

PART 1
BOARD MEETING



Minutes of Meeting held at 5:15 pm
23rd August 2007 at Little Aynam House, Kendal

Present: John Stanton – Chair
Mary Dowling – Vice Chair
Ron Pritchard
Joan Chadwick
John Short
David Vatcher
Robin Brown
Peter Bland
Peter Thompson
Gwen Murfin
Christine Chadwick
Graham Donning

Officers: David Stubbs
Peter Thomas
Alison Kinnon
Sue Mallinson

Apologies: Paul Jones
Garry Ronson

Observers Brenda Gray

NO **TITLE OF MINUTE** **ACTION**

Prior to the meeting commencing the Chief Executive circulated to Board Directors the first draft of the Business Plan. Consultation has commenced on the plan through the examination of change strategy with stakeholders in 2006. Having regard to tenant consultation and to meet the requirements of the new KLOE's, new priorities are being identified. A workshop with tenants and directors and the SLH annual stakeholder conference will address the plan.

518 **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

Amend the attendees at 12th July 2007 meeting to include Gwen Murfin

Subject to this amendment the minutes were accepted as a true record of the proceedings.

519 **MATTERS ARISING**

Any Other Business: The Chair asked if the AGM was going to be held on 14th September. The Chief Executive replied that Tenants' Committee decided to advertise for tenant board members in order to reflect the diversity of the area. An advertisement would go in the September Homefront newsletter and a delay was required to complete this process.

RESOLVED:- That the AGM be now held at 5:00 pm prior to the Board meeting

520 REPORTS FROM TENANTS' COMMITTEE

Min 302: Peter Bland reported that Marianne Hood had suggested that Area Panels be changed in a major way and expressed concern that any diversity training should be of a good quality.

Gwen Murfin supported the role of area panels but commented they needed more 'fresh blood' and to perhaps work more in partnership with Cumbria County Council and other agencies.

John Short reported that two people, Liz Easton and Phyllis Tweedale, had both joined Tenants' Committee.

Min 309b: Discussion took place over the use of the resource centre for staff training on the finance system because of the availability of terminals. Joan Chadwick replied that Margaret Pritchard had sent out an email to all Tenants' Committee members saying that Tenants Committee would move to another venue on that date.

521 RESULTS OF MOCK INSPECTION

The Chief Executive said that the mock inspection had been a useful process, and together with our own self assessment had identified areas for improvement that needed to be addressed urgently.

SLH had a priority to involve tenants in all the key decisions and tenants representatives are fully involved at every level of the business. However we need to more fully address the requirement for more diverse participation. With the review of the district wide compact on going at the moment now was the time to engage more widely.

With regard to Equality & Diversity this required much more development and a stronger emphasis to raise the bar to the current 2 star standard. By appointing an 'E & D' champion for the Board was a good step towards attaining this objective.

Another key area for improvement is the responsive repairs service. Even though the service had been through market testing, there was still a need to increase productivity and service standards and the pace of change had to be accelerated.

The Chief Executive added that service development had been inhibited by the lack of resources within the HRA, especially for the development of ICT systems which remains a weakness at the present time. There are prospects for improvement however, as this year has seen progress. Comparisons with other organisations unit management costs have shown that stock transfer RSL's average £940, other RSL's £1042 and amongst ALMO's SLH has one of the lowest fee incomes at £590 per unit. This has created capacity issues which are only now being addressed.

The Chief Executive explained that all social landlords successful in inspection have engaged consultancy support as 'critical friends' to help ensure that compliance with KLOE's can be attained. Discussions have begun with an experienced Audit Commission associate inspector who was highly recommended by another ALMO who lifted the bar to 3 stars.

Gwen Murfin expressed concern that SLH had formally highly regarded in its approach to tenant participation and asked what had changed?

The Director of Operations replied that Marianne Hood, Independent Tenant Adviser,

had advised that there were inevitably ups and downs in tenant involvement. The Chief Executive added that SLH has tenant involvement as its core value and would ensure that tenant involvement would be more broadly embedded in its approach.

ACTION

At this point Alison Kinnon, Housing Manager was introduced to the Directors and spoke about the ways that tenant participation would be embedded throughout the whole business. Tenants were being asked to join in but to stipulate at what level and how they were to be involved. With regard to equality and diversity it was planned to ensure that the group was representative of all residents.

A recommendation from HQN was that the Board should appoint a 'champion for tenant involvement. It was advocated that Gwen Murfin with her experience in tenant activism may wish to undertake this role and she accepted.

GM

David Vatcher added that 'village voices' were an important asset and the remoteness of council properties spread geographically was important to remember.

Christine Chadwick questioned the 'uncertain prospects' results of the mock inspection and the Chief Executive replied that this was due partly to the absence of key personnel including Senior Managers and the lack of readily available documentary information during the brief on site part of the HQN visit. Additionally impact of the pilot phases on decent homes which resulted in low levels of satisfaction and problems with communication affected our performance track record. Satisfaction has now greatly improved and it was proposed to evidence change through a further survey later on in the year. There needs to be a drive on improving performance across the whole business.

Christine Chadwick wanted to know what the key 'showstoppers' were. The Chief Executive advised that these would be identified within the new Business Plan priorities for each service area currently under consideration which would include the enhancement of tenant involvement and performance improvement.

The Vice Chair commented that 'we took our eye off the ball', and as like tenant involvement when it was going well, it was left alone and we now had the opportunity to re-ignite the flame and commended management team for giving an honest appraisal. There was a need to re-energise the company with new 'blood' into the business via external support. New skills were needed from external individuals.

The Vice Chair suggested that the Board see how SLH is improving on such things as repairs, tenant involvement, and equality and diversity on a couple of sides of A4.

Ron Pritchard added that a lot of time was wasted with going through the contract process but there was room for change and improvement with regard to repairs that progress is being made on, ie PDA's.

Robin Brown commented on his disappointment but now that the challenge had been thrown down, Board Directors needed to move very quickly in supporting SLH and that tasks could be split. The Chair added that there might be a few focus group meetings and emails could be sent with progress updates.

PT

The Chief Executive reported that from now until inspection there would be progress review meetings each Monday to tackle the action plan. Priorities would be reviewed with stakeholders through workshops and taken to the stakeholder conference.

Graham Donning commented with regard to slippage that an oven had failed PAT testing at Fell Close communal lounge and apparently other ovens had failed in sheltered housing. The Director of Operations would investigate this matter to Graham.

DS

ACTION

Peter Thompson questioned the financial implications and the Chief Executive replied that these were very provisional estimates, there may well be a more radical approach and these more detailed resources would be brought to the next board meeting. There was no option but to be successful and SLDC were very supportive and would be able to inject any necessary practical support.

PT

RESOLVED:- That the Board delegate the Chief Executive with the authority to go ahead with the proposed expenditure highlighted in the report.

PT

: -That Directors utilise a quorum to approve any urgent decisions, via email and special meetings

: -That the Board approve the draft delivery Plan which had been despatched prior to the Board.

522 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Strategy & Performance Manager gave a presentation on Performance Management Framework and explained that by bringing this together in one document it would provide a model for how both external and internal factors shape the way SLH operate, which included the role of scrutiny and challenge, which governed performance monitoring. David Vatcher asked if this challenge could be used through tenants complaints and Helen Lawler replied that this was so, if we had a policy about complaints, do our procedures match up? There is a constant cross-referencing which is what embedding was all about.

Helen Lawler then explained that the plan had been done in excel so that items could be filtered to provide information in a more accessible way and for different purposes. It was a cheap in-house system and it was appropriate to our needs.

Robin Brown questioned the percentage in the end column and was told that this percentage had to be agreed with the Line Manager and any dates that were to be moved were done with the approval of the Management team and from team meetings.

Christine Chadwick commented that the 6 monthly 1-2-1's for staff was too long a period and that repairs should have productivity targets which would be different for each trade. The Chief Executive agreed with the criticism and said this would be changed.

The Vice Chair said that this performance management framework was about deliverability and culture of performance and not to get 'lost' in it.

The Chief Executive commented that the key was about driving performance management all levels of business and focusing on the most important outcome for tenants.

RESOLVED:- That the Board approve the new performance management framework 2007-08 subject to amendments on 1-2-1's
 -That the Board approve the new Delivery Plan performance reporting system
 -That the Board approve the delivery Plan 2007-08

523 CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT

RESOLVED:- That the Board note progress

524 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS TO JUNE 2007

ACTION

The Treasury Manager explained the position regarding the accounts at period 3 and explained the way in which the projections are made.

Robin Brown asked if the Board could rely on the overspend projections, and the Treasury Manager replied that at the end of period 3 it was too early to identify trends especially with the change in business priorities following the mock inspection.

Christine Chadwick asked about reporting from the new financial system and the Treasury Manager explained that information from Sun Accounts would be more comprehensive and that the Board would be asked to decide the format and detail of financial reports nearer the go live date.

David Vatcher asked about the end column figures which did take into account seasonality at the end of the financial year.

The Director of Operations explained that there was low spending at the beginning of the year due to preparation of work.

Robin Brown queried the projected overspend on stores and asked for more detail on stores and other budgets to be taken to the Finance & Procurement committee on 10 th September 2007.

GR

RESOLVED:- That the Board note the financial position at this time.

525 POLICY REVIEW: DOMESTIC VIOLENE POLICY, RACIAL HARASSMENT POLICY AND HATE CRIME POLICY

John Short enquired if the complaints policy had been updated. The Director of Operations replied that the Business Support Manager was on leave but had updated the complaints policy.

SAB

RESOLVED:- That the Board accept the recommendation of the Policy Committee and adopts the new Domestic Violence Policy, Racial Harassment Policy and Hate Crime Policy.

526 HR COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED:- That the minutes be accepted.

527 POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED:- That the minutes be accepted.

528 RETIREMENT/ELECTION OF BOARD DIRECTORS, CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

The Business Support Manager had sent out a late report which detailed the retirement/election of Directors. David Vatcher said he was happy to stand down and be re-elected and Peter Thompson said he was happy to retire and stand for re-election.

RESOLVED:- That the next AGM be held on 4th October at 5:00 pm to enable time for the advertisement and selection of a Tenant Board Director.
:- One Council and Independent Board director should retire at the next AGM
:- Peter Bland, Tenant Board Director should retire and stand for election at the AGM

529 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ACTION

Gwen Murfin said that Liz Easton, new Tenants' Committee member had been involved in a car accident and that Paul Jones had come out of hospital today and the Board wished him a speedy recovery.

Gwen Murfin requested that councillor payslips be sent with other postal items instead of separately.

CAT

Ron Pritchard spoke about SLH not having an asbestos register which could cost £30K with IT and manpower and asked if SLDC should contribute towards the cost. The Director of Operations said that SLDC have a register and NPS have the job of keeping the register up to date, which can be accessed from the website. Through SLH's own survey work a number of items of asbestos in properties have been picked up and NPS have been informed.

David Vatcher asked about the asbestos removal at Beck Nook referred to in the contract monitoring report and asked why if it didn't represent danger was not left. The Director of Operations said that it was a contingency budget and possibly might not be removed but sealed in.

The Chair asked Directors for a suitable date for the board/tenants workshop to review business plan priorities and options. A date of **20th September at 2pm** was agreed. Venue to be arranged.

PT
CAT

530 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 4th October 2007 at Little Aynam House, Kendal.