



The Gateshead Housing Company

Working with Gateshead Council

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

15 January 2015

PRESENT:

Directors

Paul Foy (Chair)
Elizabeth Bird
Sheila Bouitieh
Robert Buckley
Joanne Carr
George Clark
Mick Davison
Pauline Dillon
Eileen Gill
Helen Hall
John Hamilton
Tracy Harrison
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

Also Present

Paul Dowling	Strategic Director, Communities and Environment, Gateshead Council
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Apologies

Kathryn Ferdinand
Peter Mole

82 GATESHEAD COUNCIL BUDGET 2015/16 AND 2016/17

The Board received a presentation from Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Customers and Environment, Gateshead Council on the Council's 2015/16 and 2016/17 budget.

In particular, the Council's draft proposals for 2015/16, themed areas for 2016/17 and key considerations were highlighted.

The Board advised that there was an appetite shown from them to help and share with the Council where it could. Paul Dowling advised that he wanted to work closer with the Company.

The Chair gave particular recognition to the work that Paul had done since taking over as the Council's lead for housing and the Council's decision to extend the management agreement by a further five years.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

83 BOARD MEMBERSHIP

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.

Following a comprehensive advertising campaign, 23 expressions of interest with 11 applications were received. Of the 11 applications received, the interview panel consisting of Paul Foy, John Hamilton and Robert Buckley shortlisted five applicants for interview.

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.

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.

RESOLVED – That Tracy Harrison be appointed as an Independent Director and Ronnie Harris be appointed as a reserve Independent Director for one year.

84 FIVE YEAR BUSINESS PLAN 2015-2020

The Board received a presentation from Jon Mallen-Beadle, Managing Director on the draft five-year business plan.

Graphs showing rent arrears from 2008-2014, the number of void properties from 2009 to present and the percentage of customers satisfied overall with their neighbourhood were presented.

Some member of the Board were surprised that satisfaction was still falling and asked if this was specifically with housing or environmental issues beyond the Company's control due to cuts by the Council. It was noted that this issue needed to be dealt with collectively by the Company and the Council. It was also stressed that all dissatisfaction was followed up individually with the tenant.

A point was made that the Company needed to be careful not to deliver anything different that resulted in it taking its eye off the core functions.

The vision, mission statement and values were presented. The Board felt that these should be reviewed.

Details of the draft areas underpinning each of the following future objectives in the five-year plan were reported: -

- Protecting HRA income & investment in stock
- Supporting tenants & sustaining tenancies and neighbourhoods
- Investing in our employees & developing ways of working to deliver the plan
- Key partner working to deliver/support the Council's vision and objectives – it was felt that this should be amended to joint vision and objectives.

The Board felt that it would be beneficial if the organisations it would be working in partnership with (Public Health, Credit Union, other voluntary organisations) were invited to explain their budget positions etc.

The Board was informed that the since responsibility for housing had been taken over by Communities and Environment, the Council accepted that it didn't need as many performance indicators and that the Company could develop its own.

Reference was made to the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) being provided by Nottingham City Council for 16-24 year olds and the big savings. It was felt that this could be something to look into for harder to let properties in Gateshead.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted and a half day Board Away Day be held in February 2015 to support the development of the five-year business plan.

85 MINUTES

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 20 November 2014 were approved as a correct record.

86 MATTERS ARISING – CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

The Board was informed at its last meeting that the Company had achieved Customer Service Excellence Reaccreditation and would receive the final report in due course.

The Company has now received the final report confirming the Reaccreditation with no non-compliances, no partial compliances and five compliance pluses.

It was noted that it was not normal for an organisation to receive more than two compliances pluses.

The Board felt that the Company needed to make maximum use of publicising this good news story as well as discussing the detail at the next meeting of Customers and Communities Committee.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the Board’s appreciation be conveyed to all staff for this achievement and also for the work they do on a daily basis.
- (ii) That the Managing Director make maximum use of publicising this good news story.
- (iii) That the final report be circulated to all members of the Board and discussed in detail at the next meeting of Customers and Communities Committee.

87 PROPOSED RENT INCREASES FOR 2015/16 FOR TGHC OWNED PROPERTIES

A report was submitted proposing an increase to the rents for 2015/16 for TGHC owned properties.

The rent increase proposed for 2015/16 is in line with the HCA guidelines of CPI + 1%. 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.

RESOLVED – That the proposed rent increases for TGHC owned properties for 2015/16 be approved.

88 WREKENTON HOUSING OFFICE RELOCATION

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.

The Wrekenton housing office is the only 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.

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.

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 the Company to work longer with customers, particularly around alternative payment options.

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.

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.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the relocation of the housing service to the Wrekenton hub be noted.
- (ii) That, following consultation, a further report on the proposals and implications for employees be provided to Resources Committee.

(Mick Davison declared an interest in this issue due to the opening up of the Credit Union he was setting up was also delayed due to the current customer service centre at Wrekenton being earmarked for the new Credit Union premises)

89 MINUTES OF KEELMAN HOMES HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting of Keelman Homes Board held on 20 November 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be noted.

90 MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 13 January 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be noted.

91 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following items have been posted on the Company's website: -

- Petitions Update
- Outstanding Issues
- Forward Plan

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

92 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, 19 March 2015 at 10am in the Blaydon Room, Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead.

93 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 4 of the Company's Access to Information Rules.

94 MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 13 January 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be noted.