

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on
Monday 13 May 2019 at 4.40pm in
“The Barn”, 2 Chapel Lane, King’s Lynn**

PRESENT:

Andy Walder (Chairman)
Joanna Barrett (Co-opted Member)
Steve Clark
Marie Connell
Tony Hall (Chief Executive) (Minute Numbers 26/19 – 47/19)
Marcus Hopkins
Ian Pinches
Pauleen Pratt
Simon Smith
Richard Spilsbury (Co-opted Member)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Sophie Bates	-	Director of Housing (Minute Numbers 26/19 – 47/19)
Alex Dixon	-	Director of Property (Minute Numbers 26/19 – 47/19)
Dave Marshall	-	Director of Finance and Resources (Minute Numbers 26/19 – 47/19)
Ian Hill	-	Company Secretary
Angus MacQueen	-	Deputy Company Secretary

26/19 APOLOGIES AND OPENING REMARKS

(a) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Shelley Lamprell-Josephs, Brian Long, Jasmine Rigg and Mike Britch (observer).

(b) In-Depth Assessment

The Chairman referred to the recently announced outcome of Freebridge’s In-Depth Assessment by the Regulator, which was Financial Viability 1, Governance 1. These were the highest possible scores, and the Chairman paid tribute to the Management Team and employees for their excellent work leading to this result.

27/19 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28/19 MATTERS ARISING

(a) West Winch Development (Minute Number 04/19(a))

Confidential

(b) Albion Road (“Blockbuster”) Development (Minute Number 08/19(e))

In response to a question, the Director of Property confirmed that there was interest in both the shop unit and the office unit in the Albion Road development.

29/19 ACTION SHEET

The Deputy Company Secretary referred to the action in relation to minute number 117/18 – “Update Board Member Agreement for Services”. The action sheet stated that a report on this was included on this agenda; however, since the entry had been written, it had been decided to present the report in the first instance to the Governance Committee on 1 July 2019. He apologised that the action sheet had not been amended accordingly.

The Board noted the action sheet.

30/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Andy Walder declared an interest in the item at minute number 39/19 – Governance Committee Recommendations Part 1 – as his reappointment to the Board was the subject of one of the recommendations. He withdrew from the room for the duration of the item.

Tony Hall declared an interest in the item at minute number 48/19 – Governance Committee Recommendations Part 2 – as it would include discussion around his remuneration. He left the meeting before the item was considered.

31/19 CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE

In addition to his usual weekly meetings with the Chief Executive, the Chairman described the following activities that he had undertaken since the last meeting:

- He had attended a meeting in Leeds with the Regulator, along with the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Resources, to receive feedback on the In-Depth Assessment. He had then attended a meeting for Board Chairmen with the Regulator, to learn about the Regulator’s current thinking on the present and the future. He had circulated notes of both meetings to the Board.
- He had attended various meetings in his capacity as the nominated Governor of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

- He and the Chief Executive had met with their counterparts at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to discuss how the two organisations could work more closely together. This would be considered further at the Board's strategy afternoon on 10 June 2019.
- He had attended two meetings of the East of England Housing Association Chairs group. The main topics had been tenant engagement and closer joint working. He would like to add to the agenda for the Board's strategy afternoon on 10 June 2019 consideration of joint working with similar housing associations; the Board supported this addition to the agenda.
- He had attended the shareholder lunch on 3 May 2019. This had been an excellent event, attended by around 30 people, and a good opportunity for engagement with the tenant shareholders which would be repeated.

The Chairman reflected that the key themes of his activities had been moving towards excellence and customer engagement.

The need to maintain a close relationship with the Borough Council was stressed. The Chairman confirmed that the links with the Borough Council were being maintained and developed at the highest levels of both organisations.

32/19 MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE

(a) Introduction

A written update from the Management Team had been previously circulated and was noted by the Board.

The written update covered the following issues:

- Declarations of Interest Update
- Total Reward
- Human Resources Team
- Data Protection
- Tenant Engagement
- Thornage Hall Rents
- Placeshapers
- Development Update
- Settlement of Disrepair Claim
- Red Flag Risk Management

Discussion took place on some aspects of the update, as set out below.

(b) Tenant Engagement

The Chief Executive advised that the Tenant Panel away day would be held shortly. This would be an opportunity to engage with the Panel around possible changes to Freebridge's governance model.

(c) Development Update

Confidential

(d) Settlement of Disrepair Claim

In response to questions, members of the Management Team made the following points:

- The compensation figure for the disrepair claim had been reached following legal advice and was calculated based on a proportion of rent.
- The tenant had agreed that this was a full and final settlement.
- A few similar claims were currently being considered; they were not related to each other.
- The amounts involved were not sufficiently significant to merit a specific mention in the annual accounts.

33/19 PERFORMANCE PACK

(a) Introduction

The Chief Executive presented the Performance Pack for the Quarter ending 31 March 2019. He highlighted that the Pack included the Business Plan outturn for the 2018/19 financial year. Stretching targets had been set in order to boost performance. The Pack provided a transparent view of the business.

Discussion took place on each aspect of the Performance Pack, as set out below.

(b) Operational Performance Report and Financial Statements

Confidential

(c) Treasury Management and Strategy Update

Confidential

(d) Business Plan Project Update

In answer to a question, the Director of Property said that the changes being implemented within Property Services were having a positive effect. These included a new schedule of rates, a fairer remuneration package, and task and finish groups to consider performance issues. He emphasised that there remained considerable work to do.

(e) Risk Management and Business Assurance Update

The Board noted the update.

(f) Health and Safety Compliance

The Board expressed concern that the commencement of the auditing of the six higher risk health and safety areas had been delayed, and asked that this be monitored by the Audit Committee.

The Board requested that future reports be made clearer, to enable it to monitor health and safety compliance more easily. The Director of Property said that he was working on a dashboard of compliance, which would address these concerns. The Chief Executive stressed that health and safety compliance was good. A Board Member suggested that some Board Members might benefit from some health and safety training; anyone interested was asked to make this known.

In answer to a question, the Director of Property confirmed that 100% of fuel servicing inspections had been carried out.

(g) Tenant Panel Quarterly Update

The Board noted the Tenant Panel's key messages for the Board, namely:

- 1) The Tenant Panel expresses concerns about the Complaints process but understands that this is currently under review.
- 2) The Tenant Panel feels it is important that responses to enquiries are dealt with according to our service standards.
- 3) The Tenant Panel wishes to congratulate the Board and Freebridge for maintaining a V1/G1 award.

[Confidential wording]

34/19 FINANCIAL PLAN 2019/20

Confidential

35/19 FINANCIAL FORECAST RETURN 2018/19

The Director of Finance and Resources presented a report which introduced the 2018/19 Financial Forecast Return.

RESOLVED: That the Financial Forecast Return be approved and submitted to the Regulator.

36/19 HILLINGTON SQUARE TENDER RESULT AND NEXT STEPS

Confidential item

37/19 FINAL DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Chief Executive presented a report which introduced the final draft of the Communications Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Communications Strategy be approved as presented.

38/19 FINAL DRAFT CUSTOMER STRATEGY

The Chief Executive presented a report which introduced the final draft of the Customer Strategy.

In answer to a question, the Chief Executive said that the success of the Strategy would be monitored as part of the Business Plan monitoring process.

RESOLVED: That the Customer Strategy be approved as presented.

Simon Smith in the Chair

**39/19 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS
- PART 1**

The Board considered recommendations of the Governance Committee meeting held on 11 March 2019.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Annual General Meeting 2019 be recommended to reappoint Andy Walder as an Independent Board Member until the Annual General Meeting in 2022.
- 2) That the Annual General Meeting 2019 be recommended to reappoint Jasmine Rigg as a Tenant Board Member until the Annual General Meeting in 2022.

Andy Walder in the Chair

40/19 STATISTICAL DATA RETURN 2018/19

The Director of Finance and Resources presented a report which introduced this year's Statistical Data Return.

RESOLVED: That the submission of Freebridge's Statistical Data Return 2018/19, as presented, to the Regulator be authorised.

41/19 ANNUAL FRAUD RETURN

The Board considered a report which set out the Annual Fraud Return 2019.

RESOLVED: That the submission of Freebridge's Annual Fraud Return 2019, as presented, be authorised.

42/19 QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS/COMPLIMENTS OVERVIEW 2018/19 OUTTURN

The Chief Executive presented a report which provided an overview of complaints and compliments for 2018/19. He said that similar reports had in the past been presented to the Board, but this had stopped for recent meetings, following the review of the Performance Pack. The Board asked for a specific report to be reintroduced.

The Chief Executive highlighted that the key themes from the complaints were monitoring repairs, "not doing what we said we would do" and poor communications. Improvements were being put in place, particularly within Property Services, to address these. The new Customer Services Manager was now taking responsibility to resolve complaints. Those that could not be resolved at the first stage would, in future, be referred to a manager, rather than a director, for further investigation.

The Chairman pointed out that complaints had doubled over the year and compliments had halved. The Chief Executive responded that this was partly an employee training issue, whereby some things were being incorrectly logged as complaints, while a number of compliments were not being recorded; however, the direction of travel needed reversing.

The Board supported the new approach to dealing with complaints, in particular freeing up director's time by removing them from the process. The Board discussed whether the Stage 2 Complaints Panel should be retained. On the one hand, it took a great deal of senior management and Non-Executive time and rarely resulted in a significantly different resolution from that previously determined. On the other hand, it gave complainants the opportunity to bring their case to the highest level of the organisation and demonstrated that Freebridge took complaints seriously. The Chief Executive stated that there would be a review of the Complaints Panel later in the year, at which point this could be discussed by the Board in more detail.

The Board noted the report and

RESOLVED: That an overview of complaints be included in the Performance Pack.

43/19 URGENT ACTIONS TAKEN

The Board noted requests for urgent action that had been approved, as follows:

- Provision of a Tenancy to Close Relatives of an Existing Employee.
- Provision of a Tenancy to a Close Relative of a Recent Employee.
- Employment of a Close Relative of an Existing Employee.
- Provision of a Tenancy to an Existing Employee.
- Provision of Tenancies to an Existing Employee and a Close Relative of an Existing Employee.

The Board requested that the need to report urgent actions taken to the next Board meeting be considered as part of the ongoing Governance review.

44/19 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Board received the minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on 11 March 2019 and of the Audit Committee meeting held on 29 April 2019.

45/19 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE BOARD

The Board noted its work programme for the ensuing year.

46/19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

47/19 NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 22 July 2019 at 4.30pm. The Board's next strategy afternoon would be held on Monday 10 June 2019 at 12noon.

48/19 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – PART 2

[Confidential minute circulated to Board Members only.]

The meeting closed at 7.20pm, having resolved to continue to sit after two hours.

CHAIRMAN