

## **FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD**

### **Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Monday 18 May 2015 at 7.15pm in “The Barn”, 2 Chapel Lane, King’s Lynn**

#### **PRESENT:**

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

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Colin Davison	-	Director of Property
John Crowther	-	Interim Director of Finance
Clare Flynn	-	Finance Manager
Philip Porter	-	BWNL (minute number 89/15)
Angus MacQueen	-	Company Secretary

The meeting was preceded by a presentation from Philip Porter of BWNL, Freebridge’s treasury management advisors, on Economic Indicators and the Funding Market.

#### **89/15      TREASURY MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY UPDATE AND POLICY REVIEW**

Confidential item

#### **90/15      APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence. However, the Board noted that Lesley Bambridge had resigned as a Board Member. The Board requested that its thanks be passed on to Lesley for her hard work and contribution to Freebridge as a Board Member over the past five and a half years.

#### **91/15      MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **92/15      MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

## **93/15            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Tony Hall declared an interest in the item at minute number 112/15 – Chief Executive's Appraisal. The Board was content that he should remain in the room during the item, as there was to be no discussion.

## **94/15            CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

The Chairman said that, in addition to his usual weekly meetings with the Chief Executive, he had attended the following events since the last meeting:

- Board financial reporting training held on 20 April 2015
- e<sup>2</sup> Joint Members Group meeting held on 22 April 2015, hosted by Orwell Housing
- Freebridge Community Awards held on 28 April 2015
- Festival Too charity golf day held on 13 May 2015, attended with a Tenant Panel Member and two employees.

The Board observed that this year's Freebridge Community Awards event had been particularly successful and asked that its thanks be passed on to all staff involved. The Chairman commented that it was pleasing that a number of Board Members had been present at the event.

## **95/15            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:

- Finance Director Recruitment
- Residential Accommodation Strategy – Queen Elizabeth Hospital
- Board Financial Reporting training
- Leaders in Housing seminar
- Freebridge Community Awards
- Goals UK
- Maternity Cover for the Director of Engagement
- Freebridge Week of Wellbeing
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Conference
- Service Charge Report – Yours South Lynn
- Elizabeth Avenue, Downham Market
- Board Member Declaration

The Board was particularly pleased to note that the Deputy Chief Executive had spoken at a large CIPD conference, on the subject of coaching. He had co-presented with representatives of BT.

It was highlighted that Freebridge had hosted a Leaders in Housing seminar for 14 senior housing professionals from around the country. This had been a good opportunity to promote both Freebridge and West Norfolk.

**96/15            2014/15 BUSINESS PLAN OUTTURN REPORT**

The Chief Executive presented a report which set out the 2014/15 Business Plan outturn. He highlighted that the 2014/15 Business Plan had been achieved, other than a change to the Hillington Square project timetable.

The Board was delighted to note the list of key achievements from across the organisation that had been prepared to enable the Chairman to approve the payment of the Board's discretionary element of the Business Plan Bond. The list demonstrated the range of work being undertaken alongside the Business Plan. The need to ensure that employees were not working at an excessive pace and to monitor staffing resources was stressed.

**RESOLVED:** That the 2014/15 Business Plan outturn report be approved.

**97/15            ELIZABETH AVENUE – FIRE INVESTIGATION**

Confidential item

**98/15            PROCUREMENT APPROVALS**

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

The Chairman advised that he had compared the estimated cost with the actual cost for each of the contracts that had been let, and could confirm that the actual cost was reasonably close to estimate in each case.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That Freebridge enter into the Procurement For Housing framework agreement for the procurement of energy for a maximum of three years, as detailed in section 2 of the report, and that the Director of Property appoint the successful contractor subject to the requirements of Financial Regulation 7 having been followed.
- 2) That the contracts that have been let be noted, as set out in section 3 of the report.

**99/15            REVISED CODE OF GOVERNANCE**

The Company Secretary presented a report which introduced the 2015 revision to the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance.

The Company Secretary undertook to provide a hard copy of the revised Code to any Board Members who would like one.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the National Housing Federation's "Code of Governance – Promoting Board Excellence for Housing Associations" (2015 edition) be adopted.
- 2) That the Company Secretary be requested to undertake a review of current compliance with the revised Code, and to present to the Board meeting in July 2015 an action plan to address areas of non-compliance by 31 March 2016.

**100/15      REVIEW OF THE COMPLAINTS PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Company Secretary presented a report which reviewed the Complaints Panel terms of reference.

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Complaints Panel terms of reference be approved, as presented.

**101/15      REVIEW OF THE FREEBRIDGE APPROACH TO SECTION 122 OF THE HOUSING AND REGENERATION ACT 2008 POLICY**

The Company Secretary presented a report which reviewed the Freebridge Approach to Section 122 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 Policy.

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Freebridge Approach to Section 122 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 Policy be approved, as presented.

**102/15      TENANT PANEL WORK PLAN 2015/16**

The Company Secretary presented a report which described the Tenant Panel work plan for 2015/16.

It was noted that the Board Vice-Chairman was now attending Tenant Panel meetings on a quarterly basis, to provide feedback on the work of the Board. Other Board Members were also attending Tenant Panel meetings as observers, in order to improve the Board's linkage with the Panel.

It was suggested that, should the new Government introduce proposals to extend the Right To Buy, the Tenant Panel should be involved in discussions on Freebridge's approach to this. This would be considered as and when any proposals were formalised, although it should be noted that the Tenant Panel did not represent a cross-section of all tenants.

**RESOLVED:** That the Tenant Panel work plan for 2015/16, which is in addition to the work being undertaken as part of the Panel's enhanced role, be endorsed.

**103/15      STATISTICAL DATA RETURN 2015**

The Finance Manager presented a report which introduced the Statistical Data Return 2015.

The Finance Manager explained that the annual external audit was currently being undertaken, and that there could consequently be a small movement in stock numbers. As a result, there could be a need to make slight changes to the Statistical Data Return before it was submitted at the end of May 2015.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the submission of Freebridge's Statistical Data Return 2015, as presented, be authorised.
- 2) That the Finance Manager be authorised to make slight changes to the Return, should these be identified by the current external audit, in advance of submission.

**104/15      ANNUAL FRAUD RETURN**

The Company Secretary presented a report which set out the Annual Fraud Return 2015.

**RESOLVED:** That the submission of Freebridge's Annual Fraud Return 2015 be authorised, as presented.

**105/15      EMPLOYMENT OF A CLOSE RELATIVE OF AN EXISTING EMPLOYEE**

Confidential item

**106/15      EMPLOYEE DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Confidential item

**107/15      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.

**108/15      OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW**

The Director of Property presented the Operations Performance Overview report for the quarter ending 31 March 2015.

The Director of Property advised that the Tenant Panel had considered this report. The Panel had raised some queries, which would be answered, but

nothing fundamental for the Board to consider. The Panel had been particularly pleased to note the low number of complaints that had been received.

The Board also observed that the number of complaints was small; this was particularly pleasing when compared to the larger number of compliments. The compliments had been made to staff around the organisation, rather than being limited to one or two teams.

It was highlighted that leaseholder arrears were increasing. The Deputy Chief Executive said that this was being investigated; a report would be made to the next meeting, including a more specific issue around the Yours South Lynn development.

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that it was usual for there to be a steady increase in rent arrears during the first three months after the rent-free weeks over Christmas.

The Board noted the report.

**109/15      FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES QUARTERLY MANAGEMENT REPORT**

Confidential item

**110/15      RISK MANAGEMENT AND FRAUD AWARENESS UPDATE**

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which detailed risk management activity during the quarter ending 31 March 2015.

The Board noted the report.

**111/15      UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Finance Manager presented a report which provided an update on the development of the Financial Plan and associated activities.

The Finance Manager advised that the Legal Services Manager had attended a workshop on compiling Assets and Liabilities Registers, and it appeared that Freebridge was taking much the same approach as other associations.

The Board noted the report.

**112/15      CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL**

Matthew Brown, Chairman of the Chief Executive's Appraisal Panel, advised that the Panel had met on 27 April 2015, to carry out the Chief Executive's annual appraisal. He said that he would provide feedback to any Non-Executive Board Members who requested it.

**113/15      URGENT ACTION TAKEN – REQUEST TO WRITE-OFF DEBT  
OVER £2,000**

Confidential item

**114/15      URGENT ACTION TAKEN – REINSTATEMENT OF FIRE  
DAMAGED PROPERTIES AT ELIZABETH AVENUE,  
DOWNHAM MARKET**

The Board noted a request for urgent action that had been approved, to enter into a contract to reinstate three properties at Elizabeth Avenue, Downham Market, following a fire.

**115/15      COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Ian Pinches, Chairman of the Audit Committee, presented the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 20 April 2015. He advised that there were some minor changes to be made to the minutes, but nothing substantive.

**116/15      WORK UPDATE**

The Company Secretary presented the work update, which included the following:

- Action Sheet
- Future Work Programme of the Board.

In answer to a question, the Chief Executive said that Management Team would be putting together a programme for "Board Thinking Sessions". A Board Member suggested that it would be better to have lighter "Thinking Sessions" where Board agendas were anticipated to be busy.

The Board noted the update.

**117/15      ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- **Local Columnist**

The Board was disappointed to note that a columnist in a local newspaper, in resigning from her role, had been openly critical of King's Lynn. It was pleasing that, in response, a number of positive comments had been made about the town.

**118/15      NEXT MEETING**

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 15 June 2015 at 6.30pm.

**The meeting closed at 8.40pm.**

**CHAIRMAN**