

## **FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD**

### **Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Monday 17 May 2021 at 4.30pm “Virtual” Meeting by Video Link**

#### **PRESENT:**

Andy Walder (Chair)  
Joanna Barrett  
Andrew Hill  
Anita Jones (Chief Executive)  
Brian Long  
Donald McKenzie  
Gill Rejzl  
Vicky Savage  
Simon Smith

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

|                  |   |  |
|------------------|---|--|
| Anna Simpson     | - | Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive |
| Sophie Bates     | - | Director of Customer and Communities             |
| Paul Newbold     | - | Director of Development                          |
| Graham Wilson    | - | Director of Assets                               |
| Nicola Uppington | - | Customer Services Manager (Minute Number 39/21)  |
| Angus MacQueen   | - | Governance Manager                               |

#### **39/21 CUSTOMER VOICE**

The Board had received a report giving the background to a recent complaint, regarding a lack of communication and delays in relation to an issue with damp and mould. The tenant who had made the complaint joined the meeting and described her experience. She paid tribute to the employees in the Customer Services team who had resolved the complaint; however, she advised that she was now having a similar experience with Freebridge in relation to a different issue.

The Chair and the Director of Assets apologised to the tenant for the unacceptable level of customer service that she had suffered, and confirmed that every effort was being made to improve processes. The tenant left the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Customer Services Manager for the efforts her team had made to resolve the complaint. She left the meeting.

[Confidential wording]

**40/21      APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Jasmine Rigg.

**41/21      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Brian Long declared an interest in the item at minute number 52/21 – Salters Road, King's Lynn, Acquisition of 78 Homes in Partnership with the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk – as he was Leader of the Borough Council. As there was little discussion, the Board was content that he remain in the room for the item.

The members of the Leadership Team declared an interest in the item at minute number 63/21 – Confidential Appendix to the Governance and Remuneration Committee Chair's Report – as it related to the Chief Executive's employment package. They withdrew from the meeting before the item was considered.

**42/21      BUSINESS PLAN MAY 2021**

Confidential item

**43/21      STATISTICAL DATA RETURN 2020/21**

The Board considered a report which introduced the Statistical Data Return 2020/21.

**RESOLVED:** That the submission of Freebridge's Statistical Data Return 2020/21 to the Regulator be authorised.

**44/21 Confidential item**

**45/21 Confidential item**

**46/21 PERFORMANCE OUTTURN FOR 2020/21**

Confidential item

**47/21 APRIL 2021 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD**

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive tabled the performance dashboard for April 2021, and explained that this represented the proposed template for performance reporting to the Board going forward. The key performance indicators included had been agreed by the Board as part of its approval of the Corporate Strategy.

The Board welcomed the template, but asked that it include figures for the previous period, so that trends could be identified. The Board also requested that all Board Members be provided with performance information on a monthly basis, albeit that performance discussions would take place quarterly at the Board's meetings. The need for clear commentary, highlighting strong areas and areas requiring focus, was stressed.

In terms of the April performance figures, the Chair asked that these be circulated to the Board outside the meeting, and that Board Members respond with any comments.

The Board noted the report.

**48/21 REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE GOVERNANCE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

**(a) Committee Meeting Update**

Simon Smith, Chair of the Governance and Remuneration Committee, presented the Chair's report, which included the minutes, of the Committee's meeting held on 12 April 2021. He explained that Pauleen Pratt, the previous Chair of the Committee who had since left the Board, had written the report.

[Confidential wording]

It was acknowledged that the Board had had a full discussion on the new Code of Governance at a briefing held on 10 May 2021, and there was, therefore, no need for further discussion at this meeting.

Simon Smith suggested that the Board deal with the recommendation from the Committee regarding the “Total Rewards” scheme when the confidential appendix was considered at the end of the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020 be adopted.
- 2) That a compliance assessment be undertaken with the new Code and an action plan produced to achieve compliance during 2021/22, the action plan to be agreed, and its implementation monitored, by the Committee.

**(b) Confidential item**

**49/21 REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE**

Donald McKenzie, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, presented the Chair’s report, which included the minutes, of the Committee’s meeting held on 19 April 2021.

In relation to cyber security, the Board acknowledged that this was an increasingly significant risk for organisations. The Chair advised that he had attended a presentation from a local housing association which had suffered a serious cyber attack, and which was offering to share learning from this incident.

[Confidential wording]

The Board noted the report.

**50/21**      **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE**

Joanna Barrett, Vice-Chair of the Customer Service Committee, presented the Chair's report, which included the minutes, of the Committee's meeting held on 26 April 2021.

It was suggested that the Committee monitor whether compensation payments reduced in line with improvements in operational issues.

The Board noted the report.

**51/21**      **REPORT OF THE TENANT PANEL – QUARTER 4 ACTIVITY**

The Director of Customer and Communities presented a report which set out the activities of the Tenant Panel during January – March 2021.

[Confidential wording]

The Chief Executive stated that the Panel was keen to play an increasing role in scrutiny. Reporting to the Panel would need to be reviewed to ensure that the information it required was presented in a more accessible way.

In answer to questions, the Director of Customer and Communities made the following points:

- [Confidential wording]
- It was likely that the Panel had focused on damp and mould in view of recent coverage in the media, and their knowledge of the Ombudsman's own focus, rather than particular concerns about their own homes.

The Board was saddened to learn of the recent passing of David Wheeler, who had been a valued member of the Panel over the past year and a half.

The Board noted the report.

**52/21**      **Confidential item**

**53/21**      **MINUTES**

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 8 March 2021 and of the special meeting held on 29 March 2021 were confirmed as correct records.

The minutes would be signed by the Chair once the office had reopened following the current coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak.

**54/21**      **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

**55/21**      **ACTION SHEET**

The Board noted the action sheet.

**56/21**      **CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair gave the following update on his activities since the last meeting:

- He had attended an East of England Chairs' meeting. Subjects covered had included learning from the pandemic and the recent cyber-attack on a local housing association.
- He had attended a Placeshapers Chairs meeting, and also meetings of the Non-Executive Director network run by Placeshapers in partnership with HACT. These meetings were proving very useful and he was pleased that some Freebridge Board Members had become involved with the HACT network.

The Board questioned the value of ongoing membership of the National Housing Federation as compared to initiatives such as the HACT network.

**57/21**      **LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE**

The Board noted the Leadership Team update.

**58/21**      **APPOINTMENT OF A SHAREHOLDER**

The Board noted a report on an application to become a shareholder which had been approved.

**59/21**      **URGENT ACTION TAKEN: AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The Board noted the following request for urgent action that had been approved:

- Audit and Risk Committee Membership.

**60/21**      **FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE BOARD**

The Board noted its work programme for the ensuing year.

**61/21**      **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Confidential item

**62/21**      **NEXT MEETING**

The Board noted that its next meeting would be held on Monday 26 July 2021 at 4.30pm. Depending on the progress of the release of Government Covid restrictions, this was likely to be “in person”. Further details on the venue would be provided nearer the time. The Board would have a strategy afternoon on Monday 7 June 2021; this would be held remotely.

**63/21**      **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX TO THE GOVERNANCE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE CHAIR’S REPORT**

Simon Smith presented the confidential appendix to the Governance and Remuneration Committee Chair’s report. This set out recommendations in relation to the Chief Executive’s terms and conditions.

Simon Smith also referred to a further recommendation from the Committee, to reinvigorate the “Total Reward” scheme proposal amongst the wider organisation. The Board accepted that employee reward would be considered as part of the Corporate Strategy, and so there was no need to take this recommendation forward.

[Confidential wording]

**RESOLVED:** That the recommendations set out in the confidential appendix be approved.

**The meeting closed at 7.30pm.**

**CHAIR**