



Minutes of Meeting held at 5:15 pm 9 March 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
- Officers: David Stubbs
Garry Ronson
Sue Boulton
Trevor Woodward
- Apologies: Chris Jones
Gwen Murfin
Charles Batteson
Peter Thomas
Kathy Sykes – (Observer) Tenants' Committee

| NO | <u>TITLE OF MINUTE</u> | ACTION |
|------|---|--------|
| 0357 | MINUTES OF LAST MEETING | |
| | The minutes were accepted as a true record of the proceedings. | |
| 0358 | MATTERS ARISING | |
| | Minute 343 - Robin Brown asked what the likely timescale of the training session was to be with regard to the issue of allocations. The Head of Housing Services replied it was imminent and the policy would be discussed later in the Agenda. | |
| | Minute 355 - Robin Brown also asked about how the negotiated terms with NPS were progressing. The Head of Housing Services replied that since the initial meeting SLH were still awaiting firm proposals. | |
| | RESOLVED:- That the Chair checks progress with the Chief Executive next week on this matter. | JS/PT |
| 0359 | REPORTS FROM TENANTS' COMMITTEE | |
| | John Short asked for clarification of the funding for Choice Based Lettings and the Head of Housing Services explained that the scheme could proceed without a successful capital bid but would not take the form of a fully integrated web based system. | |

John Short also expressed Tenants' Committee concern of the impact on tenants with regard to the Allocations/Homeless Policy. Head of Housing Services replied that the Council had taken a decision to grant 10 more points for homelessness but this would only apply until a Choice Based Lettings scheme is introduced. The government target of 50 % of allocations to the homeless is being exceeded at present but choice based lettings may redress the balance somewhat.

0360 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Housing Services asked for any comments on the new quarterly performance report pointing out that it was a work in progress and that some indicators may drop out and some may be added in. Directors were happy with the new format and said that the direction of arrows indicating trends were a welcome addition.

RESOLVED:- That the new layout and coloured format of the report be accepted and to note performance for quarter 3 2005/06.

0361 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS PERIOD 10

The Head of Financial Services asked Directors to note the financial position of SLH and note the deficit; he added that he was more optimistic about the forthcoming year.

Ron Pritchard asked if the staff loss had made it more difficult for the remaining staff or had SLH been overstaffed in the past. Head of Financial Services replied there had been a short-term impact on service delivery but now SLH was in the position of advertising for two posts.

The Business Support Manager added that they were recruiting a Maintenance Surveyor for the Decent Homes Programme and also Responsive Repairs which had been advertised internally with no suitable applicants and which would be advertised in the Westmorland Gazette tomorrow. These posts had been previously frozen for 12 and 6 months respectively.

Joan Chadwick commended Head of Financial Services for not using the overdraft facility and the Vice Chair questioned the cash flow situation. Head of Financial Services said there was sufficient day to day monies to continue our services until the year end and the only creditor was SLDC.

John Short asked about the £20M Decent Homes Programme money and asked if the 13.5% fees for to fund SLH and SLDC support staff had been used. Head of Financial Services replied there was a potential of £2M and it was being used where we could properly validate this expenditure, eg Head of Property Services said that a Maintenance Surveyor's post was funded directly out of this fund.

Robin Brown suggested that the advertising should be spread further to attract ethnic minorities and the Business Support Manager agreed that this would be looked at should there be no response to the local advertising.

RESOLVED:- That the financial position and actions undertaken by the company be noted.

0362 CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS

Head of Financial Services stated that it was the stage of negotiations, where the respective partners had to approach their Boards and receive approval for the next stage of the consortium development. The time had arrived whereby the partners had to decide whether to go ahead with the partnership. The partners had been

asked to sign up in principle with the proposal to form a Cumbrian Procurement Consortium, and to affiliate with GM Procure to achieve purchasing savings.

Peter Thompson commented that it was a complex arrangement with a lot of RSLs who all had different aims and aspirations and questioned how successful it was going to be to plug into the GM procure.

The Cumbria Housing Partners (CHP) was a procurement vehicle for material purchases. Contracts were being negotiated with a view to starting in the summer of 2006. The wider reach of the group is to influence and contribute to county labour markets, but materials purchasing was the starting point for future progression. The aspiration is that it becomes more of a buyer for materials for repairs expenditure whilst establishing itself, but would expand to contractors/installers.

The Head of Financial Services said £5K had been spent on the feasibility study, but additional funding would be needed from all the partners to employ a Project Manager for 12-18 months.

Ron Pritchard asked if there was a 'drop out' clause and it would it cost to drop out. Head of Finance stated that SLH could still opt out if it felt uncomfortable, but that there are expected to be longer term benefits for SLH should the Board decide to pursue the consortium. There was a further Steering Group meeting of the consortium at Eden Housing to consider all these things on 23rd March.

RESOLVED:- It was agreed to consider the feasibility report at the next Finance & Procurement Committee meeting.

0363**POLICY REVIEW: COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL, ALLOCATIONS/LETTINGS POLICY, HOMEQUEST**

The Head of Housing Services stated that responsibility for the Allocations Policy remained with the Council. SLH would therefore need to have any draft Choice Based Lettings scheme approved by the Council before it could be implemented. The Vice Chair asked who were being consulted and Head of Housing Services replied that consultation would include SLDC, Stakeholder Task Groups, local RSL's and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Demand for accommodation far exceeds the supply of housing. CBL is not guaranteed to solve the allocation problem but may bring the rate of allocations closer to the government target of 50% to the homeless.

The Vice Chair asked if it would improve choice and would it raise expectations for those on the waiting list? The Head of Housing Services replied that there were on average 250 relets in a year and there approximately 3200 people on the waiting list, who would be banded according to need. Any restrictions on bands able to bid for a dwelling would be clearly stated on the advert. Should there be more than one bidder from the highest band for a dwelling, time on the list would be the deciding factor.

RESOLVED:- That the Board adopt the Communications Protocol as part of the wider Communications strategy

RESOLVED:- That the Allocations/Lettings policy and 'Homequest' scheme be agreed as a consultation document and considered within the wider context

0364 DELIVERY PLAN – SUMMARY AND PROGRESS REPORT

ACTION

Robin Brown questioned the progress of IT in the Delivery Plan. The Business Support Manager reported that steps were being taken to improve the effectiveness of IT systems including the Citrix server being migrated, the Evolution accountancy system transferring to Little Aynam House.

RESOLVED:- That progress be noted against the Delivery Plan.

0365 CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT FOR REVENUE AND CAPITAL PLANNED MAINTENANCE

Robin Brown questioned the difference between the budget and contract sum such as the Birthwaite lift refurbishment where there was a difference of almost £15K. Head of Property Services explained that in this case there were DDA regulations to comply to but when it came down to the actual job there was as not as much work to do as first thought.

Ron Pritchard stated that there was a problem with fencing in Ulverston and Head of Property Services replied that there would be money in the Decent Homes Programme to accommodate fencing.

Head of Property Services was then questioned about the budget of condemned boilers as there was an overspend on boilers. Now a lot of condemned boilers were being picked up by the DHP and a stranding process was in place to replace boilers over 15 years old in all areas. This will have impact on next years budget.

RESOLVED:- That progress be noted.

0366 HR COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED:- That the minutes be accepted.

0367 POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES

MINUTE 0054 - John Short re-iterated that the website needs to be more user friendly.

It was suggested that John Short contact Angela Halliwell or Amy Duncumb with any amendments/suggestions/photos. JS/AD/AH

MINUTE 0054 – The Vice Chair asked if the matter of SLH Board Directors having to leave the Council Chamber could be moved forward. Robin Brown replied it was not possible at the moment, but was under review.

RESOLVED:- That the minutes be accepted.

0368 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Directors needed for Panels with regards to staffing issues

The make up of the following panels were agreed as shown below.

Appeals Panel

**Robin Brown
Joan Chadwick
Ron Pritchard**

Remuneration Panel –
(Meeting arranged for 5:00 pm 16th March)

Chair
Vice Chair
John Short
David Vatcher

Interview Panel for 2 Directors posts

Chair
Vice Chair
Robin Brown
External expert

Matters Arising from Part II minutes

RESOLVED:- That the minutes be accepted.

Ron Pritchard congratulated SLH staff on the Procurement strategy document which was commended in the 96 page report from the Audit Commission

0369 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27th April at 5:15 pm at Little Aynam House

Meeting closed at 18:55