

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on
Monday 10 September 2012 at 6.30pm in the
Conference Room, Juniper House,
Austin Street, King's Lynn**

PRESENT:

Ray Johnson (Chairman)
Lesley Bambridge
Matthew Brown
Sylvia Calver
Steve Clark
Irene Gammon
Bill Guyan
Michael Jervis
Ian Pinches
Colin Sampson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Tony Hall	-	Chief Executive
Sean Kent	-	Deputy Chief Executive
Robert Clarke	-	Assistant Director of Housing
Angus MacQueen	-	Company Secretary

OBSERVERS:

Frazer Clement
Simon Gathercole

151/12 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies for absence were received from John Fox and Paul Leader.

The Chairman welcomed Frazer Clement and Simon Gathercole, who were attending the meeting as observers. Mr Clement had been recommended by the Board to become a new Independent Board Member; the recommendation would be considered by the Freebridge Annual General Meeting on 17 September 2012. Mr Gathercole had been appointed by the Board as a new Tenant Board Member, the appointment to take effect from 17 September 2012.

Those present introduced themselves.

152/12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 August 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

153/12 MATTERS ARISING

• **Out and About Campaign (Minute Number 145/12)**

A member advised that the Chief Fire Officer had informed her that he had been approached by Freebridge with a view to promoting fire risk surveys on the Out and About campaign. He was delighted with this opportunity and grateful to Freebridge for the suggestion.

154/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

155/12 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman gave an update on his activities as Chairman since the last meeting.

As well as his regular weekly meetings with the Chief Executive, the Chairman said that he had attended the presentation event for the sheltered scheme gardening competition. He placed on record his thanks to the Welfare and Support Manager and the Activity Support Adviser, who had organised this year's competition and had secured sponsorship for the presentation event from Walsingham Farm Shops.

The Chairman advised that he and the Chief Executive had met with Councillor Adrian Lawrence, the new Cabinet Member at the Borough Council with responsibility for housing. It was intended to hold quarterly meetings with Councillor Lawrence, to enable an exchange of information.

The Chairman stated that he would be chairing the Freebridge Annual General Meeting on 17 September 2012, immediately after which he and the Chief Executive would be attending the National Housing Federation's Annual Conference in Birmingham.

The Board noted the update.

156/12 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

(a) Hillington Square

The Chief Executive said that there had been a slight delay to the timetable for the Hillington Square project. This had been to allow sufficient time to ensure that the tender documentation for the constructor was robust and legally compliant. It was now likely that appointment of the constructor would take place early in the new year, and that work would start on site in late spring/early summer 2013.

(b) Clenchwarton Almshouses

The Chief Executive reported that all documentation had now been completed in relation to the transfer to Freebridge of two almshouses at Clenchwarton. The Charity Commission had permitted the widening of the possible beneficiaries of the almshouses, and written confirmation of this position was awaited. In order to address concerns raised by the Charity Commission, the Almshouses Trust had agreed to Freebridge undertaking repairs just before the transfer of the properties, and the preparations for this were underway.

(c) Plaxtole House

Confidential

(d) Meeting with the Funders

The Deputy Chief Executive gave an update on a recent meeting with Freebridge's funders, Royal Bank of Scotland. As well as Plaxtole House, the following issues had been discussed:

- The funders had been very complimentary regarding engagement from Freebridge during the financial planning process.

[Confidential....]

(e) Behavioural Influencing

The Deputy Chief Executive reminded the Board that four senior Freebridge employees had recently attended a meeting with the Cabinet Office's Behavioural Influencing Team at 10 Downing Street, focusing on the Hillington Square project (minute number 125/12(e) refers). The Cabinet Office had now made a proposal for continued involvement with Hillington Square, which included a significant reduction on their usual fees as this was the kind of project that they were keen to be part of. They would be seeking national publicity for their involvement, and so this was an excellent public relations opportunity for Freebridge. The team would be coming to King's Lynn later this month, and those Board Members with a particular connection to the Hillington Square project would be invited to meet with them on that occasion.

157/12 TENANCY POLICY

The Assistant Director of Housing presented a report which sought approval for the new Tenancy Policy. He also tabled a guidance note which gave background information regarding some of the terms used in the Policy.

The Assistant Director of Housing explained that the Policy had been created to meet the requirements of the Homes and Communities Agency's new regulatory framework. The intention was to help tenants remain in Freebridge properties for as long as they needed them. A specialist team had been established to provide tenancy advice.

In answer to a question, the Assistant Director of Housing said that whenever a change in tenancy was likely, Freebridge officers would meet with the tenants affected. Freebridge would also work closely with the Housing Options team at the Borough Council.

RESOLVED: That the Tenancy Policy be approved, as presented.

158/12 REVIEW OF MOVING OUT POLICY (FORMERLY DECANT POLICY)

The Assistant Director of Housing presented a report which reviewed the Moving Out Policy (formerly called the Decant Policy).

In answer to a question, the Assistant Director of Housing said that, in addition to the properties at Hillington Square, there were a number of non-traditional properties at various locations where the tenants would be required to move out while improvement works were undertaken.

RESOLVED: That the Moving Out Policy be approved, as presented.

159/12 REVIEW OF RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which reviewed the Risk Management Policy.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted that the revised Policy reflected current thinking on risk management, in particular that the greatest threat to an organisation was often caused by unforeseen risks, sometimes called “black swan” or “grey swan” risks. He had met with a risk management expert at PricewaterhouseCoopers and considered how best to implement the new thinking. They had concluded that the Freebridge business planning process was already covering most of the necessary risk management activities, although there needed to be some additional scenario planning for unforeseeable strategic risks.

The Chief Executive paid tribute to the Deputy Chief Executive’s ongoing excellent work on risk management.

RESOLVED: That the Risk Management Policy be approved, as presented.

160/12 SUSTAINABILITY, AN ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which explained how it was intended that Freebridge would comply with sustainability standards and best practice.

The Board agreed that it was more beneficial and efficient to include sustainability commitments in all Freebridge policies, rather than having a separate policy on sustainability.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report, as presented, be approved as an interim document.
- 2) That transfer actions be added to the following policies when they are next reviewed:
 - Asset Management Policy
 - Communications Policy
 - Community Development Policy
 - Customer Care Policy
 - Digital Inclusion Policy
 - Financial Inclusion Policy
 - Human Resources Policy
 - Value for Money Policy
- 3) That the policy statement below be included in these and any other policies when they are reviewed:

“Freebridge aims to deliver efficient services that provide a good experience for our customers and are sympathetic to the needs of our stakeholders, whilst conscientiously sourcing materials and minimising waste. We will aim to make sustainability a key consideration in all our decisions, whilst recognising that we have a moral duty to act and therefore we believe that this also makes good sense, from an ethical and organisational perspective.”

161/12 ANNUAL REPORT FOR TENANTS 2011/12

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which introduced Freebridge’s proposed Annual Report for Tenants 2011/12.

The Deputy Chief Executive tabled an updated version of the Annual Report. In addition to the correction of typographical errors, the main change from the original version was the removal of the column showing the spread of expenditure in 2010/11 in the “How We Spend Our Money” table. This had been removed as it had been felt not to be sufficiently relevant.

The Deputy Chief Executive said that the legal and regulatory requirements as to the contents of the Annual Report were much less stringent than in previous years. The Annual Report had been developed in consultation with a group of tenants; information on finance and governance had been kept to a minimum in line with tenant feedback. This year’s Annual Report would be included in the Streets Ahead magazine, rather than published as a separate document, resulting in a significant cost saving.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report for Tenants 2011/12, as tabled, be approved for publishing to Freebridge’s tenants.

162/12 GOVERNANCE UPDATE

The Company Secretary presented a report which provided an update on issues around:

- The National Housing Federation (NHF) “Excellence in Governance” Code for Members
- The NHF “Excellence in Standards of Conduct” Code for Members.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That continued adoption of the NHF “Excellence in Governance” Code for Members 2010 be approved, and that adoption of this Code be revisited every two years.
- 2) That it be noted that Freebridge is fully compliant with the NHF “Excellence in Governance” Code for Members 2010.
- 3) That the outcome of the Internal Audit review of Freebridge’s compliance with the NHF “Excellence in Standards of Conduct” Code for Members 2010 be noted, and that it be noted that Freebridge is very close to full compliance.

163/12 APPOINTMENT TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S APPRAISAL PANEL

The Company Secretary presented a report which sought to appoint a Board Member to fill the vacancy on the Chief Executive’s Appraisal Panel created by the departure from the Board of Michael Jervis.

RESOLVED: That Colin Sampson be appointed to the Chief Executive’s Appraisal Panel.

164/12 APPOINTMENT OF SHAREHOLDER

The Company Secretary presented a report which requested the Board to consider an application for tenant shareholding.

RESOLVED: That the application for tenant shareholding set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

165/12 AFFORDABLE RENT TENANCY ANALYSIS

The Assistant Director of Housing presented a report which provided an initial indication of the impact that Affordable Rent had had on Freebridge tenants and tenancy sustainment, since Freebridge had commenced letting properties at an Affordable Rent in October 2011.

The Assistant Director of Housing highlighted that the report concluded that there appeared to be no significant issues arising from the introduction of Affordable Rent at Freebridge. It could be worth Freebridge exploring the

possibility of increasing the number of properties on Affordable Rent; there could be an opportunity to do this as at least one e² partner was struggling to achieve its quota. The Chief Executive commented that Freebridge had taken a cautious approach to the introduction of Affordable Rent properties; some of those who had taken a bolder approach now appeared to be finding it difficult to let sufficient properties at Affordable Rent.

The Board asked that its thanks be passed on to the Housing Services Manager for her highly analytical and informative report.

The Board noted the report.

166/12 FEEDBACK FROM THE 2012 EMPLOYEE CONFERENCE

The Chief Executive presented a report which set out a summary of feedback from the 2012 employee conference.

The Board welcomed the feedback, which was generally very positive, whilst the high response rate showed a good level of engagement.

In answer to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive said that concerns over workload could generally be overcome by helping employees to find new ways of working and to manage their workloads better.

The Board noted the report.

167/12 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.

168/12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- **Sylvia Calver, Irene Gammon and Michael Jervis**

The Chairman recorded his thanks to Sylvia Calver, Irene Gammon and Michael Jervis for their hard work as Freebridge Board Members over many years. This was their last Board meeting, as they would be leaving the Board following the AGM on 17 September 2012.

169/12 NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 8 October 2012 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

CHAIRMAN