

## **FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD**

### **Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Monday 7 March 2016 at 6.30pm 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)  
Brian Long  
Ian Pinches  
Jasmine Rigg

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Robert Clarke	-	Director of Housing
Colin Davison	-	Director of Property
Clare Flynn	-	Finance Business Partner (minute numbers 47/16 - 53/16)
Howard Burton	-	Business Assurance Manager (minute numbers 47/16 - 55/16)
Angus MacQueen	-	Company Secretary

#### **47/16      APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Colin Sampson.

#### **48/16      MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **49/16      MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

#### **50/16      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **51/16      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 15 February 2016, he and the Company Secretary had signed contracts electronically for the first time, following the inclusion of a provision to allow this in Standing Orders when these were reviewed by the Board at its meeting on 11 January 2016. The contracts had been framework agreements for Eastern Procurement.
- On 3 March 2016, he had attended a National Housing Federation Eastern Region Chairs meeting, in Cambridge.
- On 4 March 2016, he had attended a meeting of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Governors' Council, which he sat on as Freebridge's representative.

## **52/16            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
- Internal Audit Letter of Engagement
- Placeshapers Roundtable Meeting
- Plaxtole House
- Closure of Area Offices at Hunstanton and Downham Market
- King's Lynn Court Closure
- Times Top 100
- Homes and Communities Agency Assessment
- Blockbuster Video Shop

The Board was delighted to note that Freebridge had retained both its G1/V1 regulatory assessment by the Homes and Communities Agency and its place in the Times Top 100 not-for-profit employers list. Some disappointment was expressed that Freebridge had significantly slipped down the Times Top 100 list, to 93<sup>rd</sup>, and the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the reasons for this were being investigated.

With regard to the Internal Audit Letter of Engagement, it was

**RESOLVED:** That the Letter be signed on behalf of Freebridge by the Deputy Chief Executive.

## **53/16            BUDGET 2016/17**

Confidential item

## **54/16            BUSINESS PLAN 2016/17**

The Chief Executive presented a report which introduced a revised template for the Business Plan. The aim of the revised template was to create a more

flexible Plan which could respond to a rapidly changing environment without losing sight of the long-term aims.

In answer to questions, the Chief Executive made the following points:

- Under “Community Development/Tenant Empowerment”, Management Team would be scoping the kind of alternative housing products that Freebridge might offer in the future. These might include shared housing and a staircase to full ownership with a safety net for those who did not ultimately achieve this.
- The revised template was designed to be flexible, and as such firm deadlines had not been included. The Board would be provided with narrative updates on a quarterly basis, when it would have the opportunity to enquire and challenge. Any actions that had slipped beyond target timescales would be highlighted within the Plan.

A Board Member stressed that, whilst it was appropriate to focus on Value for Money, cost reduction should also be borne in mind. He had received reassurance on this point from the Executive in advance of the meeting.

The Board welcomed the revised template and the flexibility it provided.

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Business Plan template be approved.

#### **55/16            REVIEW OF THE PROCUREMENT POLICY**

The Business Assurance Manager presented a report which reviewed the Procurement Policy. He highlighted that the revised Policy aimed to reflect good practice, clarify expected behaviours and adhere to regulatory requirements. It would be supported by a series of guidance notes.

In answer to questions, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that suppliers providing direct services to Freebridge tenants and staff would be asked about their approach to equality and diversity through the tendering process, and this would be monitored through the life of the contract. Non-compliance would be tackled as part of the quality assurance process; a proportionate approach would be taken, for instance small businesses might be provided with support or training.

In response to a question, the Business Support Manager said that sustainability was one of a range of issues considered as part of the tender process.

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Procurement Policy be approved, as presented.

#### **56/16            NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The Director of Housing presented a report which introduced the Neighbourhood Management Policy. He explained that this new Policy complemented a number of existing policies, and provided an improved

framework for the work that Freebridge was carrying out in local neighbourhoods.

Whilst welcoming the new Policy, the Board asked for the following additions to be made to it:

- Under Section 4, “Strategy”, include engagement with residents.
- Under Section 5, “Research and Evaluation”, clarify that consideration of the need for additional skills and resources would include both internal and external sources.
- In the Action Plan, cross reference with other relevant policies.

**RESOLVED:** That the Neighbourhood Management Policy be approved, subject to the amendments listed above.

#### **57/16            REVIEW OF THE SHAREHOLDING POLICY**

The Company Secretary presented a report which reviewed the Shareholding Policy.

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Shareholding Policy be approved, as presented.

#### **58/16            REVIEW OF VARIOUS HOUSING POLICIES**

The Director of Housing presented a report which reviewed the following policies:

- Appeals Policy
- Allocations and Lettings Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Starter Tenancies Policy.

The report also proposed amalgamating the Tenancy Policy and the Starter Tenancies Policy.

In answer to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that legislation was awaited on the Government’s “Pay to Stay” concept before deciding on how this would be implemented or the impact on tenants monitored.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the amendments to the Tenancy Policy and the Starter Tenancy Policy, including the amalgamation of these two policies, be approved.
- 2) That the revised Appeals Policy and Allocations and Lettings Policy be approved, as presented.

**59/16**            **REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING AND DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICIES**

The Director of Housing presented a report which reviewed the following policies:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy.

In answer to questions, the Director of Housing confirmed that there was an appropriate reporting mechanism in place for staff or contractors to raise concerns around safeguarding/abuse, and an audit trail was maintained. Staff and contractors had received safeguarding training.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive confirmed that key members of staff had attended training on radicalisation.

**RESOLVED:** That the following revised policies be approved as presented:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy (including the name of the Policy being changed to “Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse or Neglect Policy”)
- Domestic Abuse Policy.

**60/16**            **SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

The Chief Executive presented a report which described recent changes that had been made to Management Team structure and arrangements.

The Chairman advised that he would monitor the effect of the new structure on the workload of the Executive through the Chief Executive’s appraisal process.

The Board was pleased to note the opportunities for development of senior staff within the new structure.

The Board noted the report.

**61/16**            **HILLINGTON SQUARE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN POST PHASE 3**

Confidential item

**62/16**            **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Matthew Brown, Chairman of the Governance Committee, presented the minutes of the Committee’s meeting held on 1 February 2016. He highlighted

that Colin Sampson had stepped down from the Chief Executive's Appraisal Panel, and had been replaced by Marie Connell.

**63/16            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.

**64/16            ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**(a)      Correction to Service Standards Document**

The Company Secretary explained that the Freebridge Service Standards document gave the response time to non-emergency/non-urgent repairs as 31 days; this should have read 28 days.

**RESOLVED:** That the Service Standards document be amended accordingly.

**(b)      Joinery Apprentice of the Year**

The Board was delighted to note that Freebridge employee Shane Denton had been awarded "Joinery Apprentice of the Year" by the College of West Anglia. This was the latest in a number of similar awards received by Freebridge employees over the past few years. The Board asked the Director of Property to pass on its congratulations to Shane.

**65/16            NEXT MEETING**

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 11 April 2016 at 6.30pm.

**The meeting closed at 7.50pm.**

**CHAIRMAN**