

SBSH Advisory Board Meeting 5

Note of Meeting: 15th December 2025

1.0		Welcome/Apologies:	Actions:
	1.1	<p>Welcome:</p> <p>GM welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>	
	1.2	<p>Attendance:</p> <p>Gary Mees (GM) – Gary Mees Architectural Technology representing Construction Industry. (Chair)</p> <p>Stephen Garvin (SG) – Head of Building Standards Division representing BSD.</p> <p>Mark Lawler (ML) – Director MJL Consulting Engineers Ltd. representing Certifiers.</p> <p>Nigel Kerr (NK) – Head of Protective Services Fife Council representing Fife Council.</p> <p>Laura Shanks (LS) – Building Standards Team Manager City of Edinburgh Council representing LABSS. (Vice Chair)</p> <p>JP Breslin (JPB) – Building Standards Team Leader Stirling Council representing LABSS.</p> <p>Alan McAulay (AMcA) – SBSH Director (Technical/Operations/Services).</p> <p>James Whiteford (JW) – SBSH Director (Business/Strategy/Transformation).</p> <p>Apologies:</p> <p>Robert Nichol (RN) – Chief Officer Environment and Economy CoSLA representing CoSLA.</p> <p>Neil Mitchell (NM) – Head of Development Unit Building Standards Division representing BSD.</p> <p>Craig Hatton (CH) – Chief Executive North Ayrshire Council. Representing SOLACE.</p> <p>Stuart Parker (SP) – Managing Director Scotland of Morgan Sindall representing the Construction Industry.</p>	
	1.3	<p>Intimations/Conflicts of Interest:</p> <p>Noting that the agenda included matters relating to the 2026/27 SBSH budget and the proposed 2027/28 growth bid, NK highlighted that his remit includes representing the interests of Fife Council.</p>	
	1.4	<p>Note of previous meeting:</p>	

		Agreed.	
2.0		Previous Actions:	
	2.1	Action 5.1 - Review the balance of Board members: Agreed to defer until June 2026.	Board
	2.2	Action 5.2 - Review SBSH PIs: Item covered under 3.3 below.	
	2.3	Action 5.3 - Future operational reports to include a RAG status, indication of any priority, and re-priority, of outstanding tasks, and reporting on STAS peaks, by exception: JW confirmed that the operational report has now been updated. STAS peaks will be reported as an update. GM suggested the colour coding should be indexed: Red-behind; Amber-ongoing; and Green on-track/Complete	SBSH
	2.4	Action 5.4 - Alert/inform CoSLA and Scottish Ministers of the intention to leave the 0.5 FTE administration and technical support officers post vacant: SG agreed and confirmed there is a need to alert CoSLA and Scottish Ministers on SBSH related matters and change. Take as BAU.	
	2.5	Action 5.5 - Expand the risk register descriptors to better indicate what the potential risk is: JW confirmed that the active risks now have a more concise description to make it clearer what the risks are.	
3.0		Update:	
	3.1	SBSH Periodic Operational Report Q2 2025/26: Technical/Services/Operations update. AMcA gave a full update on activities in SBSH: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural Hub is continuing to evolve, with ongoing discussions involving local authority verifiers. Currently, most LAs rely on third-party engineers for structural checks, as only a minimal number have in-house engineering capability. To support collaboration and consistency, a national forum will be established, similar to the existing Fire Hub. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Papers have adopted a collaborative approach to support verifiers in the effective development of guidance for specific types of work. These papers will be shared to ensure consistency and best practice across the network. The LABSS CTWG Terms of Reference remain under abeyance while the LABSS re-shaping process is underway. During this period, SBSH will continue to provide support, and operations will proceed on a business-as-usual basis. No fundamental changes from STAS process review, just promotional activity which is currently in draft format with CTWG. <p>ML said there had been collaborative discussions and was happy with the direction the Structural Hub was going.</p> <p>SG said we need to ensure there is enough rigor around the STAS scheme and mechanism for audit purposes. He also enquired if the fee income was appropriate. AMcA provided clarity on why the fees are set as they are. I.e. essentially to act as an administration charge, whilst sufficient to deter disingenuous applications. He also confirmed there will be discussion with JW and LS to get a proportionate assessment around the processes.</p> <p>Business/Strategy/Transformation/Learning update. JW gave a full update on activities within SBSH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform/DMS is now in place and backdated to the start of 2025, with all live STAS applications and Information Papers also entered. A request has been submitted to the IT team at Fife Council to arrange a contractor to set up the Enterprise workflow and graphs and charts for reporting. The mobile app has been built for both Android and iOS platforms. User Acceptance Testing (UAT) is scheduled to begin on 8th March, with a full launch planned for April 2026. Time recording proposals to support compliance assessment activity is currently with Idox for pricing with 2 different proposals. One using the time recording tool currently within Idox and the other using the new 'Events' tab, which will come available in Uniform version 10.9.1. 13 LAs have requested assistance in implementation. SBSH supported holding the BSD 'Compliance Plan' roadshow events which also included an update on the CAS system and Peer Review system. These events were well received. 	
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3.2		<p>Finance:</p> <p>Current position: For this current financial year there is currently a circa £1.7m committed spend, with a projected surplus of around £450k. Reasons for this are recruitment period timescales, actual role grades being different to that modelled and money set aside to support compliance plan no longer required. Surplus will be used to supplement funding for next year.</p> <p>Proposed 2026/27 budgetary spend: Spend detailed under Annex A to the circulated 2026/27 budget report. Laid out in 4 sections. Income noted is the funding support grant and anticipated STAS fees. The funding support grant money noted is modelled from the sum set out in our original technical business case with inflationary increases to 2026/27. Expenditure covers salary costs and overheads as well as specific costs that are essential to run our core services.</p> <p>Supported national development covers spend that is used to directly support and develop building standards operatives. Funding under supported national development will change over the years as different initiatives are funded. The Board were asked to note, whilst the budgetary spend is identified, this will be made up by agreed funding support in the sum of £1,200,000.00 with the balance being used from the budgetary surplus being carried forward from this financial year.</p> <p>Proposed 2027/28 growth bid (Technical Manager):</p> <p>See report for justification. As SBSH is new it was expected a growth bid may be required for the future, this reflects the unanticipated growth rate in services and success of SBSH and would ensure ongoing quality. JW introduced the board to the</p>	

	<p>paper and confirmed that governance requires that recruitment of additional staff be taken to the Advisory Board to seek approval, and funding secured with Fife Council. JW also confirmed that the required funding for the additional post was identified in the two finance papers circulated to the board and BSD research into future SBSH funding was also aware of the sums for the 2027/28 budget including growth bid. AMcA gave the board an overview of the key considerations as to why the inclusion of this role within the SBSH has been proposed.</p> <p>LS questioned whether there is too much demand on SBSH and suggested that BSD technical team could provide support. LS also asked if the new post will be openly advertised and whether candidates will come from local authority staff or other backgrounds, noting that recruiting staff in Building Standards is currently challenging and this could add to the difficulty.</p> <p>It was confirmed that it is intended that the new post would be openly advertised and candidates could come from either within the SBSH, local authorities or the private sector. It was also clarified that the hub should aim to grow to support the local authority service it delivers.</p> <p>SG confirmed that BSD continues to receive a number of enquiries, which are discussed with SBSH as appropriate. In addition to this, BSD primarily serves ministers and supports policy development.</p> <p>Advisory Board consideration of proposed 2026/27 spend and 2027/28 growth bid:</p> <p>Following discussion and consideration of the 2026/27 SBSH budget setting and the proposed 2027/28 growth bid papers, GM asked the Board for their approval or rejection of the proposals. The Board unanimously agreed with the proposed budget setting for 2026/27 and the growth bid to create a Technical Managers post.</p> <p>Future SBSH funding – consultation work:</p> <p>Optimal Economics is undertaking consultation work for the delivery of a SBSH budget setting funding model for 2027/28 onwards. The focus is on providing automatic and predictable funding for the SBSH moving forward that is inflationary linked and can accommodate adjustments in identified budgetary spend and</p>	
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		<p>supported growth bids, which would also have periodic review periods and take cognisance of any carry-forward/surpluses.</p> <p>The draft report is currently with BSD for review. SG confirmed it has not yet reached him but agreed to review it with the aim of establishing a sustainable long-term funding model.</p>	
	3.3	<p>Business:</p> <p>Proposed PIs:</p> <p>JW provided an overview of proposal to provide a revised suite of performance indicators. This was a deferred action requested previously by the Board. JW confirmed that it has been brought to the table at this time as it was appropriate to undertake the review to coincide with the work that has recently been undertaken regarding Enterprise workflow, graphs and charts. JW also sought clarity as to when, if accepted, this new reporting should start as it may be best to start in Q1 2026/27 to run out this financial year with the current reporting.</p> <p>GM sought the Boards opinion, and it was agreed to move forward with the revised reporting, acknowledging that whilst there are still a large number of PIs, they will also be useful for business purposes and are mostly automatically generated, thus not overly burdensome to collate.</p> <p>Time/Activity:</p> <p>It was confirmed that the time and activity report was primarily circulated to the Board for noting. There are no significant changes to report from previous quarters, other than to note that CPD and sick leave are now reported separately as previously requested by the Board.</p>	
	3.4	<p>Risk Register:</p> <p>There are currently two active risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing 2026/27 funding. Given the agreement with BSD to £1.2m funding support, supplemented with this financial year’s surplus, this risk can now be reduced. Funding support letter expected in due course. • Securing 2027/28 budget and onwards funding formula. This risk is still present unadjusted, as BSD reviewing the report from Optimal and outcome unknown. 	

4.0		AOCB:	
	4.1	NK asked whether the review on dangerous buildings from the Court of Session has been published. It is publicly available , but BSD confirmed they have not reviewed yet. LABSS is expected to pick this up in January with BSD, due to the implications for local authority building standards teams.	
	4.2	Next Meeting: Monday 9 th March 2026 at 13:30.	Chair
5.0		Actions:	
	5.1	Review the balance of Board members. Longer term action for noting – defer to June 2026.	Board
	5.2	Index RAG ratings in operational reports.	SBSH