

## **BOARD MEETING**

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### **Minutes of Board Meeting held at 5:15 pm 29<sup>th</sup> October 2009, Little Aynam House, Kendal**

Present: John Short (Vice Chairman)  
Peter Bland  
Christine Chadwick  
John Stanton  
Peter Thompson  
David Vatcher  
Joan Chadwick  
Charles Howarth  
Frank Hodson

Officers: Peter Thomas  
David Stubbs  
Rebecca Lord

Guests: Brenda Gray

Apologies: Mary Dowling (Chairman)  
Robin Brown  
Peter Woof  
Alison Kinnon  
Sue Boulton

NO	<u>TITLE OF MINUTE</u>	<b>ACTION</b>
	The Vice Chairman welcomed Directors to the meeting and Frank Hodson apologised on behalf of Robin Brown who sent his best wishes to the Board.	
<b>793</b>	<b>MINUTES OF LAST MEETING</b>	
	The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman of the meeting.	
<b>794</b>	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>	
	None.	
<b>795</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT</b>	
	<u>Structure Changes</u>	
	The Chief Executive reported that the implementation of the revised management structure will shortly be finalised following the appointment of two Business Improvement Managers. Brenda Gray asked if these appointments were short term contracts and the Chief Executive replied that these were permanent positions.	
	David Vatcher arrived.	
	Peter Thompson asked when the posts would be filled and the Chief Executive replied it would be late January 2010.	

Appointing Chairman and members of Sub Committees

The Chief Executive reported that following the AGM, it was usual that Sub Committees would each then appoint their own chairman. As the Board was considering the appointment of a co-optee it was proposed that at the next Board meeting on 10 December that a 'refresh' of membership of each of the Committees should take place. Following this the members of each Committee would choose a Chairman.

Homeless and Housing Advice

The Chief Executive reported that SLDC and SLH had jointly commissioned Mike Schirwing, an Audit Commission Associate Director to undertake a review and make recommendations for the future provision of the homeless and housing advice services. An independent review would enable and ensure that SLDC and SLH make decisions on future delivery of the service based on the delivery of Best Value.

Covalent

The Chief Executive handed out examples of the Quarter 2 Delivery Plan which was now fully implemented onto the Covalent system. Training and information on the Covalent Performance management system would be provided in due course by SLDC's Performance Officer, Gillian Llewellyn.

Brenda Gray said she had received training on the Covalent system and was very impressed with the system once you knew how to use it. John Short also confirmed he had used the system and found it beneficial.

RESOLVED:- That the Board note the Chief Executive's report.

**796 VICE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Vice Chairman reported to the Board that Ian Ellery had attended Tenants' Committee last week and had apologised for the delay with regard to the Strategic Options Review appointment of a Project Manager. Interview dates had now been set up for the Project Manager and a Tenant Representative would be asked to be a member of the interview panel.

RESOLVED:- That the Board note the Vice Chairman's report.

**797 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO AUGUST 2009**

Rebecca Lord reported that Management Accounts for August 2009 showed a year to date surplus of £213,763 which should not be taken as indicative of the year end. A detailed review of the financial performance for the 6 months to September to include re-introduction of year-end projections would be presented to the Finance & Procurement Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> November. Rebecca Lord reported that a meeting was held between SLDC and SLH setting out the revenue repairs structure. The Chief Executive added that SLH were now moving towards a different procurement strategy and funding now had to be carefully prioritised.

David Vatcher asked that as the painting programme was delayed would this mean that painting would take place in bad weather. The Director of Operations replied that if the weather conditions were poor the pre-painting would not be carried out

RESOLVED:- That the Board note the Management Accounts for the year to August 2009

Delivery Plan

The Vice Chairman asked what the traffic light O indicated when the task was to determine funding streams for new stock purchase or development. An explanation was given that this symbol meant that this task could not proceed e.g. due to a lack of funding. Brenda Gray added that in future there may well be further opportunities to develop affordable housing and preparations should be made so that SLH and SLDC could respond to these opportunities within a short timeframe.

Performance Plan

The Director of Operations explained that BVPI 66a 'Proportion of rent collected' had been redefined as an indicator by Housemark and the current figure was recalculated to 94.18%.

Decent Homes

The Director of Operations reported that the Decent Homes programme was due for completion at the end of November and everything would be completed within that programme except School Knott Close which does not achieve Decency standard. The programme was on time and within budget and 100% satisfaction had been achieved.

RESOLVED:- That the Board note the Quarter One Delivery Plan, Performance Plan and DHP report

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

The Director of Operations reported on the recent rent reduction letter which had been sent out. It had proved to be a huge task with purchase of additional software but the task had gone well. Charles Howarth questioned the wording of the Housing Benefit letter and said it was very confusing. The Director of Operations replied that the Housing Benefit letter was a standard letter as required by the Government. SLH and SLDC had co-ordinated together to send out the SLH letter first explaining that, if the tenant received Housing Benefit, a Housing Benefit letter would be sent out shortly by SLDC with an overpayment amount. In actual effect the rent decrease and the overpayment cancelled each other out and so the letters needed to be read in conjunction with each other. Tenants not receiving Housing Benefit would receive a reduction.

David Vatcher asked where SLH were with regard to building houses? The Chief Executive replied that through the asset management plan, SLH were looking at land to build on and where properties were not in demand examining the potential of sites to be developed. Within the context of the Stock Options Review there was potentially an amount of money through stock transfer which would be available for future development. .

**RESIDENTS' QUESTIONS**

There were no resident's questions.

**TENANTS' COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Charles Howarth expressed his opinion that he felt the Stock Options review had progressed very slowly as Tenants' Committee had had a meeting last December with regard to the stock options and gained the impression that steps would be taken

shortly to commence the project.

**ACTION**

The Vice Chairman then reported that a report had been received from Tenants' Committee with regard to the final proposals for improvements and changes to the Service Improvement Groups

The Vice Chairman said that as this report had only recently been sent out to Directors but he felt more time was needed to read through this. A lot of work had gone into the final proposals and this matter would be deferred until the next board meeting as an Agenda item.

CAT

#### **802 POLICY REVIEW: FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS**

Christine Chadwick referred to paragraph 6.2 and suggested that an amendment be made that 'If after 6 weeks no response is received the file should be referred to the Business Improvement Manager for write-off or alternative....'

The Director of Operations replied that if there was any possibility of receiving funds it would be 'written on' and if there was no money in a deceased case a Statutory Declaration Form would be completed. The Director of Operations also added that nothing is written off until reasons are given for the write off and SLDC will then agree and grant their approval.

RESOLVED:- That the Board accepts the recommendation of the Policy Committee and adopts the revised Former Tenant Arrears Recovery Policy.

#### **803 POLICY REVIEW: CONFIDENTIALITY DATA PROTECTION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY**

Christine Chadwick referred to paragraph 4.1 and asked about the time limits on 'apply strict checks to determine the length of time information is held'. The Director of Operations said that the time limits would change and SLH would work within the statutory timescales.

RESOLVED:- That the Board accepts the recommendation of the Policy Committee and adopts the revised Confidentiality, Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policy.

#### **804 BOARD RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

The Vice Chairman thanked the officers involved at SLH for all their hard work which had been put into this policy over the past eighteen months.

RESOLVED:- i) That the Board accepts the recommendation of the HR Committee and adopts the new Board Membership Policy.  
ii) That a full review of the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association to be conducted following the conclusion of the Strategic Stock Options Appraisal.

#### **805 DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE POLICIES**

RESOLVED: That the Board accepts the recommendation of the HR Committee and adopts the new Grievance and Disciplinary Policies and Procedures.

#### **806 EMPLOYEE MENTORING SCHEME**

The Director of Operations commented that since this scheme had been piloted, he had spoken to officers who found this scheme had really helped new employees to settle in and the support given was really useful.

David Vatcher asked if there was a recommended timescale for mentoring and the Director of Operations replied that it was on a case by case basis and could last from 3- 6 months or years if an employee was undertaking a post graduate course.

RESOLVED:- That the Board accepts the recommendation of the HR Committee and approves the introduction of a mentoring scheme across the company

**807 NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL PAY NEGOTIATIONS**

The Chief Executive reported that this report updated the Directors on the conclusion of the national negotiations on the 2009/10 Pay and Conditions claim. The implementation of the agreed Pay Award has lead to a saving of approximately £42K against the budget.

RESOLVED:- That the Board notes the contents of this report.

Frank Hodson left the meeting.

**808 DRAFT POLICY MINUTES**

RESOLVED:- That the board note the draft minutes.

**809 BOARD AWAY DAY – 17<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2009**

The Chief Executive reported that the Board would be shortly examining the company's future strategic direction and the Away Day was a good way to commence examination of opportunities leading to the production of a new Business Plan.

The Vice Chairman suggested that the Board Away Day report from Michael Guest be deferred until to the next Board when the Chairman would be able to discuss this report further.

MD

**810 PROPOSED BOARD AND TENANTS' COMMITTEE MEETING DATES FOR 2010**

It was confirmed that the dates had been checked in order to avoid a clash with Council meetings. Peter Thompson suggested that the proposed dates be also checked to see if any clashed with school holidays. (This has been confirmed that all Board dates do not conflict with school holidays).

CAT

RESOLVED:- That the Board note and approve the proposed dates contained in the report

**811 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**812 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

10<sup>th</sup> December 2009

**813 PART II MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2009**

These were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Meeting concluded at 6:40 pm.