

Minutes of the Eighty-Fourth Board Meeting

Held on 28 September 2015 at 5.30 pm
In Room 1, Rowan House
Sheepen Road, Colchester CO3 3WG

Present:

Anne Grahamslaw (Chair)
Nigel Chapman (Vice Chair)
Alan Blois (Vice Chair)
Geoff Foster
Michala Carey
Julie Parker
Glen Houchell
Julia Havis
Tina Graves
Gerard Oxford

In Attendance:

Greg Falvey
Michael Hadjimichael
Karen Loweman
Mark Wright
Gerardine Murphy
Kirk Braker
Matt Armstrong
Kathy Fitzgerald

Owen Howell (Minutes)

Lynn Thomas (CBC)
Tim O'Connor (Scrutton Bland)
James Watson (TLCC)

1. Apologies and quorum

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Mike Lilley and Dionne Philp.
- 1.2 Anne Grahamslaw declared the meeting as quorate.
- 1.3 It was agreed that Information Items would not be discussed at the meeting, with any questions to be sent to Owen Howell within the next two weeks, copying in the Chair of the Board. Answers would be collected and disseminated to Members.

2. Declaration of interests by Board Members and Officers

- 2.1 No additional interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the meeting held 17 June 2015 and Matters Arising

- 3.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.
- 3.2 All action points from the meeting had been completed.

4. Voice your view

- 4.1 Kathy Fitzgerald read a statement on behalf of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Committee to explain that there had been an interruption in their activities, owing to loss of two members and staff absence. They would resume now that two new members had been recruited.

5. Strategic risk register

- 5.1 Michael Hadjimichael introduced the report and explained its new style and updates.
- 5.2 Two new risks had been added as a result of the government's budget announcements in July:
- Impact of Welfare reform
 - Impact of announcements affecting the financial position of CBH
- 5.3 Progress has been made to improve the risk score of two of the items, with further work on-going to reduce the score of all risks.
- 5.4 Anne Grahamslaw praised the effective and appropriate nature of the redesigned strategic risk register and commended Michael for his work on this.

6. Adoption of audited accounts

- 6.1 Michael Hadjimichael confirmed that the audited accounts had been presented to the Finance & Audit Committee in July, where they were recommended to the Board for approval. There have been no significant changes since that time.
- 6.2 Board approved the accounts and agreed that:
- *The Chair of the Board signs the accounts*
 - *The Chair of the Board signs the Directors' Report*
 - *The Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee sign the Annual Governance Statement*

7. Value for Money Strategy

- 7.1 Michael Hadjimichael confirmed that the Strategy had been approved by the F&A Committee in March, which was followed by the production of an executive summary. The Strategy will be under constant review.
- 7.2 Michael confirmed that the action plan will be reviewed by the F&A Committee on a quarterly or twice-yearly basis, with an annual update going to the Board.
- 7.3 Greg Falvey added that CBH had invited CBC scrutiny, with regular updates being given to CBC at Principle Liaison Meetings. This will ensure transparency.
- 7.4 The Value for Money Strategy was agreed.

8. Approval of Company Annual Report

- 8.1 Members were shown the Annual Report, which was in the form of a video.
- 8.2 Greg Falvey explained that the Report had been produced as a video this year in an attempt to increase the uptake, with research having shown that online content was becoming the favoured way for receiving information. This also cut down cost which had been incurred in previous years on excess copies of printed reports. A printed synopsis of the Annual Report would still be included in Housing

News and Views for the benefit of residents who could not view the video version.

- 8.3 The Board approved the new format and it was suggested that a copy was provided to Council and councillor colleagues, and that it be requested that a link to the Report be added to the website of CBC. **Action:** Greg Falvey to ensure that a link is requested.

9. Information and Confidentiality Policy

- 9.1 Owen Howell introduced the amendments to the Policy and confirmed that the amended Policy had been recommended for Board approval by the G&R Committee Meeting held on 9 July 2015.

The only substantive amendment recommended by the G&R Committee was to codify our commitment to never force a tenant or customer to lodge a Subject Access Request with another organisation or body. Such an action would be illegal and so the G&R Committee recommended that we expressly acknowledge this.

- 9.2 The following questions were asked by Members:

- Re. pg 117, 3rd bullet point: How do staff who work remotely store securely their devices?

Action: Owen Howell to obtain an answer and communicate this to Board Members.

- Re. pg 117, 1st bullet point: How are documents to be disposed of in line with the Document Retention Schedule, as this Schedule is not attached to the Policy paper included in the Board Papers?

Action: Owen Howell to send a copy of the Document Retention Schedule to Board Members.

- Re. pg 118, 2.7: Should the Chair of the Board be notified upon completion of the annual review of the Data Protection Register and re-registration with the Information Commissioner?

Action: Owen Howell to obtain views on best practice and to make a recommendation in line with this.

- 9.3 It was agreed that Board would reconsider this Policy at the Board Meeting of 27 October 2015 once answers to the above questions had been obtained.

10. CBH Foundation

- 10.1 It was explained that the working title 'CBH Academy' project might be renamed as the CBH Foundation, to avoid confusion with the Colchester Academy. The naming is still under consideration.

- 10.2 Gerardine Murphy introduced the report.
- 10.3 Gerardine explained that this was a project to coordinate and expand existing work under one name as a tangible product. Whilst there was currently no need to create a separate governance structure for this, such a structure could be introduced once the project is rolled out and proving successful.
- 10.4 Gerardine explained that a project initiation document had been drawn up which included much data regarding groups who would be most likely to benefit from the learning opportunities provided through the Foundation. Consultation exercises had been carried out to determine the needs of potential participants.
- 10.5 CBH Foundation would be looking to act as a facilitator, identifying individual training/experience needs and connecting individuals with appropriate organisations with the capacity to offer training and opportunities. We are not looking to run these programmes in-house. Examples include Colchester Institute, Harlow College and the training provider Qube.
- 10.6 As the Foundation grows and becomes able to attract extra funding, there is the potential for us to directly provide opportunities/training in areas where there is currently a gap in the market.
- 10.7 Outcomes would be monitored by a dedicated member of staff, although some outcomes would be difficult to monitor – e.g. employment outcomes are dependent on many factors, so the tangible benefits of training provided are hard to measure.
- 10.8 It is yet to be decided where in our organisational structure the Foundation will be located, but it is likely that the coordinator will liaise with staff and tenants across CBH rather than work in a discrete area.
- 10.9 Concern was raised that we might be duplicating sign-posting work being done by other agencies. Gerardine explained that we would be directly providing work experience/apprenticeship opportunities and some direct training. The rest of the project would be partnership working with other bodies. Greg Falvey added that all of the statutory agencies have gaps in their provision and that when we carry out voluntary interventions to help tenants, it helps our core business through improving the situations of our tenants. There are currently many opportunities which are not being taken up by tenants owing to a lack of sign-posting.
- 10.10 Gerardine noted that the Government was planning to introduce an apprenticeship levy on companies, whether they provide apprenticeships or not. This would increase the incentive for us to provide apprenticeships, as we would be paying towards them anyway.
- 10.11 Gerardine confirmed that volunteer involvement was expected, especially in the provision of digital skills training, with residents and operatives being trained to help other residents. Karen Loweman expanded on the collaborative work being done with the Colchester Volunteer Service (CCVS) in this area. Anne Grahamslaw highlighted the need to conform to HR legislation when involving volunteers in service provision. It was confirmed that we have policies for both tenant and staff volunteering.

- 10.12 Questions were raised as to the term 'Foundation' having a set legal status.
Action: Gerardine Murphy to confirm that this was not the case.

17. Finance Assurance Report

- 17.1 Michael Hadjimichael introduced the Report as the financial position of the Company as of 31 July 2015. The F&A Committee had examined the position as of June, but owing to timing had not seen the July figures. The position was largely as expected, with some underspends.
- 17.2 Michael clarified that the new business income was the anticipated sum and was included in the 'other/Revenue' total included in this report.
- 17.3 It was clarified that the second column in the table at 6.1 should be labelled 'Anticipated profit' rather than 'Anticipated Income,' and should appear alongside a column showing 'Anticipated Income.' **Action:** Michael Hadjimichael to ensure that the relevant changes are made to this table in future papers.

18. Performance Assurance Report

- 18.1 Karen Loweman presented the Report and confirmed that the Operations Committee continued to monitor performance, especially around the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- 18.2 There is currently only one KPI which is marked 'Red' (B&B usage), which at the time of publishing was at 28. As of the day of this meeting, this was now down to nine.
- 18.3 There are several KPIs which are currently Amber but are close to being on-target (as detailed in this report). Mark Wright explained that 'Average days to complete a repair' was currently running slightly over target owing to the increased number of lengthy jobs which were taken on and completed over the summer months.
- 18.4 The decrease in the average void time before re-letting (compared to the target) was explained as partly owing to improved working between Housing and Property Services and partly owing to the fact that we set our target based on average times to re-let, with no way to predict when voids will appear which require a longer amount of time before they are ready to be re-let. Karen confirmed that we are on track to be on target by the end of the year.
- 18.5 Karen explained that properties which are in need of serious remedial work, but are occupied by tenants who refuse the work, are included within the capital works programme, but that it is impossible to know when they will become void, thus allowing this work to be done. We know a proportion of voids will be in this category, and this is factored in to our target and we make a pre-tenancy check on such properties when tenants give notice of their intention to vacate.
- 18.6 The work being done to reduce the number of under-occupied properties involves working to find acceptable options to downsize for the tenants, based on location, needs, etc. We then search for acceptable alternative accommodation.

19. Committee minutes

19.1 No questions were raised.

20. Board Forward Plan

20.1 Owen Howell presented the Board Forward Plan. This was accepted without amendment.

21. Any other business

21.1 In response to a question regarding the meeting calendar for 2015/16, Owen Howell informed the Board that he was awaiting the release of the calendar of CBC meetings, at which point he will compile a draft list of meeting dates, which will be circulated for comments and amendment requests.

21.2 Greg Falvey and Anne Grahamslaw highlighted the quality of the NFA seminar on 5 November and recommended attendance for those who are able.

21.3 CBC's intention to find a way to assist in accommodating refugees was discussed. If this were to happen, it is likely that CBC would act in an advisory and sign-posting role, rather than trying to directly provide housing from the local social housing stock. It was confirmed that housing that was being offered by CBC were properties owned by private owners and had not been previously available for let.

21.4 Board was reminded that the upcoming AGM/Board would confirm Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs. **Action:** All Members wishing to put their name forward for a Committee Chair- or Vice-Chairmanship should inform Owen Howell of this. Where more than one Member has expressed interest in a role, an anonymous election will be held to allow Board Members to choose their preferred candidate.

21.5 The size of the Board papers was raised as a concern. Whilst this will become less of a problem once plans to give online access to Board documents are carried out, it was proposed that all report papers which have been past a sub-committee are only provided in full within the electronic version of Board Papers, with the hard copy only containing the executive summary. Hard copies of full reports can be made available on request. This was agreed.

With no further business, the meeting finished at 6.27 pm.