

**Minutes of Meeting held at 5:15 pm 27 April 2006 at Little Aynam House, Kendal**

- Present: John Stanton – Chair  
 Mary Dowling – Vice Chair  
 Ian Metcalfe  
 Ron Pritchard  
 John Short  
 David Vatcher  
 Robin Brown  
 Peter Thompson  
 Joan Chadwick  
 Gwen Murfin  
 Kathy Sykes – (Observer) Tenants' Committee
- Officers: David Stubbs  
 Garry Ronson  
 Sue Boulton  
 Trevor Woodward  
 Peter Thomas
- Apologies: Chris Jones  
 Charles Batteson

NO	<u>TITLE OF MINUTE</u>	ACTION
	<p>Ian Metcalfe announced to the Board that he was retiring from all duties. The Chair thanked Ian on behalf of the Board, South Lakes Housing and SLDC for all his hard work over the past years.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Kathy Sykes as an observer to the Board.</p>	
<b>0370</b>	<b>MINUTES OF LAST MEETING</b>	
	The minutes were accepted as a true record of the proceedings.	
<b>0371</b>	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>	
	<p>Minute 355 - Robin Brown ,asked about how the negotiated terms with NPS were progressing. The Chief Executive replied that, despite reminders, NPS had still not submitted their final proposals.</p> <p>RESOLVED:- That the Chief Executive report on the terms agreed with NPS to the next Board meeting.</p>	PT
	<p>Minute 362 – Ron Pritchard asked if there were any further outcomes from the Cumbria Housing Partners meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. The Head of Finance replied that SLH are committed only to the production of a business plan which will be grant aided.</p>	PT
	<p>Minute 367 – The Councillors commented that there was no change with regard to the matter of SLH Councillor Directors having to leave the Council</p>	

Minute 343 - A question of the likely timescale of the allocations training session was raised. Helen Lawler proposed the training date to be Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May in the morning.

### **0372 REPORTS FROM TENANTS' COMMITTEE**

John Short added that the allocations training session would be useful but still wanted to know why there was a big discrepancy between SLDC/SLH figures? Head of Housing Services replied that a meeting was to be arranged between SLDC and SLH Housing Officers and was still confident that SLH figures were correct.

### **0373 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Chair asked if there were any queries or issues. Peter Thompson queried BVPI 16a – 'Percentage of employees declaring that they meet DDA (1995) Act'. The Business Support Manager explained that this was the specific wording, which we are required to put on all job application forms.

RESOLVED:- That the report be accepted.

### **0374 DECENT HOMES PROGRAMME**

Helen Lawler spoke about the format of this draft report which was to try and give an overall impression on the progress. This report would be going to SLDC and stakeholders who would be asked for their feedback on the format. Helen Lawler said that in the next report there would be a list of the Key Performance Indicators that are used for contract monitoring purposes. The Vice Chair queried the scale of the customer satisfaction survey to which the answer was 20 questionnaires returned. The Chief Executive commented that a huge amount of progress has been made in the delivery of the programme but that there was significant scope for the improvement of customer satisfaction. Bramalls had acknowledged that improvements were required and a number of remedial measures were being introduced. SLH have now been able to appoint the vacant surveyor posts and increase the level of on-site supervision.

Gwen Murfin spoke about the worrying aspect of the knock on effects from bad reports about Bramalls on the 3 main estates, but John Short said that at the past recent 3 meetings for the future estates to be modernised he had attended, there was big improvement by Bramalls Resident Liaison Officers and was hopeful of a big improvement.

Ron Pritchard spoke about the difficulties of Health & Safety for Bramalls as they did not have a permanent site and there are limitations on the steps they can take to protect their cabin sites

Peter Thompson asked if the specification had been reduced in order to achieve £500K savings and suggested some sort of change control. John Short who is on the Task team responsible for specifications, said that only once had a change in specification been proposed and Bramalls refused to compromise standards.

The Vice Chair suggested that the Board meet Bramalls to convey a positive message in support of the high standards that the company are striving for.

RESOLVED:- To arrange a meeting between the Board and Bramall representatives.

PT

RESOLVED:- That the Decent Homes Programme report be noted and that future reports should contain more detail on customer satisfaction levels.

**0375 DELIVERY PLAN**

David Vatcher and the Vice Chair commented that a substantial number of tasks identified in the 2005/06 Delivery Plan had been carried forward into the next financial year. Was this due to the plan being too ambitious? The Vice Chair commented that as the report was on going it needed to constantly reviewed and have a sharper focus so that SLH was on top of the main priorities.

The Chief Executive explained that the 2005/06 progress report had been highly simplified and no longer identified the main priorities or the percentage of each task completed. As reported the company has focussed a lot of resources on making a start on the Decent Homes programme and the resources required were higher than anticipated. Nevertheless the main Delivery Plan priorities had been achieved and substantive progress had been made on many of the tasks although these may not have reached completion. For example The Business Support Manager said that staffing structure would be completed by the end of next week and the IT tasks had since been completed since the Delivery Plan has been printed. Robin Brown added that he should like to see target dates for all tasks carried forward and the Chief Executive advised Directors that this would be incorporated into the newly formatted plan which will be submitted to the next Board meeting.

RESOLVED:- That progress be noted and a new, re-formatted progress report on the Delivery Plan be submitted to the next Board.

**0376 COMPLAINTS**

Ron Pritchard asked as there were 13 response repairs complaints what sort of complaints they were to which the Business Support Manager replied they were mainly about damp, the length of time of gas connections (to which Trevor Woodward added it was totally out of SLH's control the amount of time for a gas connection) and tenants wanting new kitchens before the Decent Homes programme had been implemented.

The Head of Housing Services added that to put things in perspective 10,000 orders had been raised over the past year so 13 complaints was a very low proportion of the total.

Gwen Murfin suggested that MP's letters are filed separately and David Vatcher added that the statistics should be kept separately.

RESOLVED:- That the report be noted.

**0377 CASHIER CLOSURE – EFFECT ON RENT ARREARS**

Head of Housing Services was pleased to report that since February three quarters of the shortfall in rent collected during that month had been made up in March. The swipe card had turned out to be a great success and is now one of the most popular methods of payment.

David Vatcher commented about the decline in door to door rent collection from 12.4% to 6.8%. Head of Housing Services replied that there had been a decline over a number of years as alternative payment methods had been introduced. The Chief Executive added that the Inspectors thought the rent collection was an excellent service for rural areas, not only dealing with rent collection but repairs, housing and estate management, which task had been assimilated into Housing

Officer's duties.

The Vice Chair added that it was pleasing to see a huge turnaround and congratulated staff in achieving this.

**ACTION**

RESOLVED:- That the report be noted.

**0378 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS – PERIOD 11**

The Head of Finance introduced the accounts for Period 11 and stated that the Finance Team were now heavily involved in the year end process. The accounts presented showed a saving against the Management Fee and overspends as previously reported in revenue repairs. The year end outturn is much sooner this year than last so the final figures will be the next set of finance returns that will be brought to the Board.

RESOLVED:- That progress be noted.

**0379 MANAGEMENT FEE AND BUDGETS 2006-07**

Head of Finance spoke about how some savings could be achieved through the efficiency review and fees could be charged against the Decent Homes programme which should enable SLH to live within the budget. Head of Finance added that no money had been allocated for investment for Choice Based Lettings and investment in IT, however the steps taken by SLH should enable the fee agreed to be sufficient for normal operations. The Council has made a commitment to properly reflect the cost of repairs and the budget received for Revenue Repairs are substantial increases on previous years.

The Vice Chair expressed concern about the there being less money than last year overall and spoke of the need for crucial investment in IT and asked if there was any further money available from SLDC. Robin Brown replied that there was no growth in the SLDC budget.

The Chief Executive summed up by saying that the additional income for repairs services and the fees from the DHP will compensate the company to a large degree for the net reduction in supervision and management fees. In order to achieve investment the company would be challenged to identify further efficiencies.

RESOLVED:- That the Directors approve the budgets and Management Fee as set out in the report.

**0380 CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT FOR REVENUE AND CAPITAL PLANNED MAINTENANCE**

RESOLVED:- That the report be noted.

**0381 ECONOMIC REGENERATION TRAINING INITIATIVE**

The Strategy and New Initiatives Co-ordinator spoke about the training programme and how it was a real benefit to the local economy and left something for the future once the Decent Homes programme had finished. Barrow Training Partnership was a new innovative company that offered much more flexible training than usual and training had now been completed for eight trainees in plastering.

The Vice Chair commented that this wasn't to be a one off and needed to have the partnership grow and develop and perhaps other skills be used i.e. plumbers.

The Chief Executive spoke about the need for a vision for the future and corporate

strategy to support sustainable communities. There was potential here to look at some activities SLDC carry out.

**ACTION**

Garry Ronson talked about the possible option to become a training intermediary to provide people with the skills to re-enter employment.

Head of Housing added that our Performance Officer was looking for funding and sourcing out grants to move training and development forward.

RESOLVED:- That the Board noted the successful outcome of the training initiative.

**0382 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair informed the Board that John Stewart had resigned from the Finance and Procurement Committee due to increased work commitments.

Ron Pritchard asked if Bramalls were doing void properties and Head of Property Services replied that this was being done by the response team and Bramalls were being charged for the out of hours cover.

John Short questioned the lack of attendance of Charles Batteson. The Chair to report to the next meeting.

JS

Joan Chadwick asked for the distinction between the area panels environmental budget and DHP regeneration to be stressed at area panels.

DS

**0383 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

8<sup>th</sup> June at 5:15 pm at Fell Close, Ulverston.

Meeting closed at 19:25