

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on
Monday 20 February 2023 at 4.20pm in the
Conference Room, Juniper House
Austin Street, King's Lynn**



PRESENT:

Andy Walder (Chair)
Jo Barrett
Gil Fernandes
Andrew Hill
Anita Jones (Chief Executive)
Donald McKenzie (minute numbers 01/23 - 13/23)
Gill Rejzl
Vicky Savage
Simon Smith

IN ATTENDANCE:

Anna Simpson	-	Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive
Sophie Bates	-	Director of Customer & Communities
Paul Newbold	-	Director of New Homes & Commercial
Dave Seaton	-	Director of Homes & Community Maintenance
Angus MacQueen	-	Governance Manager

OBSERVERS:

	-	Regulator of Social Housing
	-	Regulator of Social Housing

01/23 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Jasmine Rigg.

02/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest. [Confidential wording]

03/23 CHAIR'S UPDATE

Confidential item

04/23 OPERATING CONTEXT AND RISK

Confidential item

05/23

CUSTOMER VOICE

The Director of Customer & Communities presented a report which brought together customer service performance data, intelligence gained from Freebridge's involved tenants and the MyFreebridge framework, and the key trends from complaints performance. This provided an insight and holistic overview of the current voice of Freebridge's customers.

Key points of the discussion were as follows:

[Confidential wording]

- A Board Member said that the responses to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures had shown that tenants viewed their homes as more than just four walls.
- A Board Member stated that the psychometric segmentation which was currently being carried out would provide useful insight to enable a bespoke approach to customer services.
- A Board Member commented that contractor performance would be key to improving tenant satisfaction.
- A Board Member noted that two Ombudsman determinations had been found against Freebridge since April 2022 (up from zero in the previous year) and asked whether there had been any learning from these cases. The Director of Customer & Communities confirmed that learning was taking place from these cases and, indeed, it was intended to learn from all complaints. She expected more cases to be referred to the Ombudsman as tenants became more aware of this as an option.
- The Chair asked if progress was being made on hearing the voices of difficult to reach tenants. The Director of Customer & Communities advised that the Customer Ambassadors were seeking views from tenants in their communities and feeding these back. The psychometric segmentation would also inform how to tailor communications with all tenants.

[Confidential wording]

- A Board Member suggested that the inclusion of targets would enhance future customer voice reports.
- A Board Member asked how the Customer Voice Panel would be informed of the Board's responses to its points. The Director of Customer & Communities stated that this was the responsibility of the Board Members who sat on the Customer Voice Panel.

[Confidential wording]

The Board thanked the Director of Customer & Communities for an informative report and for the work that had been done to achieve improved customer insight.

The Board noted the report.

06/23 CORPORATE STRATEGY 2023/24

The Chief Executive presented a report which set out the Corporate Strategy delivery plan for 2023/24. She advised that a draft suite of key performance indicators would be presented for discussion at the March away day.

The Chief Executive highlighted that the 2023/24 delivery plan would be key to improving customer satisfaction and to navigating the operating environment. It would need to be dynamic. [Confidential wording]

Key points of the discussion were as follows:

- A Board Member asked how it would become clear if a project in the delivery plan was not working. The Chief Executive responded that it would be monitored dynamically and regularly. The Board acknowledged that, on occasions, it could be necessary to remove projects during the life of the plan.
- A Board Member asked that the delivery plan cross-reference with risk. The Chief Executive advised that plan would be presented clearly and in a way that Board Members could cross reference with the relevant risks.
- The Chair asked whether Freebridge was culturally ready for this delivery plan. The Chief Executive responded that she believed that it was, particularly following the improvements made through the Target Operating Model and with the introduction of new values.
- The Chair requested that a sequential chart illustrating the target dates for each project be produced.
- A Board Member queried how reliant delivery of the 2023/24 plan would be on recruitment. The Chief Executive replied that the turnover rate was slowing down and that the quality of recruitment had improved through the use of consultants. The key area would be Homes and Community Maintenance, which was currently going through a restructure as part of the Target Operating Model process. [Confidential wording]
- A Board Member stated that some of the initiatives in the plan should include customer consultation. The Chief Executive confirmed that customer consultation would take place as necessary.
- A Board Member highlighted that the Hillington Square project was not included in the plan, even though it would be a significant area of activity.

The Chief Executive advised that it was not included, as it was part of the development programme; she would consider whether to add it into the plan.

- A Board Member suggested that the Plan should include where there were opportunities to work with partners. The Chief Executive undertook to add this in.
- A Board Member noted that 13 projects were scheduled for completion at the end of the year and suggested that some be brought forward so as to avoid a peak of workload.
- The Board requested that the Customer Voice Panel review the plan before its introduction.

RESOLVED: That the content, shape and broad objectives of the Corporate Strategy delivery plan 2023/24 be approved and that amendments be made to the plan as set out above.

07/23 BUDGET 2023/24

Confidential item

08/23 FREEBRIDGE VALUES 2023

The Chief Executive presented a report which outlined a refreshed set of values for the organisation. She stressed that the presentation of the new values would be improved in advance of roll out.

Key points of the discussion were as follows:

- A Board Member questioned whether the meaning of one of the suggested values, “Be the change” would be clear to everyone. Other Board Members were of the view that it was sufficiently clear. The Board requested that the Leadership Team consider whether the wording of this value should be amended.
- A Board Member asked that the Leadership Team consider adding the words “and respect” to “Value our customers” which sat under the value “Think Customer”.
- It was acknowledged that embedding the new values would be work. The Chair stressed that it was the Board’s responsibility to lead on demonstrating the values.
- The Board welcomed the new values, which reflected the Board’s input at its away days.

RESOLVED: That the new set of values be agreed, subject to the Leadership Team’s consideration of the wording described above.

09/23 **HOMES AND COMMUNITY MAINTENANCE – DELIVERING FOR OUR CUSTOMER**

Confidential item

10/23 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE REPAIRS TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Gill Rejzl, Chair of the Repairs Task and Finish Group, presented the Chair's report of the Task and Finish Group's meeting held on 26 January 2023. She paid tribute to the hard work of the Homes and Communities Maintenance team in addressing the pandemic backlog.

The Board noted the report and acknowledged that there would be discussion on repairs under the next item (minute number 11/23 refers).

11/23 **PERFORMANCE UPDATE QUARTER 3 2022/23**

Confidential item

12/23 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE**

Donald McKenzie, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, presented the Chair's report of the Committee's meeting held on 6 February 2023.

Key points of the discussion were as follows:

[Confidential wording]

The Board noted the report.

13/23 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Vicky Savage, Chair of the Development Committee, presented the Chair's report of the Committee's meeting held on 23 January 2023.

Key points of the discussion were as set out below:

[Confidential wording]

The Board noted the report.

14/23 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE TREASURY TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Andrew Hill, Chair of the Treasury Task and Finish Group, presented the Chair's report of the Task and Finish Group's meeting held on 9 February 2023.

[Confidential wording]

The Board noted the report.

15/23 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE GOVERNANCE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

Simon Smith, Chair of the Governance and Remuneration Committee, presented the Chair's report of the Committee's meeting held on 30 January 2023.

RESOLVED:

- 1) **That the five key principles underpinning the People Plan be supported.**

- 2) **That the new Probity Policy be adopted with effect from 1 April 2023, in support of the NHF's Code of Conduct 2022, subject to the reference being made in the Policy to the availability of a list of Freebridge contractors.**

- 3) [Confidential wording]

- 4) **That Freebridge continue with its current practice of not paying Board/Committee Members travel expenses for meetings at the office base.**

16/23 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 14 November 2022 and of the special meeting held on 13 December 2022 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

17/23 **MATTERS ARISING/ACTION SHEET**

There were no matters arising.

In relation to the action sheet, Simon Smith, as Chair of the Governance and Remuneration Committee, said that, when the Committee considered Board size at its meeting on 20 March 2023, it should also consider the future of the two current task and finish groups (minute number 86/22 refers).

18/23 **WRITTEN RESOLUTIONS**

The Board noted the following written resolutions:

- May 2022 Business Plan Letter of Variation to the LSVT loan agreement
- Rent and Service Charge Increases 2023-24.

19/23 **URGENT ACTIONS**

The Board noted the following urgent action which had been approved:

[Confidential wording]

20/23 WORK PROGRAMME

The Board noted its work programme.

[Confidential wording]

21/23 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Confidential item

22/23 NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that its next meeting would be held on Monday 15 May 2023 at 4.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.

CHAIR