



RBW Board Briefing 2018

Thank you to Pobl for hosting our Regulatory Board meeting in Swansea. Our decision to be 'on tour' as a Board has been a great success. It's a good opportunity to raise our profile as a Board as well as hear about all the exciting work and about some of the challenges happening in the sector.

Health and Safety remains high on our agenda. It is vitally important it remains high on your Board agenda and that as Board Members, you have a thorough understanding and confidence in the assurance frameworks you have in place. I have always believed that part of the value I bring to the role of Chair of the Regulatory Board for Wales is the lived experience of being a housing association Chair. The most valuable learning I have gained over the years has not been when things are going well. Working through the issues I have faced recently at Knowsley Housing Trust, when we believed as a Board that we had assurance on our regulatory compliance issues relating to health and safety, only to find we didn't, has been the hardest and most difficult challenge I have ever dealt with. I have committed to sharing the lessons I have learnt from this experience and am discussing with CHC the best way to do this.

The Board was pleased to see the Regulation team being proactive in asking all associations for information on health and safety compliance. However, we did want to make sure that it was clear to all that this in no way should be seen as a transfer of responsibility to the Regulator. Responsibility for health and safety compliance sits with each individual Board. We appreciate the timeline to submit the report was challenging for some and we acknowledge the support from the sector in progressing this work.

I would also like to remind Boards of the importance of reporting issues of concern to the Regulator at an early point. Self reporting is an important part of the co-regulatory model and allows the regulation team to work with associations to resolve matters. Finding out about issues after the event means support may not be an option available.

We spent time think about the future of housing regulation in Wales. This has started to generate some new ideas. We are planning to arrange a joint meeting of the CHC Board and RBW Board to start a conversation about how best to progress these ideas making sure the sector are very much involved from the start. We also want to understand more about how Board feel about the current arrangements.

We continue to progress our work in scoping our next thematic review on how tenants are able to shape and influence the services they receive. We are setting up a steering group in place and this work will be progressing over the coming months.

It was also good to receive the news on the day of our meeting that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) had announced housing associations in Wales would be removed from the public sector balance sheet. Whilst it was a technical matter, the implications had this decision not been taken, would have had serious consequences for the sector. We recognised the vast amount of work undertaken by colleagues within the Regulation Team on dealing with this issue and thanked them for their hard work.

The Minister joined us for the last session of the day and we had a good discussion on the main opportunities, challenges and risks facing the sector. It was good to hear the Minister reaffirm her

support for the sector not only in the provision of good quality affordable homes but also in delivering wider regeneration and improved outcomes for communities in Wales.

RBW welcomed the launch of the new CHC Code of Governance. We recognise the importance of the Code as a set of principles and recommended practice to support effective governance and regulatory compliance. The move towards a focus on organisation culture rather than process should be seen as a positive step forward, recognising the responsibility to shape appropriate and robust governance arrangements rests with each Association. I hope this really pushes Boards to think very hard about what great governance looks like for their organisation. Each Board must be satisfied it can robustly demonstrate to the Regulator that it complies with the new Code. The need for board members to discuss the Code's principles and recommended practice should drive lots of debate and discussion at Board meetings.

Finally we are keen as a Board to become even more engaged with the sector. We would welcome any opportunities to meet with RSL Board members, please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like myself, or a representative of RBW, to meet with your Board or attend any events you may feel relevant.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen White', written in a cursive style.

Helen White (Chair)
Regulatory Board for Wales