

**FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD**

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on  
Monday 15 June 2015 at 6.30 pm in  
“The Barn”, 2 Chapel Lane, King’s Lynn**

**PRESENT:**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Robert Clarke	-	Director of Housing
Colin Davison	-	Director of Property
Michelle Gant	-	Director of Engagement
John Crowther	-	Interim Director of Finance
Howard Burton	-	Business Assurance Manager
Helen Richardson	-	Governance Coordinator

**119/15      APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Marie Connell.

The Chairman advised that a nomination from the Council was expected for the vacant Councillor position.

**120/15      MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**121/15      MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

**122/15      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Ian Pinches declared an interest in the item at minute number 124/15 – Chief Executive’s Update in regard to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Accommodation Strategy. The Board was content that he should remain in the room during the item, as there was to be no discussion.

## **123/15      CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

The Chairman said that, in addition to his usual weekly meetings with the Chief Executive, he had the following events coming up in the following week:

- East of England Housing Association Chairs meeting on 16 June.
- e<sup>2</sup> Chairs and Chief Executives meeting on 18 June.

## **124/15      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:

- Hillington Square Café
- Homes and Communities Agency feedback – Fire at Elizabeth Avenue, Downham Market
- NHF Board Member's Regional Seminar on Improving Governance
- Queen Elizabeth Hospital Accommodation Strategy
- Freebridge Week of Wellbeing Overview
- Employee Car Parking
- Finance Director Recruitment
- Plaxtole House
- Sheltered Scheme Gardening Competition Judging

Discussions took place on some aspects of the update, as set out below.

### **a) Sheltered Scheme Gardening Competition Judging**

The Chairman agreed to discuss judging of the sheltered scheme gardening competition with Marie Connell. It was felt that this was good opportunity for the Board to do get involved in the community.

### **b) Executive Contracts**

This was an additional item, not including in the written update.

The Chief Executive highlighted that the review of Executive Contracts was a longer term item listed on the Board action sheet. As suggested by the Chief Executive, in order to resolve the action, the Board agreed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive Appraisal Panel. The Chief Executive advised that a review of the Chief Executive's Appraisal Panel would be considered as part of any board structure change. It was confirmed that a revised Terms of Reference for the Chief Executive's Appraisal Panel would be brought to the Board for approval in line with the new Code of Governance.

**125/15**      **REVIEW OF THE VALUE FOR MONEY POLICY**

The Business Assurance Manager presented a report which reviewed the Value for Money Policy.

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Value for Money Policy be approved, as presented.

**126/15**      **VALUE FOR MONEY SELF-ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

The Business Assurance Manager presented a report which introduced the Value for Money Self-Assessment Statement for 2014/15.

The Board were pleased that the Value for Money Self-Assessment Statement was written in plain English and it was felt that it reflected Freebridge's values; the Board thanked the Business Assurance Manager for his work in producing this document.

Following a suggestion, the Business Assurance Manager agreed to consider clarification of the numbers of properties at Hillington Square yet to meet the Decent Homes Standard, in order to explain the reasons why they were yet to be completed in particular for those less familiar with the refurbishment project.

The Director of Property advised that a new Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating for assessing Energy Performance of properties had been published, and it was likely that current ratings would change in the next financial year resulting in a lower energy efficient rating score.

**RESOLVED:** That the Value for Money statement is included in Freebridge's statutory financial accounts for 2014/15, as detailed in section 2 of the report.

**127/15**      **SERVICE CHARGES**

Confidential item

**128/15**      **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW**

The Interim Finance Director presented a report which reviewed the Financial Regulations.

The Interim Finance Director shared that he had recently attended a National Housing Federation seminar on stress testing, and there had been an indication that the Homes and Communities Agency were looking for Boards to take a lead on stress testing within the organisation. It was acknowledged that the Board were due to attend an Iron Grip training session on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015 on stress testing.

In answer to a question, the Director of Housing clarified that bad debt provision was always initiated and managed by the Income Team. He added that debt write-offs were often either following the death of a tenant or

following the use of debt collection agencies being unable to locate a tenant who had absconded. The Director of Housing advised that he would be checking the procedure to ensure that it was in line with this advice.

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Financial Regulations be approved, as presented.

**129/15      REVIEW OF THE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

The Director of Engagement presented a report which reviewed the Marketing and Communications Policy.

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Marketing and Communications Policy be approved, as presented.

**130/15      REVIEW OF THE ICT POLICY REVIEW AND UPDATE**

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

The Deputy Chief Executive shared that PriceWaterhouseCooper had provided consultancy. He highlighted that there was more emphasis in the policy about changing staff attitudes to technology, such as making more use of video conferencing, which the Human Resources and Communications Team were aiming to promote.

Following a query by a Board Member, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that the strategy didn't preclude Freebridge from partnering on ICT provision and if there were potential partners Freebridge would be happy to discuss.

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

**131/15      PROCUREMENT APPROVALS**

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

In answer to a question, the Director of Property advised that the contract awarded for reroofing was below the OJEU threshold.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That Freebridge enter into the contracts/agreements as detailed in section 2 of the report, and that the Director of Property appoint the successful contractors subject to the requirements of Financial Regulation 7 and Standing Order 6 having been followed.
- 2) That the contracts that have been let be noted, as set out in section 3 of the report.

**132/15      ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE**

The Director of Property presented the report which provided the annual health and safety update.

The Board were pleased to note the contents of the report and gave a commendation for those involved in Health and Safety. The Board also wished to pass on congratulations in the achievement of receiving a Gold Award from the ROSPA (Royal Society of Prevention of Accidents) Occupational Health and Safety Awards for the fourth year running.

Following a question, the Director of Property advised that staff were encouraged to report near misses and there had been a marked increase in reports being received.

The Board noted the report.

**133/15      ANNUAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING UPDATE**

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 2014-15.

The Board wished to congratulate the Director of Engagement on the progress that had been made since the last update.

In answer to questions, the Director of Engagement highlighted the following:

- In recruitment of LGBT applicants there had been an increase, though those applying had not been appointed to post.
- There had been an increase in the number of disabled applicants, though it was acknowledged that 0.7% of overall applications received were a lower percentage compared to the wider population.

The Director of Engagement explained that the Human Resources team were reviewing the recruitment system and improvements to the recruitment of LGBT or disabled applicants would be explored. The Deputy Chief Executive added that training could be held with managers.

The Board considered that often a disability might be defined as something that is physical, but often it might be something that cannot be seen such as mental health. It was also felt that Freebridge should focus on asking applicants what reasonable adjustments they might need in terms of how they regard themselves to be individually.

Following a question, the Director of Engagement advised that the apprenticeship and trainee programme at Freebridge was not age restricted,

and there had been an increase in younger recruits due to the apprenticeship scheme.

The Board noted the report.

[The Director of Engagement clarified following the meeting for the purpose of the minutes that 2.7% of residents in the 2011 census identified themselves as being minority ethnic in West Norfolk.]

**134/15      DISREPAIR CLAIM**

Confidential item

**135/15      BEST COMPANIES FINDINGS**

The Director of Engagement presented a report which provided an update on the Best Companies findings.

The Board commented that the report was excellent and the feedback received from staff had been good and it would be a great tool for the organisation.

**136/15      WORK UPDATE**

The Chief Executive presented the work update, which included the following:

- Action Sheet
- Future Work Programme of the Board.

The Board noted the update.

**137/15      ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- **Time to Think Schedule**

The Chief Executive shared that the topic of Diversity and Community Cohesion was due to be held as a Time to Think at the meeting. He explained that the topic had been suggested prior to the election in advance of any potential issues. Following a suggestion from the Chief Executive, the Board agreed for him to create and circulate a Time to Think schedule to the Board based on the six Business Plan themes and any wider work to be done during the financial year.

- **Business Plan**

The Board were pleased to see the new layout and style of the Business Plan and commented that it worked well.

- **Director of Engagement**

Confidential

**138/15      NEXT MEETING**

The Board noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Monday 13 July 2015 at 6.30pm.

**The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.**

**CHAIRMAN**