

WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING COMPANY LIMITED

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AT WALH HQ, WIGAN

TUESDAY 9th JANUARY 2007

Present:

Members:

Fred Walker (Chair for part of meeting), Geoff Roberts (Chair for part of meeting), Fiona Whistlecroft, Jean Garlick, Marjorie Marsden, Pat Cummins, Dorothy Abbott (part), Michael Baines (part) and Chris Ready (part).

In Attendance:

Ashley Crumbley (Chief Executive), Mike Grimes (Director of Housing Management), Mike Sterlicchi (Director of Stock Investment and Repairs), Phil Brown (Company Secretary), Edward Flanagan (Board Services and Finance Officer) and Colin Devine (Housing Group Manager) (part),

893. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) reporting the responses from Board Members to the invitation to stand for the positions of Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Board. Members were informed that one nomination for the post of Chair had been received from Geoff Roberts. Geoff spoke in support of his application.

Votes For: 8

Against: 0

Abstentions: 1

It was **AGREED** That Geoff Roberts be appointed Chair of the Wigan and Leigh Housing Board with a period of office until the meeting after the next Annual General Meeting.

From this point, Geoff Roberts chaired the meeting.

Members were advised that nominations had been received for the post of Vice Chair from Pat Cummins, Marjorie Marsden and Chris Ready. Each applicant spoke in support of their application.

The Chief Executive reminded the Board of the process to follow should there be a tie in votes.

The Company Secretary collected and counted ballot papers and announced that Chris Ready had received the most votes.

Votes For: 8

Against: 0

Abstentions: 1

It was **AGREED** That Chris Ready be appointed Vice Chair of the Wigan and Leigh Housing Board with a period of office until the meeting after the next Annual General Meeting.

894. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Sue Loudon.

895. MINUTES:

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 19th December 2006 were accepted as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

896. URGENT BUSINESS:

No urgent business was presented to the Board.

897. AGENDA ORDER:

The Chair advised that some Members had to leave early to attend another meeting and suggested that the agenda order is changed to bring the items 'Stock Investment Priorities 2007/08 – Delegations' and 'Discussion on Agenda for February Board Meeting and Governance Issues' to the start of the meeting.

898. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC:

Members agreed to exclude the press and public from the items referred to in minutes 905 to 907 as they contained commercially sensitive information.

ITEMS FOR DECISION:

Open Items

899. STOCK INVESTMENT PRIORITIES 2007/08 - DELEGATIONS:

The Director of Stock Investment and Repairs presented a report (circulated) advising that it is necessary to identify the range and priority of work to be carried out in the 2007/08 revenue and capital programmes before the budget report goes to the Council's Cabinet in February 2007. The new Business and Performance Committee would look at this in the future. As it had not yet been formed, it was proposed that a task group of members of the former Stock Investment Committee should meet to advise on the range and priority of work and that delegated authority be given to the Chair and Vice Chair to agree these priorities.

Votes For: 9

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To establish a Task Group to advise on the investment programmes for 2007/08 and to delegate to the Chair and Vice Chair the authority to agree the revenue and capital programmes for 2007/08.

900. DISCUSSION ON AGENDA FOR FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES (SETTING UP OF COMMITTEES):

The Chief Executive advised that at the Board's bi-monthly strategy meetings there may be one or two items of urgent business to deal with but the rest of the meeting would be dedicated to strategic issues. He asked the Board to decide what they would like to discuss at their February meeting. During the discussion that followed it was suggested that dedicating the meeting to finalising governance issues would be inappropriate. It was proposed to use the meeting to review the major issues facing WALH and set the agenda for the strategic meetings for 2007.

Votes For: 9

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** (a) The next meeting of the Board shall be dedicated to setting the agenda for strategy meetings for the rest of the year.

(b) The Board Services and Finance Officer would write to all Board Members asking them to specify which of the Committees they would like to sit on.

(c) That the Chief Executive and the Chair would meet to go through the outstanding recommendations of the Governance Review Group, from which proposals to move forward would be put to the Board.

901. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT TEAM REVIEW ON SICKNESS ABSENCE:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to inform Board of the findings of the Service Improvement Team's review of sickness absence and to recommend measures to improve value for money by reducing absence from work.

During the discussion that followed, Members shared learning from their experiences of other organisations including the Greater Manchester Fire Service and the Health Service.

Members noted that the report did not include a detailed procedure but focussed on policy. The Chief Executive suggested drawing up proposals for a policy with the Chair of the Board, Dorothy Abbott and the Human Resources Manager after which we would seek to work with the Trade Unions on developing a simpler Attendance Management Policy.

Votes For: 9

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** (a) To accept the report and a target for sickness absence of 11 days for 2007/08.

(b) Sickness absence be included with the quarterly performance reports to the Board.

(c) To accept the recommendations of the Service Improvement Team.

(d) To agree in principle the Attendance Management Policy set out in the appendix but to carry out further development of the policy involving the Chair, Dorothy Abbott, the Chief Executive and the Human Resources Manager.

At this point Chris Ready, Dorothy Abbott and Mick Baines left the meeting.

902. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT TEAM REVIEW – VALUE FOR MONEY:

The Director of Stock Investment and Repairs presented a report (circulated) on the outcome of the Repairs Service Review.

In reply to questions raised, the Director advised that the WALH management was moving to a boroughwide structure, instead of the split between Wigan Homes and Leigh Homes. Contractors boundaries would remain unchanged. The Chief Executive advised that repairs expenditure had not reduced as a result of the improvements to the housing stock. Factors influencing this included the standards at which everything needs to be maintained is that much higher and the inclusion of kitchen omits. The Director also explained how commitment accounting is carried out at WALH

Votes For: 6

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To note the outcome of the Repairs Service Improvement Review and agree to the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Action Plan within the proposed timescales.

903. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT TEAM REVIEW – INCOME MANAGEMENT:

The Housing Group Manager presented a report (circulated) on the findings and recommendations of the Service Improvement Team on Income Management. Members were informed of key proposals within the action plan and advised that these proposals would be advertised when they were implemented.

Board Members acknowledged the need to carefully examine the option to end the policy of collecting rent one week in arrears once other improvements to rent collection procedures had been implemented.

Votes For: 6

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To approve the structural and procedural changes outlined and note the sensitivity of the issues.

At this point the Housing Group Manager left the meeting.

904. MINUTES:

- (a) **Minutes – Equality and Diversity Committee 30th October 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.
- (b) **Minutes – Human Resources Committee 8th November 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.
- (c) **Minutes – Extraordinary General Meeting 22nd November 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.
- (d) **Minutes – Wigan Homes Board 22nd November 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.
- (e) **Minutes – Leigh Homes Board 29th November 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.
- (f) **Minutes – Finance Committee 11th December 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.
- (g) **Minutes – Annual General Meeting 19th December 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

Press and Public Excluded Items

905. ESTABLISHMENT FOR 2007/08:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) proposing an establishment for 2007/08 which involves a reduction of two posts to 457.5 posts and with no specific provision for temporary posts. These would be needed on a much reduced level. Members were advised that there would be a series of below inflation annual budget increases to minimise the risk of a budget crisis in future years.

Votes For: 6

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** (a) That the establishment of 457.5 staff be approved by 2007/08.

(b) That the Chief Executive consults with the Trade Unions and then manages the workforce changes.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Press and Public Excluded Items

906. PROGRAMMED WORKS PROGRESS AND DAY TO DAY REPAIRS EXPENDITURE:

The Director of Stock Investment and Repairs presented a report (circulated) providing the Board with an update on progress on the 2006/07 programmes of work and a summary of day to day repairs expenditure against budget allocation. In reply

to a question, the Director stated that tenants are charged for repairs if caused by their neglect.

It was **AGREED** To note the contents of the report.

907. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING AND QUESTION TIME:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to brief the Board on progress on the Chief Executive's priorities and major issues. Members were advised of a probable underspend on the Management Fee which would be returned to the Housing Revenue Account and of the appointment of Ken Lee as a new Finance Manager.

The Board received an update on the visit from Habitat Angers and noted the arrangements made for the visit.

It was **AGREED** To note the contents of the report.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Open Items

908. APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL NOMINATED BOARD MEMBERS:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to share with Board Members, Wigan Council's proposals for the selection process to appoint four Council nominees to the Board of Wigan and Leigh Housing.

It was **AGREED** To note the contents of the report.

909. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 6.00pm on Tuesday, 6th February 2007 at WALH HQ, Unity House, Westwood Park Drive, Wigan.

CHAIR