

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Monday 23 June 2014 at 6.30pm in "The Barn", 2 Chapel Lane, King's Lynn

PRESENT:

Ray Johnson (Chairman)
Lesley Bambridge
Matthew Brown
Tony Hall (Chief Executive)
Sean Kent (Deputy Chief Executive)
Paul Leader
Ian Pinches
Jasmine Rigg
Colin Sampson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Colin Davison - Director of Property
Michelle Gant - Director of Engagement
Angus MacQueen - Company Secretary

113/14 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Steve Clark.

114/14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

115/14 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

116/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Confidential item

117/14 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

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

- e² Board Members' conference held at Bury St Edmund's on 5 June 2014
- Meeting to shortlist applications for Board Membership

He would be attending, on 24 June 2014, a meeting about anti-social behaviour organised by Norfolk's Police and Crime Commissioner.

118/14 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE**

A written update from the Chief Executive, covering a number of issues, had been previously circulated and was noted by the Board.

119/14 **VALUE FOR MONEY SELF-ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**
2013/14

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which sought approval of the Value for Money Self-Assessment Statement, for inclusion in Freebridge's statutory accounts 2013/14.

The Board noted that the Statement had been prepared by the Business Assurance Manager and asked that its thanks be passed onto him for an excellent piece of work. The Deputy Chief Executive said that support in producing the document had been received from Freebridge's internal auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers. He also thanked the members of the working party for their significant input; this had included two Board Members (Matthew Brown and Steve Clark), two Tenant Panel Members and Freebridge staff members. It was now important that the Board as a whole took ownership of the document

The Deputy Chief Executive thanked those Board Members who had suggested amendments to the Statement since it had been issued with the agenda. These had been incorporated, although the revised version had not been circulated to the Board, as the amendments were minor typographical changes and points of clarification. He also clarified that the Board's conclusion in the report should have read that "no significant deficiencies, omissions or errors were identified".

The Board was particularly pleased to note that Freebridge had come top in the e² mystery shopping exercise. The considerable impact on the local economy of Freebridge's procurement was also highlighted.

In answer to a question, the Director of Property confirmed that an Energy Efficiency Adviser had been in post for three months. She had already carried out some visits to tenants' homes and was researching what help and advice could be available. She would then be producing publicity and information materials.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Statement would be presented to the Tenant Panel. The two Tenant Panel Members who were on the working party would take the lead on this.

The Deputy Chief Executive said that, as this version of the Statement had been prepared for inclusion in the statutory accounts, 2012/13 benchmarking data had had to be used, as the data for 2013/14 was not yet available. A further version of the Statement incorporating the 2013/14 benchmarking data would be presented to the Board in September 2014 and then published on Freebridge's website.

RESOLVED: That the Value for Money Self-Assessment Statement be approved for inclusion in the 2013/14 statutory accounts.

120/14 CONSENT FOR DISPOSAL AND PURCHASE OF LEASEHOLD UNITS ON HILLINGTON SQUARE

The Director of Property presented a report which set out a proposal for the purchase and disposal of leasehold units as part of the Hillington Square project.

In answer to questions, the following points were made:

- Both external and internal legal advice had been taken, to ensure that the wording of the new lease was as robust as possible. The funders had also been consulted.
- It was intended to introduce full service charges for leaseholders. Consultation with resident leaseholders about this was ongoing.
- The leaseholders would be encouraged to take their own legal advice before entering the new lease, although Freebridge could not insist on this.
- About half of current leaseholders on Hillington Square were resident leaseholders.

RESOLVED: That authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Director of Property to purchase and dispose of leasehold units to achieve best value for the Hillington Square project within existing budgets.

121/14 PROCUREMENT OF VARIOUS CONTRACTS

The Director of Property presented reports which described the proposed procurement of the following contracts:

- Refurbishment of the property known as the Rampant Horse, Gayton
- Refurbishment of 48/49 High Street, King's Lynn
- Loft/cavity wall insulation
- Asbestos Surveying/Sampling and Removal

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the Borough Council's Planning Department was being consulted on the proposals for the Rampant Horse and 48/49 High Street; no works would be commissioned until planning permission had been secured. It was also noted that there was a local protest group which wished the Rampant Horse to be reopened as a public house.

A Board Member said that prior to the meeting he had queried the figures on the Rampant Horse contract with the Director of Property. He was now satisfied that the project would provide good value for money. In answer to a

question, the Director of Property said that the empty homes funding rules would allow for the redevelopment of the site after five years.

Questions around the insulation and asbestos contracts had been submitted by a Board Member prior to the meeting, and had been answered to his satisfaction.

It was noted that the year of completion for the four contracts had, in each case, been listed wrongly in the reports; this should have read “2015” rather than “2014”.

The Board was of the view that these reports were largely operational, although they had been presented to the Board as a requirement of Financial Regulation 7. It was suggested that the Board needed only a quarterly forecast of contracts worth over £50,000 to be let; each one could then be approved unless the Board required further information. The Board could also receive a quarterly schedule of contracts worth over £50,000 that had been let. The Company Secretary was asked to prepare the necessary changes to Financial Regulation 7, for approval at the next Board meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the procurement of the following contacts be approved:
 - Refurbishment of the property known as the Rampant Horse, Gayton
 - Refurbishment of 48/49 High Street, King’s Lynn
 - Loft/cavity wall insulation
 - Asbestos Surveying/Sampling and Removal
- 2) That it be agreed that the Director of Property appoint the successful contractor in each case, subject to the requirements of Financial Regulation 7 having been followed.
- 3) That the timetable for procurement in each case be noted.
- 4) That the Company Secretary present to the next meeting proposed amendments to Financial Regulation 7, to reflect the Board’s wishes in terms of procurement approval over £50,000.

122/14 CONTRACT SIGNING – ORWELL JOINERY

The Director of Property presented a report which sought approval for Freebridge through Property Services to enter into a contract with Orwell Housing to manufacture and install timber windows following a successful tender process.

In answer to a question, the Director of Property said that VAT for the works would be accommodated within Freebridge’s partial exemption.

The Board congratulated the Director of Property and his team on being awarded the contract.

RESOLVED: That Freebridge enter the contract to manufacture and install timber windows for Orwell Housing.

123/14 LEGAL CHARGING OF PROPERTIES TO FUNDERS AND SECTION 172 CONSENT

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which requested authorisation for the Legal Charge on 37 properties purchased or developed by Freebridge, in favour of Freebridge's funders.

In answer to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that the properties would be charged to a security agent who would hold them to the benefit of RBS, Freebridge's funders. At the point when Freebridge wished to release security, RBS would send the agent notification and the agent would continue holding the properties for Freebridge's benefit. This was simpler than charging direct to RBS. Freebridge was obliged to charge the properties; there would be options to release security once peak debt had been reached, in 2018.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the properties identified in Appendix 1 to the report be charged to Prudential Trustee Co Ltd (Prudential) to the benefit of Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS).
- 2) That authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Legal Services Manager to ratify the terms of and the entry into the Legal Mortgage for the properties identified in Appendix 1, provided that the terms are not materially different from those previously used (as set out in the document on the Board Members' website alongside the agenda for this meeting), and that such Legal Mortgage be executed once finalised.
- 3) That the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to execute such Legal Mortgage on the Board's behalf.
- 4) That it be authorised that Freebridge's seal be affixed to such Legal Mortgage if it is to be executed by the Borrower under seal or for such Legal Mortgage to be executed by the Borrower as a deed.
- 5) That it be authorised to obtain Section 172 consent from the Homes and Communities Agency to enable the above to be carried out.

124/14 REVIEW OF THE HOME OWNERSHIP THROUGH RIGHT TO BUY/RIGHT TO ACQUIRE POLICY

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which reviewed the Home Ownership Through Right To Buy/Right To Acquire Policy.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted that the position in the revised Policy regarding restrictive covenants concerning the re-sale of properties in designated rural areas remained the same as in the previous Policy. This was that Freebridge would not release the covenant or give consent to the disposal of a property with the covenant attached where potential purchasers did not meet the necessary local connection criteria. There had been a number of challenges to this position, but officers had not departed from the Policy. The Board strongly supported the continuation of this stance in the interests of protecting affordable housing in rural areas. It was also noted that if there were ever a case when Freebridge was minded to release the covenant, it had a regulatory requirement to achieve value for money, and so a significant payment would be required from the owner of the property.

RESOLVED: That the Home Ownership Through Right To Buy/Right To Acquire Policy be approved, as presented.

125/14 REVIEW OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

The Director of Property presented reports which reviewed the Health and Safety Policy and which provided the annual health and safety update.

Prior to the meeting, a Board Member had requested figures around assaults on staff, and these had been provided to his satisfaction.

RESOLVED: That the Health and Safety Policy be approved, as presented.

126/14 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.

127/14 ANNUAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING UPDATES

The Director of Engagement presented a report which provided an update on equality and diversity in recruitment, on actions undertaken to promote equality and diversity in recruitment, and on training and development during 2013-14.

Following a point raised by a Board Member, the Director of Engagement undertook to investigate options around West Norfolk Voluntary and Community Action making use of Freebridge's Skillgate training package.

The Board noted the report.

128/14 URGENT ACTION TAKEN – SECONDMENT OF A CLOSE RELATIVE OF AN EXISTING EMPLOYEE

The Board noted a request for urgent action that had been approved, to enable the secondment of a close relative of an existing employee from one Freebridge team to another. In answer to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that this secondment had been made in line with the same arrangements that would apply to any member of staff.

129/14 URGENT ACTION TAKEN – PROVISION OF A TENANCY TO A CLOSE RELATIVE OF AN EXISTING EMPLOYEE

The Board noted a request for urgent action that had been approved, to enable the Association to provide a tenancy to the close relative of an existing employee.

130/14 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.

131/14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

132/14 NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 14 July 2014 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm.

CHAIRMAN