

WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING COMPANY LIMITED

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AT LEIGH HOMES HEADQUARTERS

TUESDAY 4th JULY 2006

Present:

Members:

John Roe (Chair), Tom Frost, Pat Cummins, Don Battersby, Deborah Lee, Geoff Roberts, Marjorie Marsden and Mick Baines (part).

In Attendance:

Ashley Crumbley (Chief Executive) and Edward Flanagan (Board Services and Finance Officer)

The Chair welcomed the new Chief Executive to the post and wished him every success.

805. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Chris Ready and Linda Jones.

806. MINUTES:

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 23rd May 2006 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising

Day to Day Repairs Budget Revenue Out-turn 2005/06 (minute 786 refers) The Chief Executive advised that due to unforeseen circumstances the Finance Committee meeting of 4th July had been cancelled and the report requested on the Day to Day Repairs Budget was still being written by the Council's Internal Audit Section.

Members agreed to hold the next meeting of the Finance Committee at 4.30pm on Tuesday 15th August 2006, preceding the WALH Board meeting.

Outsourcing of Former Tenants Arrears – Appointment of a Debt Collection Agency (minute 798 refers) The Chief Executive advised that he would be looking closely at this to ensure the programme runs smoothly.

807. URGENT BUSINESS:

No urgent business was presented to the Board.

808. AGENDA ORDER:

Members agreed to receive the agenda in the order presented.

809. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC:

Members agreed to exclude the press and public from the items referred to in minutes 815 to 817 and 819 as they contained personnel, financial or commercially sensitive information.

ITEMS FOR DECISION:

Open Items

810. DRAFT VISION:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) setting out a draft vision for the company for the next ten years. Members were informed of the different stages involved in formulating the draft vision and plans for consultation with tenants and staff.

In reply to questions raised, the Chief Executive advised that the vision is closely aligned to goal 6 of the Community Plan produced by the Local Strategic Partnership. Members commented that the partnership aspect of the vision is key to its success.

The Board also discussed proposals for the review of governance and commented that the whole Board structure should be looked at rather than bits and that nothing is sacred. Members suggested that the current structure, set up 5 years ago, was due for review. It was suggested that a small group undertake the review, to consist of the Joint Chairs of the Parent Board, a representative from each Area Board, a tenant, a representative of the Council and an external consultant.

Votes For: 7

Against 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** (a) To approve the draft vision and the Chief Executive ensure consultation takes place in July with staff, residents and other stakeholders.

(b) To form a working group consisting of the Joint Chairs, a representative from each of the Area Boards, a tenant, a representative of the Council and an external consultant to review governance arrangements in light of the emerging new vision for the Company and report back to the Board.

At this point Mick Baines joined the meeting.

811. SELECTION OF INDEPENDENT BOARD MEMBERS:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) seeking guidance on how to proceed with the recruitment campaign for Independent Board Members now that the Board structure was to be reviewed. Members agreed that extending the term of those Independent Board Members due to retire would be a better solution than

trying to recruit new people to an unknown board structure. The Chief Executive informed Members of legal advice received stating that those Independent Board Members due to retire must do so at the AGM but the AGM can be postponed upto January 2007. He thought this would give enough time to review governance arrangements and be able to recruit new Members as necessary.

Votes For: 8
Against 0
Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To postpone this year's AGM up to January 2007, leaving the Recognition Dinner to take place on the date originally set for the AGM of 20th October 2006.

812. EXTENSION OF INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to obtain permission to extend Introductory Tenancies in certain circumstances. In reply to Members concerns, the Chief Executive advised that the organisation needs to improve its approach to using the Introductory Tenancy to evict tenants causing anti social behaviour and the new powers would help.

In reply to a question raised, the Chief Executive said that each case of rent arrears needs to be looked at individually as everyone's circumstances are different. Therefore it would not be possible to issue prescriptive criteria.

Votes For: 8
Against 0
Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To allow the use of new powers to extend Introductory Tenancies in certain circumstances.

813. ATHERTON MANAGEMENT AREA ANNUAL UPDATE:

This report was withdrawn.

814. MINUTES:

- (a) **Minutes – Equality and Diversity Committee 8th May 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.
- (b) **Minutes – Equality and Diversity Committee 19th June 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.
- (c) **Minutes – Finance Committee 23rd May 2006**
These were endorsed.

Matters Arising

Housing Revenue Account Out-turn 2005/06 (Minute 143 refers)

Board Members requested a written report on the HRA Out-turn to be presented to the Finance Committee at it's next meeting.

- (d) **Minutes – Wigan Homes Board 31st May 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.
- (e) **Minutes – Leigh Homes Board 7th June 2006**
These were endorsed and there were no matters arising.

Press and Public Excluded Items

815. REORGANISATION OF MANAGEMENT TEAM:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to propose the reorganisation of Management Team. He outlined in detail the proposed changes and the reasoning behind them.

In reply to questions raised, the Chief Executive advised that in the new structure the Directors would need a strong team of managers under them who would take on an operational management role and who were empowered to make decisions, leaving the Directors with more of a strategic role. The Chief Executive did not believe there was any risk of “under-management” at Chief Officer level.

Votes For: 8
Against 0
Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** (a) The Management Team be restructured as set out in the report.

- (b) Any recruitment or selection in accordance with Company Policy.
- (c) The Director of Corporate Services post be disestablished and a new post of Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects be created.
- (d) To delegate responsibility for implementing any redundancy to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of Human Resources Committee.
- (e) The Business Services Manager be appointed as Company Secretary and remunerated appropriately.
- (f) Human Resources Committee oversees the implementation of the changes.
- (g) Wigan Homes Board and Leigh Homes Board be informed of the change.
- (h) To delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Co-Chairs and the Chair of the Human Resources Committee any other decisions or changes that may be necessary to implement the new structure and to report back to the Board were the delegated power has been exercised.

816. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE FOR CHIEF OFFICERS:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) requesting the Board to formally agree a disciplinary and dismissal procedure for Chief Officers. A copy of which was appended to the report.

Votes For: 8

Against 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To approve the disciplinary and dismissal procedure for Chief Officers.

817. DURHAM STREET REGENERATION:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to update Members on the Durham Street regeneration scheme. Members questioned why each block of flats could not be demolished as they become vacant and were informed that this is due to environmental, health and safety and costs implications.

The Chief Executive advised that he would check if the flats have been taken out of rating to avoid incurring any Council Tax charges.

Votes For: 8

Against 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To note the progress on the regeneration scheme and support the recommendation to the Council that the Durham Street blocks be demolished and landscaped pending the development of a suitable regeneration scheme.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

Open Items

818. PURSUANCE OF RENT ARREARS:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) informing the Board of WALH's performance in pursuance of rent in 2005/06. Members were invited to email any technical questions to the Chief Executive or the Board Services and Finance Officer who would ensure that they are passed on to the appropriate manager and answered.

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

Press and Public Excluded Items

819. PROGRAMMED WORKS PROGRESS:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) providing the Board with an update on progress on the 2006/07 partnering programmes including kitchens, external repairs and painting (planned maintenance), roofing and environmental improvements.

Members requested that profiled spend is shown against actual spend in future reports.

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

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Open Items

820. GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF ARMS LENGTH MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) to inform Members of the publication of the Department of Communities and Local Government's review of Arms Length Management Organisations and comment on the implications for Wigan and Leigh Housing and Wigan Council.

Members were given feedback from those who attended a recent trip to the House of Commons to lobby MP's and of the opportunities that may emerge for creating affordable housing.

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

821. DRAFT AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY:

The Chief Executive presented a report (circulated) on Wigan Council's Draft Affordable Housing Strategy and to seek Board Members comments on the strategy and Wigan and Leigh Housing's potential role.

Votes For: 8

Against 0

Abstentions: 0

It was **AGREED** To give authority to Officers to look at possible ways WALH could assist the Council in delivering its Affordable Housing Strategy.

822. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 6.00pm on Tuesday, 15th August 2006 at WALH HQ, Westwood Park Drive, Wigan.

CHAIR