

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Monday 8 February 2016 at 7.00pm in “The Barn”, 2 Chapel Lane, King’s Lynn

The meeting was preceded by a presentation from the Director of Property and the Head of Property on “Net Present Value”.

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Colin Davison	-	Director of Property
Andy Edmonds	-	Head of Property
Clare Flynn	-	Finance Business Partner
Angus MacQueen	-	Company Secretary

23/16 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

24/16 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25/16 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

26/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Sean Kent declared an interest in the item at minute number 31/16 – Eastern Procurement Project Partnering Contracts – as he was a Director of Eastern Procurement. The Board was content that he should remain in the room for the item, but he did not vote.

27/16 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman said that he had attended his usual weekly meetings with the Chief Executive. In addition, he advised of the following:

- On 18 January 2016, he had attended the formal opening of Phase 2 of the Hillington Square project. This had been a successful event and had received good media coverage.
- On 20 January 2016, he had sat on the Complaints Panel.
- On 28 January 2016, he and the Vice-Chairman had attended an e² Joint Members Group meeting, hosted by Saffron Housing Trust.
- Also on 28 January 2016, he and the Vice-Chairman had attended "Line of Sight" training run by the National Housing Federation, in Cambridge.
- On 1 February 2016, he had attended the first meeting of Freebridge's new Governance Committee. One of the items on the agenda had been Board Recruitment. The Committee had been keen to ensure that the Board vacancies were advertised to all tenants, and so the recruitment timetable had been slightly rescheduled to enable publication of the advertisement in Streets Ahead.

The Chairman stated that he had written to Sir Henry Bellingham, the local Member of Parliament, and to Brandon Lewis MP, the Housing Minister, to express an interest in the funding that had been announced for the refurbishment of estates, for use on the Hillington Square project.

[Confidential wording]

28/16 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:

- Hillington Square – Phase 2 Launch
- Thornage Hall Rent Setting
- Tenant Panel Recruitment
- Sheltered Housing Garden Competition 2016
- Charitable Activities
- Letter of Thanks from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk
- Plaxtole House

The Board noted that a Board Member was required for the judging panel for each of the two days of this year's sheltered housing garden competition. It was agreed that Marie Connell and Jas Rigg would cover a day each.

The Board was delighted to note that Freebridge employees had raised £6,054 for their chosen charities during 2015 (East Anglian Air Ambulance, King's Lynn Samaritans and the Macmillan Cancer Unit), and asked that its thanks be passed on to the staff.

The Board was pleased to note a letter received from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk thanking Freebridge for help provided to the Police with recent cases, and asked that its thanks be passed on to the staff responsible for dealing with anti-social behaviour.

In addition to the written update, the Chief Executive advised that Freebridge had come 106th in the recently published Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. To come so close to the top 100 was a significant achievement, especially considering that Freebridge had not applied for the Index for several years. Useful feedback had been received and would be taken into account when next year's submission was made.

29/16 SHELTERED HOUSING RENT

The Finance Business Partner presented a report which sought approval of an annual rent increase of CPI +1% (totalling 0.9%) for the Association's sheltered properties for 2016/17. This followed a ministerial announcement that supported housing (including sheltered accommodation) would be excluded from the 1% rent reduction for 2016/17.

In answer to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Government had decided not to include supported housing in the 1% rent reduction for 2016/17, as feedback had been received that the reduction could create significant difficulties, possibly leading to closure, for some schemes. The Government had, therefore, decided to delay the reduction for supported housing for one year, so as to allow time to investigate the possible impact.

RESOLVED: That the proposed rent increase of 0.9% for sheltered and supported properties in 2016/17 be approved.

30/16 BOARD APPRAISAL AND REVIEW/GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Company Secretary presented a report which set out the progress achieved against the Governance Improvement Action Plan, and which considered Campbell Tickell's outcome report following the Board Appraisal and Review process undertaken in November 2015.

The Company Secretary highlighted that, as referred to by the Chairman earlier in the meeting (minute number 27/16 above refers), the Board recruitment timetable had been slightly rescheduled to enable publication of the advertisement in Streets Ahead. There would, therefore, be some changes to the recruitment dates included in the Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2016.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the progress achieved against the Governance Improvement Action Plan 2015, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted and that, other than the action on review of regulatory compliance, which would be retained in the 2016 Action Plan, it be agreed that all actions are now completed.
- 2) That the outcome report of the 2015 Board appraisal and review process be noted, and the resulting Governance Improvement Action Plan be approved as set out in Appendix 3 to the Board report, subject to there being a slight rescheduling of the dates relating to Board recruitment.

31/16 EASTERN PROCUREMENT PROJECT PARTNERING CONTRACTS

The Head of Property presented a report which sought approval to enter into Project Partnering Contracts with Eastern Procurement for tendered Lot 1 – Kitchen & Bathroom Refurbishment, Rewiring and Other General Improvement and Lot 2 – Re-roofing.

In answer to questions, the Head of Property clarified that, as a member of Eastern Procurement, Freebridge was required to enter into these contracts. However, there was currently no intention to make use of the contracts; should there be at a later date a wish to use any of the works tendered under these contracts, a further report would be brought to the Board seeking approval to do so.

RESOLVED: That Freebridge enter into the Eastern Procurement Project Partnering Contracts for Lot 1 – Kitchen & Bathroom Refurbishment, Rewiring and Other General Improvement and Lot 2 – Re-roofing.

32/16 PROCUREMENT APPROVALS

The Company Secretary presented a report which advised of forthcoming procurement contracts worth over £50,000, and which provided information on contracts which had been recently let and were worth over £50,000.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the procurement of a contract for drainage works, as detailed in section 2.1 of the report, be approved, and that the Director of Property appoint the successful contractor subject to the requirements of Financial Regulation 7 having been followed.
- 2) That the procurement of a contract for out of hours repairs reporting and call alarm services, as detailed in section 2.2 of the report, be approved, and that the Director of Property appoint the successful

contractor subject to the requirements of OJEU and Financial Regulation 7 having been followed.

- 3) That the contracts that have been let be noted, as set out in section 3 of the report.

33/16 SHARED OWNERSHIP

Confidential item

34/16 AUDIT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Confidential item

35/16 TENANT PANEL QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Company Secretary presented a report which provided a quarterly update of the Tenant Panel's work.

The report included a progress update on the Tenant Panel Development Plan and recommended additions to the Freebridge Service Standards.

The Board noted the report and

RESOLVED: That additions to the Service Standards be agreed as follows:

- a) That response given to emails should be within 2 working days, though it is noted that an automated response is sent to all emails as a first acknowledgement.
- b) That response should be given to text messages within 24 hours.
- c) That response should be given to social media within four working hours.

36/16 OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

The Director of Property presented the Operations Performance Overview report for the quarter ending 31 December 2015. He highlighted the following points:

- Performance had been generally positive through the quarter.
- Complaints were being resolved more quickly. Learning outcomes from complaints would be reported to the Board in future.
- Although it appeared that there had been a drop in performance regarding the collection of service charges and other arrears, this was simply the result of a timing issue around the payment of invoices.

In answer to a question, the Chief Executive said that the Board should treat with caution the figures quoted in the report on customer satisfaction. These had been collected under a pilot scheme to use telephone, rather than postal, surveying. More work was required to fully understand the figures; an update would be provided at the next meeting.

The Board requested an update on the work being undertaken to analyse the reasons for refusal of properties and any opportunities to improve this. The Director of Property undertook to arrange for this to be provided in the next Operations Performance Overview report.

The Board was particularly pleased to note the examples included in the report of where the Energy Efficiency Officer had helped tenants to save money on their energy bills.

The Board noted the report.

37/16 **FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES QUARTERLY MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Finance Business Partner presented a report which provided financial information for the quarter ending 31 December 2015, together with Human Resources key performance indicator information. She highlighted that the Association continued to outperform its budget.

The Board was particularly pleased to note the strong financial performance of the Providence Street Community Centre.

The Board noted the report.

38/16 **TREASURY MANGEMENT AND STRATEGY UPDATE**

Confidential item

39/16 **RISK MANAGEMENT AND FRAUD AWARENESS UPDATE**

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which detailed risk management activity during the quarter ending 31 December 2015. He highlighted that the quarterly risk management reports contributed to the Board's annual internal controls assurance report.

The Board noted the report.

40/16 **REVISED 2015/16 BUSINESS PLAN – THIRD QUARTER UPDATE**

The Chief Executive presented a report which set out the third quarter update to the 2015/16 Business Plan.

The Board noted the report.

41/16 **NET PRESENT VALUE EXERCISE**

The Head of Property presented a report which described the Net Present Value exercise undertaken on Freebridge's behalf by Savills Commercial Limited, the outcomes of the exercise and the next steps.

Immediately before the meeting, the Board had received a presentation providing more detail.

The Board noted the report.

42/16 UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FINANCIAL PLAN

Confidential item

43/16 COMMITTEE MINUTES

Ian Pinches, Chairman of the Audit Committee, presented the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 25 January 2016. He highlighted that the Committee had requested that the Board receive a Welfare Reform update briefing later in the year.

44/16 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.

45/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

46/16 NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 7 March 2016 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

CHAIRMAN