

BOARD MEETING

Minutes of Board Meeting held at 5:15 pm 27th May 2010, Georgian Room, Kendal Town Hall, Kendal

Present:	Mary Dowling (Chairman) John Short (Vice Chairman) Peter Bland Peter Thompson David Vatcher Joan Chadwick Charles Howarth Christine Chadwick Sheila Meades Peter Woof John Stanton Frank Hodson
Officers:	Peter Thomas David Stubbs Sue Boulton Jacqui Blenkinship John Mansergh
Guests	Councillor Peter Thornton – Portfolio Holder Keith Finch – Tribal John Sykes – Project Manager, Stock Options (Part) David Sykes - Assistant Director (Community Investment & development (Part)
Apologies:	Robin Brown

NO	<u>TITLE OF MINUTE</u>	ACTION
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The Chairman commenced the meeting by welcoming Peter Thornton as the new Portfolio Holder, Keith Finch from Tribal and John Sykes, Housing Options Project Manager.

Keith Finch then gave a 45 minute presentation on the outcomes emerging from the financial modelling over a 30 year time horizon that has taken place as part of Stock Options Study . Keith outlined the four options that had been tested :

- (1) Stay in the current HRA system
- (2) Return management of the housing stock to SLDC within the current HRA system
- (3) The impact of the proposed HRA self-financing model
- (4) Stock Transfer

The conclusions from Keith's presentation were that

- (1) Stock retention under the current subsidy system is not sustainable as significant revenue savings are needed and capital resources are insufficient.
- (2) In –house management could provide some savings to improve the revenue position but there would be no real improvement in capital investment
- (3) Self-financing improves the situation significantly. The viability of the HRA

would be secured and there could be significantly more capital investment but there was considerable uncertainty about this approach as it is still a proposal under consultation. **ACTION**

(4) The future of stock transfer is uncertain but it would deliver the required investment and there may be a window of opportunity before self financing is introduced subject to tenant support and a manageable General Fund impact.

Board members and Peter Thornton asked a series of questions including, the size of any VAT shelter that might arise; how interest rates on borrowings were calculated and at what interest rate any of the project options become less viable; the need and ability to repay borrowings and the reliability of the valuation figure of £16;5m in total (£5,157 per property). Keith Finch responded fully to these questions.

The Chairman thanked Keith Finch for his presentation and added that the Project Board with SLDC, SLH, Tenant and Staff representatives was moving forward with its work and would shortly make a recommendation to SLDC on the most viable option from the project. The Chairman said that it was important that SLH Board members kept in touch with the main issues emerging from the project and if additional briefing was required this would be provided on request. Copies of this presentation would be emailed out to Board Directors. **CAT**

David Sykes, John Sykes and Keith Finch then left the meeting.

890 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Minute 880 – Frank Hodson pointed out the misspelling of his surname.

Subject to this amendment the minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

891 MATTERS ARISING

The Board noted the Action Proforma on matters arising from the last Board meeting. The following matters were highlighted:

Minute 875 – The Chairman highlighted that a report on ‘under- occupancy’ issues would be brought to a future Board meeting

Minute 880 – Christine Chadwick confirmed that she would let the Business Support Manager have any amendments to her training record **CC**

Minute 882 – An update on securing grant funding for energy efficient projects was to be presented to the Board but as funding had been cut Jacqui Blenkinship would keep the Board informed **JB**

Minute 883 – Peter Bland confirmed that Fiona Harrison Senior Housing Officer had sent a letter to Councillor Hall and that this matter would be raised at the next Grant Approval Panel (GAP) meeting. **PB**

892 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

SLDC Changes

The Chief Executive welcomed Peter Thornton as Housing and Development Portfolio Holder to the meeting and paid tribute to Brenda Gray for all her hard work.

This week SLDC designated Lawrence Conway as Acting Chief Executive after accepting Peter Ridgway's retirement effective from 31st May.

New Government Policy

The new government has pledged to remove house building targets and there would be an emphasis on bringing empty homes back into use.

SLH Maintenance Review

An internal review of the SLH Maintenance service commenced this month with John Mansergh as Project Manager and it was hoped the study would be concluded by September 2010 when the outcomes and resultant action plan would be brought back to the Board.

Swift response to power failure

The Chief Executive reported that the maintenance and housing team had put in a tremendous effort in sorting out a variety of problems that affected tenants at Binfold Croft and adjacent properties in Kirkby Lonsdale after a power surge.

School Knott Development

Jacqui Blenkinship and Fiona Harrison attended the Windermere Town Council evening meeting held on 24th May to inform members of the progress in relation to the proposed changes to School Knott.

RESOLVED: That the Board agreed to note the Chief Executive's Report.

893 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman summarised the outcomes of the 1:1 meetings with Directors and circulated a written note for information. The Chairman confirmed that the Board Away Day was taking place on 11th June at Kendal College. The programme was being finalised to be emailed shortly.

PT/SAB

John Short said that maps of where SLH properties are located would be very useful especially now the Housing Stock Options study was being undertaken. Jacqui Blenkinship commented that these maps were held by NPS but there would be a cost in producing them.

RESOLVED:- That the Board note the Chairman's report and recommended that the Chief Executive and his team ensure that any outstanding issues from the 1:1 report are followed up particularly the issue of providing updated maps/details to Board members on property locations.

SMT

894 YEAR END REPORT – 2009/10 DELIVERY PLAN, PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND DECENT HOMESDelivery Plan

The Chief Executive reported that he was very satisfied with the level of achievement in respect to the Delivery Plan which had been attained throughout the year.

The Director of Operations reported that the production of in house energy performance certificates for all voids would be submitted within the next fortnight.

The annual survey of sheltered housing tenants had now been completed and John Short reported that comments from the Sheltered Service Improvement Group had recommended that in future a biennial sheltered survey should be undertaken as an annual survey was felt to be too frequent and did not produce a large response.

Sheila Meades asked about the options for improving the existing accommodation at Ulverston Town Hall. The Chief Executive replied that this had been a big issue in the Audit Commission inspection but SLDC were now moving forward with the refurbishment of the town hall which should be completed by September.

Christine Chadwick asked if the Procurement Policy was still under review and the Chief Executive commented that this issue was ongoing.

The Chairman asked if the Delivery Plan was challenging enough and the Chief Executive replied that with a lot of the focus on stock options the Delivery Plan was balanced at the right level. The Chairman commented that the Board were interested in the outcomes and the differences the delivery plan tasks had made and requested that such a commentary be included in the review of the next annual Delivery Plan.

PT

Decent Homes

The Chief Executive reported that a lot had been learnt from the Decent Homes Project working in partnership with Bramalls, tenants and SLDC and it had demonstrated SLH's capacity to continue to deliver major capital programmes successfully. Peter Thompson commented that the team were to be congratulated on a good achievement.

Performance Plan

The Director of Operations reported that 100.02% proportion of rent collected had been achieved and that rent arrears had been reduced by £24K.

David Vatcher asked about the long term sickness and the Chairman reported that this had been look at in detail by HR Committee and was well managed.

Peter Thornton asked about the proportion of satisfaction survey returns and the Chief Executive replied that it was 35% with repair satisfaction, and the response with the decent homes work was 80%-90%. The number of returns depended on the type of service provided although prize draws acted as an incentive to encourage tenants to respond to surveys.

Peter Bland queried the reduction of recognised Tenants and Resident Associations and the Director of Operations replied that the criteria used is that groups must be eligible for an annual grant. Over the years certain Resident's Associations have tended to be issue based and thus did not meet the criteria of a regular grant.

RESOLVED:- That the Board note the progress and achievements against the 2009/10 Delivery Plan, Performance Indicators and Decent Homes report. The Board commended the SLH staff on the level and quality of the achievements attained particularly in relation to the Decent Homes project.

895 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS ANALYSIS 2009/10

The Business Support presented this report and stated that Housemark had now set up a benchmarking of complaints performance club which would be used for comparisons in future annual complaint reports.

SAB

Christine Chadwick suggested that the justified/unjustified table be place placed alongside the type of complaints.

SAB

Sheila Meades asked if there were any informal complaints and the Chief Executive replied that MP enquiry letters were recorded separately. Unsatisfactory repair satisfaction slips were also recorded and followed up. Sheila Meades then asked how confident were SLH that people could make complaints and the Business Support Manager replied that a Compensation Policy had been introduced last year and complaints were accepted in any format. **ACTION**

Sheila Meades informed the Board about a free advocacy service at Lancashire County Council and it was considered that the availability of advocacy services for tenants was worth following up. **SAB**

Peter Thornton asked why complaints had reduced and the response was that with improvements in the delivery of the decent homes programme, maintenance complaints had reduced. Jacqui Blenkinship commented that given the limited budget for repairs and maintenance in 2010/11, it was likely that the level of complaints on this topic could increase.

RESOLVED:- That the Board note the report.

896 RESIDENTS QUESTIONS

A resident's question had been received regarding how SLH awards contracts. A handout was given with the response which detailed the criteria for value for money and factors taken into consideration when awarding a contract. The response to this question would be included in the tenants newsletter. **PT**

897 REVIEW OF TENANTS'S COMMITTEE AWAY DAY

The Performance Manager reported that further to the Tenants' Committee Away Day held in March a review meeting had taken place and work was now in progress to ensure all actions were agreed.

John Short commented that Peter Thornton was formally invited to attend Tenant Committee meetings.

David Vatcher commented that since the demise of Area Panels he was out of touch with what was happening in his area. John Mansergh said this issue would be addressed together with Tenant Committee colleagues. **JM**

RESOLVED:- That the Committee and Board note the actions agreed at the meeting between Tenants' Committee and SLH on 9 April 2010

898 TENANTS' COMMITTEE REPORTS

RESOLVED:-That Tenants Committee minutes be noted

899 REVIEW OF BOARD EXPENSES

The Business Support Manager provided a report benchmarking the SLH Board Expenses Policy against other North West ALMOs. The Chairman said that this report was provided to make Board Members aware of this matter and would be considered at the next HR Committee where further work on a Board Expenses policy would be undertaken by the Committee. John Short provided the Board with some information on salary levels which he had obtained from the Oldham website.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the findings of the evaluation of the North West ALMO's Board Expenses Policies and await the conclusion of the work of the HR Committee on a Board Expenses Policy.

900 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

901 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8th July 2010 at the **Georgian Room, Kendal Town Hall.**

The meeting concluded at 7:30 pm.