

Howard de Walden Estates Limited

Section 172 Statement for the year ended 31 March 2020

Overview

Section 172 of the Companies Act 2006 requires a Director of a company to act in the way he or she considers, in good faith, would be most likely to promote the success of the company for the benefit of its members as a whole. In doing this, section 172 requires a Director to have regard, among other matters, to: the likely consequences of any decision in the long term; the interests of the company's employees; the need to foster the company's business relationships with suppliers, customers and others; the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment; the desirability of the company maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct; and the need to act fairly with members of the company. The Directors give careful consideration to the factors set out above in discharging their duties under section 172 for the Company. This statement should be read in conjunction with the Strategic report in the financial statements as a whole.

The Company engages with a wide range of stakeholders to inform our thinking including customers, suppliers and contractors, the environment, communities, employees and shareholders. We consider the perspective of all stakeholders to continue to deliver outstanding places to live and work with positive outcomes for all. The Board met throughout the year to discuss matters of strategic importance and to obtain an understanding of the performance and position of the Howard de Walden Group, of which the Company is the largest component. Any decisions made by the Board are done so with the Company's performance in mind and considering the impact on stakeholders, with our reputation of paramount importance. The Executive Directors are part of the Executive Committee and attend management meetings throughout the year to ensure decisions made at Board level are carried out appropriately.

Customers

The Company works hard to actively communicate with all customers to ensure we are constantly meeting their needs and providing properties fit for purpose. In the year, we carried out our first ever residential customer satisfaction survey. With over 200 responses received, the results were very good with 85% of respondents satisfied with the service they receive. The survey has also provided invaluable areas for improvement which the Board is addressing.

Employees

Employees are central to the long-term success of the Company. We encourage open and constructive discussions throughout the year via regular town hall style meetings and at the presentation of the annual results. Both provide a good platform to give employees an update on activities. This year, the Board commissioned our first ever employee survey, to obtain direct feedback from employees. The results were positive but also provided clear areas for improvement which the Board is actively considering.

Suppliers and contractors

We work with suppliers and contractors who share our ethical and corporate governance standards. Contractors are engaged with throughout refurbishment works to ensure they are working in line with our expectations. Procurement is an area the Board is keen to improve upon. Accordingly, a new position has been created within our Business Operations team for a supplier management specialist.

Environment

The Company takes its responsibilities for environmental matters seriously and continues to improve its work in this area. The Board considers sustainability a business-critical area and has created new roles to focus our attention on this area going forward. As a member of the UK Green Building Council, we are actively engaging with our peers and working collaboratively to provide more efficient buildings for the future.

Communities

Communities are at the heart of everything we do. We engage throughout the year via forums and written literature. We actively promote businesses and put on events to showcase the area as well as making donations to local charitable causes. This year, the Board agreed to provide key worker housing for lower paid workers via the provision of discounted rents in selected properties. It was agreed to provide housing for key workers relating to those who work in the medical sector, particularly hospitals, recognising the key service they provide to the community. Local hospitals were engaged with and eight units were allocated for use as key worker housing.

Shareholders

As part of a family-owned group of companies, our family members' interests are always considered when making strategic decisions. Four family members sit on the Board and other beneficial shareholders are invited to attend meetings, demonstrating the Board's active engagement with shareholders. A new committee was established in the year to provide a platform for the shareholders to provide input, particularly on matters focused on the long term.