed in April 2026. Dates for all ongoing actions would be confirmed. The Board agreed that updates to the Programme of Business for items would consider an action 'closed'.

The Board **NOTED** the action points.

#### **2304 BOARD, COMMITTEES AND GENERAL COUNSEL REPORT**

The Chair noted the increased written information to the Board now provided to the Board. This was welcomed and allowed reports to be taken as read. Austin highlighted several points from the General Counsel Report.

Austin advised that remuneration of HGS Board members had been discussed at the recent Governance and People Committee. The reasons, legislation and possible options were shared. Austin advised that Home Group was keen to ensure equity across the governance structure. Assurance from the relevant regulatory bodies would be sought and an update brought back to the HGS Board on completion for further discussions on next steps.

The Board were advised of an approval for East Balornock Phase 7, a Scottish scheme given at a recent Home Board but dependent on HGS Board review and approval at this meeting.

The HGS Chair recruitment was reported as ongoing. Interest in the role was noted and updates to the Board would happen in due course. The Customer Board recruitment had been launched on 4 February.

Training opportunities for the Board had been outlined in the report. Pending final decisions all diary invites would be sent. Face to face, online and recorded options would be considered. Planned overnight meetings would be confirmed as part of this process.

The Chair invited responses from the Board to the points highlighted. The Chair confirmed Home Board's keenness to ensure equity, given the contribution made across the governance structure. Jackie asked if larger Scottish Registered Social Landlord's undertook the same approach. Bryony confirmed others' position on this and payment of office bearers. Home Group sought to explore and expand on this. Comparator information and benchmarking would be included in any subsequent report.

The Chair noted the Customer Recruitment process in place and advised the Board of Robyn's intention to step down at the AGM. Robyn's good attendance was noted. Apologies were given from Robyn for March due to employment commitments.

Austin advised that Home Board had approved the appointment of Catherine Wood to the Development Committee from next meeting, 3 March 2026. A meeting with the Chair would be arranged.

#### **Action: Austin Woods**

The Board were advised of Mark Henderson's announcement to retire.

The Board **NOTED** the General Counsel Report.

## 2305 DIRECTOR OF SCOTLAND REPORT

The report was taken as read and Bryony highlighted key points.

- Funding for net zero work in Sanquhar and Kellaholm had not been as expected. This would require reconsideration of plans, including Home Group Scotland's contribution to the project.
- The single building assessment process was ongoing. The Cladding Remediation Act assessments were in place and preferred suppliers Airey Miller had been instructed and a start date was awaited. Scottish Government may require a repeat of the single building assessment at Salamander bringing the total to three.
- The More Homes Scotland initiative had been announced but was not due to be launched until 2027/28 and HGS were pleased to feed into this. Opportunities were unclear at this time, but engagement was positive.
- Approvals to sell another property and buy with grant support from the Scottish Government had been approved through internal processes.

HGS required registration with Ofgem as a communal heating provider, in its own right rather than as part of Home Group. This would be added to the register of returns schedule and the Board's annual assurance reports.

Gavin raised the direct contract procurement process and the benefit for HGS. Bryony confirmed this was a significant purchase given the impact on customer satisfaction. Planning for the procurement of other contracts in this way had begun.

Gavin asked if gaps had been left due to recent colleague exits. Bryony confirmed aspects of roles that had been absorbed but assured the Board this would not impact her role.

Emmanuel advised a date correction on page 24 of the Director's Report – the Cabinet Secretary date was for 2025 not 2026.

June queried the optimism in property acquirement proposals given the low level of interest. Bryony confirmed that some natural 'moving on' could be expected and that sales would happen when this took place. Cost of improvements could influence owners' decision to sell, however HGS could be looking at between five and ten years to complete its property rationalisation approach.

The Chair commended the detailed update within the report.

The Board **NOTED** the Director's Report.

## 2306 Q3 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT

The KPI report was presented by Bryony. Critical KPIs were highlighted. Rent arrears had seen a slight improvement at the end of January. Ongoing support for Housing Managers was in place to support this work. Migration from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit had exacerbated the arrears problem and the action needed to resolve this where customers defaulted on payments. Direct payments for rent were arranged where possible and applicable. A quality assessment of rent arrears would take place in the next financial year with appropriate resource allocated to address the issue.

Mid-market rent void levels had improved. City fringe locations were seeing some challenges and taking longer to rent. Gavin queried the cumulative totals of figures and suggested reporting on this KPI be considered next financial year.

Bryony confirmed that the Strategic Performance Framework would be introduced and the KPIs under this framework would be reviewed and reported to HGS Board where applicable. June queried if the KPI for Customer Satisfaction also needed consideration. The Board welcomed the ongoing improvements in the reporting.

The Board **NOTED** the KPI Performance Report.

### **2307 Q3 FINANCE REPORT**

Chris Hopkins joined the meeting and updated the Board on Q3 financial performance. HGS was in a strong financial position and £2.3Million ahead of budget. This was expected to continue and was driven by low maintenance costs and a reduced level of spending over the year. Finance costs, depreciation and lower levels of borrowing than in the five-year plane were cited as factors in this position.

Gavin noted the level of detail provided and confirmed the solid position that the report illustrated.

The Board **NOTED** the Finance Report.

### **2308 5-YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN ASSUMPTIONS**

Chris presented the assumptions report and confirmed the detail within it. Chris provided the Board with clarity on the inputs to the financial plan and the rigorous way in which the risk appetite of the business and the financial envelope decisions were aligned. Chris confirmed that rent increases of CPI +1% would be applied. Bank of England targets for inflation and Retail Price Index (RPI) links to salary had been applied. Centrus had provided advice throughout the process.

Chris confirmed the detailed process which formed part of the stress testing and the development assumptions. The plan sought to build 100 new homes per year on average. The net-spend assumptions for homes in the plan had been increased reflecting a change in anticipated phasing.

The Chair acknowledged the robust governance in place which underpinned all plans and asked how the volatility of the last few years and the uncertainty that remained had been addressed. Chris confirmed that geopolitical factors were taken into consideration when making reasonable planning judgements and creating the finance plans. External factors continued to present some uncertainty. Chris outlined the geopolitical fatigue and market reactions and the reduced impact of the external factors to market fluctuations. Gavin commended the level of detail for mitigations and the scenarios outlined in the report. The balance between midmarket rents and social rent figures was noted. Strategic conversations would continue and the impact of these on the financial plan monitored.

Board members raised queries about the economic assumptions on the rent increases and noted the external factors that had been considered. The Board commended the work undertaken in producing the plan.

Jackie asked if other sector benchmarking was used, outside of Centrus advice. Chris advised that Centrus were an industry standard expert, however the

organisation applied its own assumptions on buffers and forward interest rates. External advice from lenders and treasury experts supported the business in its stress testing process. Chris confirmed that a group approach, rather than Scotland specific approach, to salary increases was applied.

The Chair noted Home Board discussions on the commitment to the Real Living Wage and the impact on internal pay scales. Bryony outlined recent work on salary scales for the Scottish sector. Roles and challenges to appointing to particular positions required some consideration and region specific benchmarking to be applied for the purposes of staff recruitment and retention.

The Board **APPROVED** the content of the 5 Year Financial Plan Assumption report.

### **2309 Q3 COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Bryony outlined the Complaints Performance report and advised the Board that a new approach to not extending complaints time was working much better and reflected in performance.

The Operational Delivery Plan gave assurance that learning from complaints and robust processes for capturing and processing actions would move forward in the next few months. Once the mechanism was set up outputs and outcomes could be reported to the Board.

The Chair asked for a focussed report to the Board on complaints learning and improvement at a future date.

**Action: Bryony Willett**

The Board **NOTED** the Complaints Performance Report.

### **2310 Q3 ASSET PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Jeremy joined the meeting to present the Asset Performance Report. Good progress on the stock condition survey target was highlighted. This was expected to be no less than 90% by the end of the year.

Strong performance on energy efficiency was report for Scotland stock. Bids for homes in Sanquhar and Kellaholm had been made however grant goal posts had now changed and the level of grant possible was uncertain. Work to confirm Home Group Scotland's contribution for the proposed work was in progress.

Jackie noted the number of homes requiring three attempts for access and asked about other options to complete stock condition surveys. Jeremy advised that forced access was not part of the legally possible route. Work continued to use all opportunities to complete the surveys, such as visits to the property for repairs. New techniques would continue to be developed to engage with customers and gain access where needed.

Catherine asked why some properties had no EPC grading. Jeremy confirmed there was no legal obligation in EPC certification, however ensuring all properties had these was the intention of Home Group overall and work would continue to complete these for all homes.

The Board **NOTED** the Asset Performance Report.

### **2311 Q3 HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Paul Walker joined the meeting to present the report and confirmed that

performance was in line with expectations in the quarter. The Board's attention was drawn to the Fire Risk assessments and follow on works. There were no high-risk actions outstanding and good performance in addressing these actions had brought figures down from 121 to 50.

A plan for the fire risk assessment action follow-up and responsive repairs had been agreed at the Health and Safety Governance Committee. This plan would be drawn up and brought to a future committee meeting.

Third party management of HGS properties was highlighted. 11 actions were outstanding and an update of these was being pursued. A joint visit was planned to ensure closure on actions for Margaretta House in Glasgow. Bryony advised the Board of the monitoring and legal processes being followed.

Statutory compliance for Legionella checks was currently 100%. However, an exercise is ongoing to survey all common areas of blocks to provide assurance that all relevant risks had been identified and were being mitigated where relevant, e.g. by treatment programmes.

Paul reported 15 cases of damp and mould falling out of the service level agreement timescales. Details of the issue were explained, and a review of processes was in place.

Gavin queried the report of auto-vent openings and asked if this was a particular issue with the new contractor. Paul confirmed the missed visits were being addressed and visits were back on track. Andrew queried the liability for damp and mould and was provided with a summary of statutory compliance requirements and the policy framework that supported obligations to customers.

The Board **NOTED** the Health and Safety Performance Report.

## **2312 Q3 OPERATIONAL DELIVERY PLAN**

Bryony confirmed the reporting frequency of this paper and the need for higher level strategic reporting to the Board. The content of this report would be considered in the future to give the balance of the Board's need to track strategic delivery.

**Action: Bryony Willett**

Bryony updated the Board on project developments and timescales. The Dundee office had been identified and was in line with Home Group objectives as a shared office space.

Discussions were now progressing around Easterhouse with the proposal of developments on derelict land. Bryony advised that regeneration may involve other tenures apart from social housing, and Home Group had proposed a similar model to the Gateshead LLP with the Local Authority (LA). Tenure diversification could apply on this site; however, no detail had yet been confirmed. Jackie proposed of the need for the LA to look beyond site-by-site development and take a more strategic view of the area. The Chair noted wider policy debate regarding the need for a more strategic approach to regional planning and economic development across Scotland.

The Board enquired on timescales and details. The Scottish Government support for private housing building was clear; however future political changes could impact current proposals.

The Board **NOTED** the Operational Delivery Plan and agreed the review of

levels of reporting to the Board.

### **2313 Q3 DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Will Gardner joined the meeting and presented the performance report. Will advised the Board that performance was consistent with the last report to Board. Delays reported were expected to catchup by year end and there would be 14 more homes delivered in the year than had been forecast. HGS had been able to take advantage of the national acquisition grant programme.

The Board were pleased to be informed of the successful completion of homes in South Queensferry for customers in time for Christmas.

Will advised the Board of very early discussions with potential investors who could provide alternative funding for Scottish housing development. Gavin noted the potential for mid-market rent developments. The Meat Market was an example of a scheme which could guide strategic discussions and opportunities. Will noted that proposals and strategic decisions could impact the overall financial plan and the balance between social rent and mid-market rent was something that needed to be considered and potentially tested at this time.

Jackie noted the positive report and in-roads to new providers that were being considered. Further understanding of decisions around localities would be welcomed. Jackie would join Kitson and Andrew's meeting. Over supply risks were discussed, most notably at Easterhouse.

**Action: Kitson Keen**

Bryony confirmed that a regional asset plan was in progress. This would be presented to the Board in due course. It was agreed training on development for the Board would be scheduled soon.

**Action: Will Gardner / Bryony Willett**

The Board **NOTED** the Development Performance Report.

### **2314 DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS**

Will presented the Development Approvals paper. Three approvals were sought in East Balornock Phase 7, Calderwood ALD (Taylor Wimpey) and Beatliewoods (Bancon Homes).

Will summarised the site-specific funding considerations and advised of the grant rates that applied. The Board considered the plans, geographical location of stock, and the tenure. Catherine sought a strategic discussion on the development location decisions. A regional asset plan update was requested.

**Action: Bryony Willett**

Emmanuel clarified some of the Net Present Value (NPV) figures and the hurdle rate details. Will explained variations in calculations of 30 years and 45 years shown in the report.

The Board queried the maintenance and management for the Calderwood proposal given the remoteness of the area and the number of homes being planned. Will assured the Board that long term maintenance was factored into the proposals.

Jackie queried the proposal in Beatliewoods with Bancon Homes as a new partner. Will assured the Board of the level of due diligence completed, and the quality of homes and openness of the developing relationship with Bancon. This opportunity provided a small trial with the hope of further growth. Gavin sought

clarity on the cross-company indemnity in place and was assured of the financial due diligence completed.

The Board **APPROVED** the development proposals in East Balornock Phase 7, Calderwood ALD-Taylor Wimpey and Beatliewoods - Bancon Homes.

### **2315 RENT CONSULTATION OUTCOME AND FINAL DECISION**

Bryony provided the Board with a summary of the feedback from the rent consultation process. 300 people had responded. Increasing engagement rates in the future would consider the best use of digital access and other communication channels.

The Board were advised that most customers did not think the rent increase was affordable. This was a greater percentage score on this same question than last year.

Bryony reminded the Board of plans for net zero improvements and the future repairs model being considered which created uncertainty. The budget proposals for 2026/2027 had sought to maximise the benefit to the customer with improvements and development of homes. The increase would allow additional homes to be built and the planned investment increase of £1.5Million would expect to see fuel costs drop as a result of net zero improvements. Bryony advised the Board that the 4.8% increase together with the 7% service charge increase was broadly in line with the total-cost-to-customer increase to the rest of the sector.

The Chair proposed an action ahead of the next rent consultation item to allow the Board a discussion of the consultation process so that it was as effective and meaningful as possible.

**Action: Bryony Willett/ Austin Woods/ Agenda**

Bryony proposed that 'where your money goes' conversations could contribute to the next consultation process. The Board considered response rates and expectations from customers around affordability and cost of living rises. The Board sought to ensure that engagement was strong, and communication was clear to customers and asked for other approaches to communication to be considered. The reduced impact of customers on housing benefit was noted.

Catherine asked how service charge increases were communicated. A break down was provided and any increase above £5 per month was explained. Bespoke communications were applied when needed to deal with service charge increases. The Board requested greater sighting on service charges.

**Action: Bryony Willett**

The Chair moved to seek Board's approval of the proposed rent increase of 4.8%.

The Board **APPROVED** the rent increase of 4.8% from April 2026.

### **2316 RESPONDING TO CUSTOMER FEEDBACK**

The Board sought a further timeslot to discuss the Customer Feedback report. A session would be scheduled ahead of the next Board meeting to undertake this.

**Action: Austin Woods**

The Board requested a Rent and Service Charges discussion in October before the next consultation process.

**Action: Austin Woods**

Helen proposed a wider discussion on rent as part of the May meeting, given the five-year plan requirements.

**Action: Helen Meehan/ Bryony Willett/ Austin Woods (linked to action 2315)**

The discussion on Rent would be added to the Programme of Business for August 2026 and training sessions prior to this so any impact can be considered as part of the Business Plan approval process.

### **2317 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE**

Helen Young joined the meeting at this point and presented eight audit reports relating to Home Group Scotland. Two reports were considered as 'limited' assurance and the high finding details were outlined to the Board.

Gavin acknowledged the significant work going on with stock condition surveys and noted the need to continue the systems development that supported the capture of all data from a range of strands.

The Board acknowledged the challenges of turning around a void quickly but acknowledged this as an important area of focus highlighted in the report.

The Board were advised of three overdue actions listed on recent Audit Committee reports. Bryony confirmed that procedures would be rolled out across HGS once decisions on these areas were considered.

The Board noted the Internal Audit Plan for 26/27 and discussed the formulation of this plan, the Group wide scoping and nuances that applied in Scotland. No additional proposals to the plan were proposed by the Board.

The update of Audit Reports to the Regulator was discussed. The process for this would be confirmed after the meeting and all steps introduced.

**Action: Governance Team**

The Board **NOTED** the Internal Audit Update report

The Board **NOTED** the HGS Internal Audit Plan 2026/2027.

### **2318 AOB**

The Chair confirmed the plans for the in-person meeting in Edinburgh in March and asked all to be aware of the rescheduled Risk Training workshop.

### **2319 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 11 March 2026**

Signed: Susan C. Deane Date: 11/3/26  
Chair

