

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Monday 11 January 2016 at 7.05pm in “The Barn”, 2 Chapel Lane, King’s Lynn

The meeting was preceded by a presentation from the Business Assurance Manager on “Assessing Our Risk Appetite”.

PRESENT:

Ray Johnson (Chairman)
Steve Clark
Marie Connell
Tony Hall (Chief Executive)
Sean Kent (Deputy Chief Executive)
Brian Long (Minute Numbers 01/16 - 15/16)
Ian Pinches
Jasmine Rigg
Colin Sampson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Michelle Gant - Director of Engagement
Howard Burton - Business Assurance Manager
(Minute Numbers 01/16 - 07/16)
Angus MacQueen - Company Secretary

01/16 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Matthew Brown.

02/16 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

03/16 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

04/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Steve Clark and Jasmine Rigg declared interests in the item at minute number 11/16 – Board Recruitment – as they could be candidates in this year’s round of Board recruitment. The Board was content that they should remain in the room for the item, but they did not vote.

05/16 **CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

The Chairman said that he had continued to attend his weekly meetings with the Chief Executive.

06/16 **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:

- Energy Efficiency Grant
- Providence Street Community Centre
- Hillington Square
- North Lynn Allotment
- Plaxtole House
- Elizabeth Avenue Fire – Envirovent Units
- Out and About Visits
- Properties Requiring Major Repairs
- GOALS UK
- Insurance Claim
- Management Team Remuneration Review
- Village Link Action Group

The Board was delighted to note that the update included several items of positive news. The following were highlighted:

- £5,000 of energy efficiency grant secured by the Energy Advisor;
- the high level of income being achieved at Providence Street; and
- the high number of tenants' homes visited through the Out and About Programme during 2015.

[Confidential wording]

07/16 **PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE RISK MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY AND CORPORATE RISK MAP**

The Business Assurance Manager presented a report which provided an update and proposed revisions to the Freebridge risk management methodology and Corporate Risk Map.

The Business Assurance Manager explained that the revisions were intended to make the risk management methodology more straightforward, transparent and meaningful. The "impact" and "likelihood" criteria for each risk had been retained, but "risk appetite" was now also taken into account, to create an overall "risk rating". Risks had been split into "strategic", "tactical" and "operational" levels, and would be monitored accordingly. The Risk Map linked with the Regulatory Standards and the Regulator's "Sector Risk Profile"

2015. Regular updates on the Risk Map and risk management activity would continue to be reported to the Board.

The Board welcomed the revisions to the Risk Map and the changes to the risk management methodology. The Board was of the view that, whilst it should not stray into operational details, it was important that it continued to monitor the full Risk Map; however, the summary of top risks would be particularly useful.

The Board observed that some risks had more than one lead officer, and discussed whether it would be better for each risk to have a single owner. It was explained, however, that some risks were the responsibility of more than one person, and allocating only one owner to each would create confusion by having to split those risks. It was, therefore, decided to leave this unchanged.

The Board also considered whether to reduce the number of risk appetite categories from five to three, as there was a concern that having five categories could lead to unprofitable debates around the middle three. However, it was determined to leave this unchanged for now.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the proposed revisions to the risk management methodology be approved for implementation and subsequent reporting.
- 2) That the revised Corporate Risk Map be noted.

08/16 ANNUAL INCOME REPORT 2016/17

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which sought approval for an annual rent decrease of 1% for the financial year 2016/17 for both social and affordable rent types, with the exception of shared ownership properties and other income types.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted that the proposed rent decrease was in line with legislative changes. He also pointed out that work was ongoing to assess the impact of the capping of Housing Benefit payments for new social housing tenants to Local Housing Allowance levels, which would take effect from 1 April 2018.

In answer to a question, it was clarified that the Thornage Hall budget for 2016/17 had not yet been finalised. Once this was in place, it was proposed that the Chief Executive would agree the Thornage Hall rent levels and report back to the Board.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That a proposed rent decrease for 2016/17 of 1% in line with the Welfare Reform and Work Bill be approved.

- 2) That a proposed rent increase for 2016/17 of RPI + 0.5% for shared ownership properties be approved.
- 3) That other income be increased by 0.9% (being CPI of -0.1% + 1%).
- 4) That authority to agree the rents for Thornage Hall be delegated to the Chief Executive and reported back to the Board.

09/16 REVIEW OF THE BOARD MEMBERSHIP, RECRUITMENT AND SUCCESSION POLICY

The Company Secretary presented a report which reviewed the Board Membership, Recruitment and Succession Policy.

RESOLVED: That the revised Board Membership, Recruitment and Succession Policy be approved, as presented.

10/16 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS/APPOINTMENT OF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Company Secretary presented a report which reviewed the Standing Orders, and which sought to appoint a new Governance Committee following discussion to this effect at the Board's "away afternoon" in December 2015.

A concern was expressed that the establishment of the Governance Committee could create a "two-tier" Board. In response, it was explained that this was unlikely to be the case, as most of the Governance Committee's terms of reference involved monitoring or making recommendations to the Board. The Committee would be appointed annually, and so there would be an opportunity for the Board to rotate its membership if this continued to be a concern.

The Board noted that it was suggested that the membership of the Governance Committee would be three non-Executive Board Members, including the Board Chairman. The Chairman proposed that Matthew Brown be appointed Chairman of the Committee, in order to provide continuity from his role as Chief Executive's Appraisal Panel Chairman. The Chairman also suggested that the Committee would benefit from the inclusion of another senior Board Member, and as such put forward Ian Pinches, who was Chairman of the Audit Committee, as the other member. Whilst supporting this, the Board was of the view that limiting the Committee to three members would deny it access to a wider range of skills. It was, therefore, agreed to establish the Committee with four members; Marie Connell was then nominated and appointed as its Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the amendments to the Standing Orders be approved, as presented, subject to the following changes to the amendments to Standing Order 4:

- the Governance Committee be established with four (rather than three) non-Executive Board Members, including the Board Chairman; and
 - the quorum for the Governance Committee be three (rather than two) members.
- 2) That the following be appointed to the Governance Committee: Ray Johnson (as Board Chairman), Matthew Brown, Marie Connell and Ian Pinches.
 - 3) That Matthew Brown be appointed as Chairman of the Governance Committee and Marie Connell be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Governance Committee.

11/16 BOARD RECRUITMENT

The Company Secretary presented a report which sought to initiate the recruitment of Board Members in 2016.

RESOLVED: That the Governance Committee be requested to oversee the 2016 Board recruitment process, along the lines set out in the report.

12/16 AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

The Director of Engagement presented a report which put forward amendments to the Complaints and Compliments Policy, to reflect the Financial Conduct Authority's requirements in relation to the holding of a Consumer Credit Licence.

RESOLVED: That the amendments to the Complaints and Compliments Policy be approved, as presented.

13/16 ANNUAL REVIEW OF BOARD AND TENANT PANEL DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Company Secretary presented a report which set out the annual Board and Tenant Panel declarations of interest, and which reviewed Freebridge's dealings with certain companies and organisations in light of the declarations.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the schedule of Board Member declarations of interest, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- 2) That the schedule of interests attached at Appendix 2 to the report be made available for public inspection on request.
- 3) That the declarations of interest made by Tenant Panel Members be noted.

14/16 **ANNUAL REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Confidential item

15/16 **INTERNAL CONTROLS REVIEW**

Confidential item

16/16 **HILLINGTON SQUARE COMMUNICATIONS POST PHASE 3**

Confidential item

17/16 **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

The Director of Engagement presented a report which provided an update on customer satisfaction during the pilot of the new customer surveying process, and which reviewed the process itself.

The Director of Engagement stressed that it was important to treat the figures with care, as they had been obtained through telephone surveying, as opposed to previous figures which had been put together via postal surveys. Postal surveys tended to attract more extreme responses than telephone surveys, and so the results were difficult to compare with each other. The introduction of Freebridge's own customer surveying process would mean that it could no longer benchmark through Housemark, but the Director of Engagement would be contacting the Institute of Customer Service to investigate any possible benchmarking alternatives.

The Board noted the report.

18/16 **URGENT ACTION TAKEN – INCLUSION OF PROVIDENCE STREET INTO EXISTING CLEANING CONTRACT**

The Board noted a request for urgent action that had been approved, to extend the existing cleaning contract to encompass the Providence Street Community Centre.

19/16 **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Ian Pinches, Chairman of the Audit Committee, presented the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 9 November 2015. He highlighted that the tendering of the Internal Audit contract was currently being overseen by the Committee.

20/16 **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.

21/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

22/16 NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 8 February 2016 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

CHAIRMAN