

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Monday 4 November 2013 at 6.30pm in "The Barn", 2 Chapel Lane, King's Lynn

PRESENT:

Ray Johnson (Chairman)
Lesley Bambridge
Matthew Brown
Steve Clark
Frazer Clement
Simon Gathercole
Tony Hall (Chief Executive)
Sean Kent (Deputy Chief Executive)
Paul Leader
Ian Pinches
Colin Sampson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Michelle Gant - Director of Engagement
Shendi Keshet - Director of Finance
Angus MacQueen - Company Secretary

OBSERVER:

Liz Potter - Campbell Tickell

179/13 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed Liz Potter of Campbell Tickell who was observing the meeting as part of the annual Board appraisal and review process.

The Chairman also welcomed Tony Hall and Sean Kent, who were now Board Members in their respective capacities as Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, following registration of the Rule amendments approved at the 2013 Annual General Meeting.

An apology for absence was received from John Fox. The Board was sorry to learn that John Fox was unwell and wished him all the best.

180/13 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

181/13 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

182/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Tony Hall declared an interest in the item at 201/13 – Chief Executive's Appraisal – but remained in the room as there was no discussion on the item.

183/13 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman said that, in addition to his weekly meetings with the Chief Executive, he had attended a meeting of the Eastern Region housing association chairs, organised by the National Housing Federation. This had been a very interesting and useful event.

184/13 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

(a) Zoots Nightclub Site

The Chief Executive reported that the Borough Council's Planning Committee had, that morning, unanimously approved Freebridge's revised application for development on the former Zoots nightclub site in King's Lynn. The Committee had turned down the original application, but the revised application had addressed its concerns. Although the revised scheme had three fewer units than the original proposal, it was still viable and overall was a better development. The Chief Executive thanked Lesley Bambridge for her support at the Committee meeting.

In answer to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive undertook to provide Ian Pinches with details of the financial implications of the loss of three units from the original application.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive said that he would let the Board have key dates from the project timetable when these were available.

The Director of Engagement explained that BBC Radio Norfolk had that morning run a feature on cinema memories. This was in light of the Zoots nightclub site application, as the site had previously been the location for the Pilot Cinema. A lady had rung into the station to say that she had become engaged at the Pilot Cinema 53 years ago. With the help of Radio Norfolk, the Director of Engagement had made contact with this lady, and would be using this story in future Freebridge publicity on the site.

(b) Hillington Square

The Chief Executive advised that the key piece of work in the Hillington Square project recently had been revising the plans to redesign and keep the existing stair cores, rather than demolishing them. This was in response to a recommendation in the Cabinet Office report.

(c) Providence Street

The Chief Executive stated that the purchase of Providence Street was progressing, albeit slowly. The legal papers had been drafted.

(d) Probation Service

The Chief Executive reported that early discussions had been held with the Probation Service regarding housing needs in West Norfolk.

(e) Bank Mandate

Confidential

185/13 REVIEW OF THE CHARITABLE SUPPORT POLICY

The Director of Engagement presented a report which reviewed the Charitable Support Policy.

RESOLVED: That the Charitable Support Policy be approved, as presented.

186/13 REVIEW OF THE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT POLICY

The Director of Engagement presented a report which reviewed the Customer Engagement Policy.

RESOLVED: That the Customer Engagement Policy be approved, as presented.

187/13 REVIEW OF THE BUSINESS CONTINUITY STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which reviewed the Business Continuity Strategy and Guidelines.

RESOLVED: That the Business Continuity Strategy and Guidelines be approved, as presented.

188/13 FRAUD ACTION PLAN

Confidential item

189/13 ANNUAL REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Confidential item

190/13 SALE OF FURTHER SHARES IN SHARED OWNERSHIP LEASE

Confidential item

191/13 APPOINTMENT OF SHAREHOLDER

The Board considered a report which listed an application for tenant shareholding.

RESOLVED: That the application for tenant shareholding set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

192/13 OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Operations Performance Overview report for the quarter ending 30 September 2013. An updated version of the Quarterly Trend Report (Appendix 1 to the Board report) was tabled; this included some additional wording around arrears.

Discussion took place on some aspects of the report, as set out below:

- There had been a rise in service charge arrears. This was being kept under review, but was mainly a timing issue.
- The Executive would look into the two complaints about staff attitude, in particular whether these related to Freebridge staff or contractors. The fact that only two complaints had been received during the quarter was pleasing.
- The number of compliments recorded was pleasing. Staff were known to be motivated by the knowledge that recorded compliments were reported to the Board.
- The fact that the number of properties without a gas servicing certificate had returned to zero was pleasing.
- As there were now fewer Decent Homes relets, which often resulted in zero re-let days, any delay caused when a property was not let to the first person nominated had a greater impact on overall relet times. There had been a number of refusals during August, which had impacted on the relet figures. Staff were working with West Norfolk Homechoice to ensure that properties and applicants were matched as well as possible, and there had already been an improvement.
- Staff were tracking properties which could fall into non-decency, as well as those which became vacant but had not had Decent Homes improvements because of tenant refusal.
- The Board may like to consider its aspirational standard for properties when it next reviewed the Asset Management Policy.

The Board noted the report.

193/13 **FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES QUARTERLY
MANAGEMENT REPORT**

Confidential item

194/13 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Director of Finance presented a report which provided an update on treasury activity for the period 1 April to 30 September 2013.

It was noted that Philip Porter of Beha Williams, Freebridge's treasury management advisors, would be giving a presentation at the next Board meeting. The Board was content that this should be about 20 minutes in duration, plus 10 minutes for questions and discussion.

The Board noted the report.

195/13 **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which detailed risk management activity during the quarter ending 30 September 2013 and provided an update to the Corporate Risk Map.

The Board noted the report.

[At the conclusion of the meeting, the Board undertook a risk appetite exercise, the results of which would be considered at the Board's away weekend later in the month.]

196/13 **BUSINESS PLAN 2013/14 – SECOND QUARTER UPDATE**

The Chief Executive presented a report which set out the second quarter update to the 2013/14 Business Plan.

Discussion took place on some aspects of the report, as set out below:

- The "out and about" events were proving very popular with tenants and were a good chance to meet with customers in an informal way.
- A significant number of the outstanding actions on the Business Plan fell to the Director of Housing. The Deputy Chief Executive was monitoring the Director of Housing's workload, and was confident that the actions would be completed on target, as they were being allocated around the team.
- Freebridge was hosting two "Community Organisers", who had just started work in North Lynn and South Lynn respectively. These posts had come about as a result of a successful application for Government funding, following the work with the Cabinet Office on Behavioural Influencing in Hillington Square. A Community Development Officer would also be recruited shortly for Hillington Square.

The Board considered the format of the Business Plan update reports. A member stated that he did not believe that it was necessary to include in the report items which were on target but not yet completed; he would prefer reporting by exception of items likely not to be achieved within target. Other members were of the view, however, that because of the importance of the Business Plan to the organisation, the Board should regularly monitor all elements of it, albeit that much of this would be confirmation that actions were on target. The Board, therefore, decided to leave the format of the report unchanged, although it was suggested that those items marked “amber” (ie “in progress”) could have a little more detail on the progress made.

It was noted that monthly meetings regarding Plaxtole House would take place with The Benjamin Foundation until January 2014 (rather than January 2013, as stated in the update).

The Board noted the report.

197/13 PLAXTOLE HOUSE QUARTERLY UPDATE

Confidential item

198/13 CONTINUOUS RECORDING (CORE) OF LETTINGS AND SALES FOR 2012/13

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which highlighted from the CORE statistics significant changes to Freebridge’s lettings in 2012/13 as compared to 2011/12, and which identified any trends and indicators that could affect how Freebridge managed its housing stock in the future.

The Board was of the view that it no longer required this report in future years, unless there were areas of concern that the Executive felt were important to make the rest of the Board aware of.

The Board noted the report.

199/13 BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) LETTINGS

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which sought to set a new BME indicator for lettings.

The Board noted that, for the first time, in 2012/13, Freebridge had not achieved its BME lettings indicator. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that work was being undertaken to ascertain the reasons for this. Initial indications were that there appeared to be a large number of refusals among people with BME backgrounds. A full report would be brought to the Board.

The Board acknowledged the importance of monitoring BME lettings, in the interests of equality, and stated that it wished to continue receiving this report on an annual basis.

RESOLVED: That a new BME lettings indicator of 13.43% be adopted and reviewed annually.

200/13 PENSION DISCRETION

The Board noted a report which provided details of a recent pension discretion that had been granted.

201/13 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL

Confidential item

202/13 WORK UPDATE

The Company Secretary presented the work update, which included the following:

- Action Sheet
- Future Work Programme of the Board.

In relation to the action sheet, the Company Secretary advised that the Deputy Chief Executive had prepared a report reviewing the process of this year's external audit, and that this would be presented to the Audit Committee on 11 November 2013.

The Board noted the update.

203/13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- **Queen Elizabeth Hospital Trust**

Ian Pinches, as Chairman of the Audit Committee at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Trust, gave an update on the position of the Trust, which had recently had regulatory intervention.

204/13 NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 9 December 2013 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

CHAIRMAN