

WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING COMPANY LIMITED

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AT WALH HQ, WIGAN

TUESDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2010

Present:

Members:

Geoff Roberts (Chair), Marjorie Marsden, John Michaels, Jo Bennett, Marie Blundell, Michael Winstanley, Kevin Burgan, Fiona Whistlecroft and Pat Riley.

In Attendance:

Ashley Crumbley (Chief Executive), Ken Lee (Director of Resources), Janice Barton (Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects), Mike Sterlicchi (Director of Asset Management and Development), Mike Maunder (Interim Director of Housing Management), Dave Bainbridge (Group Manager – Better Neighbourhoods), Trevor Smith (Group Manager – Planned Maintenance) and Edward Flanagan (Board Services and Finance Officer).

307. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Myra Whiteside, Jean Garlick, John Carleton and Fred Walker.

308. MINUTES:

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 January 2010 were accepted as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

309. URGENT BUSINESS:

No items of urgent business were presented to the Board.

310. AGENDA ORDER:

The Board agreed to receive reports as on the agenda.

311. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

No declarations of interest were made.

Open Items

312. UPDATES FROM TENANT BOARD MEMBERS:

No issues were raised.

313. MID TERM REVIEW OF THE CONTRACT BETWEEN WALH AND WIGAN COUNCIL:

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects presented a report to update Board Members on the progress on the ALMO contract review. Proposals for two contracts, one for Housing Management and one for Housing Support were put to Wigan Council's

Environment, Culture and Housing Scrutiny Committee and would go to Wigan Council's Cabinet. The new contract would reflect Wigan and Leigh Housing's expanding role in the borough. Board welcomed the current proposals by Council officers of two plus five year contracts with a review period.

The Chief Executive advised Board that there was currently a new mutual co-operative model of housing that was being considered by the Government that could potentially be of benefit to tenants and the Council retained ownership of the housing stock. Board Members felt that this was something they would like to examine and asked Officers to research the different models available.

It was **AGREED:** To note the progress on the ALMO contract review.
To welcome proposals for a seven year contract for Housing Management services.

Votes For: 9
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

314. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ESTIMATES:

This item was withdrawn.

315. ALMO FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE – 31 DECEMBER 2009:

The Director of Resources presented a report to update Members on the financial position of the ALMO. Members were informed that there is no longer a need for expenditure to exactly match the Management Fee as had been the case in previous years, as the Inland Revenue no longer sees any surplus as profit and it is therefore not liable to Corporation Tax. The Director suggested that, with Council permission, any surpluses could be retained in reserve.

It was **AGREED:**

- To note the content of the report.
- To retain some of the year end surpluses for investment back in Value for Money efficiencies.

Votes For: 9
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

316. ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT POLICY:

The Director of Asset Management and Development and the Group Manager – Planned Maintenance presented a report to brief Members on the findings of a review of WALH's approach to asbestos management, to advise on new guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive and to seek Members approval of a new Asbestos Policy Framework. The new requirement to carry out an asbestos survey on a property prior to any works that could disturb the fabric of the building along with the requirement to survey every property type would have large cost implications.

Board Members discussed how best to monitor this new practice.

- It was **AGREED:**
- To adopt the Asbestos Management Policy as set out in the report.
 - To note the initial estimate of up to £0.5M in the 2010/11 budget and the overall provision of approximately £5M included in the Asset Management and Investment Plan for the implementation of the Policy.
 - Regular updates and any key decisions should be reported to the Business, Investment and Performance Committee

Votes For: 9
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

317. MINUTES:

Business, Investment and Performance Committee – 15 December 2009:

These were endorsed with no matters arising.

318. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC:

The Board agreed to exclude the press and public from the items referred to in minutes 319 to 321.

Press and Public Excluded Items

319. RISK MANAGEMENT:

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects presented a report to discuss with Board the Risk Management Strategy for the organisation and to present the updated Risk Register. The Director advised that Risk Management needed to be embedded throughout the organisation and changes to the risk management process were included to achieve this as well as updates to the risk register.

It was **AGREED:** To approve the approach to risk management in the organisation and the updated Risk Register.

Votes For: 9
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

320. STAFF STRUCTURE:

The Director of Resources presented a report to provide the Board with an update of the establishment and indicate the minor changes that are being made to improve services and to meet budget demands for the forthcoming year. Board noted that staff turnover is currently 6% per annum and there is the equivalent of 444 full time employees at WALH.

In response to questions raised, Board Members were informed that the age profile of staff is included in reports presented to the Business, Investment and Performance Committee and, with the exception of Management Team, there is not a disproportionately high number of staff due to retire in the next few years. It was noted that the number of staff per property compared with other similar housing providers had been reported to the Board previously.

- It was **AGREED:**
- To approve the changes to the establishment identified in the report.
 - To approve the current establishment and employees budget of £12.4M for 2010/11.
 - To note the use of the savings from the staff turnover/slippage.

Votes For: 9
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

321. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING AND QUESTION TIME:

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

- Funding award for a housing development at The Orchards in Leigh
- Potential ministerial visit
- Recent negative publicity

Board Members were briefed on proposals for a new way of joint working with key partners including the Council, the Police and the Primary Care Trust, to better manage services at a local level. The new initiative would be piloted in Atherton. Board Members were asked to consider if WALH should take joint lead with one of the partners in one of the five areas.

A discussion ensued on previous attempts at joint working at a local level and what could be learned from those initiatives. Members stressed the importance of getting a commitment of resources from each of the partner agencies at the beginning and to look for 'quick wins' early on to show to the wider community that this initiative is materially different from its predecessors.

- It was **AGREED:**
- That Board is enthusiastic about this initiative and sees the benefits if it works for tenants.
 - That clear targets should be set at the beginning of the initiative.
 - That the benefits to tenants should be evidenced.

Votes For: 9
Against: 0
Abstentions: 0

322. ITEMS FOR NEXT BOARD MEETING:

A Board Member suggested that staff should be invited to observe Board meetings. The Chief Executive reminded the Board that employees have observed Board meetings on occasion and suggested the Staff Conference in the summer would be the best opportunity to give a general invitation to staff.

323. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

6.00pm on Tuesday 2 March 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	