

WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING COMPANY LIMITED

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AT WALH HEADQUARTERS

TUESDAY 23rd MAY 2006

Present:

Members:

John Roe (Chair for part of meeting), Tom Frost (Chair for part of meeting), Pat Cummins, Don Battersby, Deborah Lee and Geoff Roberts,

In Attendance:

Peter Gee (Chief Executive), Mike Grimes (Area Director) and Edward Flanagan (Board Services and Finance Officer)

The Chief Executive informed the Board of the sad news that George Robinson had passed away. Members gave tributes and all those in attendance observed a minutes silence.

784. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Fred Walker and Marjorie Marsden.

At this point Tom Frost joined the meeting and took over as Chair.

785. MINUTES:

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 11th April 2006 were accepted as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

786. URGENT BUSINESS:

The Chief Executive advised that the Finance Committee had requested the report 'Day to Day Repairs Budget Revenue Out-turn 2005/06' be presented to the Board as urgent business.

Day to Day Repairs Budget Revenue Out-turn 2005/06

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated at the meeting) advising of the out-turn expenditure on the Day to Day Repairs budget for 2005/06 compared to the budget available. The report highlighted a possible overspend against the original budget. The Chair of the Finance Committee added that the Committee expressed concern at the content of the report with regard to the extend of the possible overspend and the fact that it had not been noticed until now. The Finance

Committee requested a further report to be presented at its next meeting at which it would consider what to do.

Votes For: 6
Against 0
Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To endorse the recommendation of the Finance Committee to express concern at the content of the report and request a further report at its next meeting.

787. AGENDA ORDER:

Members agreed to receive the agenda in the order presented.

788. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC:

Members agreed to exclude the press and public from the items referred to in minutes 786, 789-790 and 796-799 as they contained financial or commercially sensitive information.

ITEMS FOR DECISION:

Press and Public Excluded Items

789. DELIVERY OF SERVICES FROM AND COMMITMENT TO THE COUNCIL'S JOINT SERVICE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT:

The Area Director presented a report (circulated) advising the Board of the Council's proposals to deliver services from a Joint Service Centre to be built in Wigan town centre. To seek approval that Wigan and Leigh Housing will give a commitment to be a partner in this proposal and deliver services as described in the report.

Members questioned references in the report to the Wigan Property Shop and other WALH sections moving to new accommodation in Hallgate, Wigan, when the Board had not agreed to this. The Chief Executive advised that this was sanctioned, rightly or wrongly under delegated authority.

A discussion followed, Members expressed concern that a Joint Contact Centre may have a detrimental effect on the service provided to tenants. Board Members commented that the proposals would not be considered unless they were beneficial to tenants.

Votes For: 6
Against 0
Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** (a) To support the proposal for Wigan and Leigh Housing to be a partner within the Joint Service Centre.

(b) To consider the relocation of the Wigan Property Shop, the Homeless Service and the Housing Link Teams to the Joint Service Centre along with any other staff that are appropriate.

(c) To explore further with the Council the potential for joint working on the contact centre and hubs.

(d) That the Board should be fully informed at all stages so that the Board's views can be taken account of at all times.

790. COMPLAINT AGAINST FOTARA:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) updating the Board on progress made in respect of the complaint against the Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (FOTARA). Members commended the work of FOTARA and commented that any proposals to make their systems stronger would benefit the group.

Votes For: 6

Against 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To endorse the recommendations of the independent panel.

Open Items

791. CHANGE IN OFFICE NAME:

The Area Director presented a report (circulated) seeking approval to change the name of the relocated Ashton Area Housing Office to Makerfield Area Housing Office.

Votes For: 6

Against 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** That Ashton Area Housing Office should be called Makerfield Area Housing Office when it moves from Ashton Town Hall.

792. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) obtaining Members agreement to update the Equality and Diversity Committee's Terms of Reference in line with recommendations from the Committee's annual Service Planning Day.

Votes For: 6

Against 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To update the Equality and Diversity Committee's Terms of Reference in line with the recommendations outlined in the report.

793. MINUTES:

(a) **Minutes – Wigan Homes Board 19th April 2006**

These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

794. DELIVERY AND BUSINESS PLAN 2006/07:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) seeking approval of the Delivery and Business Plan for 2006/07, a draft of which was appended to the report. Members were informed that the plan has changed minimally from last year prior to the substantive changes anticipated following the future visioning for the company.

Votes For: 6
Against 0
Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To approve the Delivery and Business Plan for 2006/07.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

Open Items

795. DELIVERY AND BUSINESS PLAN PRIORITIES 2005/06:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) reporting on progress to date on the priority tasks in the 2005/06 Delivery and Business Plan. He advised that he had concerns about the lack of progress in value for money.

Members offered congratulations to those involved in helping the Company achieve level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

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

Press and Public Excluded Items

796. PROGRAMMED WORKS PROGRESS:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) providing the Board with an update on progress on the 2006/07 programmes. Members noted that the programme is much reduced from previous years and therefore there is much more pressure not to overspend.

Board Members requested that satisfaction rates should not be claimed as if a percentage of all tenants but as a percentage of those tenants who returned their satisfaction survey. The Chief Executive added that the response rates are high enough to be statistically robust.

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

797. WATES CONSTRUCTION LTD. – CLAIM:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated at the meeting) to inform Members of the results of the investigation and subsequent negotiations in to the failures by Wates to carry out the whole property rewiring to the technical performance specification. Members were informed that once it was established that

the work completed was safe, a financial settlement was sought to avoid further disturbance to tenants.

Board Members offered congratulations to the Maintenance and Development Manager for his work in achieving an agreeable settlement.

Votes For: 6

Against 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** (a) To accept the offer of a financial settlement from Wates of £198,000 gross as compensation for their failure to carryout the whole property rewiring work to technical specification to 121 properties .

(b) To note that the remedial works to the 121 properties were partial rewires has taken place to be included in a future programme of work.

798. OUTSOURCING OF FORMER TENANTS ARREARS – APPOINTMENT OF DEBT COLLECTION AGENCY:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) reporting the results of the tendering process and seek approval for the appointment of a Debt Collection Agency to collect rent arrears debts from former tenants who have failed to make payments to Wigan and Leigh Housing since it became an ALMO or, in the case of older debts, Wigan Council.

Votes For: 6

Against 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** (a) To approve the recommendation of the selection panel to appoint Rossendales Limited to collect former tenants arrears for a period of two years and extendable for a further 12 months, subject to review by Wigan and Leigh Housing and Wigan Council.

(b) That the Chief Executive of Wigan and Leigh Housing should submit regular progress reports, on a quarterly basis to Wigan and Leigh Housing Board on the performance of the company's actions.

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

799. TENANTS' HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE SCHEME REVIEW:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) reporting on the review that has taken place for the Council's Tenants' Home Contents Insurance Scheme, which is administered on the Council's behalf by WALH.

It was **AGREED** that the new policy arrangements are noted.

Open Items

800. REVIEW OF ESTATE INSPECTIONS 2005/06:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) providing Board Members with the year end analysis of Estate Inspections 2005/06. Board Members questioned the

inspection criteria with regard to broken fences and fly tipping. The Chief Executive advised that it is very important that WALH staff report any broken fencing to keep them maintained to their current high standard. He also suggested that following the Council's decision to charge for the collection of bulky items of rubbish, WALH needs to do more to help tenants with this.

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

801. TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY 2006:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to advise Members of the requirement to undertake a tenant satisfaction survey this financial year. The work will be undertaken in-house.

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

802. DECISIONS OF NFA AGM AND ANNUAL REPORT 2006:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) informing Members of decisions taken at the recent AGM held in York on 27th April 2006.

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

803. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2006:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) informing Board Members of the arrangement for the 2006 Annual General Meeting to be held at the JJB stadium on Friday 20th October 2006.

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

Board Members gave various tributes to the Chief Executive and thanked him for the years of commitment he has given to WALH and the Housing Department before that. Members congratulated him on his many achievements and expressed appreciation for how approachable and helpful he has been to Board Members.

In reply, the Chief Executive thanked the Board for their support and encouragement since the ALMO's inception.

804. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 6.00pm on Tuesday, 4th July 2006 at Leigh Homes HQ, Chapel Street, Leigh.

CHAIR