

Minutes of Meeting held 25 August 2005 at Little Aynam House, Kendal

Present: John Stanton – Chair
Joan Chadwick – Vice Chair
Ian Metcalfe
Ron Pritchard
John Short
Gwen Murfin
Mary Dowling
Chris Jones
David Vatcher
Robin Brown

South Mike Jones
Lakeland Jack Jones
District Council Peter Ridgway
Debbie Storr

Officers: Peter Thomas
Trevor Woodward
Helen Lawler
Judith Mitchell
David Stubbs
Sue Mallinson

Apologies: Charles Batteson
Peter Thompson
Garry Ronson
Sue Boulton

NO	<u>TITLE OF MINUTE</u>	ACTION
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0290	BRIEFING FROM SLDC	
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Decent Homes Contract

Mike Jones explained that the ultimate responsibility for the housing stock and tenants rested with the Council. However, the Council's view was that SLH should have the freedom to manage. He summarised the way the Council had had to respond to the defective tendering process following legal advice.

Mary Dowling asked what lessons had been learned from recent events. Mike Jones' view was that the Council should have spoken earlier with SLH and taken more advice. On SLH's part, he felt that haste to drive forward the programme should be tempered with more reflection and risk assessment.

John Stanton commented on the difficulties experienced by officers and by the Board and Tenants' Committee as a result of being shut out of the process.

Reassurances were provided that the contractor feels confident that the programme

can still be delivered on time.

ACTION

The HRA Account

Jack Jones explained that the closure of accounts by SLDC for the year 2004-5 had shown an overspend of £1/2M. This was caused by actual income falling below estimated income; secondly by a lack of clarity over responsibility between SLDC and SLH. More important was that during the year the account went into deficit which should never happen.

Urgent action is now required to review spending. This is required by law. The target is to work together to find £427K this year. This would put the HRA back into the black by £1/4M by the end of 2005-6. Expectations are for income to increase; it will also be possible to charge some administration costs to the Decent Homes Programme as long as these are justifiable. Peter Thomas commented that the Business Plan has always made clear that there would be this dependency on the Decent Homes Programme. Jack Jones said that although there was no direct impact on the Management Fee there may be a need to "share the pain".

Future Relationships

Peter Ridgeway explained the effects of the recent Council restructuring. Many disparate Council services have been brought together under Customer Services. There is a need to build a better partnership with SLH and with South Lakeland Leisure. A new model of governance is required which will have a proper contract relationship, clearer lines of communication and give a better mechanism for monitoring. This process will begin this autumn.

Mary Dowling welcomed this and the attendance by SLDC officers at the Board meeting. She proposed that such communication was repeated and formalised.

0292 NEW DIRECTORS

John Stanton welcomed Robin Brown and David Vatcher who have now been formally appointed to serve as Directors on the Board.

0293 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting were accepted as a true record of the proceedings.

0294 MATTERS ARISING

Minute 0279: more information was requested about the responsibilities of the Project Board.

RESOLVED: - that details of the role and responsibilities of the Project Board be circulated after its first meeting on 1 September 2005.

HL

Minute 0277 Grounds Maintenance: John Short asked if there had been any progress with Continental Landscapes. Robin Brown reported that there is no current contract with Continental Landscapes.

RESOLVED:- that the contractual position be investigated and reported on to the next Board meeting.

DS

Part 2 Items. Gwen Murfin asked about the procedure for keeping/circulating minutes of confidential items.

RESOLVED: that the minutes would record that a Part 2 item had been discussed.

Detailed minutes of Part 2 items would be circulated to Board Directors and returned by them. A file would be kept by the Chief Executive.

ACTION

HL

0295 REPORT FROM TENANTS' COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Tenants' Committee held on 18 August 2005 have been given to the Board. There were no special reports arising.

John Short reported that a visit has been arranged for tenants to visit Bramall's work in Warrington.

0296 PERFORMANCE REPORT

David Stubbs reported that there were no major variances. Some good news to note is that, for the first time ever, urgent repairs completed within Government time limits have reached our challenging target which puts SLH in the top quartile.

Robin Brown queried the number of ASB cases. David Stubbs reported that these were similar to last year and not expected to rise. He also drew the Board's attention to the Anti-social Behaviour Forum to be held on 29 September 2005 which Directors were welcome to attend.

RESOLVED:- that the significant achievements in performance be noted.

0297 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

The financial accounts for period 3 were presented and the current underspend noted.

RESOLVED:- that the contents of the report be noted.

0298 LEASEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Sue Mallinson outlined progress with leaseholder management which was sufficient to meet the Audit Commission criticisms.

RESOLVED:- that the Board note the contents of the report.

0299 BOARD REMUNERATION

The view of the meeting was that this matter was overshadowed by the need to balance the HRA as reported earlier by Jack Jones. Mary Dowling commented that the Board should take a longer view and decide on its future policy, bearing in mind the need to widen out Board membership to be more representative of the community.

Robin Brown confirmed that Council Directors have their expenses paid by SLDC.

RESOLVED:- that at this time the Board should not consider further the issue of Board remuneration

- that this matter should be looked at further by the Policy Committee in conjunction with issues on how Directors are replaced.

CJ

0300 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Directors were asked whether they wished to continue to serve on their current Committees. Nominations were requested to fill the vacancies following the resignations of Sonya Lawson and Roger Bingham.

ACTION

RESOLVED:- that David Vatcher serve on the Policy Committee; Robin Brown on the Finance Committee; that the vacancy on the HR Committee remain unfilled for the time being.

DV/RB

0301 DELIVERY PLAN

Progress against the Delivery Plan Summary was noted. Peter Thomas explained how SLH is attempting to rationalise service delivery which is linked to long-term survival.

RESOLVED:- that the Board note the contents of the report.

0302 CONTRACT MONITORING

Peter Thomas reported that a good start had been made with Bramall Construction who were proving to be very willing to engage. It is expected that there will be intensive activity at the “front-end” with the priority being to get the programme out and costed.

RESOLVED: - that the Board note the contents of the report.

0303 HR COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:- that the minutes of the meeting be accepted.

0304 POLICY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:- that the minutes of the meeting be accepted
- that the Leaseholder Management Policy be adopted

0305 CHIEF EXECUTIVES OBJECTIVES

RESOLVED: - that the objectives circulated be adopted.

0306 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

RESOLVED: that the Chief Executive shall provide a short report to the next meeting on the Decent Homes issue giving an account of the problems, lessons learnt and proposals to improve.

PT

0307 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6 October at 5:15 pm at Little Aynam House.