

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on
Monday 8 September 2014 at 6.40pm in
The Olive Branch Café, Hillington Square, King's Lynn**

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Swanson - Communications Business Partner
(minute number 177/14)
Angus MacQueen - Company Secretary
Helen Richardson - Governance Administrator

OBSERVERS:

Marie Connell) Future Board Members, subject to
Kimberley Ely) AGM approval on 22 September
2014

177/14 ANNUAL REPORT FOR TENANTS 2013/14

The Communications Business Partner presented a report which introduced Freebridge's proposed Annual Report for Tenants 2013/14.

The Communications Business Partner explained that the Annual Report for Tenants 2013/14 would be available in video format. The video had been put together in such a way that it could be shown without sound, on a continuous loop, in areas such as Juniper House reception. A voiceover would be added for other uses of the video, for instance on Freebridge's website and when it was shown at the Annual General Meeting. A written version of the Annual Report would also be published in Streets Ahead.

The Communications Business Partner played the video. The Board was delighted with the video and thanked the Communications Business Partner for an excellent piece of work. It was suggested that the video might be slightly too long, and the Communications Business Partner was asked to investigate whether any of it could be edited. It was also felt that the video could be slowed down to allow more time to read the text.

It was agreed that, when the video was shown at the Annual General Meeting, it should be complemented by the Executive drawing out the key points in their address to the shareholders and giving the context of continuous improvement.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report for Tenants 2013/14, as presented, be approved for publishing to Freebridge's tenants.

178/14 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

179/14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 August 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

180/14 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

181/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

182/14 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman said that he had continued to hold his weekly meetings with the Chief Executive, and had met with the Deputy Chief Executive when the Chief Executive had been on holiday.

183/14 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

A written update from the Chief Executive, covering a number of issues, was noted by the Board. Some aspects of the update were discussed, as set out below:

- The Executive would be undertaking an options appraisal of the Rampant Horse site in Gayton, following the refusal of planning permission, and would keep the Board informed of progress. Press coverage on the issue had been disappointing.
- The sheltered scheme gardening competition awards ceremony had been successful. Three Non-Executive Board Members had attended the event, namely Lesley Bambridge, Paul Leader and Ian Pinches.
- The Board approved the key performance indicators for the Hillington Square project which had been circulated. An event to mark the opening of the Phase 1 show flat would be held on 9 September 2014; the flat would then be open to the public for the following two days and

Freebridge staff would be on hand to provide information and take feedback. The Board was also very pleased to note that the Housing Minister had agreed to perform the formal opening of Phase 1, on 7 November 2014, and congratulated the Executive on securing the Minister's attendance.

- Negotiations were ongoing with the Borough Council regarding the continuing presence of Council-nominated members on the Board. It appeared that the Council may not be prepared to relinquish its places on the Board but might agree to allow Freebridge to interview and if necessary reject its nominations. Any agreement with the Council would be enshrined in the Rules.

184/14 VALUE FOR MONEY SELF-ASSESSMENT STATEMENT 2013/14

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which sought approval for key updates and revisions to Freebridge's Value For Money Self-Assessment Statement ("VFM: Good things from wise spending – 2013/14") for inclusion on Freebridge's website.

The Board was pleased to note that Freebridge's energy efficiency figures had improved. The Deputy Chief Executive said that the benefits to tenants in terms of heating costs were currently being investigated.

It was highlighted that significant cost savings were being achieved on anti-social behaviour cases, although the effectiveness of the service had been maintained.

It was acknowledged that expenditure on empty properties had increased when viewed against peers, but the importance of minimising turnaround times was stressed.

The Deputy Chief Executive said that a detailed report on the benchmarking figures for 2013/14 would be presented to the Board before the end of 2014.

RESOLVED: That the additional information for Freebridge's Value For Money arrangements document ("VFM: Good things from wise spending – 2013/14"), including the Executive Summary and details of the emerging findings from our 2013/14 performance as identified by HouseMark, be agreed.

185/14 VARIOUS GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The Company Secretary presented a report which:

- considered approaches to two issues on the Governance Improvement Action Plan which were now due for action;
- sought the re-adoption of the Code of Governance;
- proposed a number of Rule amendments; and

- put forward an amendment to Standing Order 4 regarding Executives on the Audit Committee.

In terms of Executives being co-opted to the Audit Committee in order to achieve a quorum in exceptional circumstances, the Board endorsed the proposed wording that Executives should not chair the meeting or form the majority of the Committee's membership. Executives would be expected not to take part in any aspects of the meeting in which they had a conflict of interest.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the approaches around the two Governance Improvement Action Plan issues which were now due for action, as set out in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 of the report, be approved.
- 2) That continued adoption of the National Housing Federation "Excellence in Governance" Code for Members 2010 be approved.
- 3) That the commissioning of drafting of the Rule amendments listed in section 3 of the report be approved, and that the appropriate consultation be undertaken.
- 4) That a Special General Meeting be called for early in 2015 to consider the Rule amendments, subject to support from the Borough Council and the funders.
- 5) That paragraph 2.2 of Standing Order 4 be amended as follows:
(additional words in italics):

2.2 The membership of the Committee shall consist of at least four, but not more than six, Board Members. Executive Members may not be members of the Committee, *other than in exceptional circumstances where their co-option on a one-off basis would enable a quorum to be achieved. In such circumstances, Executive Members may not chair the meeting or form the majority of the Committee's membership.* The Board may co-opt up to two non-Board Members on to the Committee.

186/14 APPOINTMENT OF SHAREHOLDERS

The Board considered a report which listed applications for tenant shareholding.

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

187/14 **URGENT ACTION TAKEN – PROVISION OF A GARAGE TENANCY TO AN EXISTING EMPLOYEE**

The Board noted a request for urgent action that had been approved, to enable the Association to provide a garage tenancy to an existing employee.

188/14 **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 under minute number 139/14, the Company Secretary said that he had almost finalised the Board Member Agreement for Services which all Board Members would be asked to sign, along with a number of other forms, as part of the introduction of Board remuneration. The Company Secretary requested the Board's permission to sign the Agreement for Services on behalf of Freebridge.

The Board noted the update and

RESOLVED: That the Board Member Agreement for Services be signed on Freebridge's behalf by the Company Secretary.

189/14 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(a) Paul Leader

The Chairman said that this was Paul Leader's last Board meeting, as he was standing down having completed the maximum time allowed of nine years on the Board. The Board thanked Mr Leader for his massive contribution to Freebridge, dating back to before transfer. Mr Leader would be joining the Tenant Panel.

(b) Tenant Panel

The Governance Administrator advised that a successful recruitment process had recently been held for the Tenant Panel, and that there was now just one vacancy.

(c) Board Appointments

It was noted that the annual Board appointments would be made at the next meeting, on 6 October 2014; the Company Secretary would be emailing all Board Members about this.

(d) Bill Guyan and John Fox

The Chairman said that he would make reference to the passing of two recent Board Members, Bill Guyan and John Fox, at the Annual General Meeting.

(e) Hillington Square

The Board meeting had been preceded by a tour of the construction site at Hillington Square. The Board had been very pleased to view the progress that had been made.

190/14 NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 6 October 2014 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

CHAIRMAN