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Chair retires from Housing Board

Henry Barker, Chair of Eden Housing Association (EHA) has retired as Chair of the Association under its 9 year Rule, at its recent Annual General Meeting.

Henry, speaking at the AGM, recounted how a decade ago he was interviewed for a place on the Board by then Chief Executive Paul Davies. Henry remembers the day clearly and said "I was thrilled, humbled and a little surprised to be accepted onto the Board. Little did I know then that I would enjoy 9 years as an active Member and seven years as Chair."

Henry chaired the EHA Board from 2011 and has helped steer the organisation through both memorable and challenging times. His personal highlights included overseeing the development of two Extra Care housing schemes - the first was the flagship scheme at Heysham Gardens in Carlisle in 2012, followed by the redevelopment of Mill Gardens scheme in Kirkby Stephen in 2015.

Challenges have been overcome, including finding ways to contend with the Government's imposed rent reduction policy which had significant income implications for all housing associations. Under skilful leadership from the Board, EHA has risen to the challenge, become a leaner, more efficient but still highly effective organisation that is proud of retaining its local service provision.

In his closing remarks at the AGM, Henry said "The reason I have been able to do this job is because of the varied skills and commitment from all Board Members.

"Our Board Members all have their own individual strengths and I urge them all to remember that. It is nothing to do with the size of the organisation it is about the skills and contributions you make that help Eden succeed and I thank you all for your support over the years.

"In particular, I would like to thank Margery Manfield-Cooke for supporting me as Vice Chair and being so good at keeping spirits high. We can never know what's around the corner, but EHA is certainly better placed to cope with whatever comes our way.

"Whilst I will no longer be a Member of the Board, I will still be taking a keen interest in how EHA progresses. I think I am like a stick of rock - wherever you cut me I will have EHA running through my veins and I wish the Association the very best for the future."

John Clasper, Chief Executive at EHA said "It has been a pleasure working for Henry as Chair. He has facilitated a strong teamwork ethic within our Board and across the organisation and he has always had tenant and residents' interests at the front of everything, which is how it should be. Henry will be missed by everyone at the Association but our 9 year Board Rule is there to ensure the Association continues to evolve and our governance follows recognised best practice."

Taking over as Chair is Beth Furneaux who joined the Board in September 2017 bringing with her extensive experience serving as a former County Councillor across Cumbria, leading on housing and Adult Social Care.

Margery Manfield-Cooke remains as Vice-Chair, a role she has held since 2015. Margery has many years of past senior level experience with a national registered provider; with a real depth of knowledge in supported housing provision, HR and strategic management.

Two new Members with strong financial backgrounds joined the Board at the AGM. Danny Roper is a local Chartered Accountant with a local firm of Accountants, specialising in Business Services and Corporate Tax.

Also joining the Board is Aryn Fazal who has recently retired from his role as Chief Executive of Penrith Building Society.

John Clasper concluded by saying “We are pleased to have Beth as our new Chair, who brings lots of relevant experience and insight and also to welcome our two new Board Members who not only compliment our existing skills, but they bring additional financial expertise to the team.

“Our Membership on the Board is now at its maximum under our Rules but we are always interested in talking to people who want to become more involved in the work of the Association.”

For more details, contact John Clasper at Eden Housing Association on 01768 861400 or email john.clasper@edenha.org.uk

Photo - front - Henry Barker, retiring Board Chair, with John Clasper CEO at Eden Housing Association and Beth Furneaux who takes over the role of Chair.

