

WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING COMPANY LIMITED

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AT WALH HQ, WIGAN

TUESDAY 19 JANUARY 2010

Present:

Members:

Geoff Roberts (Chair), Marjorie Marsden, John Michaels, Jo Bennett, Marie Blundell, Michael Winstanley, John Carleton, Jean Garlick, Fiona Whistlecroft, Pat Riley and Fred Walker.

In Attendance:

Ashley Crumbley (Chief Executive), Mike Grimes (Director of Housing Needs), Maureen McCoy (Project Manager – Supported Housing Services), Edward Flanagan (Board Services and Finance Officer), Janice Barton (Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects) (part), Elspeth Brighton (Director) (part), Ken Lee (Director of Resources) (part) and David Moir (Health and Safety Manager) (part).

The Chair gave a speech on behalf of the Board thanking Elspeth Brighton for the long service given to Wigan and Leigh Housing and formerly to Wigan Council's Housing Department and outlining her many achievements over that time. Dr Brighton expressed pride in the improvements in social housing in the borough, especially since the formation of the Arms Length Management Organisation and wished the Board every success in leading continued improvements in to the future.

287. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Myra Whiteside, Jean Garlick and Kevin Burgan.

288. MINUTES:

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 1 December 2009 were accepted as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

289. URGENT BUSINESS:

No items of urgent business were presented to the Board.

290. AGENDA ORDER:

The Board agreed to receive the report 'Refreshed Vision for WALH' at the beginning of the agenda.

291. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

No declarations of interest were made.

Open Items

292. REFRESHED VISION FOR WALH:

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects presented a report proposing a refreshed version of the existing company Vision with interim targets for 2012. The refreshed vision and targets were agreed.

The Board discussed energy efficient homes. The Board's wish was to move from code three to code four of the Sustainable Homes Standard in new build and of the need for further reroofing of the existing housing stock .

It was **AGREED:** To approve the refreshed vision.

Votes For: 10
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

The Director and the Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects left the meeting.

293. BRIEFING ON HEALTH AND SAFETY:

The Chief Executive introduced the Health and Safety Manager who gave a briefing on Health and Safety. The briefing contributed to the Board's awareness of key Health and Safety legislation, helped Board Members understand their role as Directors of the Company in relation to Health and Safety and, gave them an overview of WALH Health and Safety policies and procedures.

Board Members commented that they found the approach to Health and Safety is comprehensive, showing a commitment to employees and others over which the organisation has a duty of care and protecting itself against possible litigation.

It was **AGREED:** To note the briefing.

The Health and Safety Manager left the meeting.

294. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – RENT SETTING 2010/2011:

The Director of Resources presented a report providing Members of the Board with information on rent setting for 2010/11. The Shadow Tenants Committee had met before Christmas to consider both the rent rise and tenants' priorities for 2010/11. The tenants' views were taken into account when the Council met and the decision was to increase rents and associated charges by 2.5% and not the Government's 2.56% guideline figure.

It was **AGREED:** To note the rent increase of 2.5%

Votes For: 10
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

295. MANAGEMENT FEE:

The Director of Resources presented a report to seek approval of the Management fee for 2010/11. Members were reminded that the Management Fee had not been increased since 2006. This year it was proposed to raise the fee by 2.5%. A modest under spend was projected for 2009/10 and the Council was being asked that some of this could be retained in Company reserves. In reply to a question raised, the Director of Resources advised that no tasks outlined in the Business Plan had been postponed.

It was **AGREED:**

- The Management Fee estimates for 2010/11 of £15.715M be accepted.
- An under spend of £200,000 be declared to the Council for the current financial year.

Votes For: 10

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

296. COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT OUTCOME:

The Chief Executive presented a report with the results from the first Comprehensive Area Assessment. References to the borough's housing services were positive.

It was **AGREED:** To note the results and the areas of improvement which have been delivered by WALH.

The Director of Resources left the meeting.

297. ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW:

The Director of Housing Needs presented a report on a draft Allocations Policy which had been amended following consultation. Board was asked to consider various points within the new proposed policy. It was noted that the policy would need to be approved by Wigan Council and would be implemented around October 2010.

It was **AGREED:** That the proposed allocations policy should be referred to the Council for consideration with the following amendments suggested by the Board:-

- Interviews/workshops should be used on a risk basis.
- If applicants in Group A, including those with urgent medical/welfare priority refuse three acceptable offers of accommodation, staff will discuss with them their specific needs prior to any consideration of reducing their priority.
- Those with high equity or from out of the borough should be allowed to bid for time based properties with the exception of houses.
- Age criteria for bungalows should remain at 60 years but in areas of low demand this can be reduced with a local lettings policy.
- An officer of the same grade can review a decision but

any subsequent appeals will be considered by a more senior manager.

- Within Group B additional points should be given to those in employment, in employment training or actively seeking employment.

Votes For: 10
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

298. COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES QUALITY MARK AWARD:

The Chief Executive presented a report to brief the Board on the success of the recent CLS Quality Mark inspection.

It was **AGREED:** The Board congratulate staff for being awarded the Community Legal Services Quality Mark Award.

299. EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT BID – DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS:

The Director of Housing Needs presented a report to advise the Board of the bid submission to the Department of Work and Pensions for funding which would enable the company to provide tenants with support and assistance in seeking employment.

It was **AGREED:** To note the content of the report.

300. MINUTES:

(a) Stock Investment Task Group – 17 November 2009:

These were endorsed with no matters arising.

(b) Governance, Standards and Audit Committee – 19 November 2009:

These were endorsed with no matters arising.

(c) Shadow Tenants Committee – 30 November 2009:

These were endorsed with no matters arising.

(d) Shadow Tenants Committee – 15 December 2009:

These were endorsed with no matters arising.

301. UPDATE FROM TENANT BOARD MEMBERS:

Tenant Board Members updated the rest of the Board on various issues.

302. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC:

The Board agreed to exclude the press and public from the item referred to in minute 303 and 304.

Press and Public Excluded Items

303. EXTENSION OF CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF THE OUT OF HOURS SERVICE AND RELIEF MANAGEMENT SERVICE:

The Chief Executive presented a report seeking permission to negotiate an extension to the current contract with the current provider for twelve months until the review of the Sheltered Housing Service has been completed. Board Members questioned this as it was not the first time the contract had been extended pending the completion of the review of Sheltered Housing Service. Assurances were sought that this course of action did not break European procurement rules. The Chief Executive undertook to check the legal position.

It was **AGREED:** To approve the negotiation of the extension of the current contract for the out of hours and relief management service with the current provider. Subject to the extension not exceeding twelve months, value for money assessment of the outcome of the negotiations and the extension being lawful.

Votes For: 10
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

304. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING AND QUESTION TIME:

The Chief Executive updated the Board on the following topics:-

- The resignation due to ill health of Councillor Board Member Terry Halliwell
- Funding award granted for family intervention project
- A possible alliance with schools on work placements, apprentices and graduate training.
- Reassessment of neighbourhood management with partners
- Murder at Worsley Mesnes

It was **AGREED:** To note the briefing.

305. ITEMS FOR NEXT BOARD MEETING:

No items suggested.

306. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

6.00pm on Tuesday 2 February 2010 at WALH HQ, Unity House, Westwood Park Drive, Wigan.

CHAIR

Actions			
Ref/Minute	Action	Responsible Officer	Completed
1 205	Write a policy for the management of assets in the coming year.	Ken Lee	
2 206	Continue to challenge the Company's Service Level Agreements with Wigan Council.	Ken Lee	
3 208	Produce a brand new Tenants Compact next year.	Mike Grimes	
4 209	Refresh the organisation's approach to customer involvement based on the model developed by a Tenant Board Member.	Mike Grimes	
5 209	Make the organisational changes necessary to improve customer relations and tenant involvement and undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.	Mike Grimes	
6 241	Ask all Board members if they would like to attend the NFA Annual Conference with a deadline for receipt of replies.	Edward Flanagan	
7 303	Seek additional legal advice that a further extension to the contract with the current provider of the out of hours and relief warden service for the Sheltered Housing Service is within European procurement rules.	Janice Barton	