

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Monday 21 February 2022 at 4.30pm in the Assembly Room, King's Lynn Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn

PRESENT:

Simon Smith (Vice-Chair in the Chair)
Andrew Hill
Anita Jones (Chief Executive)
Donald McKenzie (via video link)
Gill Rejzl
Jasmine Rigg
Vicky Savage

IN ATTENDANCE:

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| Anna Simpson | - | Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive |
| Sophie Bates | - | Director of Customer & Communities |
| Janina Phillips | - | Director of People |
| Graham Wilson | - | Director of Assets |
| Angus MacQueen | - | Governance Manager |

01/22 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Joanna Barrett and Andy Walder.

02/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Andrew Hill advised that, while not directly relevant to his meeting, he wished to declare that he had been appointed as Head of Treasury at Clarion Housing Group. The Governance Manager said that this interest would be referred to the next meeting of the Governance and Remuneration Committee for consideration in line with the Board Membership, Recruitment & Succession Policy and the Shareholding Policy.

03/22 CORPORATE STRATEGY "BUILDING BETTER FUTURES" – YEAR 2 BUSINESS PLANNING AND 2022/23 BUDGET

The Chair decided to take consideration of Year 2 of the Corporate Strategy and of the 2022/23 budget together.

The Chief Executive presented a report which proposed the Annual Delivery Plan for Year 2 (2022/23) of the Corporate Strategy – "Building Better Futures".

The report also proposed a suite of Board-level revised key performance indicators (KPIs).

Key points of the discussion were as follows:

- In answer to a question, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Development Committee would be monitoring development voids. The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive added that the budget included 10 disposals; any decision to dispose of further development voids would, therefore, represent an opportunity for additional resource.
- The Board commented that the KPIs needed some further development, and asked that this be considered at the next Board strategy afternoon.
- In answer to a question, the Chief Executive replied that Freebridge was working with partners to attract funding for community projects; further updates would be provided to the Board on this.
- In answer to a question, the Director of Customer and Communities stated that Mary Gobar International was a strong customer excellence model, and Freebridge had already made a significant investment in it. It was sensible now to build on this previous investment by ensuring that it was properly embedded in the organisation. Once this was completed, it would be appropriate to investigate whether it could be enhanced by newer initiatives or models.
- In response to questions, the Chief Executive said that, while the Year 2 Delivery Plan was ambitious, she was confident that it was achievable, given the level of discussion at LT in developing the plan, and would enable a closer alignment to the 5 year plan ambitions by Year 3. Year 1 had been affected by lockdowns and challenges in relation to recruitment and retention of key skills. There was now a much clearer picture of repairs and Asset service requirements, while the forthcoming stock condition survey would provide crucial information on the state of properties.
- In answer to a question, the Chief Executive said that there had been significant investment of resource in developing the target operating model in Year 1. This had resulted in over 30 projects being identified, and these were now being taken forward with the support of the Business Architecture team. The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive added that a Programme Manager had recently been recruited, to ensure effective reporting of project delivery. The Board would start to see reports from the Programme Manager at its next meeting.
- In answer to a question, the Chief Executive said that performance reporting to the Board would evolve, supported by a Performance Manager. In the meantime, the Leadership Team would ensure that the Board was aware of any elements of the Year 2 Plan which were falling

behind. The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive added that the Board would also be able to monitor overview risks. The Chair commented that he had seen improvements in performance reporting to the Governance and Remuneration Committee, and he was confident that similar improvements would be made across the organisation.

The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which proposed the 2022/23 budget. She made the following points:

- Most Board Members had attended a budget briefing in advance of this meeting providing additional detail.
- Initial discussions with the funders indicated that they were likely to support the budget; they understood the need for “catch-up” works in the sector based on similar discussions with others.

[Confidential wording]

- Value for money proposals were being developed in parallel to the budget to align with the Change Programme and were anticipated to provide opportunity later in the year.

[Confidential wording]

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 be approved.**
- 2) That the direction of travel in the proposed 2022/23 KPIs be supported, but adoption of the KPIs be delayed until after the Board’s strategy afternoon on 14 March 2022.**
- 3) That the 2022/23 budget be approved and adopted as Year 1 of the Business Plan update in May 2022.**
- 4) That the disposal of 10 properties, in line with the delegated authority of the Leadership Team as set out in Standing Order 8, be approved.**

04/22 NEW TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES

The Director of Customer & Communities gave a presentation on the Regulator’s proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

Key points of the discussion were as follows:

- In answer to a question, the Director of Customer & Communities said that Freebridge’s new Customer Charter reflected the “Together with Tenants” document, adopted by Freebridge in November 2021.

“Together with Tenants” in turn reflected the Social Housing White Paper.

- The Chief Executive stated that the new Customer Charter would be presented to the Board at its next meeting. At that point, the Board could decide that the Charter form part of the Board’s formal governance documentation; this would demonstrate the Board’s commitment to customer service and engagement.
- The Board observed that the new perception measures were likely to have an impact on customer satisfaction figures across the sector.
- The Board observed that there was a good correlation between Freebridge’s five-year Corporate Strategy and the Regulator’s expectations on tenant satisfaction.

The Chair thanked the Director of Customer and Communities for her informative presentation.

05/22 STRATEGIC RISK REVIEW

Confidential item

06/22 VALUE FOR MONEY PLAN

The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which:

- outlined the proposed approach to value for money for the 2022/23 budget year and thereafter; and
- sought approval for the 2022/23 procurement for delivery in line with the Financial Regulations.

Key points of the discussion were as follows:

- In answer to a question, the Director of Assets confirmed that social value, such as a commitment to employ local young people, was requested in tender documentation. It was stressed that the delivery of social value should be monitored as part of contract management.
- The Board observed that, in light of the approval of the list of procurements, there should be no need for waivers from competitive tendering.
- It was highlighted that there would need to be forward planning for a new energy contract; the current one would expire in October 2022.
- It was stressed that it was important to allocate resources to the management of contracts.

RESOLVED: That the one-year procurement plan for 2022/23 for delivery of the contracts identified be approved.

07/22 **PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT**

Confidential item

08/22 **REPORT OF THE TENANT PANEL – QUARTER 3 & 4
ACTIVITY TO DATE**

The Director of Customer and Communities presented a report which described the activities of the Tenant Panel during October 2021 to February 2022.

The Board acknowledged the reported items in the report, in particular the Panel's support for the TPAS review of customer engagement.

The Board noted the report.

09/22 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE
COMMITTEE**

Jasmine Rigg, Chair of the Customer Service Committee, presented the Chair's report of the Committee's meeting held on 3 February 2022.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That, with reference to the Customer Service Committee terms of reference, paragraph 4.3, up to 2 Tenant Panel Members be appointed to the Committee, and that Tenant Panel Members be permitted to continue to exercise their Tenant Panel membership alongside their membership of the Customer Service Committee.
- 2) That, with reference to the existing Tenant Panel Membership Rule, the suspension of the 9-year membership restriction be approved for the duration of the Customer Service Committee pilot.

10/22 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE REPAIRS TASK AND FINISH
GROUP**

Confidential item

11/22 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE AUDIT AND RISK
COMMITTEE**

Donald McKenzie, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, presented the Chair's report of the Committee's meeting held on 17 January 2022.

Donald McKenzie reported that the Committee had been pleased to welcome its new Independent Member, Joanna Ward, who had provided valuable input.

Donald McKenzie highlighted that the key item on the Committee's agenda had been around regulatory compliance; this had been subsequently considered by the Board via written resolution.

The Board noted the report.

12/22 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE GOVERNANCE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

Simon Smith, Chair of the Governance and Remuneration Committee, presented the Chair's report of the Committee's meeting held on 31 January 2022.

Simon Smith commented that the Committee had benefited from the input of its new Independent Member, Tim Drew.

RESOLVED:

- 1) **That the Customer Service Committee be retained under its current terms of reference until the completion of the TPAS work.**

- 2) **That the Customer Service Committee be asked to monitor the progress of the TPAS work and consider its outcomes, making recommendations to the Board of the Governance and Remuneration Committee, as appropriate.**

13/22 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE TREASURY TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Andrew Hill, Chair of the Treasury Task and Finish Group, presented the Chair's report of the Task and Finish Group's meeting held on 20 January 2022.

The Board noted the report.

14/22 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SHADOW DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Vicky Savage, Chair of the Shadow Development Committee, presented the Chair's report of the Shadow Committee's meeting held on 24 January 2022.

Vicky Savage reported that it had been a momentous meeting, as this was the first time that Freebridge had had a Development Committee, albeit this had been a shadow meeting pending the agreement of the Committee's terms of reference. The meeting had received a great deal of information; this had been a good start, but members had asked for less detail and more strategic information at future meetings.

Key points of the discussion were as follows:

- In answer to a question, the Governance Manager confirmed that a recruitment consultant had been engaged to assist with the recruitment of an Independent Member to the Development Committee. Some promising candidates had been identified, but the search would continue so as to optimise the pool.

[Confidential wording]

The Board noted the report.

15/22 LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE

Confidential item

16/22 CHAIR'S UPDATE

As the Board Chair was absent from the meeting, there was no Chair's Update.

17/22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

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

18/22 MATTERS ARISING/ACTION SHEET

(a) Annual Rent and Service Charge Increase (Minute Number 95/21)

In answer to a question, the Director of Customer and Communities said that letters were currently being sent to tenants regarding the annual rent and service charge increase.

(b) Action Sheet

The Board noted the action sheet.

19/22 WRITTEN RESOLUTIONS AND URGENT ACTIONS

The Board noted the following written resolutions:

- Fairstead Community Shop
- Appointment of Independent Members to the Audit and Risk Committee and the Governance and Remuneration Committee
- Regulatory Compliance Sign-off

The Board noted the following urgent actions:

- Committee Memberships

- Employment of a Close Relative of an Existing Employee

20/22 **FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE BOARD**

The Board noted its work programme for the ensuing year.

It was noted that the Board's strategy afternoon on 14 March 2022 would include sessions on key performance indicators and pensions strategy.

The Board requested that a report on the transformation project be presented to its next meeting.

21/22 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

22/2 **NEXT MEETING**

The Board noted that its next meeting would be held on 16 May 2022.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

CHAIR