

WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING BOARD 2 MARCH 2010

Social Responsibility Policy Progress Report

Report of the Chief Executive
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Purpose/Summary:
In February 2009, Board adopted a Social Responsibility Policy Framework which had five policy principles and five priorities for us to focus on. This report sets out our achievements over the last year.
Recommendations:
The Board is asked to approve the report and to consider continuing the commitment to the Social Responsibility Policy Framework adopted on 7th February 2009.

For decision, discussion or information?	Decision
For the open part or the press and public excluded part of the agenda? If press and public excluded please state reason.	Open

Resource and Value for Money Implications:	£180,000 contained in budget for Apprentices. £250,000 annual provision made for Better Neighbourhoods fund. Approximately £14 million contained in 2009-2012 investment programme for boiler replacements and fuel conversion.
Employee Implications:	One of the five priorities is “looking after our staff”, formalising our commitment to family friendly policies and staff development.
Key Risks incl. Company reputation, business relationships, health and safety and legal implications	Policy formalises our commitment to complying with laws. The key risks revolve around delivery so lead projects are delivered and progress covered in half year and annual reports.
Equality (Impact) Assessed?	Yes √ No Not Applicable
Equality & Diversity and Community Implications:	Equality impact undertaken. Strong emphasis on tackling deprivation and inequalities in employment and health.
Impact on Tenants/Customers:	Policy emerges from tenants’ views, and majority of projects directly benefit tenants.

Environmental Implications:	Priority includes £14 million investment in providing energy efficient boilers.			
Area Forums Affected:	All			
Tracking/Process	Consultation	Area Forum/s	Committee	Board
	Tenant Board Members. Staff consultative group. Tenants			7 Feb 2009 2 Mar 2010

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Socially responsible business practice is becoming an increasingly important aspect for companies regardless of what business sector they are in. Increasingly it offers the chance for the organisation to gain a competitive advantage and strengthens the perception of the company in the eyes of key stakeholders.
- 1.2 At the Board meeting on 7th February 2009, Members approved a social responsibility policy framework setting out how, as a social housing service, we can make our estates a better place to live. This followed listening to tenants and other stakeholders and identifying what they saw as important.
- 1.3 The policy framework contains:
- five policy principles to guide us, and
 - five priorities to focus our energies on.
- 1.4 The five policy principles adopted were as follows:
1. **Ethically responsible** – being moral, honest, treating people with respect and doing what is right.
 2. **Legally responsible** – complying with the law.
 3. **Economically responsible** – not trading at a loss and returning unused funds to the local housing account (currently known as the Housing Revenue Account).
 4. **Giving back to our community** – giving back to the community in which we operate, helping create a better community.
 5. **Accountable** – being open and honest in our performance to our shareholders and tenants.
- 1.5 In addition to these five policy principles there are other policies approved by Board to make explicit our commitment on key issues such as:
- Equality and Diversity, and
 - Health and Safety.
- 1.6 Life in this Borough is not fair and Members will recall this is vividly illustrated by the research into inequalities led by one of our former Directors, Dr. Elspeth Brighton. The findings of Elspeth's research were widely published using an innovative approach following the fortunes of 400 babies born in Wigan in 2008, 200 from the least deprived parts of the borough, and 200 from the most deprived. "Box 1" sets out some of what will happen to the babies if nothing changes.

Box 1: Deprivation in Wigan Borough – WALH’s “400 babies.”

(Dr. Elspeth Brighton, 2008)

Aspect of Life	Of the 400 babies	Out of Least deprived 200	Out of Most deprived 200
Health	Have a limiting long term illness	25	62
	Smoke	29	75
	Have a drug problem	4	12
Education	Get at least 5 GCSEs A to C	154	60
	Stay on at school after 16	79	37
Work	Become a professional or manager	61	18
	Work full time	117	62
	Live on benefits	17	88
Home and family	Go home to Council house	1	145
	Are part of lone parent family	17	76
Experience of Crime	Burglary	2 per year	3 per year
	Domestic Violence	1 every 7 years	2 per year
And Finally	Live alone as a pensioner	51	94
	Live to the age of	77 if male 83 if female	70 if male 75 if female

1.7 The remainder of this report focuses on the five priorities set in our Social Responsibility Policy Framework adopted last February. These represent how Wigan and Leigh Housing is giving back to the community in which we operate helping create a better community.

2.0 Social Responsibilities Priorities - Progress Report

2.1 The five priorities set by Board in February 2009 are set out in Appendix A and cover:

- Tenant empowerment
- Tackling unemployment
- Improving health
- Reducing tenants' fuel bills
- Looking after our staff

2.2 The major achievements over the last year are set out in "Box 2".

"Box 2" – Major Achievements in 2009			
<u>Tenant Empowerment</u>		<u>Tackling Unemployment</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £250,000 Better Neighbourhood Funds used by tenants to improve quality of life on estates. • Shadow Tenants' Committee established, major decisions include increasing boiler programme by £1million. • Successful Tenants' Conference and Assembly run "by tenants, for tenants". 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 20 apprentices employed at any one time, over 50% live on our estates. • Partner contractors providing 60 apprenticeship places and supporting the Western Skills Centre. • Wigan and Leigh Housing providing and facilitating apprenticeship programmes in public sector and social housing. 	
<u>Improving Health</u>	<u>Reducing Fuel Bills</u>	<u>Looking after Our Staff</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 24,500 long life smoke alarms installed. • Expansion of the Atherton healthy living project to Ashton. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "SAP" energy rating of 71. • 2,000 new boilers installed. • Insulation of Scholes high rise. • Some £1.5million in "grants" provided by energy companies and GM Procure. • 30,000 energy efficient light bulbs distributed. • Energy efficient light bulbs fitted in all new lettings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family friendly policies. • Fair pay and grading framework introduced. • Continued investment into staff training and development. • Flexible working during "the big freeze". 	

2.3 These are our major achievements but much more has been delivered. Below is a list of just a few of the other achievements:

- Our builders donating £20,000 to the charity Communities United enabling them to provide sports and other activities to young people on our estates.
- Staff raising many thousands of pounds for various charities. Examples this year include Race for Life £450, Red Nose Day £790, Wear it Pink

£286, Jeans for Genes £400, charity contributions instead of sending Christmas cards £413, and Haiti Disaster Fund £135.

- Extending our “rent service” to provide “money advice”. Over 500 people have attended our advice days, our “open door” service with CAB has helped 612 clients with debts of around £4million and Credit Unions have been promoted.
- 18 staff benefiting from Busy Bees childcare scheme.
- Helping business in the recession by paying bills promptly, an average of 4 days for some 6,400 invoices.
- Staff Conference involving visits to our estates and community schemes to make staff more aware of how we can improve people’s lives.
- Sponsoring the Local Heroes award.
- Supporting the Compassion in Action charity based at Lowton which provides help to deprived and homeless people throughout the Borough. Support includes low cost rent of one of our shops plus a grant from the Better Neighbourhoods Fund.
- All our 101 new dwellings being built to Code 3 sustainability standard.

2.4 There are many other acts of kindness. One of the most moving involved staff in Housing Options buying and sending Christmas cards to their clients. This included individuals with little or no social networks who were delighted that someone was thinking of them.

3.0 Conclusions

3.1 Socially responsible business practice is becoming an increasingly important aspect of the company’s image and reputations.

3.2 In February last year, the Board adopted a Social Responsibility Policy Framework which, in essence, sets out our broader commitments to help create a better community above and beyond our core business activities.

3.3 This report sets out our major achievements over the last 12 months covering deprivation, environmental , charity and staff issues.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Board is asked to approve the report and to consider continuing the commitment to the Social Responsibility Policy Framework adopted on 7th February 2009.

Better Homes, Brighter Futures

What we can do to make this a better community - Our Social Responsibilities priorities until 2016

	Tenant empowerment	Tackling unemployment	Improving health	Reducing tenants' fuel bills (Energy Conservation)	Looking after our staff
Lead	Director of Housing Management	Chief Executive	Director of Housing Needs	Director of Asset Management & Development	Director of Resources
What we want to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants having a major say in influencing and challenging housing services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and employment opportunities for people who live on our estates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling inequalities in health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being amongst the top performers for energy efficiency in the region (SAP rating). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having well trained motivated staff, contributing to our vision and social responsibilities.
How we will do it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants being the largest group on the Board • Changes to governance arrangements to increase tenants' say • Strengthening the roles of the Tenants Assembly and Forums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming an exemplar of good practice on apprenticeships • Influencing the Local Strategic Partnership to create more apprenticeship posts in local public services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking the Primary Care Trust into our tenants and residents network • Promoting and facilitating uptake of key health initiatives such as affordable healthy eating and smoking cessation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing home insulation programme (High rise blocks) • Replacing electric storage heaters • Replacing older heating systems with more efficient boilers • Building environmentally friendly homes (Code 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family friendly policies • Encouraging learning and development linking appraisals to learning programmes • Facilitating charity and community working.
Knowing we are getting there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Governance Improvement Plan • An increase in tenant satisfaction levels with opportunities for participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of people from Council estates in our apprenticeship programme • Number of apprenticeships provided by local employers and our contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased uptake of healthy initiatives amongst deprived communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing investment programmes • Benchmarking within other social housing providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investors in People status • Staff satisfaction • Support to charities.