



The Gateshead Housing Company Board of Directors

Thursday, 15 January 2015 at 10am

To be held in the Blaydon Room, Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent
Street, Gateshead

Agenda

Item	Business
1.	Apologies for Absence
2.	Declarations of Interest
	<u>PRESENTATION FOR DISCUSSION</u>
3.	5 -Year Business Plan 2015-2020 Presentation by Managing Director
	<u>ITEMS FOR DECISION</u>
4.	Minutes and Matters Arising (Pages 3-10) To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 20 November 2014
5.	Board Membership (Pages 11-13) Report of Managing Director
6.	Proposed Rent Increases for 2015/16 for TGHC Owned Properties (Pages 14-17) Report of Head of Corporate Services
	<u>ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</u>
7.	Wrekenton Housing Office Relocation (Pages 18-25) Report of Director of Customers and Communities

Item	Business
8.	Minutes of Keelman Homes held on 20 November 2014 (Pages 26-29) Attached
9.	Minutes of Audit Committee held on 13 January 2015 To be tabled
10.	Items for Information The following information item is available to download from the company's website: - (i) Petitions Update (ii) Outstanding Issues (iii) Forward Plan
11.	Feedback from Outside Bodies and Events
12.	Date and Time of Next Meeting Thursday, 19 March 2015 at 10am in the Blaydon Room, Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear
13.	Exclusion of the Press and Public The Board may wish to consider excluding the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item in accordance with Category 4 of the Company's Access to Information Rules



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

20 November 2014

PRESENT:

Directors

Paul Foy (Chair)
Elizabeth Bird
Sheila Bouitieh
Robert Buckley
Joanne Carr
George Clark
Pauline Dillon
Kathryn Ferdinand
Eileen Gill
John Hamilton
Peter Mole
Joachim Moussounda Mouanda

Advisers

Jon Mallen-Beadle	Managing Director
Neil Bouch	Director of Customers and Communities
Kevin Johnson	Head of Customer Services
Natalie Hewitt	Head of Corporate Services
Phil Gallagher	Head of Investment and Development
Stuart Gibson	Governance and Risk Officer

Apologies

Mick Davison
Helen Hall

65 REPAIRS DELIVERY

The Managing Director gave a presentation on the current contract extension with Mears, repairs post March 2017 and potential options.

The current contract with Mears ends on 31 March 2015 and there is an option to extend by up to two years.

Mears have offered voids in two of the five areas plus some planned maintenance work to the Council's Construction Services. This offer has been agreed in principle and approved by Cabinet, subject to finalising a number of areas.

A Working Group led by the Council has been set up to look at all potential options post March 2017. These include the retender of the existing contract, in-house direct delivery, shared services and a joint venture. The Board felt that consideration also needed to be given to pricing models and price per property instead of schedule of rates. The Working Group will report back its recommendations to Cabinet by the end of 2015.

The Board was informed that there would be more emphasis on making properties that are currently difficult to let more attractive in the future in next year's Capital Programme.

The Board felt that the Chair/Senior Officers should be speaking to the political parties about their plans for housing after the next General Election. It was noted though that housing wasn't very high on the political agenda at the moment.

Overall, the Board felt that what was most important were the outcomes and what delivers the best service to customers with clear and robust consultation with tenants.

RESOLVED – That a Board Away Day be held in the New Year to discuss the delivery of the repairs and maintenance contract two year extension.

66 MINUTES

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 18 September 2014 were approved as a correct record.

67 MATTERS ARISING

(a) Performance / Service Standard Results – 1st Quarter 2014/15

A meeting of Executive Overview Committee has taken place to look at the way performance is scrutinised in future. It felt that a lot of performance information would be better dealt with by the committees. The Company was currently producing a 5-year business plan and performance information would fall out of that. The Board needed to be more strategic.

New performance and service standard performance indicators would be agreed as part of the 5-year business plan and this would also provide an opportunity for Board to agree which ones they should be monitoring.

When the business plan had been agreed a session would be held with Board Members.

It was noted that a report was going to the Council's Cabinet on 16 December 2014 on the future of the Company.

RESOLVED – (i) That a session be held with Board Members when the 5-year business plan has been agreed.

- (ii) That the Board receive a presentation from the Council on its current financial position and the state of the housing revenue account.

(b) Redesignation/Reclassification of Redheugh and Eslington Court

The open day to promote the redesignation/reclassification of the flats in Redheugh and Eslington Court had been very successful with a number of the flats rented as a consequence.

68 DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY AND GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS AND MANAGERS

An updated domestic abuse policy and guidance for employees and managers was submitted.

Resources Committee, at its meeting held on 4 November 2014, recommended that the Board introduce the full policy and guidance, subject to the fact that men can also experience domestic abuse from their female partner and that domestic abuse also occurs in same sex relationships being highlighted in bold in the Policy.

RESOLVED – That the Domestic Abuse Policy and Guidance for Employers and Managers be introduced within TGHC and the Policy be monitored by Resources Committee.

69 BOARD MEETINGS 2015

RESOLVED – That the following schedule of Board Meetings during 2015 be approved: -

Thursday 15 January 2015 at 10am
Thursday 19 March 2015 at 10am
Thursday 21 May 2015 at 10am
Thursday 9 July 2015 at 10am
Thursday 17 September 2015 at 10am
Thursday 19 November 2015 at 10am

70 DIGITAL INCLUSION UPDATE

In March 2012, the Government set out a commitment to deliver digital services as the default mechanism for government services. This was further expanded in the November 2012 Digital Strategy.

In August 2012, Gateshead Council launched their Digital Inclusion project and partnership, aiming to address and co-ordinate some of the fundamental issues and activity taking place in Gateshead around access to digital technology and the shift to providing more services digitally. The Company is represented on this partnership.

As part of the Government's intended roll out of Universal Credit, there is an expectation that applicants will make their application for this online, demonstrating an increased need to ensure that tenants have the appropriate

facilities and skills to complete online assessments. If tenants fail to apply for Universal Credit correctly, this will pose a serious risk on rental income in future.

The Company has been involved in a number of activities supporting digital inclusion for its tenants and leaseholders to date. Details of the key facts and work to date were reported.

Whilst there has been a range of activity undertaken, it was acknowledged that in order to take this work forward in a co-ordinated approach, it is necessary to understand what proportion of customers have access to the internet and what they currently use this for.

The Let's Get Digital Survey was carried out to get an idea of the current picture to help inform the Company's next steps. In total, 490 tenants completed the questionnaire and the full results, including the profile of the respondents, were submitted. In particular, the survey told the Company that 73.1% of respondents currently have access to the internet with access by age varying significantly from 97.9% of under-25's having access compared to 49.7% of over-60's.

The information has provided a base for the Company to carry out some further work to fully understand the different circumstances of its tenants and leaseholders to increase both digital access and digital offer in the future.

The Company has commissioned a customer insight project through a local organisation to use this data, plus all other profile data held on tenant and leaseholder base, along with additional segmentation information to carry out a research project. This will involve categorising key customer groups to form the basis of a digital strategy. It is estimated that this work will be completed by the end of December to allow this to feed into the business planning process.

The Company will continue to work closely with partners to deliver on the digital aims, most recently having met with representatives from Gateshead Council's Library Services to understand how it can work more closely, referring people to their services where appropriate and hosting some of its activities in the training suites offered in some library buildings.

The Board felt that the Company should be looking at the age ranges and doing a targeted market research using this information.

The Board felt that that more customers going digital would free up more time for face to face contact with customers.

A point was made that more customers being able to access online services could actually increase social isolation. The Company didn't want to make older people feel more isolated and shouldn't forget about the social element.

The Company also needed to ensure it protected customers from the dangers of digital scamming. It was noted that the Company had already done a lot work around door to door scamming and would do the same around digital scamming. It was also noted that Mears are looking to start some work around social isolation and it would also be built into the 5-year business plan.

The Board asked if there was scope for courses around using the internet in community centres etc. It was noted that the Company did deliver courses in sheltered schemes but older people outside of these were harder to reach.

RESOLVED – (i) That the Digital Inclusion activity carried out to date be noted.

(ii) That the Board receive a presentation following the wider research being undertaken to discuss the challenges and opportunities available going forward.

71 PERFORMANCE – SECOND QUARTER 2014/15

The Board received the second quarter performance results for 2014/15.

At the second quarter: -

- 20 indicators were traffic lighted green, which showed that the annual targets for these indicators had been achieved.
- Two indicators were traffic lighted amber, which showed that the target had not been met but performance had improved on the previous year.
- 11 indicators were traffic lighted red, which showed that the target had not been met and performance had fallen compared to the previous year.
- 12 indicators were not yet measurable/baseline year.

The analysis therefore indicates that at the second quarter, performance relating to 22 out of the 33 measurable performance indicators can be traffic lighted as on target or improving, which relates to 67% of the indicators. This is a decrease in performance compared to the second quarter 2013/14 when 78% of indicators were on target or improving.

As part of the Board Away Day on 31 October 2014, it was agreed that performance reports would be linked into the 5-year TGHC Business Plan and would be scrutinised by the relevant committee in future, with a summarised report going to the Board.

The Board asked for clarification regarding the two tenants who had complained about the amount of notice given for painting with Mears agreeing to give 1 to 2 weeks' notice before works commenced. The point was made that this resulted percentage of customers satisfied with the painting programme being red and also suggested that the Mears didn't previously give this much notice to customers prior to painting.

RESOLVED – That the performance results at the second quarter be noted.

72 SERVICE STANDARD PERFORMANCE – SECOND QUARTER 2014/15

The Board was informed of the second quarter performance results against the Company's service standards for 2014/15.

At the second quarter:-

- 26 indicators were traffic lighted green, which showed that the targets had been met. This was a decrease when compared to the second quarter 2013/14 when 31 indicators achieved the targets set.
- One indicator was traffic lighted amber, which showed that the target had not been met but performance had improved from the previous year. This was comparable with performance in the second quarter of 2013/14 when there was also one amber indicator.
- 11 indicators were traffic lighted red, which showed that the targets had not been met and performance had reduced from the previous year. This was compared to five in the second quarter of the previous year.
- 15 indicators were not yet measurable.

Overall, performance relating to 27 out of the 38 measurable service standard performance indicators can be traffic lighted as on target or improving, which relates to 71% of the indicators. This is less than performance for the second quarter 2013/14 when 86% of indicators were on target or improving.

As part of the Board Away Day on 31 October 2014, it was agreed that service standard performance reports would be linked into the 5-year TGHC Business Plan and would be scrutinised by the relevant committee in future, with a summarised report going to the Board.

Concern was expressed about the target not being met for registering and updating applications within one working week and notifying successful bidders within three working days. It was noted that the Company did increase resources last year for bidding arrangements but as a consequence has created a backlog of new applications.

The Board asked if the Company was satisfied with Tyne and Wear Homes. It was acknowledged that there were issues with having one register and all separate lettings policies.

The Board felt that the Company needed to consider whether this fall in performance was just a peak or if there were longer term issues and whether more resources needed to be put into the service. It might also want to consider reviewing the current arrangements with Tyne and Wear Homes.

RESOLVED – That the service standard performance results for the second quarter 2014/15 be noted.

73 MINUTES OF ASSETS, DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting of Assets, Development and Investment Committee held on 16 October 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

74 MINUTES OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 NOVEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting of Resources Committee held on 4 November 2014 were submitted.

Jon Mallen-Beadle has contacted HouseMark about benchmarking with other colleagues and was waiting for them to get back to him.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

75 MINUTES OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 NOVEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting of Customers and Communities Committee held on 6 November 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

76 MINUTES OF KEELMAN HOMES HELD ON 2 OCTOBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting of Keelman Homes held on 2 October 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

77 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following information has been posted on the Company's website: -

- Real Life Reform Report (No 5)
- Forward Plan

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

78 FEEDBACK FROM OUTSIDE BODIES AND EVENTS

The following feedback from outside bodies and events was reported: -

- Paul Foy and Jon Mallen-Beadle recently attending the Northern Housing Consortium Housing Summit in Leeds and advised that it was the best conference they had attending in terms of content and relevance. There was some very useful information around links between housing and the economy. It was agreed that copies of the slides would be posted on the Board Members Website.
- Jon Mallen-Beadle advised that the Company had achieved Customer Services Excellence Reaccreditation and would receive the final report in due course with details of the compliance plus and any partial compliances.

RESOLVED – That the feedback from outside bodies and events be noted.

79 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 the indicated categories of the Company's Access to Information Rules.

80 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next Board Meeting will be held on Thursday 15 January 2015 at 10am in the Blaydon Room at Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead.

81 MINUTES

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 18 September 2014 were approved as a correct record.



Report to the Board

15 January 2015

Title: Board Membership

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of Report

1. To approve the appointment of Tracy Harrison as an Independent Director and the appointment of Ronnie Harris as a reserve Independent Director for one year.

Background

2. Barbara Dennis announced at the Board Meeting on 15 May 2014 that she would be retiring as an Independent Director at the Annual General Meeting in September 2014. Barbara subsequently retired at the AGM on 18 September 2014 and it was agreed to undertake a recruitment campaign to appoint another Independent Director.

Recruitment of Independent Director

3. The vacancy for an Independent Director was advertised in November 2014 through the Housing News Website and there was an article in the Evening Chronicle, Journal and Metro. The vacancy was also advertised in The NorthEast Recruitment Now.
4. This resulted in 23 expressions of interest with 11 applications being received. Of the 11 applications received, the interview panel consisting of Paul Foy, John Hamilton and Robert Buckley shortlisted five applicants for interview.
5. The Panel agreed to appoint Tracy Harrison as an Independent Director. In addition, the Panel agreed to appoint Ronnie Harris as a reserve Independent Director for one year.
6. Tracy Harrison is Commercial Director at the Northern Housing Consortium (NHC). She joined the NHC in 2006 and the roles she has held have gained her an insight and to learn about the work of different landlords.
7. Tracy's current knowledge and experience of working with Boards comes from her previous role as Director of Moorside Maintenance Ltd and from her involvement with the NHC's Board of Management.

Links to Values

8. This report is consistent with the company value of being honest, accountable and transparent.

Equality and Diversity Implications

9. The Company aims to have a representative Board and the current make up of the Board is taken into consideration when making appointments.

Financial Implication

10. The cost of advertising the Independent Director vacancy on the Housing News website, in the local press and The NorthEast Recruitment Now was £735, £1,677 and £298 respectively. There are no other financial implications directly arising from this report.

Impact on Customers

11. Having an effective and well trained Board can ensure that services delivered to tenants are responsive to their needs.

Risk Management Implications

12. An inability to fill vacancies or retain directors on the Board or a Board without the right mix of skills has previously been identified as an operational risk and this appointment will help to continue to mitigate this risk.

Value for Money Implications

13. There are no value for money implications as a result of compiling this report.

Health Implications

14. An effective and well trained Board will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents in Gateshead.

Environmental Implications

15. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Consultation carried out

16. It has not been necessary to carry out any consultation when compiling this report.

Recommendation

17. The Board is asked to approve the appointment of Tracy Harrison as an Independent Director and the appointment of Ronnie Harris as a reserve Independent Director for one year.

**Report to Board
15 January 2015**

Title: Proposed Rent Increase for 2015/16 for TGHC Owned Properties

Report of: Head of Corporate Services

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval of a proposed increase to the rents for 2015/16 for The Gateshead Housing Company owned properties.

Background

2. The TGHC Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy was originally approved by the Board on 21 January 2010 with a subsequent update on 12 May 2010. The policy was subject to an internal review in December 2014. The review deemed that the policy is fit for purpose and as such no amendments are proposed for 2015/16 rent setting.
3. The Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy details that the initial rent period for an assured tenancy must be in place for a minimum of 12 months. Any properties let during 2014/15 will not see a rent increase in April 2015.
4. However, we will increase the rents should any properties become void as the new tenants would be due to pay rent at the 2015/16 rental costs. These rents will be increased in line with the provisions within the Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy which allow for rents to be increased by inflation plus a maximum of 1%. We will undertake the rent increase in line with the guidelines as set out by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) as they are within the parameters provided for in our Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy.

Proposed increase

5. TGHC own eight properties as follows:-
 - St Cuthbert's Drive – 3 x 4 bed houses
 - Victoria Bungalow, Station Road
 - Brandling School House, Mulberry Street
 - Dominies Close
 - Grange Street
 - Chopwell Bungalow, Derwent Street

6. The rent increase proposed for 2015/16 is in line with the HCA guidelines of CPI + 1% and the detail is set out in the Appendix to this report. CPI in September 2014 was 1.2%, which provides for an increase of 2.2%, which is an average weekly rental increase of £2.06. There are no service charges in relation to these properties.

Impact on Tenants

7. The impact on tenants is in relation to the increased rent and service charges which are detailed in the Appendix. TGHC's Rent and Income Team are available for support and advice to tenants who may have difficulty paying and any welfare reform implications will be discussed directly with them.
8. The Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy provides tenants with the means to appeal any decisions made in relation to their rent and service charges.

Risk Management Implications

9. The risks associated with the setting of rents and service charges are included within the operational risk register. The Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy ensures that the risk associated with setting incorrect rents is mitigated.

Financial Implications

10. The Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy has financial implications in relation to the income to be received by the Housing Company. The proposed increase in rents is in line with the provisions set out within the policy, guidance from the HCA and council proposals.

Health Implications

11. There are no direct health implications arising from this report.

Value for Money Implications

12. There are no Value for Money implications arising from this report, however, the proposed 2.2% increase is in line with council proposals.

Equality and Diversity Implications

13. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Consultation Carried Out

14. We advised tenants at the outset of their tenancy that they would not see an increase during the first year of their tenancy. We will be advising all tenants of the 2015/16 increase in writing where appropriate with 28 days notice.

Recommendation

15. The Board is recommended to approve the proposed rent increases for TGHC owned properties for 2015/16.

Rent Increase Calculation

Rents will be set as follows based on the proposed 2.2% increase:

Property Type	2014/15 Rents 52 Weeks	2015/16 Rents 52 Weeks	Weekly increase 52 Weeks	2015/16 Rents 50 Weeks
St Cuthbert's Drive	£95.53	£97.64	£2.11	£101.55
Victoria Bungalow	£85.76	£87.65	£1.89	£91.16
Mulberry Street	£92.85	£94.90	£2.05	£98.70
Dominies Close	£92.85	£94.90	£2.05	£98.70
Grange Street	£89.69	£91.67	£1.98	£95.34
Derwent Street	£97.08	£99.22	£2.14	£103.19

Average weekly increase = £2.06 (52 weeks)

Report to the Board

15 January 2015



Title: Wrekenton Housing Office relocation

Report of: Director of Customers and Communities

Purpose of Report

1. To advise the Board on the relocation of the housing management service to a purpose designed building in Wrekenton working alongside other services.

Background

2. The Board received a report on 16 March 2014 advising of the Council's review of all of its assets and of Council services provided within the Wrekenton area. The outcome of the Wrekenton review was a proposal to co-locate services in a new service hub in the Wrekenton Community Centre.
3. The Wrekenton housing office is the only housing company service point which is not currently co-located with council services. All other housing offices are located with library or children services and benefit from improved joint working relationships and customer services.
4. Whilst the main alterations to the Community Centre have now been completed, work on the internal fittings is now underway.
5. The following services have confirmed that they will be operating from the new hub and discussions are underway with the Police to also be based within the hub.
 - Community facilities
 - Access to financial and advice services and health initiatives
 - Library Services
 - Youth and Children's Services
 - The Base
 - Community Education and Adult and Family Learning
 - TGHC Housing Management Services

The Wrekenton hub

6. The Council are consulting the public on a review of the libraries service and how it may be provided in the future. The outcomes of the review will be reported to

Cabinet on 24 February 2015, along with recommendations for the future provision of library services across Gateshead.

7. As there may be implications from this review for the Wrekenton Hub, the opening has been delayed until the end of March, when the outcome will be known. This will allow us to work longer with customers, particularly around alternative payment options.

The future Housing service

8. The current housing service will close on 27 March 2015 and will reopen in the new hub on 30 March 2015. There will be no disruption to services which will continue to operate as normal during the relocation.
9. In line with the Council's Customer Contact strategy, there will be no payment counter within the new hub. There are a range of other payment options available within the area to enable residents to pay rent and council tax, including pay points and the Post Office. In addition, a number of self service options are available on-line and over the telephone, enabling payments to be made 24/7. A list of paypoint and post office locations is attached at Appendix 1.

Consultation with Customers and Stakeholders

10. We wrote to all 3,649 customers in October 2014 advising of the closure and drop in sessions were held so they could give their views. During the period of 16 October to 19 December 2014, we surveyed customers visiting the Wrekenton Office on the proposals and asked them how they would make their payments in the future. We continue to capture further views from customers at the office on payments and access to services.
11. The results of the consultation are attached at appendix 2. 10% (366) were surveyed and gave their views. In summary :-
 - 79% of visiting customers access the office to make a payment
 - 60% of those who responded said they would use a Post Office or Pay Point as an alternative method of payment
 - 28% would use direct debit or standing order and
 - 8% would pay on line or over the phone
 - No objections were received to the proposals
12. As part of the consultation customer's concerns were logged and have helped inform the future housing service. In response we will
 - Continue to promote the alternative ways to make a payment and obtain a rent balance.
 - Provide location details of where payments can be made.
 - Provide details on how customers can continue to access housing services at the new Wrekenton Hub.
 - Maintain links with local partnerships and community groups.

Links to Values

13. This report relates to the following company values:

- Being honest, accountable and transparent
- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
- Being caring and respecting
- Embracing equality

Impact on tenants and leaseholders

14. 3,649 homes are managed in the Wrekenton area, with over 1,112 cash transactions taken weekly, of which 747 are rent payment. Upon closure of the housing office tenants will access services in a range of ways through the Wrekenton hub or at any other housing office.

Risk Management Implications

15. There are no direct risks arising from this report.

Financial Implications

16. There are no direct costs arising from this report but any costs around the relocation of the service will be met from existing budgets. Any implications to staffing will be the subject of a report to Resources committee on 24 February 2015.

Equality and Diversity Implications

17. We will work with all customers to ensure they are able to access services they need.
18. An equality impact assessment is being carried out as part of the review to understand the potential impact on different groups of relocating the office and any actions needed to mitigate this where possible. This will be included with a further progress report to Customers and Communities committee on the proposals.

Value for Money implications

19. The relocation of the office will enable us to review the housing services to ensure an effective service continues to be provided that meets the needs of the customers.
20. As there will be no cash counter in the hub, there will be a VFM saving around the cost of transactions. Currently to make a payment at a cash counter the cost per transaction is £2.29, which is significantly higher than other methods such as Direct Debit (34p), Post Office (49p), Paypoint (44p) Internet and touchtone (20p).

Consultation

21. The ward councillors for High Fell, Lamesley, Chowdene and Low Fell were consulted throughout the development of the hub proposals and support the co-location of services. In addition meetings have been held with local residents groups to seek their views and in the main there was general agreement to the proposals. Their main concern was around finding temporary accommodation whilst the works were undertaken.

22. Consultation will be undertaken with the existing customers and stakeholders to ensure that they are able to access services following the relocation to the Wrekenton Hub.
23. Consultation with the Councils Financial Services Team will be undertaken regarding the closure of the payment counter. Actions to minimise the impact on both rent and council tax income will be implemented to maximise revenue collection.
24. The Trade Unions have been updated on the proposals to relocate the Wrekenton Housing office and on the implications of the integrated model of working on 17 December 2014. They have raised no objections to the proposals.

Recommendations

25. The Board is asked to:
 - note the relocation of the housing service to the Wrekenton hub;
 - recommend that following consultation a further report on the proposals and implications for employees be provided to Resources Committee.

Payment options – in and around Low Fell, Springwell and Wrekenton

In and around Low Fell

Paypoint locations

- A Sockett and Son – 578 Durham Road, Gateshead NE9 6HX
- C & S – 3 Boxlaw, Gateshead, NE9 6ST
- Carr Hill News – 80 Potters Way, Gateshead NE9 5QH
- Charnwood Wine Store – 2 Charnwood Gardens, Sheriff Hill, Gateshead NE9 5SB
- Co-op Allerdene – 1-3 Trafford Road, Gateshead NE9 6NF
- Co-op United – 64 Beacon Lough Road, Gateshead NE9 6TA
- Finlays Newsagents – 117 Southend Road, Gateshead NE9 6XS
- J and B News – 212 Durham Road, Gateshead NE8 4JR
- Nisa Local – 26-28 Sheriffs Highway, Gateshead NE9 5UE
- Sanghera News – 40 Sheriffs Highway, Gateshead NE9 5UE
- Wetheral Stores – 23 Wetheral Gardens, Gateshead NE9 6PY

Post Office branches

- Low Fell – 439-443 Durham Road, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 5EX
- Lyndhurst – 29 Wetheral Gardens, Gateshead NE9 6PY

In and around Springwell

Paypoint locations

- C & S – 3 Boxlaw, Gateshead NE9 6ST
- Co-op Fewster Square – Fewster Square, Gateshead NE10 8XQ
- Co-op North East – Ravensworth Villas, Gateshead NE9 7JP
- Lifestyle Express – 51 Lecondale, Leam Lane, Gateshead NE10 8RA
- Martins – 8 Fewster Square, Gateshead NE10 8XQ
- Nisa Stores – 161 High Street, Wrekenton, Gateshead, NE9 7JR

Post Office branches

- Aycliffe Avenue – 47 Aycliffe Avenue, Gateshead NE9 7BX
- Beacon Lough – 10 Boxlaw, Gateshead NE9 6ST

In and around Wrekenton

Paypoint locations

- C & S – 3 Boxlaw, Gateshead NE9 6ST
- Co-op Allerdene – 1-3 Trafford Road, Gateshead NE9 6NF
- Co-op Beacon Lough – 64 Beacon Lough Road, Gateshead NE9 6TA
- Co-op Wrekenton – Ravensworth Villas, Gateshead NE9 7JP
- Finlays Newsagents – 117 Southend Road, Gateshead NE9 6XS
- Nisa Stores – 161 High Street, Wrekenton, Gateshead NE9 7JR
- Wetheral Stores – 23 Wetheral Gardens, Gateshead NE9 6PY

Post Office branches

- Aycliffe Avenue – 47 Aycliffe Avenue, Gateshead NE9 7BX
- Beacon Lough – 10 Boxlaw, Beacon Lough, Gateshead NE9 6ST
- High Street – 307 High Street, Gateshead NE8 1EQ
- Lyndhurst – 29 Wetheral Gardens, Gateshead NE9 6PY
- Wrekenton – 175 High Street, Wrekenton, Gateshead NE9 7JR

**Wrekenton Consultation for the period of 16 October 2014 to
– 18 December 2014**

We have written to **all 3,649** Wrekenton customers to advise them of the office relocation in September 2014 and invited them to attend various drop in sessions to discuss any concerns

We have also now personally talked to over **366 (10%)** of Wrekenton customers and no objection to the relocation has been received to date.

Of the customers that were asked about the reasons they visit the housing office:

- **79%** of customers visit to make a payment

The 366 customers surveyed:

- **263** customers pay rent**
- **247** customers pay council tax**
- **198** to use the free phone**
- **275** seek general housing advice**

**note some customers visit the housing office for more than one of the above reasons

Of the customers asked about alternative methods of payment following the relocation:

- **60%** of the customers said they would use a Post Office or Pay Point as an alternative way of making payments
- **28%** of customers said they would pay by Direct Debit or Standing Order
- **8%** would pay by phone or online.
- **4%** were undecided.

Five drop in sessions were held for customers including one at the sheltered scheme, Angel Court

- **5** customers attended these sessions

Wrekenton Relocation – Feedback and Responses from Customers up to 18 December 2014

Worries or Concerns	Anything else customer commented on/ highlighted	Our Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Awkward for older people ● Inconvenient to have no payment counter at new office. ● I will miss this office for paying bills. ● Not very happy about the payment counter closing as it will be very inconvenient. ● Only comes to Wrekenton to pay rent/ council tax. ● Very confused about paying rent at other places. ● Visit Wrekenton just to pay rent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It's a shame its closing, will hit a few people as its been there a long time. There are people who have always paid their rent/council tax here. ● Please don't close rent payment counter. ● The payment counter will be missed. ● Will be sad to see go as location is convenient it's a focal point for council services and staff are very friendly ● Would prefer to make payments for rent & Council tax at another office. ● Would prefer to still come into office to pay rent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All customers were provided with details of alternatives ways to pay rent and more specifically Post Office and Pay Point locations in and around the Wrekenton and Low Fell area. ● Those residents surveyed who didn't have either a rent or council tax payment card have been ordered one to enable them to pay at the Post Office and Pay Point. Those indicating Direct Debit as a preference were given a direct debit form. ● All customers advised that although office relocating it is close by where they can access housing services other than paying rent – although they will be able to pay over the free phone or on line at the library who will be co-locating with TGHC

In response to customer's concerns and questions we will continue to promote the alternative ways to make a payments and reassure customers how they can continue to access housing services



(Company number: 06972673)

Minutes of meeting of the Board of Directors held in the Board Room at Keelman House, Fifth Avenue Business Park, Team Valley, Gateshead on Thursday, 20 November 2014 at 12.30pm

Present:

Ordinary Trustees

Brian Kelly (Chair)
Joanne Carr
Anne Connolly
Paul Foy
Peter Mole

In attendance

Neil Bouch (TGHC Director of Customers and Communities)
Natalie Hewitt (TGHC Head of Corporate Services)
Phil Gallagher (TGHC Head of Investment and Development)
Stuart Gibson (TGHC Governance and Risk Officer)

Apologies

Linda Hitman
Hannah Shepherd

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Keelman Homes held on 2 October 2014 were approved as a correct record.

3 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – SECOND QUARTER 2014/15

An update on the management accounts for the second quarter of the financial year 2014/15 was submitted.

The management accounts show Keelman Homes has made a surplus of £22,747 in the second quarter, compared to the expected deficit of £45,583.

An overall deficit is still expected in this financial year, however it is now forecast that the deficit for the year will be reduced to £20,724 compared to the budgeted deficit of £91,165 (a reduction of £70,441). This is mainly due to a decrease in the cost of loan interest repayments required in year.

The accounts have also been impacted in the second quarter by the change from producing the statutory accounts under the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) to the Housing SORP, in conjunction with the external auditors KPMG.

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

4 SHARED OWNERSHIP POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The Board received a Shared Ownership Policy and Procedures which have been developed in conjunction with leaseholders (i.e. shared owners).

The policy and procedures have been developed to ensure that shared ownership properties are allocated to customers in a fair and consistent manner, in accordance with best practice and the Keelman Homes lettings policy, which mirrors the Council's lettings policy.

The majority of shared ownership schemes are funded by HCA and, as such, the policy and procedures ensure that the management of these homes conforms to the conditions of funding, as detailed in the Capital Funding Guide, in addition to acting in a legally compliant customer focused and transparent manner.

The policy and procedures cover all aspects of shared ownership including marketing, applications, allocation, rent collection, staircasing (purchase of additional shares) and sales.

The HCA recommend that all shared ownership providers develop and publish a flexible tenure policy. Flexible tenure is designed to enable a shared owner to remain in their home through either selling some shares back to the landlord (downcasing) or by selling all of their shares and becoming a tenant at an Affordable Rent. Any repurchase of the property will be considered as a last resort.

RESOLVED – That the Shared Ownership Policy and Procedures be approved.

5 NEW BUILD AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Board received an update on the current phases of new build activity for Keelman Homes.

There are 15 units currently being developed in the first phase of works, utilising developers grant and working in partnership with Esh Construction Services. All properties in this phase are expected to be complete within the current financial year to comply with HCA grant conditions.

Phase 2 of the new build programme proposed to provide 29 units across two sites in the West of the borough at the former Lonnen sheltered scheme site and a cleared garage site on the Runhead Estate.

The works to the Lonnen site commenced at the beginning of June with a draft programme targeting completion in early 2015. The site will include a mix of social rents (14 units) and private sales (6 units).

In relation to the private sales properties, the estimated valuations used in the financial model were agreed with the developer and based on local knowledge, recent sales and valuations of similar type properties and were conservative estimates of what was being achieved at the time the scheme was first proposed. Further to the last Board Meeting, an independent valuation report has been commissioned to verify asking prices for sales and typical market rents.

The Board was informed at its last meeting of the need to defer delivery of the Runhead site due to service diversions, no further work has been undertaken since the October meeting. As the site will not be progressed using current HCA developers grant, the intention would be to re-commence the scheme using HCA grant as part of the 2015-18 funded programme.

This scheme is currently being discussed with both Galiford Try and the HCA to establish what grant can be achieved through what the HCA have termed continuous market engagement. As the initial preparatory work and planning have been achieved, the indications are that an application for this scheme would be viewed positively as a confirmed, ready to commence development.

The next steps are to firm up revised costs for the scheme, taking into account the service diversions and submit an application to the HCA for grant funding.

Discussions are ongoing with Galiford Try as to which party would apply for the grant as although Galiford have committed to hold contract prices, they have not yet secured further grant for this scheme. Should Keelman Homes apply for grant in its own right, then the scheme could potentially be delivered as part of a package with the preferred development partner as part of the 2015-18 programme.

The Board received an update on the Empty Homes Purchase and Repair Programme. The five units that were in the current programme have now completed and returned to use as affordable homes.

Following award of grant in the 2015-18 allocation for the purchase and repair of a further 18 empty properties, work is under way to identify potential acquisitions and discussions are being held with the HCA about the possibility of commencing with purchases in advance of April 2015, subject to appropriate properties being available.

It has previously been reported that grant has been secured to support delivery of a further 27 new build units during the 2015 -18 Affordable Homes Programme.

The HCA have recently advised that they are considering requests for further units under the continuous market engagement route, although unlike in previous

rounds where indicative bids could be submitted, they require certainty and firm proposals on any additional schemes that are being proposed.

Subject to discussions with Galiford Try, the Runhead scheme is a one that Keelman Homes may submit a bid against. Similarly, discussions are being held with Gateshead Council about the potential timescales for the programming of the Clasper Village and Bleach Green regeneration sites, with Keelman Homes bidding for grant to support the purchase of affordable units from the appointed developer.

Following the recent functional review of Council services, a Housing Growth working group has been formed to look at strategic housing supply across the borough and the most appropriate use of sites for housing projects.

The Two Castles Framework that was used to appoint Esh remains valid until December 2015 and discussions are currently taking place with them about their capacity to deliver further works in 2015-16, once the current phase of new build concludes, which would provide some continuity and assurance around value for money as framework rates would be honoured. They have also indicated a willingness to work in partnership with both Keelman Homes and Gateshead Council's Construction Services on future developments.

A subsequent report with recommendations on the appointment of a development partner will be brought to a future board meeting.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the update on the new build programme and empty homes purchase and repair programme be noted.
- (ii) That a link to the video produced around the Kibblesworth development be posted on the TGHC website.

6 DATE AND TIME OF MEETINGS 2014/15

RESOLVED – That the following schedule of meetings in 2015 be approved: -

Thursday 15 January 2015 at 12.30pm
Thursday 19 March 2015 at 12.30pm
Thursday 21 May 2015 at 12.30pm
Thursday 9 July 2015 at 12.30pm
Thursday 17 September 2015 at 12.30pm
Thursday 19 November 2015 at 12.30pm