



# Colchester Borough Homes Code of Governance Compliance

2022-23

# What is Governance?

1. Governance is about how organisations ensure that they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest, and accountable manner.

2. Governance comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which organisations are directed and controlled.

3. The Code of Governance is a comprehensive document which sets out how organisations should behave across the following 4 themes;

1. Mission and Values



2. Strategy and Delivery



3. Board Effectiveness



4. Control and Assurance



▶ The Board and Leadership at CBH have continued to assure our compliance with the NHF Code of Governance 2020 throughout the year.

▶ This self-assessment statement is a brief summary of our compliance with the Code overall and how we demonstrate this against each of the themes.

▶ We have included a summary of how we meet the key requirements.

▶ This demonstrates the policies, processes and documents we have in place to assure our colleagues, customers and stakeholders that we are compliant with the Code.



# Theme 1 – Mission and Values

- ▶ This section explains how the CBH Board sets, and actively drives, the organisation's social purpose, vision and values. It explains how the Board defines the culture of the organisation, ensuring strong resident focus as well as adhering to the key principles of openness, accountability and integrity.



## Our Mission

Our mission is to deliver **great value services that make a difference**

## Our Values

We are committed to our key company values (“The CBH Way”) and focus on these in the planning and delivery of our services:

- **Building Trust** - To work with customers to build trust in our service.
- **Delivering Customer Led Services** - To work with customers to improve what we do, and promote fair and equal services for all.
- **Commitment to Our Communities** - To offer customers services they can rely on, which respect the needs of the community and individuals.
- **Delivering Professional Services** - Our staff are highly trained to enable customers to receive a knowledgeable response.
- **Providing Value for Money** - in everything we do



## Our Vision

CBH launched our new [Strategic Plan](#) in 2022. This document set out the board's forward-looking ambitions to increasing our impact on Colchester in three key areas:

- **Our customers** - To deliver a positive customer experience across all services. To amplify residents' voices within our organisation and increase overall customer satisfaction
- **Our colleagues** - To be a great local employer. To develop our employment practices and invest in our workforce, offering every person the opportunity to thrive.
- **Our communities** - To invest in the homes we manage, and promote safe, inclusive communities, and shape neighbourhoods where people thrive and feel proud to live.



## Resident Focus

CBH has always placed tenants at the heart of decision making; including the customer voice in all major decisions and receiving regular updates on customer complaints, compliments, and focused reports from our tenant scrutiny group on specific areas of the business.

The diagram shows how we involve residents and customers and get information from them, how the Board gets this information and uses it, and finally how we close that feedback loop by sharing the information.



The Board actively direct activities within the business based on the feedback it receives

### How the Board get insight

Resident Board Members  
Residents Voice Panel  
Tenant Scrutiny Panel  
Focus on Frontline reports to Board  
Voice your view art every Board meeting  
Strategic Plan  
Customer Satisfaction Surveys  
Meeting customers on stock tours  
Resident Engagement activity Board Reports  
Customer complaints, feedback and compliments

### What we have done with insight

- Strategic Plan was consulted on with our tenants
  - Consultation for our new Resident Engagement Commitments replacing our existing Residents Engagement Plan
- Tenant Scrutiny panel reports to Board and agreed actions monitored
- Our Box Smart having positive impact on Anti-Social Behaviour measures to work with other organisations and support our communities.
- Our successful Community Funding of £40,000 a year to support charities and organisations through the cost-of-living crisis supporting our Cooking on a Budget sessions.

### How we share insight

Housing News and Views  
Annual Report  
Website  
Social Media  
Email Campaigns

## Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Colchester Borough Homes is committed to treating people with fairness and respect, and appropriately to their needs.

Our Equality Objectives are driven and monitored through our strategic plan and its delivery plans, and our approach and progress is scrutinised by our Board.

We are committed to openness and transparency, and we publish policies and strategies, along with their 'Equality Impact Assessments', which help to ensure fair treatment towards all groups.

## Integrity and Accountability

The Board operates openly and transparently with all colleagues at CBH and CCC and our tenants.

Each year our statutory financial statements and accounts are published as well as our Customer Annual Report which outlines the work that has been undertaken in the previous year.

The Board receives scrutiny on key areas of the business from our tenant scrutiny panel, who report to the Board directly.

Information about our Board, who they are and their declarations of interest are all available on the CBH website.





# Theme 2 – Strategy and Delivery

- ▶ This section explains how the CBH Board sets ambitious plans and strategies for the organisation, ensuring that we remain financially viable, are well governed and we maintain strong oversight of arrangements to achieve this.



## Strategies, Resources and Plans

This year we launched our new strategic plan for 2022-27 and we have performed well against the majority of the plan.

We have seen some very positive results, such as CBH listening to and acting on residents' views having increased by 9% in one year (against a target of 10% in 5 years).

Other performance recorded a reduction in 'overall satisfaction, although this is recognised as a sector wide challenge. This is partly due to the pandemic, but also due to labour issues, supply chain issues, the cost of living crisis and rising inflation have all had an impact

## Chief Executive

The Code of Governance contains many provisions relating to the Chief Executive who has the delegated authority to oversee and manage the operational delivery of the organisations strategies and plans.

These include ensuring that there is a rigorous contract of employment in place, that they are remunerated accordingly, that their role and delegated authority is documented and that they are subject to annual appraisal which is overseen by the Board.

We are fully compliant with them all.

## Workforce

In our independent survey in April 2022 Staff spoke highly of CBH and demonstrated a depth of loyalty and much to be proud of. Staff talked about the benefits of working at CBH including the people that they worked with and the feeling of giving something back.

The main point of feedback from the workforce was relating to pay and reward, which is unsurprising given the cost of living crisis and rising inflation throughout 2022.

A benchmarking exercise was carried out and salaries for a number of roles were adjusted accordingly and staff were also awarded a nationally negotiated (Unison) cost of living increase award.

The key HR challenges faced by CBH are notably difficulties in recruiting staff and pay, challenges that are shared with many other organisations.

The Board has further access into the views of our staff through our Focus on Frontline feature at every Board meeting.

## Performance

CBH has a Medium-Term Delivery Plan which sits alongside the CBH Strategic Plan and is focused on enabling CBH to fulfil the terms of its management agreement with CCC. The Medium-Term Delivery Plan provides a framework through which CBH delivers its management agreement obligations, including compliance with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.

The Board receives reports at each meeting which goes into detail on these performance measures, with a dashboard outlining performance in each area

Throughout the year, the Board also receive reports from all areas of the business. These are a mixture of Executive reports, strategies, policies, performance updates, risk reports, approvals and information items for consideration.

# Theme 3 – Board and Effectiveness

- ▶ This section explains how CBH assures the effectiveness of our Non-Executive Directors and how we maintain a skilled, forward-thinking and diverse Board that provides high challenge and high support to our Executive team and colleagues.



# External Board Effectiveness Review April 2022

CBH carried out an external Board Effectiveness Review in April 2022 and overall, the review findings were very positive.

The brief for this work was to look at board effectiveness in general, and specifically carry out an appraisal of the board's alignment with the 2020 Code

A number of recommendations were made as part of the review, and these were incorporated into an action plan which has been monitored by our Governance and Remuneration Committee.

At the time of writing this report of all actions have been completed and implemented bar one which will be carried out in August 2023.



## Roles, Responsibilities and Functions of the Board and Committees

Our Articles of Association and Standing Orders clearly outline the roles, responsibilities and functions of the Board and its Committees.

Our Scheme of Delegations clearly articulate those matters which are solely reserved to the Board and those which are delegated to Committees of the Board, the Chief Executive and those which can then be delegated further as part of the operational running of the business. A Scheme of Financial Delegations is also in place to support this

## Board Composition, Selection, Appointment and Remuneration

The Board can have up to 12 Members including independent, resident, councillor and Executive Members at any time.

Board succession is considered by the Governance and Remuneration Committee and an annual exercise is undertaken by the Board to identify skills, knowledge and experience and where there may be gaps to be filled in the future.

Recruitment processes are open, fair and are tailored to ensure that we are recruiting to meet any gaps identified.

The Chair of the Board is remunerated at a fair market rate which is regularly benchmarked and reviewed by external consultants.

## Committees

There are three standing Committees of the Board: Operations and Performance, Finance and Audit and Governance and Remuneration which provide more in-depth scrutiny to specific areas of the business and report these to the Board.

These Committees have a Chair who is a Non-Executive Director of the Board and have terms of reference which clearly states their responsibilities and reporting lines.

Ad-hoc committees are also convened from time-to-time to focus on specific tasks.

## Tenure and Renewal

CBH has a Board Member Recruitment and Renewal Policy which is overseen by the Governance and Remuneration Committee .

As at March 2023 CBH was compliant with the provisions of this policy and with the Code of Governance with regards to Board tenure

## Conduct of Business

CBH conducts all Board and Committee meetings effectively, as endorsed by our external Board effectiveness review in April 2022.

Member appraisals are carried out as well as effectiveness of Board and Committees and actions for improvement are acted upon.

The annual governance calendar is agreed before year end and an urgency process can be used if decisions are required between meetings.

Meeting papers are published in advance giving the Board sufficient time to read them and make comments and observations using the online system.

Each meeting also has a standing item allowing the Board to comment on the effectiveness of the meeting and add suggestions for improvement

## Appraisal, Review and Learning

CBH conducted its triennial review of our governance arrangements by an external organisation.

All Board members receive and induction to the business.

Ongoing learning opportunities through away days, access to conferences and events.

Learning also comes from our Board Champion Roles which are in place for Health & Safety, Complaints & Customer Service, Diversity & Inclusion, Risk and Sustainability & Wellbeing

A comprehensive appraisal process is carried out annually and the results of these are reported to G&R with an agreed training action plan.

# Theme 4 – Control and Assurance

- ▶ This section explains how approaches control and assurance; ensuring that there is sufficient oversight of operational performance, risk management, and audit processes to be able to state in statutory accounts and reports that the organisation adheres to all relevant standards, codes and legislation







## Audit, Compliance and the Finance and Audit Committee

- CBH has a Finance and Audit Committee which meets 4 times a year, and has oversight of both internal and external audit, as well as internal process for control assurance including Health and Safety.
- The Committee reports to the Board and also holds meetings with the external auditors (without the Executive present) annually.
- The Committee has responsibility for reviewing all internal audits throughout the year, as well as considering the effectiveness of internal audit arrangements and the re-procurement of internal audit.
- The Committee oversees the annual statutory reporting process, agreeing the timeline with the external auditors, signing off the financial statements, final accounts and the governance statement and recommending these to Board.



## Risk

- The Board receives Risk Reports throughout the year and maintain overall responsibility for risk management and oversight. They conduct an annual risk review at an Away Day.
- The Finance and Audit Committee carry out deep dives into specific risks, as well as reviewing and recommending the risk appetite of the organisation before recommending to the Board for approval.
- As well as oversight of the risk register, Board review at every meeting new and emerging risks and changes in the sector



## **Whistleblowing**

CBH has a Whistleblowing Policy which covers our arrangements for whistleblowing and is clear on the process to be followed if anyone has concerns about the conduct of any of our colleagues or Board Members.

The Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee is the designated contact for issues which are related to the Chief Executive, Directors Management Team or the Head of Finance.