

WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING COMPANY LIMITED
BUSINESS, INVESTMENT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

MEETING AT WALH HQ, WIGAN

TUESDAY 22 JUNE 2010

Present:

Members:

Jean Garlick (Chair), Jo Bennett and Myra Whiteside.

In Attendance:

Janice Barton (Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects), Mike Sterlicchi (Director of Asset Management and Development), Mike Grimes (Director of Housing Needs) and Phil Brown (Company Secretary),

127. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Marie Blundell, Michael Winstanley and Geoff Roberts.

128. MINUTES:

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20 April 2010 were accepted as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

Actions from the Minutes:

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects advised that Action Point 5 relating to Minute 84 had been completed.

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects advised that Action Point 8 relating to Minute 101 would be dealt with in a report to July Board.

Committee agreed that Action Point 11 relating to Minute 111 could be included in the Director of Asset Management and Development's quarterly progress reports on Programmed Works and Day to Day Expenditure.

Point 12 Minute 115 - The Company Secretary was requested to include the dates of meetings alongside the reference number of all requested actions on the Actions sheet.

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects undertook to obtain full updates on the outstanding actions for the next meeting.

129. URGENT BUSINESS:

No urgent business was presented to the Committee.

130. AGENDA ORDER:

Committee agreed the order in which they would like to receive the reports on the agenda.

131. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:

No declarations of interest were made.

132. KEY BUSINESS INDICATORS FOR 2010/11:

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects presented a report outlining proposals to amend the current set of “at risk” indicators to enable the Board and the Client to focus on the areas of business which are particularly important or where performance is giving cause for concern. She pointed out that these key business indicators could be amended during the financial year if Members considered that another indicator was causing concern. Members asked the Director to clarify which of the proposed indicators were statutory indicators. A Committee Member also queried whether the coalition budget announced earlier in the day would have any impact on the “at risk” indicators and was advised that it was unlikely immediately but future Housing Benefit changes could impact. In response to a further question, the Director of Asset Management and Development explained what action was required to achieve 100% Decent Homes within the Council housing stock.

- It was agreed:**
- To rename the “at risk” indicators as Key Business Indicators.
 - To approve a set of Key Business Indicators for 2010/11 which will be closely scrutinised as part of the quarterly Board performance reports, with the flexibility of identifying one or two additional indicators during the year if they are causing particular concern.
 - That the Key Business Indicators should be reviewed annually.

133. PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT – HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING ADVICE SERVICE:

The Director of Housing Needs presented a report to provide Committee Members with information regarding the significant improvements made to the Homelessness and Housing Advice Service. He pointed out some of the achievements of the service and highlighted the considerable reduction in costs incurred by the Council for providing emergency bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people. Members commented that changes to the policy relating to the exclusion of applicants from the Housing Register had resulted in an increase in exclusions of people with a history of anti-social behaviour. Members welcomed the significant reduction in homelessness presentations due to the increased preventative work undertaken by the service.

A Committee Member queried the accuracy of the average time to rehouse applicants from the housing register and the Director explained that this figure was affected by applicants who remained on the register for many years waiting for a specific property in an area of high demand.

The Committee complimented the staff within the Homelessness and Housing Advice Service for the progress made in assisting some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

It was agreed: To note the report.

134. UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS TO INCREASE ACCESS TO PROPERTIES IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR:

The Director of Housing Needs presented a progress report on developments to increase access to properties in the private rented sector. He advised Committee that Wigan Council had reviewed its Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme and there was now a welcome increase in the number of accredited landlords and properties available for our staff to recommend to possible applicants when advising them of their housing options. Such vacancies can also be advertised in the Property Shops. The Director also referred to the service provided by Wigan Housing Solutions, which offers a property management service to private landlords as well as finding suitable applicants for their properties. Wigan Council is now aiming to increase the number of private landlords who achieve accreditation and who use the services provided by Wigan Housing Solutions. A Committee Member commented on a Wigan Council initiative to address anti-social behaviour in private rented accommodation in the Leigh area. In response to a concern raised, the Director advised Members that WALH staff are involved in signposting applicants to private landlords which does not involve any significant additional workload.

A suggestion was made that Wigan Council and Wigan Housing Solutions be approached to request that they seek to identify an accredited landlord to target purchasing former right to buy properties on Council estates that are empty. It may then be possible to consider setting up an agreement with the private landlord and Wigan Housing Solutions to tackle these properties.

It was agreed: To note the report and the progress made to extend housing choice.

135. WORKFORCE PROFILE AND EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY MONITORING PROGRESS:

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects presented a report to provide Committee Members with recruitment monitoring and workforce profile information, review progress against employment equality targets and agree new targets for 2010/11.

The Director advised Members that the 2009/10 profile information showed that the Company was close to the targets set by the Board. She added that there was no evidence of discrimination and pointed out that it was company policy to use mixed employment panels. She also provided Members with background information to advise the Committee how the proposed targets for 2010/11 had been determined.

In response to a question raised, the Director explained how the Company targets young people to take up apprentice positions on the Pathways scheme.

Members commented that they were satisfied with the information provided and considered the Company's employment processes to be fair and consistent.

It was agreed: To note the report and endorse the targets for 2010/11.

136. HORIZON ENERGY COOPERATIVE:

The Director of Asset Management and Development presented a report outlining proposals to develop a cooperative of social landlords called the Horizon Energy Cooperative. He explained how the cooperative planned to access external funding to develop projects to progress research and development for the use of renewable energy technology on social housing. The cooperative provides an opportunity for social landlords to work together to develop projects that may prove viable due to the economies of scale offered by working in partnership.

Members acknowledged that there could be major long term benefits if the cooperative proved successful.

- It was agreed:**
- To approve the setting up of the Horizon Energy Cooperative (HEC) and support the aims and objectives of the new body.
 - To agree to WALH becoming a member of the HEC if it can be shown there are practical benefits.
 - To approve an initial budget of £10,000 from within existing resources to investigate alternative options through the membership of the HEC.
 - To agree that officers may approach Wigan Council to seek its approval for WALH to develop any energy saving opportunities identified by HEC.

137. FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS IN INDEPENDENT LIVING SCHEME PROPERTIES:

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects presented a report to inform Members about the fire safety standards now required for Independent Living Schemes and what WALH had done to achieve the required standards. She explained that the fire safety regulations for such properties had been upgraded and it had, therefore, proved necessary to inspect each property and arrange improvement works to ensure that all the properties comply with the revised standards. WALH is managing the improvement works on behalf of Wigan Council's Adult Services Department who are financing the works. The Director informed the Committee that it is now proposed to carry out an annual inspection of each property included in the Independent Living Scheme. Members commented that they considered it appropriate that the improvement works should be managed by officers from WALH.

It was agreed: To note the new fire safety standards set within Greater Manchester and approve the actions taken by officers to ensure that WALH comply with the required fire safety standards.

126. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will take place at 6.00pm on Tuesday 17 August 2010.

CHAIR

Actions			
Ref 1 Min 68 18/8/09	An update and review report to be brought to the Committee on the success of dedicated office training time by January 2011.	Director of Housing Management	
Ref 2 Min 69 18/8/09	Collate the number of complaints that could be classed as multiple types of behaviour with regard to neighbour nuisance complaints alongside those already measured.	Director of Housing Management	
Ref 3 Min 69 18/8/09	Review the procedure for rehousing the victims or witnesses of anti-social behaviour to avoid rehousing them near relatives or associates of the perpetrator.	Director of Housing Management	
Ref 4 Min 69 18/8/09	Include the number of people excluded from the housing register in future anti-social behaviour reports.	Director of Housing Management	
Ref 5 Min 84 20/10/09	Committee Members requested an update in six months on how the review of the accreditation scheme is progressing.	Director of Housing Needs	✓
Ref 6 Min 87 20/10/09	Measure and report back to the Committee how many neighbour nuisance complaints are lodged against introductory tenants compared to secure tenants and how many actions were taken in the first year after an introductory tenancy was made secure as past of the annual report on ASB.	Director of Housing Management	
Ref 8 Min 101 15/12/09	Provide year on year comparisons with HouseMark benchmarking information.	Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects	✓
Ref 9 Min 102 15/12/09	Provide a more detailed report on stress related absence.	Director of Resources	
Ref 11 Min 111 16/2/10	Include updates on right first time performance in the Programmed Works and Day to Day Repairs Expenditure reports.	Director of Asset Management and Development	

Actions			
Ref 12 Min 115 20/04/10	Include dates of all meetings in the Actions sheet.	Company Secretary	✓
Ref 13 Min 119 20/04/10	Regularly report on the equality and diversity activity of contractors	Director of Asset Management and Development	To be included in quarterly monitoring report
Ref 14 Min 120 20/04/10	Provide updates on the timing of return to work interviews.	Director of Resources	
Ref 15 Min 122 20/04/10	Increase take up of the Tenants Home Contents Insurance Scheme	Director of Housing Management	
Ref 16 Min 132 22/6/10	Review the Key Business Indicators annually.	Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects	
Ref 17 Min 134 22/6/10	Approach Wigan Council and Wigan Housing Solutions to request that they seek to identify an accredited landlord to target purchasing former right to buy properties on Council estates that are empty.	Director of Housing Needs	