

New look Board for Connexus

23/09/2019

John Barker replaces Ruth Cooke as Chair of the Board at Connexus, with other new Board members introduced at the AGM.

Connexus, who manage over 10,000 homes across the West Midlands, has announced the appointment of their new Board at the AGM this week. Richard Woolley, Chief Executive of Connexus, welcomed 6 new Board members to the Connexus team, with outgoing Chair, Ruth Cooke, handing over to new Chair, John Barker.

Ruth Cooke joined Herefordshire Housing Board in 2010 and soon became Chair of the Finance committee that oversaw the refinancing of the Group through the issuing of a £120m bond. In 2015 Ruth became chair of the Group and was instrumental in leading the governance of Independence Trust joining the Group. In 2017 Ruth jointly led the merger of Herefordshire Housing and Shropshire housing Groups and became Chair of the newly merged organisation in July 2017. Ruth steered the Group through governance issues in 2018 and led the Board through the identification of a succession plan for the new Board and Executive.

John Barker brings with him a wealth of experience in the housing sector, where he has filled roles in executive and non-executive positions, including 20 years as chief executive of Moat.

Connexus was formed through the merger of Shropshire Housing Group and Herefordshire Housing in 2017, a merger overseen by outgoing Chair Ruth Cooke. Ruth departs Connexus after serving 9 years on the Board of Herefordshire Housing, as Chair of Connexus since merger.

New Board member Andrew Taylor has been appointed Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. Andrew is a qualified member and fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and has significant experience in all areas of risk, corporate governance and stakeholder management. His previous NED positions saw him chair Boards and Committees at both the Salvation Army Housing Association and Hendon Christian Association.

Andrew is joined on the Board by new members who bring with them fresh impetus and a range of experience and expertise. Andrew Battrum was the Finance Director at Bromford Housing Group for 13 successful years, developing strong analytical skills and treasury expertise. The Board also

Say hello

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welcomes Simon Gibbs, who has over 25 years' experience as a CEO/MD. Simon is a Chartered Accountant with investment banking experience and specialist knowledge in property development.

New Board member Maggie Punyer has an invaluable grasp of the key issues facing the housing sector, having served as a Lead Director with Ocean Media. Maggie also has a commercial background, providing the strategic leadership needed at a governance level by Connexus. Completing the new-look Board is Abigail Reilly, who has 15 years' experience at senior management level within social housing. Abigail's time as an Executive Director has seen her heavily involved in governance reviews, including an in-depth regulatory assessment (IDA) process.

Ruth Cooke, outgoing Chair, said:

"It's been an absolute privilege to spend 9 years as a Board member and then Chair of Connexus. I've been lucky enough to work with a hugely talented team of executives and non-executives. I'm proud of all we've achieved, including the creation of Connexus itself. I know that the organisation will go from strength to strength under the leadership of John Barker."

Richard Woolley said:

"This is an exciting time for Connexus and I am delighted that we have a strong Board in place to deliver our plans."

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