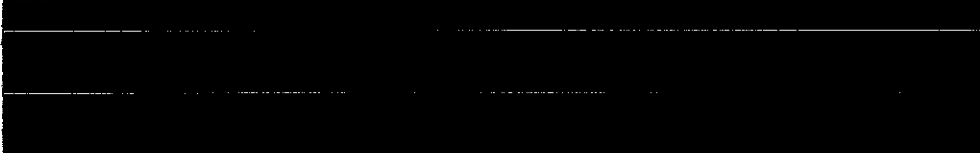


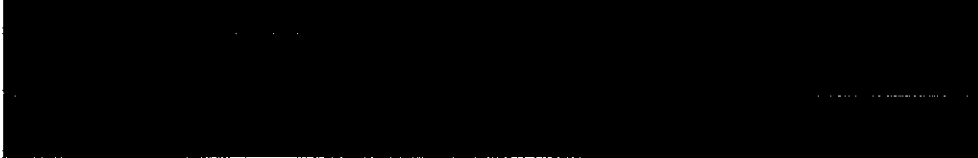
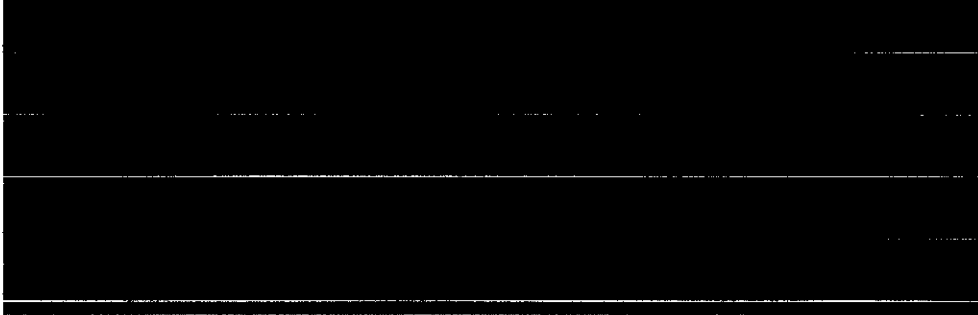
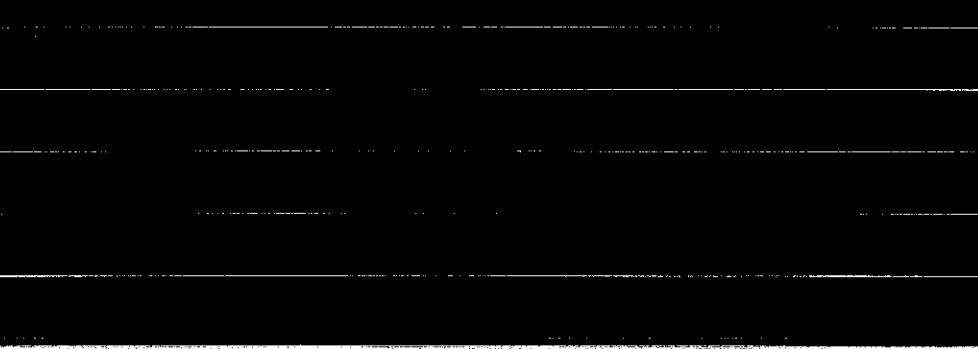



Date/Time Friday 27 th November 2020 13:00 – 18:30	Venue By Teams/Telephone Link
In attendance: Richard Wearmouth Jeff Reid Malcolm Robinson Guy Renner-Thompson Ian Swithenbank John Woodman Chris Sayers Martin Knowles	Chair
Present: Ken Dunbar Robin Earl Juliemma McLoughlin Kim Grant (Minutes)	Advance Northumberland Managing Director Advance Northumberland Chief Operating Officer NCC Executive Director of Regeneration, Commercial & Economy Advance Northumberland PA
Part: Andrew Lovatt Michael Black Kathryn Hutchinson John Moran Craig Maxwell	Advance Northumberland Director of Developments (Commercial & Infrastructure) Advance Northumberland Director of Economic Growth & Investments Advance Northumberland Senior Investment Manager Advance Northumberland Homes Manager Mazars (External Auditor)
Apologies: Colin Dickson Pat Walker Chris Hand	Advance Northumberland Chief Finance Officer Advance Northumberland Governance & Performance Manager NCC Finance Director

1.0	Notice & Quorum
1.1	The Chair welcomed the attendees and declared the meeting quorate.
2.0	Apologies for Absence
2.1	The Chair reported that there had been apologies for absence from Colin Dickson, Pat Walker and Chris Hand.
3.0	Declarations of Interest
3.1	There were no declarations of interest.
4.0	Minutes of the Previous Meetings
4.1	The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 30 th October 2020 were REVIEWED and AGREED with clarification of amendment to 12.44 whereby the change log recorded the threshold for leases at £7,000 per annum and the schedule recorded it as £10,000 per annum. Clarified as £10,000 per annum.
4.2	Actions from the 30th October 2020 Board Meeting
4.2.1	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Action: Information Security Policy - Following Board confirmation that they do not wish to have a separate device for the purpose of Advance Northumberland Board papers the policy is to be revised to note the security implications of not using Advance Northumberland issued devices then brought back to Board for sign-off. Response: Progressed and policy will be revised and brought back to the Board for sign off.</p> <p>Action: Sharepoint to be utilised for Board papers, when available, with a specific Board Director area to include backdated Board meeting papers. Response: Board Director folder created within Sharepoint.</p> <p>Action: Richard Stannard House background briefing paper. Response: To be provided at a future Board meeting.</p> 

	<p>Action: Business Plan - Board expressed the wish to have input into the Business Plan. Workshop to be set up with the Board. Response: Workshop to be set up in February 2021 to include an external facilitator and representation from NCC.</p>
4.2.5	<p>AOB Action: Hard copy Board papers to be provided to those Board Directors that require them until Sharepoint is available Response: Complete.</p>
5.0	<p>Matters Arising</p>
5.1	<p>There were no further items for discussion under Matters Arising.</p>
6.0	<p>Ratification of Board Decisions made Electronically</p>
6.1	
<p>CONFIDENTIAL ITEM</p>	
7.0	
7.1	
7.2	
7.3	
7.4	

7.5

[Redacted content for item 7.5]

7.6

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7.9	
8.0	Performance Updates
8.1	HR Update
8.1.1	The HR Manager presented the report the purpose of which was to provide an update on current HR activities.
8.1.2	<p>The HR Manager confirmed that the current headcount within Advance Northumberland at 31.10.2020 was 129.</p> <p>There were 4 live vacancies within the Economic Growth and Investments team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rural Design Innovation Manager ● Rural Design Compliance and Grants Officer ● Rural Design Innovation Business Advisor ● Rural Design Innovation Support Officer <p>There was a further vacancy within Ascent homes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sales Executive.
8.1.3	The HR Manager stated that labour turnover for the year commencing 1st April was 6.53% - 5 voluntary leavers. For the 12-month rolling period ending 31st October 2020 the labour turnover was 6.15%. There were no notable trends in this information that would be a cause for concern.
8.1.4	<p>The HR Manager confirmed that the sickness absence rate for the year commencing April 2020 was 1.3%.</p> <p>We had seen an increase in September / October. We had referred 5 people to occupational health and were managing this process with line managers. We had three people absent due to Covid-19, including 1 long term.</p>

	<p>There were no patterns or demographics to link the absence causes.</p> <p>Shielding – two people had been told to shield as part of Lockdown 2.</p> <p>There had been 4 incidents of compassionate leave since April.</p>
<p>8.1.5</p>	<p>The HR Manager confirmed that Better Health At Work continued to be promoted under the banner of "Better Health at Home". We had been invited to speak at the next Sharing Best Practice event because of work on mental health during the pandemic.</p> <p>We had a range of activities arranged from October through to Christmas with a focus on mental health awareness. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Halloween Quiz ● 12 days of Christmas ● Sugar Awareness Week ● Wear it Pink for Breast Cancer ● Stress Awareness Week ● World Kindness Day and the relaunch of the Appreciation inbox ● Alcohol Awareness Week
<p>8.1.6</p>	<p>The HR Manager confirmed all of the initial health surveillance appointments had been completed. Of these, 6 had been referred to Tier 4 assessment. Five of these had been completed, with the last person being on furlough / long term sick for the majority of 2020. Three had confirmed with HAVs - RIDDOR reports had been completed and risk assessments put in place with reduced exposure. We believed, given the roles and age profiles of those involved, that these would be pre-existing conditions prior to employment with Advance Northumberland. We continued to monitor exposure using the appropriate equipment. All exposure was significantly below the recommended levels.</p>
<p>8.1.7</p>	<p>The HR Manager confirmed that we had continued with the random drug and alcohol testing. Since the introduction of this, 72 people had been tested.</p> <p>The programme was reinstated from the 1st July 2020, with our provider now using fingerprint testing rather than saliva for drugs testing. One person had failed the Alcohol test and two (1 contractor) had failed the drugs test since this was introduced.</p> <p>The next testing is scheduled for the beginning of November.</p>
<p>8.1.8</p>	<p>The HR Manager stated that the Customer Care training that was scheduled to commence in April 2020 had been rescheduled with the management coaching session booked to start in January 2021. This was made up of 4</p>

	<p>sessions via Teams of 60 minutes each, rather than one half day of training. There would also be practical work and observations as part of this process. Following this, customer experience training would be delivered to all staff.</p> <p>Thirty-eight managers had attended coaching in managing and leading remote teams throughout September / October 2020. The focus of this training was on employee mental health and helping managers to look for signs that an individual might not be coping. This would be kept under constant review with line managers.</p>
8.1.9	<p>The HR Manager confirmed that 48 individuals were initially furloughed. People were now being brought back to work and, as of the 1st October, 2 people remained on full furlough and 2 were working on a flexible furlough basis. Both of the individuals on full furlough were also on long term sick, their absences would be managed through the sickness absence process.</p>
8.1.10	<p>The HR Manager stated that the consultation on the proposal to change expenses rates had been carried out and letters sent to all affected staff. Any issues would be highlighted in the November Board paper.</p>
8.1.11	<p>The HR Manager confirmed that the HR consultants who were commissioned to independently review our salary structures had now completed the work on job families. The next steps in the process were benchmarking internally and externally to ensure salaries were appropriate (whilst also taking into account the benefit of working for Advance Northumberland). The job families had been shared with Directors and once benchmarking was completed would be shared with the Senior Leadership Team.</p>
8.1.12	<p>The HR Manager stated that the performance management cycle was April to March. The decision had been taken to postpone mid-year reviews until January 2021. We were currently working to ensure that all objectives were up to date.</p>
8.1.13	<p>The HR Manager stated that the employee forum had met on the 5th November 2020. Some interesting suggestions had been made relating to performance management, reward & recognition and company values. We had launched a survey to gain further input on what colleagues think the company values should be.</p>
8.1.14	<p>The HR Manager confirmed that we had achieved the IIP standard and had received the report with suggested work to progress to the silver standard. A meeting was held with Directors/HR in August to agree and plan actions. The IIP Assessor had recommended that we update / introduce the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Management Charter - what Advance Northumberland colleagues could expect from their line manager ● HR Strategy

8.1.15	<p>The HR Manager presented the Management Charter which set clear expectations for managers and, in particular, what Advance Northumberland expects of its people managers. This standard would be applied across all Advance Northumberland teams. Managers would have their performance assessed against these baseline standards and other performance targets agreed during their performance review and objective setting meetings. Leading by example, fairness and equity in the application of these standards were core components of our expectations.</p> <p>Following a question from C Sayers the HR Manager confirmed that there would be a management objective incorporated within the Performance Review that would allow the ability to report on whether staff were adhering to the HR Strategy.</p> <p>M Knowles commented that he felt it was a good document, particularly the section covering total rewards, and stated that it was important that staff adhered to the company's values and culture.</p> <p>Following a question from M Knowles the HR Manager confirmed that a Workforce Plan would be incorporated within the Business Plan and would be reviewed on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>The Managing Director stated that this policy would be required to align with NCC's policy.</p>
8.1.16	<p>The HR Manager presented the HR Strategy paper confirming that this was a higher-level version of the Management Charter and it linked back to the performance mechanisms e.g. performance clinics.</p> <p>The aims outlined in the HR Strategy would help drive the required changes in culture, leadership, talent management, performance, reward and recognition, personal development, ways of working and structures that would be needed to ensure that Advance Northumberland met the goals set out in its Business Plan.</p> <p>Following a question about whether diversity should be covered more within the HR Strategy, the Managing Director stated that Board diversity was dealt with by NCC and he would ask for it to be included on the agenda at a future Shareholder Group meeting.</p>
<p>The Board:</p>	
8.1.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTED the contents of the report. • APPROVED the HR strategy • APPROVED the Management Charter.
8.2	<p>FOI/Data Protection</p>
8.2.1	<p>The Chief Operating Officer introduced the report, the purpose of which was</p>

	to inform the Board on FOI and data protection issues dealt with by the company over the preceding month.
8.2.2	<p>The Chief Operating Officer informed the Board that the Freedom of Information Act 2000 provided public access to information held by public authorities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obliging public authorities to publish certain information about their activities and • Enabling members of the public to request information from public authorities.
8.2.3	<p>The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that we normally had 20 working days to respond to a request. However, there were certain circumstances that we could refuse a request which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would cost too much or take too much staff time to deal with the request • The request was vexatious • The request repeated a previous request from the same person. <p>Other exemptions related to particular types of information, for example information relating to government policy, where harm would arise from disclosure or where disclosure would be likely to prejudice a criminal investigation or prejudice someone's commercial interest.</p> <p>The grounds for refusing a request were tightly regulated and before a refusal could be agreed, consideration must be given to the public interest test and the prejudice test.</p>
8.2.4	The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that Advance Northumberland did not receive any FOI's in October 2020.
8.2.5	<p>The Chief Operating Officer informed the Board that the Data Protection Act 2018 provided a comprehensive and modern framework for data protection in the UK and set new standards for protecting general data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).</p> <p>The right of access, commonly referred to as subject access, gave individuals the right to obtain a copy of their personal data as well as other supplementary information.</p> <p>Individuals had the right to obtain the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that you are processing their personal data • A copy of their personal data • Other supplementary information – this largely corresponded to the information that you should provide in a privacy notice. <p>We were required to comply with a request without undue delay and at the latest within one month of receipt of the request or (if later) within one month</p>

	<p>of receipt of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any information requested to confirm the requestor's identity A fee (in certain circumstances).
8.2.6	The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that Advance Northumberland had not received any subject access requests since December 2019 which was reported to the Board.
8.2.7	The Chief Operating Officer informed the Board that the GDPR introduced a duty on all organisations to report certain types of personal data breach to the relevant supervisory authority. This must be done within 72 hours of becoming aware of the breach where feasible.
8.2.8	<p>The Chief Operating Officer stated that Advance Northumberland had one data breach incident reported in early November 2020:</p> <p>A tenant (A) rang to inform us that (A) had received a rent statement for another tenant (B) in the envelope with (A)'s rent statement. The rent statement disclosed details of (B's) name and address and rent payments. The statement did not include bank account details or any other personal information.</p> <p>The breach was assessed using the ICO Self Assessment Tool. Based on the the unlikelihood that the breach would result in a risk to the data subject (B), the assessment concluded:</p> <p><i>'You should keep an internal record of the breach as detailed in Article 33 (5) of the GDPR, including what happened, the effects of the breach and remedial actions taken.</i></p> <p><i>There is no requirement to notify the ICO but you should keep a note of why you came to this decision. If new information which affects the circumstances of this breach comes to light, you should reassess the risk and determine whether it becomes reportable at that point.'</i></p> <p>Next Steps:</p> <p>A letter was written to tenant B giving details of the breach and apologising.</p> <p>We were already in discussions with an ICT consultant to enable digital distribution of invoices and rent statements.</p> <p>To minimise risk going forward, we will cease to send out rent statements in hard copy as a matter of course from April 2021 (there was no legal obligation for us to provide these statements), but tenants could be sent a statement on request. We will use the next four months to contact all tenants by text, email, letter and via the website to inform them of the change and how to request a statement if one is required.</p>
	The Board:
8.2.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NOTED the contents of the report.

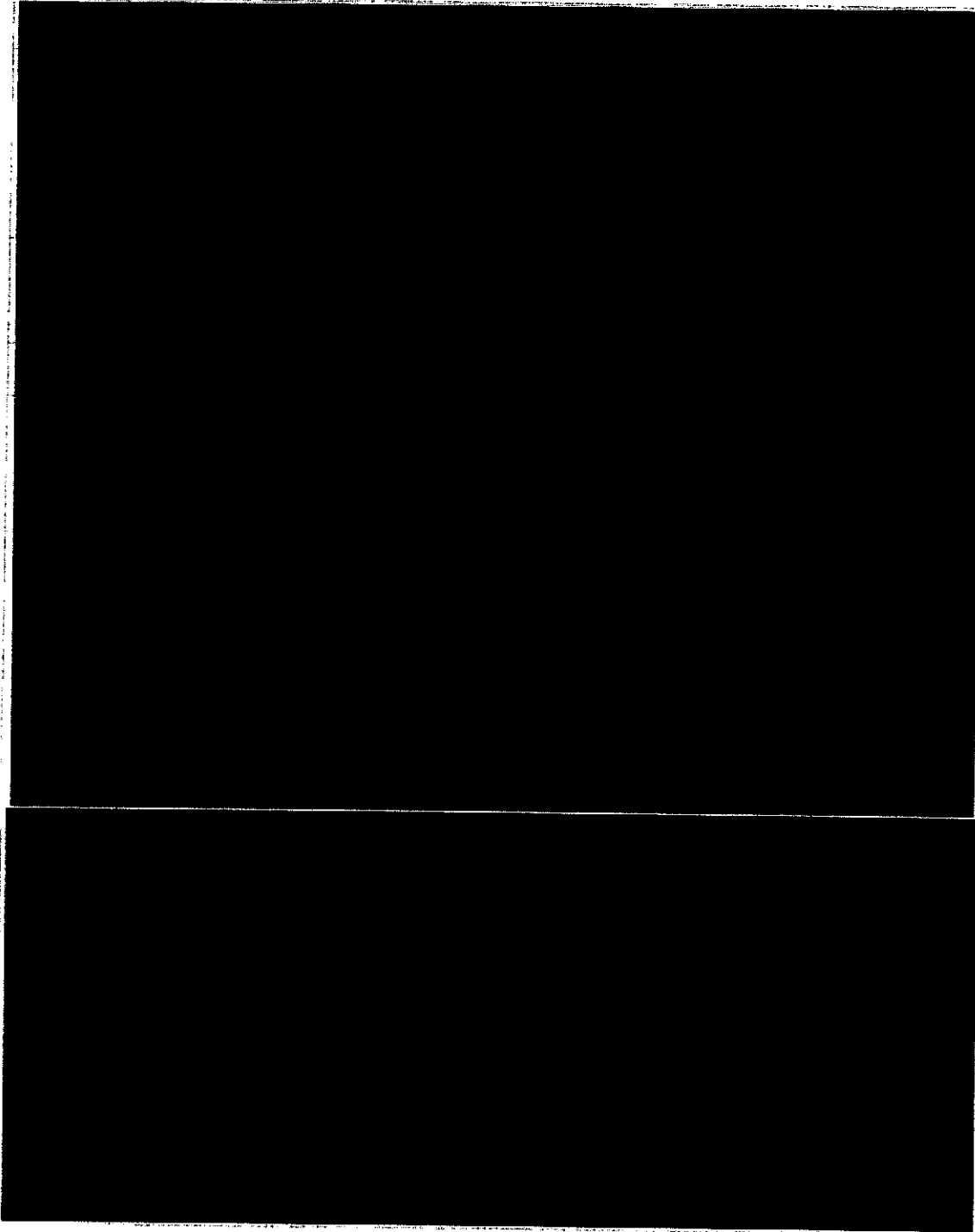
9.0	Policies
9.1	Revised Debt Collection Policy
9.2	<p>The Chief Operating Officer introduced the policy explain that the aim of this policy was to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate a coordinated approach to managing multiple debts owed to the Group. • Identify, where appropriate, support which may be required to those owing money to the Group, and ensure circumstances were taken into consideration. • Apply best practice to debt collection.
9.3	<p>The Chief Operating Officer stated that the document detailed Advance Northumberland's (the "Group") policies on the billing, collection and recovery of monies due to the Group. This Policy sets out the general principles to be applied in relation to debt management across all subsidiaries within the Group. The management of income was a key business area for the Group. The Group collected income from many streams; some of this activity was governed by legislation while others by sound principles of financial management. The key to economic, efficient and effective income management was the creation and maintenance of a clear framework that sets out the approach, principles and strategy within which all activities would be conducted. It was essential that all monies due were collected effectively by the Group, and that debt owed to the Group was kept to a minimum. Effective income management processes were critical to the delivery of overall Group objectives.</p>
9.4	<p>The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that the policy applied to the collection of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial rents • Expenditure the landlord may seek to recover under the terms of the lease • Residential rents • Repair recharges • Project Management Fees • Sundry Debt There are specific rules and regulations that govern the recovery and collection of these debts, a
9.5	<p>J Woodman commented that the Company should be explicit within the policy on their approach to bad debt collection.</p>
9.6	<p>Following a comment by the Board the Chief Executive Officer confirmed that a record was kept of all bad debt write offs.</p>
9.7	<p>Following discussion, it was agreed that the way to inform the Shareholder of debt write offs would be through the normal process of the sharing of Board reports.</p>
	<p>The Board:</p>

9.8 • NOTED the contents of the report.

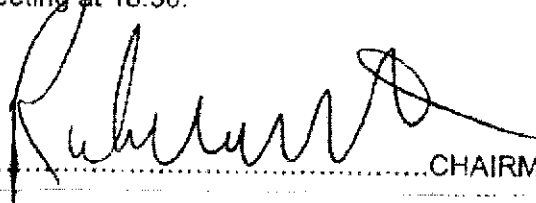
10.0 Approvals



10.1 There were no approvals presented to the Board under this section.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS




14.2 The Chairman thanked the Board for their attendance and closed the meeting at 18:30.


CHAIRMAN

Summary of Actions	
Minutes of Previous Meeting – 30 th October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● REVIEWED & AGREED with clarification of amendment to 12.44 whereby the change log recorded the threshold for leases at £7,000 per annum and the schedule recorded it as £10,000 per annum. Clarified as £10,000 per annum.
Matters Arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Richard Stannard House – background briefing paper to be provided to a future Board meeting  ● Finance Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of remaining units at Hemingway Court to be clarified. ○ Corporate Risk Register – Brexit is currently being incorporated into the risk register for circulation to Board when complete. ○ Rural Design Centre – Full report will be circulated to the Board covering the risks associated with grant funded programmes. ● Business Plan - Board workshop at the end of February 2021 with an external facilitator. To include JMcloughlin/S Agass of NCC.
Ratification of Virtual Approval	

<p>HR Update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVED the HR Strategy – to be included on the agenda at the next Shareholder Group meeting re diversity at Board level. • APPROVED the Management Charter.
<p>Policies – Revised Debt Collection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVED the Revised Debt Collection Policy subject to an explanation within the policy covering our approach to bad debt collection. • Board to be updated on how other organisations approached debt collection.
<p>Power of Attorney</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p>Actions from Previous Board Minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of a recent report regarding Ascent Homes to the Audit Committee, a report would be prepared in the New Year detailing how Red Sky helped Advance Northumberland to reduce costs.
<p>KPMG Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board requested that they have site of the original brief from NCC to KPMG. Chair committed to trying to establish the nature of the scope and why it had been requested.
<p>[REDACTED]</p>	
<p>[REDACTED]</p>	

	
Procurement Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board commented that, during procurement at any level, if there was only one contender this should be flagged to the Board from a governance point of view.• Board requested that this be raised at the Shareholder Group meeting.
