

THE BOARD

MINUTES of the **Public Meeting** held on **20 SEPTEMBER 2007** at 14 Hounds Gate from 5.30pm to 8.30pm.

Board Members:

Graham Chapman
Anne Dean
Harry Everington (left at 6.40 pm)
Martyn Kingsford
Peter Linford
David Liversidge
Margaret Pugsley
Paul Rowe
Valerie Schneider
Janet Storar
Malcolm Wood

Also in Attendance:

David Angus	Interim Director of Property Services
Lydia Dlaboha	Housing Quality Network (left at 6.45 pm)
Jean England	Shadow Inspection Tenant Inspector (left at 6.45pm)
Chris Langstaff	Chief Executive
Gill Moy	Director of Housing Operations
Amanda Schofield	Interim Head of Strategy and Partnership
Simon Sweetinburgh	Interim Company Secretary
Graham Ward	Shadow Inspection Tenant Inspector
Jo Wileman	Director of Organisational Development

07/15 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed Lydia Dlaboha, Jean England and Graham Ward to the meeting, and welcomed Harry Everington back to the Board of NCH.

07/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Ade Aderogba and Tim Bell.

07/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

**07/18 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
26 JULY 2007**

The Board adopted the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to a correction to item 07/06 2nd para, only 1 nomination had been received for Vice Chair – Janet Storar.

07/19 MATTERS ARISING FROM BOARD MINUTES

Minute 120 – The Chief Executive explained how this discussion with the City had been broadened into more long term strategic discussions about the Company's funding, and that he wanted to talk more about this with the Board at the forthcoming Board away day. It was also discussed and agreed that the Company needs to be substantially linked into the City's Neighbourhood Transformational agenda at all levels, including governance arrangements.

Minute 132 – The Director of Housing Operations confirmed that City officers were satisfied with the 07/08 Lettings Plan subject to a few minor amendments. When these have been completed the plan will be forwarded to the Director of the Retained Housing Service and the Housing Portfolio Holder in the City for sign off.

Minute 143 – It as confirmed that the Chief Executive is addressing the City's Scrutiny Committee soon and can expect questions on the choice based lettings scheme.

Minute 07/08 – The Interim Head of Strategy and Partnership confirmed that Green Paper implications are part of discussions with the City and other stakeholders in respect of NCH's Strategic Plan development.

Minute 07/11 – The Chief Executive informed the Board that the NCH IT Strategy was under development. It aims to complete in 2 months time and will be key in terms of discussing the IT SLA with the City.

07/20 HOUSING QUALITY NETWORK

Lydia Dlaboha of HQN gave a presentation to the Board about the forthcoming shadow inspection, and copies of her presentation were distributed to board members as a hardcopy handout. The presentation covered the purpose of the inspection; how it will be carried out and by whom; the scope of the inspection; the role of the staff and role of the Board; and how to prepare for the inspection.

In discussion afterwards, Lydia confirmed the following points –

- Extremes of view received by the inspectors will be easily identified and moderated through the focus group and triangulation processes
- Feedback from staff indicated a degree of nervousness with the District Auditor's report as yet unpublished
- The proposed interview programme will be reviewed to ensure it takes account of the extensive collaboration by NCH with other partners at the neighbourhood level
- Staff focus groups will report on the direction and leadership that they consider they get from the Board and senior management
- The report will help to identify for the Board where it can have most impact during the period up to the audit commission inspection
- The inspection will set NCH in the context of the standard of other ALMO's
- The inspection will be carried out by 7-8 HQN inspectors and 6 tenant inspectors over a 2 week period
- The inspectors are independent and the inspection will be both robust and challenging

(6.40 Harry Everington left just prior to the end of the discussion).

(6.45 Lydia Dlaboha and Jean England left at the end of the discussion).

07/21 COMPANY SECRETARY'S REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Acting Company Secretary. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman thanked Simon Sweetinburgh for his work for NCH in that capacity, and particular appreciation was conveyed to the company secretariat team for their work on producing the Board Members Handbook.

RESOLUTIONS:

The Board

- 1. Agreed to appoint Jo Wileman as Company Secretary as from 28th September 2007, and until the new permanent Company Solicitor/Secretary is appointed; and**
- 2. Noted the remainder of the report.**

07/22 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The Chief Executive and then Director of Housing Operations provided details of encouraging performance results which were coming through, including month on month improvements in rent arrears, and early improvements in voids performance.

In the discussion that followed the following points were noted –

- Board members experience of the new financial exclusion officers was very positive
- Where houses boarded up for good reasons, NCH should ensure people locally know why, perhaps by placing a notice on the property
- The voids standard is being developed in consultation, and 3 'show homes' are shortly to be opened as part of this consultation and board members will be invited to visit and provide feedback
- Gardens will be included in the new voids standard and the new voids team will be responsible for all voids matters from start to end of the void period for any property
- Councillors will be provided with contact details for the new voids team
- The voids standard will include a more flexible approach to the protection of void property and the voids team given discretion as to the most appropriate measure for each property
- A fundamental review of the caretaking services is going to be undertaken
- Vouchers to incoming tenants for decorations is currently being reviewed

The Board asked the Chief Executive to ensure that the City was formally aware of the existence of NCH's 10 year strategy and vision, and that all opportunities were being taken to ensure NCH is inputting our strategy/vision into the City's emerging 20-30 year vision consultation exercise.

The Chief Executive updated the Board on progress in recruiting a new Director of Finance and that a fallback position was also under development in the event that the recruitment campaign turns out to be unsuccessful.

The Chief Executive commented on the tenants Status Survey, detailed results from which were just coming through. Results will be analysed in detail and broken down into areas. A full report will be prepared and sent out to board members. The headline from the survey is that whilst we have seen some improvements in satisfaction ratings in certain areas overall there is little change from last time.

However, nationally tenant satisfactions are reported to have declined by 2% in the last year, so NCH should consider its results in that context as well.

The Board noted the report.

07/23 ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

The report was presented by the Director of Housing Operations. Whilst the Board agreed with the overall thrust of the paper, and also with the specific proposals being made in the report, concern as expressed about the rather broad brush costs provided.

The Board welcomed the opportunity for expansion at Hounds Gate, and the separation it afforded from the City, but only on the basis of a realistic assessment of the value of the property.

The Board welcomed the proposal to consolidate call centre operations at Harvey Road.

The Board also welcomed a review of the area office structure, provided this was undertaken at an appropriate level of detail and incorporated available data around tenant satisfaction, current usage by tenants etc and based on a vision of service delivery fit for the future.

The Board agreed to the resolutions in the report, subject to demonstration of a cost neutral payback over a 5 year period in respect of the recommendations

RESOLUTIONS:

The Board agreed:

- 1 (i) **In principle to take up the option of additional space in Hounds Gate on the basis of terms properly reflecting the condition and usability of the building;**
- (ii) **The Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair to implement the recommendation subject to a cost neutral payback over a five year period**
2. **Additional works to improve the accommodation at Harvey Road and enable the consolidation of call centre operations on the site subject to a cost neutral payback over a five year period**
3. **Undertake a review of area housing offices and their services;**

07/24 HOUSING OPERATIONS BUSINESS PLANS – VOIDS AND ALLOCATIONS / RENT SERVICES

The Director of Housing Operations introduced her report, inviting comments from board members on the 2 draft business plans either now or outside of the meeting. The templates arrived at for these reports following consultation will then be used for additional business plans to be produced for other services in due course. She advised the Board that a more rigorous and strategic approach to risk assessment would be undertaken.

In the discussion that followed the following points were noted:–

- Concerns around the low levels of literacy in Nottingham and the need to take this into account in service planning
- Consideration of risks around the future of the HB regime nationally, and also locally in terms of its management by the City
- Tenant frustrations with Homelink – it should be an NCH priority to improve the relationship with tenants over this process
- An analysis of previous lettings has been prepared by HomeLink which will help to inform customers when making choices about the type and area of preference when bidding for properties
- The local connection and how it may be prioritised is currently being considered as part of the review of Choice Base Lettings
- A progress report on choice based lettings in Nottingham will be brought to the next Board meeting

The Board noted the report.

07/25 REPORT BACK FROM COMMITTEES AND TASK GROUPS

The Board noted the report.

07/26 PROGRESS ON TENANT AND LEASHOLDER PARTICIPATION

It was pointed out that the new disability forum was not mentioned in the report and the Director of Housing Operations apologised for this omission.

Concern was raised that the report did not address the urgent need for tenant involvement with the City's neighbourhood transformation consultation programme "Your Choice Your Voice".

Concern was also raised at the apparent slow pace of development of the Area Panel and Forum structure. It was agreed that a further progress report will be produced for Board Members before the next Board meeting, to include a schedule of Area Panel/Forum meetings.

The Board noted the report.

07/27 BOARD MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

It was agreed that the committees meeting schedule will be reviewed now that committee memberships have been agreed, in order that committee members attendance can be maximised.

07/28 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Board were advised that it was proposed to close offices over the Xmas/new year period as follows – offices closed 24th-26th Dec. and 31st and 1st Jan.

07/29 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Board was advised that the date of the next meeting is scheduled for 15 November 2007 in the Board Room, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham, NG1 7BA at 5.30pm.

The Meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

SIGNED..... DATE.....