



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.