Board language: what to say, and what to avoid

Minutes are read later by leaseholders, insurers, tribunals and regulators deciding whether the board acted reasonably. The wrong words promise what the board can't guarantee; the right words record what it actually did. **Describe the process, never certify the building.**

> **Only use this wording where it's true.** The aim is to record what the board actually did, not to sound compliant. Replace anything in [brackets] with the real detail.

Avoid	Write instead
"The building is fire compliant."	"The board has reviewed the fire risk assessment dated [date] and agreed a timetable for the actions it raised."
"The agent has confirmed it's safe."	"The managing agent reported on [date] that [named checks] were completed. The board noted the report."
"The contractor said it's fine."	"The board received [adviser]'s report dated [date] and agreed the approach it recommends."
"Just handle it."	"The board authorised the managing agent to [action] up to £[amount], and asked for a report at the next meeting."
"The agent decided."	"The board approved the agent's recommendation of [option], having considered [alternatives]."
"We'll deal with it next year."	"The board deferred [item] to [date] because [reason], having considered the risk of waiting."
"We went with the cheapest quote."	"The board accepted the lowest compliant quote after comparing the scope and specification of each."

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Continued overleaf

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One decision, minuted two ways

Weak

“Fire doors discussed. Agent to sort.”

Strong

Item 6: communal fire doors. Having considered the fire risk assessment dated 3 March, which rates 12 doors as high priority, the board agreed to replace those doors this year and, on the assessor’s written advice, to review the rest in 2027 rather than raise a special levy. The agent is to start Section 20 consultation and report to the next meeting. The chair asked about conflicts of interest; none were declared.

Four habits that make minutes defensible

1. **Record the advice.** Who advised, what they were asked, and when.
2. **Record the reasoning.** If the board defers, phases or departs from advice, say why and when it will review it.
3. **Record the authority.** Who can act, within what limits, and when they report back.
4. **Record any conflicts.** Any director with a personal interest in the decision, and whether they took part.

Would your board’s records hold up? A Blockwell Governance Risk Review rates twelve areas of board governance and gives a prioritised, board-ready action plan, for a fixed fee.
Book a free 30-minute call at blockwell.co.uk/book
or email ben@blockwell.co.uk

This guide is free to copy and share with your fellow directors.

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