

TRH Group Board Workshop 15 May 2026

Welcome by Chair

The Chair opened the strategy day by welcoming Tenants' Voice Group members and thanking them for their contributions, encouraging active participation and feedback. He explained that the session aimed to reflect on TRH's progress, consider future ambitions, and explore how to improve as a housing association. He also introduced Kevin Bennett as the new Chief Executive Officer.

Keynote speech (Alison Inman, social justice campaigner and tenant advocate, past President of the CIH and Chair of Tpas)

Alison Inman introduced herself and highlighted how expectations in the housing sector have shifted significantly in recent years. She explained that tenant engagement was now a central regulatory focus, with organisations unable to achieve top consumer ratings without strong evidence of meaningful engagement. Alison welcomed TRH's commitment to tenant involvement through its Tenants' Voice Group and emphasised that tenants expect issues to be resolved quickly, with honesty, accountability, and clear communication. While AI could support efficiency, she stressed it should not replace human interaction, as a customer-centred, empathetic approach remained essential.

Alison highlighted practical issues affecting tenants, such as the design of new-build homes and the cost of unsuitable fittings, suggesting more tenant-friendly specifications and giving examples of good practice from other housing associations. She drew attention to the problem of "silent tenants" who disengage from services, the value of trades colleagues as frontline insight providers, and the need for consistent service delivery – particularly avoiding multiple staff attending the same job. Across the sector, she noted a tendency to focus on performance targets rather than meaningful conversations with tenants.

During the session, members discussed tenant engagement challenges within TRH including inconsistent communication and the need for clearer service standards. Tenants highlighted frustrations such as lack of updates and dealing with multiple staff, while Alison encouraged more honest communication, better tracking of first-point resolution, and earlier tenant involvement in policy development. Suggestions included exploring tenant engagement tracking tools, participating in Tpas regional and scrutiny forums, and ensuring a balanced understanding of both positive feedback and areas for improvement.

Are we governing well? What could we do better?

The Chair introduced a session on governance arrangements, explaining it aimed to review the governance structure approved in March 2025 and gather feedback on its continued effectiveness. The Assistant Director of Governance and Assurance and Governance Manager then presented an overview of the 2025/2026 Board Effectiveness Review and the current governance structure.

Members then took part in a workshop in smaller groups, discussing key questions about the level of assurance received from Board and Committee information, oversight between Board and Committees, and how effectively governance arrangements provide a wider organisational view. They also reflected on frustrations with current governance processes, the adequacy of terms of reference and workplans, and whether the organisation was making full use of members' skills, including identifying any gaps due to upcoming retirements.

Session feedback:

Members felt that the Board and committees received generally good assurance, supported by effective Chair updates, but that governance processes were sometimes hindered by repetitive reports and long meeting agendas that limited meaningful discussions. Members asked if more succinct reports could be produced alongside improved agenda management and also consideration to scheduling of meetings to reduce pressure on members and officers.

While oversight between Board and Committees was considered broadly sufficient, improvements were suggested around avoiding duplication, strengthening Committee Member induction and visibility for these members. Additional feedback included earlier involvement in policy development, potential better use of members' time and skills and a need for greater visibility in communities.

Back to the future: What does the next strategic chapter look like for Two Rivers Housing?

The Chief Executive presented an overview of TRH's progress since her appointment in December 2023, highlighting a focus on building neighbourhoods where people enjoyed living and positioning TRH as a community anchor and investor. She outlined key priorities identified by tenants for the coming years, including improvements to anti-social behaviour management, complaint handling, and communication, and also provided an update on the organisation's cultural transformation journey.

Regional and local challenges for Two Rivers Housing

Kevin Bennett, the incoming Chief Executive, highlighted the main issues affecting TRH and the housing sector, setting out three priorities: resilience, connection, and delivery. He also pointed to key local factors, including the Forest of Dean Local Plan and planned local government changes in 2028.

He stressed the importance of building on recent progress while tackling challenges like rural connectivity and the cost of living. Key areas of focus would be improving customer-focused services, supporting cultural change, making better use of digital tools while staying inclusive, working with partners, and supporting the organisation's growth.

Simon Nunn, National Housing Federation (NHF) – The national picture and challenges for the sector

Simon Nunn introduced the NHF and reflected on key challenges facing the housing sector over the past three years, including capacity pressures, funding, regulation, and political uncertainty. He outlined government commitments and ambitions for housing associations by 2030, focusing on delivering quality homes and services, increasing the supply of affordable housing, and strengthening partnerships. He also highlighted current issues such as political instability and future sector challenges, alongside opportunities such as government funding for initiatives for solar panel installation.

In group discussions, members explored TRH's priorities under three themes: resilience, connection, and delivery. Key points included the need to ensure sufficient staffing, manage workloads, improve IT systems, plan for succession, and strengthen financial and organisational resilience. Members emphasised improving connections across colleagues, communities, and partners, as well as increasing Board visibility. On delivery, the focus was on maintaining cultural improvements, strengthening customer-centred services, streamlining and digitalising processes, ensuring adequate resources, and addressing rising demand, while also creating opportunities for growth, including building more homes.

Close

The Chair closed the strategy day by thanking all present for attending and also thanked Hayley Selway for the work she has undertaken during her time as Chief Executive.