

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING

WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SHAREHOLDERS IN ADVANCE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SEPTEMBER 2020

Shareholder Question #1: “Why has the communal TV aerial* use been discontinued, as this would save all of the residents quite a substantial amount of money on a licence fee, and as any costs involved in maintaining the aerial would be added to our rent (as it used to be) so any costs including admin costs would be recovered, so there would be no loss to Freebridge?” (*at Prince Henry Place)

Freebridge Leadership team response: “We are pleased to clarify that the communal TV aerial is still operational, and any repairs or maintenance to it are covered as part of the existing service charges.

“Following the Government’s decision to end the funding of free TV Licences for people aged 75 or over, unless they were in receipt of Pension Credits, there was some confusion over Concessionary Licences.

“The good news is that TV Licensing have now agreed that those aged 75 or over who live on a Sheltered Scheme with a Concessionary Licence should continue to be eligible for a free licence, and following this Freebridge have provided all of the required information to them to make the necessary amendments. If any resident has concerns about this issue, they can contact us for further help.”

Shareholder Question #2: “The land at the end of Prince Henry Place, Downham Market, has once again been turned down by the local council for development by the current owners, so as I have said in the past that as the land was only meant to be developed for social housing (as I understand) why can't Freebridge apply to take it over so that it can be used for what it was originally intended for?”

Freebridge Leadership team response: “We’re unaware as to whether the land in question is available to buy but we appreciate the point being made and our Development Team will look into this further. Thank you.”

Shareholder Question #3: “Why didn’t Freebridge say who is on the Customer Service Panel when asked some months ago?”

Freebridge Leadership team response: “We’re sorry that we haven’t announced this news before now but are happy to confirm that Jas Rigg and Jo Barrett from Freebridge’s Board will be joined by Zana Balciuniene, Paul Leader and Maria West, who were successfully recruited to the Committee at the beginning of 2020.”

Shareholder Question #4: “Why wouldn’t the CEO Mr Hall answer my letter dated 27 April concerning the Customer Service Committee interviews? I do assume he has been working from home all this time.”

Freebridge Leadership team response: “We felt the letter sent in response, on the 28th April, covered the various points raised in the original correspondence. If the shareholder in question still feels there are matters that remain unanswered, we would ask that they contact us direct.”

Shareholder Question #5: Why am I still waiting for a reply re my concerns about Capita collecting the rent, and will Capita be chasing rent arrears like they do TV licences?

Freebridge Leadership team response: “We chose Capita following a competitive tender process as we felt that they offered the widest and most flexible range of payment options to our customers, and we are confident that they will provide a good quality service.

“Capita have not been contracted to provide a collections or debt service. All contact regarding customers’ accounts, payment plans and all other queries relating to rent remains the direct responsibility of Freebridge employees”.

Shareholder Question #6: “Why wouldn’t Freebridge say how much it costs to print and deliver “Streets Ahead” magazine each quarter when asked by a shareholder of the company?”

Freebridge Leadership team response: “As we are about to go out to tender for the printing and delivery of the Streets Ahead magazine, we’re not in a position to provide this information. Once the tender process is complete, we’ll be happy to provide the details in a future issue of the magazine.”

Shareholder Question #7: “Why are the Service Standards results so appallingly bad for 2019/20 and so far 2020/21?”

Freebridge Leadership team response: “While there is lots of good work happening at Freebridge we understand that our performance in some areas is not where we want it to be. Please rest assured that we recognise that there is more for us to do and we are working hard to put this right.”

Shareholder Question #8: Why are the Board still refusing to comply with the rules (contract) of the company, ie C15.4* which ALL shareholders and the company agree to be bound by?

Freebridge Leadership team response: “The Board considered this issue in November 2019 and decided not to remove any shareholders as they felt that taking such action would be contrary to Freebridge’s tenant engagement principles and to increasing expectations from the Government that associations should engage more with their tenants.”

*Rule C15.4 states: “A shareholder shall cease to be a shareholder if.... they do not participate in, nor deliver written apologies in advance for two general meetings and the Board resolves that they be removed.”

Shareholder Question #9: Why is it so difficult to obtain answers to questions at the first or second time of asking?

Freebridge Leadership team response: “We do give every question that we receive due consideration and we endeavour to provide answers to them as far as possible.”

Shareholder Question #10: “When the Shareholders were informed that a new committee was to be set up to run as an interface between the Board and the Tenants Panel and that the Tenants Panel would not be involved with this new committee, why were members of the Tenants Panel involved in the interviews for the new committee?”

Freebridge Leadership team response: “We felt that including Tenant Panel members on the interview panel for the recruitment of tenants to the Customer Service Committee was a positive move given they have a valuable insight into the skills required to work in partnership with Freebridge.”

Shareholder Question #11: “I also have been informed that ex-Tenant Panel Members are on this committee, yet candidates who applied to be part of this new committee who were not existing or ex-Tenant Panel members were not elected to go on this new committee?”

Freebridge Leadership team response: “Everyone who applied to the Customer Service Committee was considered using the same open and fair recruitment process, and as a result we are very much looking forward to working with Zana, Paul and Maria.”