

**WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING COMPANY LIMITED**

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**AT LEIGH HOMES HQ, LEIGH**

**TUESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2006**

**Present:**

**Members:**

Tom Frost (Chair), Don Battersby, Marjorie Marsden, Chris Ready, Geoff Roberts and Mick Baines.

**In Attendance:**

Ashley Crumbley (Chief Executive), Dave Bainbridge (Area Director) and Edward Flanagan (Board Services and Finance Officer).

The Board observed a minutes silence as a mark of respect for the late Linda Jones.

**836. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies for absence were received from Jean Garlick, Pat Cummins, Sue Loudon, Fred Walker and Deborah Lee.

**837. MINUTES:**

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2006 were accepted as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

**838. URGENT BUSINESS:**

No urgent business was presented to the Board.

**839. AGENDA ORDER:**

Members agreed to move press and public excluded items to the end of the agenda.

**840. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC:**

Members agreed to exclude the press and public from the items referred to in minute 849 and 853 as they contained personnel, financial or commercially sensitive information.

**ITEMS FOR DECISION:**

**Open Items**

**841. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR/CHAIRS:**

The Board was asked to consider what action it would like to take following the resignation of one of the two Joint Chairs, John Roe.

**Votes For:** 6  
**Against** 0  
**Abstentions:** 0

It was **AGREED** To continue until the next Annual General Meeting with one Chair.

**842. GOVERNANCE REVIEW:**

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) reporting the proposals from the Governance Review Group to change the Board structure including replacing the 2 Area Boards with 6 Area Forums.

The Board discussed each point in detail and noted that further work on the Area Housing Forum would be undertaken by the Governance Review Group at an away day. Members noted that recruitment to Area Forums may be difficult in some parts of the borough where there are no Tenants and Residents groups. The Tenant Participation team would be asked to improve tenant involvement in those areas.

The Board asked that the team responsible for securing the Better Neighbourhoods funds be thanked and asked that it is made clear what this funding can be used for.

In reply to Members concerns regarding the need for wider consultation, the Chief Executive advised that he would be attending Area Board and Committee meetings over the next month and consulting with key stakeholders.

**Votes For:** 6  
**Against** 0  
**Abstentions:** 0

It was **AGREED** (a) To accept the proposals set out in the report.

(b) The Governance Review Group is re-convened to develop a detailed proposition for Area Forums and the appointment of tenants to main Board.

(c) The Company Secretary should report on the changes needed to governance documents including the constitution and Scheme of Delegations to develop options for the future recruitment of tenant representatives on the Board.

The Board noted a potential conflict of interest for all Independent Board Members present during discussion of the next item.

**843. RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT BOARD MEMBERS AND APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR:**

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to seek guidance from the Board as to how to proceed with the forthcoming recruitment of Independent Board Members and the appointment of a Chair.

Members discussed whether previous suggestions to advertise in the national press and to use consultants on the interview panel were absolutely necessary.

Members discussed the role of Chair and the need for a personal specification and role description to provide clarity as to what is expected from the postholder.

**Votes For:** 6  
**Against** 0  
**Abstentions:** 0

It was **AGREED** (a) To authorise the Chief Executive to advertise for the recruitment of Independent Board Members.

(b) To appoint a panel consisting of Chris Ready, Marjorie Marsden, Pat Cummins and Mick Baines to recruit and select Independent Board Members.

(c) To establish a task group consisting of Mick Baines and Marjorie Marsden to develop the process and selection criteria for the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair.

#### **844. IMPROVING GOVERNANCE:**

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to share with the Board the assessment undertaken by the Governance Review Group of the current governance arrangements and to consider continuous improvement in governance. Members were asked to select a small number of priorities to work through over the coming year. It was suggested that the Board Development Agency assessment should be used next year to measure this year's performance and then performance should be set and measured using the Scottish model.

**Votes For:** 6  
**Against** 0  
**Abstentions:** 0

It was **AGREED** (a) To establish an annual assessment of governance arrangements and setting of annual improvement programmes.

(b) To aim to achieve in the next year a high quality induction, training and development programme including individual personal development plans for Board Members.

#### **845. BOARD MEMBER CHAMPIONS:**

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to inform the Board on progress made on the appointment of Board Member Champions for each of the five goals of the Company vision 'Better Homes Brighter Futures'.

**Votes For:** 6  
**Against** 0  
**Abstentions:** 0

It was **AGREED** (a) To seek expressions of interest from Members of the Board excluding the Chair and Vice Chair to act as Board Member champions in one of the five goals of the vision next year after the Chair and Vice Chair have been appointed.

(b) In the interim, the Chief Executive should seek the guidance of the Chair when needed, in the absence of the relevant Board Member Champion.

#### **846. VALUE FOR MONEY:**

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) seeking the Board's endorsement of the approach being taken to ensure the Company delivers value for money services. Members were advised that according to a recent benchmarking exercise by Housemark, Wigan and Leigh Housing has the lowest overhead costs of the 23 ALMO's that participated. The Chief Executive explained that the exercise had highlighted poor sickness levels within the organisation and he informed Members of proposals to try to improve the problem. Members asked that sensitivity is used and that they are kept informed.

**Votes For:** 6

**Against** 0

**Abstentions:** 0

It was **AGREED** to approve the approach being taken to deliver value for money.

#### **847. THE RESPECT STANDARD FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT:**

The Area Director presented a report (circulated) to inform Board Members of the Government's Respect Standard and to provide an overview of its content. The Area Director said that he felt the Company already carries out everything outlined in the standard. Board Members requested that follow up reports include areas of weakness identified and an action plan for improvement.

A discussion followed on the positive working relationship between WALH and the Police although it was noted some improvements could be made with communication at a local level.

#### **848. MINUTES:**

(a) **Minutes – Equality and Diversity Committee 7<sup>th</sup> August 2006**

These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

(b) **Minutes – Human Resources Committee 16<sup>th</sup> August 2006**

These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

(c) **Minutes – Wigan Homes Board 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2006**

These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

(d) **Minutes – Leigh Homes Board 30<sup>th</sup> August 2006**

These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

(e) **Minutes – Governance Review Group 30<sup>th</sup> August 2006**

These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

(f) **Minutes – Governance Review Group 6<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

(g) **Minutes – Governance Review Group 13<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

(h) **Verbal Update – Finance Committee 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

The Chief Executive gave a verbal update on the issues raised at the Finance Committee meeting that preceded this meeting.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:**  
**Press and Public Excluded Items**

**849. PROGRAMMED WORKS PROGRESS:**

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) updating the Board with the progress on the 2006/07 programmes. The Chief Executive advised that responsive repairs would be included in this report from next month.

It was **AGREED** to note the report.

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:**  
**Open Items**

**850. DIVERSITY MONITORING REPORT:**

The Area Director presented a report (circulated) providing a summary of the last six months diversity monitoring reports presented to the Equality and Diversity Committee. The Board was pleased to note that Wigan and Leigh Housing was the first ALMO to achieve the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice and Equality Standard in Local Government Level III.

It was **AGREED** to note the report.

**851. REVIEW OF 2005/06 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS BY INTERNAL AUDIT:**

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) informing Members of a review carried out by Internal Audit in respect of last year's performance Indicators. He advised that he has reminded Directors that they are responsible for the accuracy of information collected and the performance for their performance indicators.

It was **AGREED** to note the report.

**852. FOTARA'S PROGRESS ON ADDRESSING AND ACHIEVING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT MADE BY THE BOARD:**

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to provide the Board with a summary of progress made by FOTARA in meeting the recommendations for improvement made on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2006. Board Members commented that the quality of the report was excellent for a voluntary group. The Board wished to record their thanks for the quality of the report and the work done by the Executive to comply

with the recommendations of the panel and hoped that they would continue to progress.

It was **AGREED** that a letter signed by the Chair should be sent to FOTARA thanking them for the work done in complying with the recommendations of the panel and advising them that it is hoped that they will continue to progress.

### **Press and Public Excluded Items**

#### **853. CHIEF EXECUTIVE BRIEFING AND QUESTION TIME:**

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to brief the Board on progress against the Chief Executive's priorities and major issues.

It was **AGREED** to note the report.

**854. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** 6.00pm on Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2006 at WALH HQ, Unity House, Westwood Park Drive, Wigan.

**CHAIR**