

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Monday 5 October 2015 at 6.30pm in "The Barn", 2 Chapel Lane, King's Lynn

PRESENT:

Matthew Brown
Steve Clark
Marie Connell
Tony Hall (Chief Executive)
Ray Johnson
Sean Kent (Deputy Chief Executive)
Brian Long
Ian Pinches
Jasmine Rigg
Colin Sampson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andrew Edmonds - Head of Property
Vince Warren - Head of Regeneration
Clare Flynn - Finance Manager
Angus MacQueen - Company Secretary

194/15 APPOINTMENT OF BOARD CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Company Secretary presented a report which sought to appoint the Board Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

Ray Johnson was proposed and seconded for the position of Board Chairman. Steve Clark was proposed and seconded for the position of Board Vice-Chairman. There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED:

- 1) That Ray Johnson be appointed Board Chairman until the start of the first Board meeting following the 2016 Annual General Meeting.
- 2) That Steve Clark be appointed Board Vice-Chairman until the start of the first Board meeting following the 2016 Annual General Meeting.

Ray Johnson in the Chair

Ray Johnson thanked the Board for reappointing him as Chairman. He said that Board recruitment and succession planning were top priorities, to be addressed over the next few months.

195/15 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

196/15 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

197/15 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

198/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Ray Johnson and Steve Clark declared interests in the item at minute number 194/15 – Appointment of Board Chairman and Vice-Chairman – as they were the candidates for the positions. They withdrew from the room for the duration of the item. Ian Pinches declared interests in the appointment of the Chairman of the Audit Committee, as he was the candidate, and the appointment of the Freebridge representative on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Governors' Council, as he was a Board Member of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He withdrew from the room when these appointments were made, under minute number 204/15 – Governance Issues.

199/15 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman said that he had held his usual weekly meetings with the Chief Executive. He had also attended, along with most of the Board, a conference for e² Board Members, held in Bury St Edmund's on 1 October 2015; this had been an excellent event.

200/15 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

A written update from the Chief Executive had been previously circulated and was noted by the Board.

The written update covered the following issues:

- Elizabeth Avenue Fire Damaged Properties
- North End Yard
- Community Grant Fund
- Plaxtole House
- Charity Golf Day
- Appointment of Finance Director
- Roll Out of Universal Credit
- Planning Committee Visit
- Providence Street Community Centre
- Right To Buy – Proposed Voluntary Agreement

With reference to the Elizabeth Avenue fire, the Chief Executive said that 46 properties had been identified as having been purchased under the Right To Buy which had ventilation units in the loft. An information leaflet had been sent to each of these properties.

With regard to Plaxtole House, the Chief Executive reported that The Benjamin Foundation had indicated that it would vacate the property by 26 October 2015.

The Chief Executive stated that he had received positive feedback following the tour of Keeble Court and Hillington Square which he had provided to the Planning Committee. Additionally, he was pleased to report that the Planning Committee had that day approved Freebridge's revised application for the Rampant Horse Public House site, in Gayton.

The Board was pleased to note the wide range of activities being carried out at the Providence Street Community Centre and the income that was being generated.

The Chief Executive said that he understood that a significant majority of housing associations had indicated their support for the voluntary agreement around Right To Buy negotiated with the Government by the National Housing Federation.

[Confidential wording]

201/15 REVISED BUSINESS PLAN

The Chief Executive presented a report which set out the revised Business Plan 2015-2017. He said that preparing the revised Business Plan alongside the revised Financial Plan had worked well; this was a model which would be followed in the future.

The Chief Executive stated that the revised Business Plan and Financial Plan had been produced in response to the rent reduction announcement in the Chancellor's Budget on 8 July 2015 and the subsequent regulatory requirement to submit a revised Financial Forecast Return by 30 October 2015. The Board had given direction in the preparation of the revised Plans, firstly at the "iron grip" stress testing exercise held on 17 July 2015 and secondly at the "Thinking Session" held on 7 September 2015, and the draft documents therefore reflected the Board's direction. The proposals had been drawn up by the Management Team, in consultation with the Leader Managers, and had been consulted on with the Tenant Panel.

The Chief Executive highlighted that the report firstly set out progress achieved against the original 2015-2016 Business Plan. Secondly, it set out the revised Business Plan; this had been designed as an 18-month Plan, rather than the usual 12-month Plan, as half of the current year had elapsed. Management Team was recommending which of the uncompleted items from 2015-2016 to include in the revised Plan. All four of the Business Plan Objectives, Increasing Satisfaction, Community Focused, Appreciating Assets

and Increasing Capacity, remained important, although the emphasis now fell more strongly on the latter two.

The Board was pleased to note that it was proposed to leave Freebridge's Vision, Mission and Values unchanged, other than a minor amendment to the Vision. The report suggested adding the word "Supporting" to the Vision, so that it would read "Supporting a Better West Norfolk"; this would help communicate that Freebridge's role was to support other agencies, but not necessarily to fill gaps in service delivery.

The Board acknowledged that the revisions to the Business Plan and Financial Plan which were being presented to this meeting were as comprehensive as possible at this stage. However, there would be further work to be done once more details were known of emerging Government policy, for instance the extension to the Right To Buy and the introduction of the "Pay To Stay" scheme. Freebridge's asset management strategy was being developed, and this would also have an impact on the revised Plans. The Board asked that these issues were considered as part of the refreshment of the Financial Plan in February 2016 (see resolution 4 below). The Board also noted that, once there was further clarity on these issues, it would be appropriate to consider further income generation measures.

The Board thanked the Chief Executive for an excellent report.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the progress against the original 2015-2016 Business Plan be noted.
- 2) That the revised Business Plan 2015-2017 be approved.
- 3) That the Freebridge Vision be amended to now read "Supporting a Better West Norfolk".
- 4) That, when the Financial Plan is refreshed in February 2016, particular attention be paid to emerging Government policy and the way that Freebridge manages its assets.

202/15 FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE 2015

Confidential item

203/15 HILLINGTON SQUARE OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Confidential item

204/15 GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The Board considered a report which sought to:

- undertake the annual process of making Board appointments for the ensuing year;
- put in place the 2016 timetable for Board, Audit Committee and AGM meetings; and
- agree the timing of a recruitment process for Tenant Board Members.

With reference to the annual Board appointments, the Chairman had previously circulated a sheet of recommendations, and these were agreed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the annual Board appointments be made as follows:

Audit Committee: Ian Pinches (Chairman), Marie Connell, (Vice-Chairman), Steve Clark, Jasmine Rigg, Karen Sly (co-opted member)

Chief Executive's Appraisal Panel: Matthew Brown (Chairman), Colin Sampson, Ray Johnson (as Board Chairman)

Complaints Panel Pool: Ray Johnson (as Board Chairman), Steve Clark (as Board Vice-Chairman), Brian Long, Jasmine Rigg

e² Joint Members Group: Steve Clark, Ray Johnson, Tony Hall (as Chief Executive)

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Governors' Council: Ray Johnson

- 2) That the 2016 meetings timetable be approved as presented.
- 3) That the recruitment to the two vacancies for Tenant Board Members be undertaken as part of the 2016 recruitment process, taking into account the Board skills audit which is being carried out in November 2015.

205/15 REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which reviewed the Financial Inclusion Policy.

RESOLVED: That the revised Financial Inclusion Policy be approved, as presented.

206/15 REQUEST TO WRITE OFF DEBTS OVER £2,000

Confidential item

207/15 REVISED STOCK CONDITION SURVEY

Confidential item

208/15 URGENT ACTION TAKEN – PROVIDENCE STREET CENTRE

Confidential item

**209/15 URGENT ACTION TAKEN – LAND AT NORTH END YARD,
KING’S LYNN, NORFOLK**

The Board noted a request for urgent action that had been approved, to dispose of the asset known as land at North End Yard, King’s Lynn.

**210/15 URGENT ACTION TAKEN – PROVISION OF A TENANCY TO
A CLOSE RELATIVE OF AN EXISTING EMPLOYEE**

The Board noted a request for urgent action that had been approved, to provide a tenancy to a close relative of an existing employee.

211/15 WORK UPDATE

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

- Action Sheet
- Future Work Programme of the Board.

The Board noted the update.

212/15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

213/15 NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 2 November 2015 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

CHAIRMAN