



# The Gateshead Housing Company

Working with Gateshead Council

## RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9 September 2014

### PRESENT:

#### Directors

John Hamilton (Chair)  
Robert Buckley  
Sheila Bouitieh  
George Clark  
Mick Davison  
Paul Foy

#### Advisers

Jon Mallen-Beadle	Managing Director
Neil Bouch	Director of Customers and Communities
Natalie Hewitt	Head of Corporate Services
Jennifer Aston	Support Services Manager
Louise Taylor	Involvement and Diversity Manager
Stuart Gibson	Governance and Risk Officer

#### Apologies

Kathryn Ferdinand  
Joachim Mouanda Moussouanda

### 11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were declared.

### 12 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 6 May 2014 were approved as a correct record.

### 13 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – FIRST QUARTER 2014/15

The committee received an update on the management accounts for the first quarter of the financial year 2014/15 including the income and expenditure in relation to both revenue and repairs.

The revenue accounts show a surplus of £214,000. This is due to an increase in income from properties owned by TGHC, slippage on vacant posts and overhead budgets where spend will not be realised until later in the year.

A £128,000 under spend on employee costs is mainly due to slippage on vacant posts.

The overhead costs are under budget by £106,000 to the first quarter, which is mainly due to budgets that are traditionally not spent until later in the year and lower utility bills during the summer months.

At the year end, a £21,000 overall surplus is being forecast for the revenue budget.

The overall position for repairs at the end of the first quarter is an under spend of £416,000. Although the position at the end of the first quarter would suggest that spend is reducing since last year, there are still some areas of concern within the budget and an overspend of £531,000 is being forecast by the end of the financial year.

Although relets are currently underspent by £145,000, it is forecast that spend will come in on budget by the year end. The committee questioned this given the number of delays in voids being returned. It was noted that some of the underspend was linked to invoices from Mears not yet being agreed. Discussions have taken place with Mears to improve the process for planning voids.

The committee received an assurance that the Company would receive the 2% efficiency saving from Mears linked to the reduction in their pension contributions.

The committee expressed its surprise about the underspend on voids given that it was aware of delays in return of voids and voids not being passed as acceptable first time. It was noted that some of the underspend was linked to invoices not yet being agreed. There were costs that the Company had incurred but not yet paid. Discussions have taken place with Mears about the process for planning and signing off voids and a streaming plan had been agreed.

The committee received clarification for the reason the painting programme was underspent during the first quarter.

A member of the committee queried the forecast for responsive repairs. It was noted that it was likely that the Company had adjusted for something that had incorrectly hit the ledger and should therefore be excluded from the forecasts for the rest of the year. This would be clarified and members of the committee would be informed accordingly.

RESOLVED – That the financial management of the revenue and repairs budgets for the first quarter of the 2014/15 financial year be noted.

## **14 SICKNESS ABSENCE AND HR UPDATE**

The committee received an update on general human resources initiatives and developments including sickness absence and learning and development from April to June 2014.

The total sickness absence for the period equates to 2 days per person compared to 1.63 days for the same period last year, which is an increase of 18.50%, although this is significantly better than the final quarter of last year when 3.06 days were lost.

Short term absence is defined as a period of less than 15 working days in duration and long term absence is greater than 15 days in duration. Short term absence for the period was 0.76 days per person and long term absence was 1.24 days. This compares with 0.83 days short term absence and 0.80 days long term absence for the same period last year. This represents a reduction of 8.43% in short term absence and an increase of 35.48% in long term absence.

The biggest cause of absence was post operation recovery with 194 days lost compared to 165 days lost last year. This is an increase of 15.07%.

Stress related absence was 173 days for the period compared to 36 days for the same period last year.

85 days of stress related absence was reported as non-work related stress. This equates to 48% as non-work related absence and 52% work related absence.

Of the 173 days lost to stress related absence, six employees reported non-work related stress and four employees reported work related stress.

The committee made the point that although stress had increased in relation to last year's statistics, sickness absence due to stress was still significantly lower than a few years ago. A further point was made that when levels get down to such small numbers, when the percentage goes up there is less need to worry as much.

The company has held 14 short term and 13 long term sickness absence review meetings in the period. One first written caution was issued and one final written caution was issued following short term absence review meetings.

In respect of post operation sickness absence, it was noted that there is an anticipated recovery time for different operations and the Company monitors against this.

The committee also received details of other HR initiatives and developments and learning and development activity during the period.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

## **15 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ACCREDITATION AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING GOOD PRACTICE AWARD**

The committee received an update on the outcome of the Investors in People (IiP) Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award June 2014.

The Company was first accredited in 2005, followed by re-accreditation in 2008. A Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award was introduced by Investors in People in 2011. The company's assessment resulted in the achievement of IiP Gold status and Health and Wellbeing in 2011.

To maintain the awards, companies must be re-assessed every three years.

The assessment took place over three days in June 2014 with the assessor interviewing 41 employees, across a range of services.

The Company has received written confirmation that it has achieved liP assessment and the Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award.

A summary of key findings were reported. These included liP and Health and Wellbeing strengths and areas of good practice, recommendations and opportunities for development.

A continuous improvement plan was provided by the assessor for consideration by the Company. The management team and organisational development service will manage the implementation of the actions.

It is a requirement of the liP process that the assessor will contact the Company after 18 months. The Company has discretion as to the form of contact for example to monitor the action plan or deliver a toolbox talk to managers.

The committee was informed that the Company did not go for IIP Gold Status given the significant additional cost of the assessment.

- RESOLVED – (i) That progress against the Investors in People standard and Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award be noted and the Company receive updates on progress with the action plan.
- (ii) That the committee place on record its congratulations to all employees involved in this achievement.

## **16 HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE**

The committee received an update on the following health and safety activities for the period April to June 2014: -

- Partners activity
- Accident reporting
- Asbestos management
- Fire safety management
- Legionella Control
- Cyclical repair and maintenance
- Lift maintenance
- Company construction related activities
- Health and Safety Legislation changes

At the July Board Meeting, the Board approved a number of proposals relating to the future of the health and safety function. The Company has been working with the Council to progress these issues and will be providing the committee with an action plan and detailed update at its next meeting.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

## **17 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY – UPDATE**

The committee received a summary of equality and diversity work within the Company for the period April to June 2014.

The Company continues to collect a range of information about its customers to ensure that it understands the makeup and needs of the communities it is working in. Details of the profile of main tenants, which now includes information from over 40% of customers on sexuality and religion, were reported.

During the period, the Employee Diversity Resource has been reviewed and updated.

Following attendance at a Disability and Employment Event held by the Percy Hedley Foundation, the taking of a disabled student on a work placement basis is being discussed. This will be progressed in the next period and reported to a future meeting of the committee.

During the period, revised guidance has been produced to support the Company's overall approach to hate crime. Hate crime awareness training has since been delivered to all front line officers. This was welcomed by the committee.

The Company was shortlisted in April for a TPAS Award for Equality and Diversity for the Hoops for Health project delivered in partnership with Newcastle Eagles.

The Company has continued to undertake a range of activities to make the organisation more LGTP inclusive, both as an employer and a service provider, including the first meeting of the LGTB Employee and Customer Network.

The Company will be submitting its entry into the 2014/15 Stonewall Workplace Equality in September and has been implementing actions raised as part of the benchmarking process from last year's submission. The Index was revised for 2014/15 so this will be the first entry submitted in the new framework. Results will be announced in Early 2015.

The committee welcomed the work the Company was doing around Hate Crime and was informed that it was reported to Customers and Communities Committee as part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Update.

RESOLVED – That the progress of activity relating to equality and diversity carried out in the first quarter of 2014/15 be noted.

## **18 REVIEW OF ISO 14001**

In 2010, the Company introduced the first environmental policy statement and, following a two stage inspection by British Standards Institution (BSI), achieved ISO 14001 certification. The ISO14001 accreditation was based on the minimum level of the Environmental Management System (EMS) criteria that assessed office based activity which included utilities, waste disposal and stationery.

The accreditation applied to Keelman House only as out based housing offices are shared premises with utilities and waste disposal directly controlled by the Council.

Following the Company's move to the Civic Centre, the majority of its EMS elements were no longer under its control with utilities and waste disposal controlled by the Council. The Company has maintained its control of stationary ordering and continues to follow EMS principles and values with this activity.

The cost to the Company for BSI external audits and re-accreditation is £3,000 with further mandatory six monthly audits at a cost of £1,800 per annum. Following value for money principles, this cost was considered excessive when it was only able to maintain control of stationary.

The Company is keen to continue to maintain the Environmental Policy principles through the work of the Environmental Management Group. It will update customers via the Service Improvement Group and employees through internal communication methods.

The Company is serious about its social responsibility and will maintain and develop environmental sustainability in work and home life through changes in behaviour and attitudes.

The Company is confident its employees apply EMS values and principles and this was endorsed in the recent Investors in People accreditation and social responsibility assessment.

RESOLVED – That the review of ISO 14001 following the co-location of the company headquarters to the Civic Centre in February 2014 be noted.

## **19 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 4 November 2014 at 2pm in the Whickham Room, Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead.

## **20 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining business in accordance with Category 1 of the Company's Access to Information Rules.