



RBW Board Briefing December 2017

Thank you to Coastal Housing for hosting our December Regulatory Board meeting.

Once again understanding the implications for all housing associations following the Grenfell tragedy was high on our agenda. It was particularly helpful to hear from Ceri Doyle, Chief Executive of Newport City Homes, who took us through what they had done to make sure they have the right assurance around tenant safety. Over 6 months on, the issue remains at the forefront of their discussions at Board and Executive level. It is vital to note that Ceri strongly believes that good corporate governance was key to enable an appropriate response. We also heard about the importance of communication with all stakeholders, in particular tenants.

I hope that health and safety and compliance remain high on your organisation's agenda. As Board members you need to understand the assurance information you receive and feel confident that you are given an accurate picture of performance and areas needing improvement. As a housing association Board member myself I appreciate this can be challenging. I would also recommend that all Board members read the interim report by Dame Judith Hackitt - Building a Safer Future – Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/668832/Independent\\_Review\\_of\\_Building\\_Regulations\\_and\\_Fire\\_Safety\\_-\\_summary\\_accessible.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/668832/Independent_Review_of_Building_Regulations_and_Fire_Safety_-_summary_accessible.pdf)

RBW members discussed the importance of robust Board Assurance Frameworks to enable Board member feel confident in the information they receive. The information presented to Boards is vitally important as it forms the basis for decision making. In the coming year, there will be increased regulatory focus on Board Assurance Framework so I would urge Board members to ask their Executive teams what plans are in place to ensure data quality and assurance frameworks are kept under review and improved or, if you've not already got a framework, what are the plans for introduction.

I am thrilled to confirm that the Regulation Team has published 34 Regulatory Judgements in the last year. This is an amazing achievement and a testament to the hard work of the team. As we are now a year into the new framework we have, as we promised, commissioned a review. It has been noted that some stakeholders feel it is too soon to be undertaking this work. We will be proceeding at this stage but the review will be 'light touch'.

The Public Accounts Committee challenged the sector to become more transparent. The RBW fully support this and are pleased that stakeholders will shortly be able to access some performance and cost data via the Welsh Government's website. The ability to compare information with other housing associations will allow stakeholders and indeed Board members to ask questions about satisfaction and service costs. Further details to follow.

You will also be aware that the rent settlement has been agreed by the Minister. RBW appreciate RSLs need to maximise income to support investment and development aspirations. However we did discuss the need for Boards to be mindful of the affordability of rents and the impact of rent increases on tenants.

Work on the Governance Thematic review is progressing well. We look forward to presenting the review at the CHC Governance conference in March 2018. RBW have decided that our next thematic review will be focussed around tenants. In particular we are keen to understand how we ensure tenants are kept at the heart of regulation and decision making at RSLs.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Governance Conference next month

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen White', with a stylized, cursive script.

Helen White (Chair)  
Regulatory Board for Wales