



**Ermine Street Housing
Independent Board Member**

**Recruitment Information Pack
March 2024**

Introduction

South Cambs Limited trading as Ermine Street Housing (ESH) is an independent property company wholly owned by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC). The aim of ESH is to provide an excellent market rented housing service, whilst also generating an income to SCDC. The company provides good quality, flexible market rented housing, to meet a recognised housing need in and around the district and beyond. The company has been trading since 2014 and has borrowed £100 million from SCDC and reached the target of 500 homes in 2023. The portfolio is geographically spread, with stock in Cambridgeshire, the majority of which is in Peterborough, in Leicester, Nottingham, Leeds, Northamptonshire and Suffolk.

The company also leases a further 190 homes from the Ministry of Defence in Bassingbourn, Brampton and Waterbeach, all in Cambridgeshire on 5-year leases, the negotiations are commencing to enter into a third 5 year lease on all three sites.

We are now seeking a strong candidate to join the Board. You should be able to work collaboratively with the other board members to help achieve our vision and deliver our priorities. Preferably candidates will have previous experience of non-executive board level work and some understanding of property development acquisition or management combined with a commercial outlook and strong stakeholder engagement skills.

Board meetings are held via MS Teams six to eight times per year, plus some initial induction and training sessions.

If you feel you have the appropriate skills, experience and commitment we would like to hear from you.

Full details of the process, the role and Ermine Street Housing are set out in this pack. For further details please contact **Duncan Vessey, Head of Ermine Street Housing at email: duncan.vessey@scamb.gov.uk or telephone: 01954 713139**

The closing date for applications is **5.00pm 22 March 2024** with dates set for interviews in the week commencing 1 April 2024.

How to Apply

You are asked to provide five documents:

1. A detailed CV (no more than four A4 pages) including qualifications, employment history, relevant experience and details of any other current or recent board memberships and key achievements, as well as voluntary activity in the last 5 years.
2. A supporting statement addressing the person specification and competencies and summarising how you think that your knowledge and experience make you a suitable candidate for the role. Please also explain your motivation in applying and give examples of specific achievements in the last 5 years which demonstrate your competence for this role.
3. Full contact details (name, job title, organisation, phone and email) for two referees. Please note we will not take up references without your prior permission.
4. A completed diversity monitoring form (separately appended as a Word document). Please note, this is for monitoring purposes only and will not be seen or used by Ermine Street Housing in the recruitment and selection process.
5. A completed "Declaration of Interests Form" and "Fit and Proper Person Form" (separately appended as a Word document).

Your application will be acknowledged and treated with strictest confidence.

Applications should be sent to Duncan Vessey, Head of Ermine Street Housing at duncan.vessey@scamb.gov.uk

All applications will be considered and assessed against the requirements of the Person Specification and Competencies in order to shortlist candidates. If you have been successful we will contact you to invite you to interview. If you are unsuccessful at this stage you will be offered feedback.

The interview panel will comprise Duncan Vessey, and two members of the ESH board, Peter Campbell and Julia Hovells, (Chair of the Board).

Timeline

Activity	Date
Closing date for applications	22 March 2024
Shortlist drawn up by the interview panel	27 March 2024
Interviews - held in SCDC Offices or online	Week commencing 1 April 2024
Confirmation of preferred candidate for appointment as board member	By 8 April 2024

About the Role

We are looking for a person who shares our passion and our drive to offer high quality private rented accommodation to tenants who are renting in the private sector, paying market rents. Your background does not have to be in housing but you should have substantial senior experience in a successful business with a strong customer or property

focus and you'll ideally have previous non-executive board level experience - we will select the candidate who best matches the profile overall.

The Board is responsible for agreeing the strategic direction for the company, managing and monitoring performance and setting key priorities. Key areas of activity will be:

- Managing key company personnel (to include approving remuneration)
- Financial planning
- Approval of the business plan
- Budgetary control
- Risk management
- Approval of company policy
- Approval of company procedures
- Approval and sign off of annual accounts

In return for your time, energy and expertise, we can offer you £3,000 per annum plus reimbursement for travel and out of pocket expenses in line with our policy. We offer a friendly and welcoming atmosphere and the opportunity to work with us to shape our future.

Details about the commitment required are set out below.

Governance Structure

ESH is a limited company registered with Companies House wholly owned by SCDC. The company set up by personnel operating at a senior level in SCDC. Operationally the staff who manage the company on a day to day basis have over 30 years' experience of managing houses in the public sector and 20 years' experience of managing homes in the private rented sector.

The company is strategically managed by a governing body, with a board of six executive and non-executive directors made up as follows:

- 2 Executive Directors - Council Officers (Peter Campbell, Jeff Membery)
- 2 Non-Executive Directors - Council Members (Cllr James Hobro and Cllr Peter Sandford)
- 2 Non-Executive Directors – Julia Hovells, (Chair of the Board) plus one vacancy

Each member is required to sign an Agreement for Services.

Operating structure

ESH staff are currently employees of SCDC, with all costs of employment recharged directly to the company, the staff are on joint contracts allowing them to work both for SCDC and any subsidiary companies.

The current staffing structure is headed by Duncan Vessey, Head of Ermine Street Housing (acting as Managing Director)

- Atef Sayed, Operations and Asset Manager
- Annie Sweeney, Lettings Manager
- Linda Ahern, Finance Manager

Plus seven other members of the staff dealing with repairs, lettings, health and safety compliance, rent collection and arrears management.

SCDC provides additional support in areas of HR, Housing, Health and Safety, Audit and Accountancy which is recharged to the company.

Responsibilities of the Board

The essential functions of the Board are listed below. The Board operates in accordance with its Memorandum and Articles.

- Define and ensure compliance with the values and objectives of the company.
- Establish policies and plans to achieve those objectives.
- Approve each year's budget and accounts prior to publication.
- Establish and oversee a framework of delegation and systems of control.
- Agree policies and make decisions on all matters that might create significant financial or other risk to the company, or which raise issues of principle.
- Monitor the company's performance in relation to these plans, budgets, controls and decisions.
- Satisfy itself that the company's affairs are conducted lawfully and in accordance with generally accepted standards of performance and propriety.
- Establish and oversee a risk management framework in order to safeguard the assets of the company.
- Carry out an annual risk appraisal and review exercise.
- To receive minutes from committees for consideration and approval of any decisions as necessary
- On an annual basis appraise the effectiveness with which it conducts its business
- Assess how the company follows the requirements of its chosen code of governance.
- Establish and monitor a mechanism for communicating and receiving feedback from the organisation's stakeholders and shareholders.
- Establish a strong working relationship between the Board, Managing Director and other senior staff.
- Follow the organisation's constitution in appointing (and if necessary, removing) the chair of the board.
- Establish a code of conduct and expected behaviour for the Board.

Commitment

It is estimated that the appointed member will commit around an average of half a day per month to the company. This time will be employed flexibly and can vary depending on the demands of the business. An initial induction will take place within three months of formal appointment.

The board has 6 to 8 regular meetings per year which are currently via MS Teams. The Board Meeting Plan for 2024 is set out below. All Board Members are expected to prepare thoroughly for these meetings.

Board Meeting Plan 2024/25

Meetings are scheduled (but not fixed) in 2024 on 25 April, 24 October, AGM (TBC), 5 December, there may be an additional meeting in the summer of 2024 and in 2025 on 23 January, 20 March.

In addition, there is the potential for a full day board away day and a business strategy review day, with all staff, held each year. Training sessions are arranged as necessary. Board members also have the opportunity to attend external training, conferences and networking sessions; and are encouraged to do so.

What the Company Expects from Board Members

1. To uphold the values and objectives of the Company.
2. To uphold the Company's core policies including those for equality and diversity.
3. To prepare for and attend meetings of the Board.
4. To participate in meetings, contributing expertise where applicable.
5. To contribute and share responsibility for the Board's decisions.
6. To prepare for and attend training sessions or other events.
7. To attend and prepare for reviews linked to individual performance and that of the Board.
8. To represent the Company as appropriate.
9. To ask for training where it is needed.
10. To declare any relevant interest.
11. To respect confidentiality of information, and
12. To uphold Code of Conduct.

What Board Members Can Expect from the Company

1. Induction and other specialist training, as appropriate, to enhance the skills of all Members.
2. Support of the Chair and Management Team.
3. Remuneration of £3,000 per annum and reimbursement of incidental expenses, including travel, associated with attending meetings and other events. Remuneration will be subject to an annual review.
4. Notification of the annual meeting schedule.
5. Agendas and meeting papers circulated in advance of meetings.

Role Description and Person Specification

Each Board member has:

- A general duty to act in the interests of the company, being committed to the corporate objectives and core values of the company.
- A duty to ensure that the company observes its rules.
- A duty to govern the company with proper skill and care, contributing to, abiding by and assuming collective responsibility for, board decisions.

Leadership

- Share accountability for the direction and control of the Company within the agreed strategy, policy and planning framework, reviewing that framework as necessary.
- Ensure that obligations to stakeholders are understood and reflected in strategy and implementation.
- Establish a strong and positive working relationship between the board, the Managing Director and other senior staff.
- Support the Chair in his/her role of providing strategic leadership and creating positive board climate.

Strategy

- Set objectives for the Company in the context of the Company's aims, strategy and policy and determine the strategic aims and outcomes required.
- Review and evaluate current and future external opportunities, threats and risks together with current and future internal strengths and weaknesses to ensure effective decision making.
- In conjunction with the board as a whole, be accountable for the quality and effectiveness of the Business Plan in contributing to delivering long term sustainability for the Company.

Performance monitoring

- Ensure there are agreed budgets for both revenue and capital expenditure that drive the outcomes set in the Business Plan.
- Review and monitor the performance of the Company against the Business Plan and ensure that the management information provided to the Board is of the nature and quality required.

Risk

- Ensure that there are systems in place to identify, manage and report risk to safeguard the Company's assets.
- Agree policies and take decisions on all matters that might create significant financial or other risk to the Company.
- Ensure the climate is monitored and appropriate actions taken to deliver a positive climate for staff and board members.

Governance

- Ensure that the Company complies with all legal and statutory obligations and that all regulatory requirements are met.
- In conjunction with the board as a whole, establish and review a Code of Conduct for all board and committee members and staff.
- Assess how the Company follows the recommendations of the chosen code of governance and state compliance or non-compliance in the Company's annual review and accounts.

Personal Development

- Be both well informed (undertake appropriate background reading, develop and maintain an appreciation of the key challenges faced by the Company) and contribute specialist knowledge, expertise and/or experience to the board.
- Contribute to creating and sustaining the "learning board" by participating in or leading board induction and development activities.

Representation

- Promote the reputation and image of the Company by representing the Company as an ambassador at key events and interlaces with tenants, stakeholders, staff etc., both internally and externally.

Board Member - Role Specification

The Board should possess the qualities required to lead the Company and control its affairs. Through annual individual and collective appraisal, the board will ensure that members have relevant skills and experience to lead the Company.

Knowledge

- Understanding of current issues in housing.
- Understanding of the social, economic and/or political context in which the Company operates.
- Understanding of the regulatory and compliance framework within which the Company operates.

Experience

- Experience of working with or for not for profit, public sector, private sector and/or social enterprise bodies.
- Experience of customer care and service delivery.
- Experience of operating in a climate of significant change and challenge.
- Experience of working as part of a team.

Abilities

- Ability to make a constructive contribution to meetings through preparation and understanding.
- Ability to understand complex issues, including financial information ability to take an active part in collective debate and decision-making ability to attend Board meetings, training and development events and other corporate activities which may be held in the evening and at weekends.

Skills

- Good interpersonal and communication skills
- Committee/meeting skills
- Good problem solving skills
- ICT literacy

Personal Qualities

- Commitment to the vision and values of the Company
- Commitment to equality and diversity in employment and service delivery
- High standards of personal and professional integrity
- From time to time the Board will require members with specific expertise in the following areas:
 - Housing development, acquisition and management
 - Accountancy, financial management and treasury management
 - Legal knowledge relevant to housing and planning
 - Asset management, development and procurement
 - Procurement, partnering and contracts
 - PR, media and communications

The details outlined in this Role Description, particularly the principal accountabilities, reflect the content of the job at the date the Role Description was prepared. It should be remembered however, that it is inevitable that over time the nature of individual roles will change, existing duties may be lost and other duties gained without changing the general remit of the duties or the level of responsibilities entailed. Consequently the Company will expect to revise this Role Description from time to time and will consult the postholder at the appropriate time.