

Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing Limited

Meeting of the Board of Directors
30 March 2010, 6:00pm, Committee Room 3



Board Member Attendees: Roger Merchant (Chair), Diane Horn, Ron Jukes, Ann Watkinson, Paul Day, Patrick Cole, Peter Gardner. Neville Stork, Tony Buck, Kenneth Jones, Marie Hannabuss, Bill Cavender, Cynthia Popley, Helen Isaac, Ian Montgomery

Also Present: Tim Harris, Isobel Rickard, Steve Wilson, Maria Maltby, Richard Paterson, Sue Taylor, Neil Barks

Public Attendees Notified in Advance: Siva Balaratnam, Kathleen Clarke

Apologies: Mushtaq Khan

Minutes: Louise Gough

Minutes

ITEM	Action
<p>1) Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies were received and recorded from Mushtaq Khan. Notifications were received from Paul Day on his requirement to leave the meeting at 7pm and from Cynthia Popley who will be arriving at the meeting at 6.30pm.</p>	
<p>2) Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p>3) Minutes of the Meeting on 23 February 2010</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 23 February 2010 be agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting, and duly signed.</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Page 4- Board Away Day- RM advised the subject is to be addressed under agenda item 5 (Chairs Report).</p> <p>Page 4- Contact Centre Staffing- MM confirmed that CNH will continue to have temporary staff within the Contact Centre until a more permanent arrangement has been clarified.</p>	

4) Public Questions

There were two public questions submitted by Mr Siva Balaratnam

If the concerns of residents, who are voluntarily engaged in a participatory role with CNH, does not make an appearance as part of the decisions that are made on our behalf, how does CNH respond to customer needs?

Answer:

We have produced a menu of involvement to inform tenants of the different mechanisms available for involvement and we also welcome suggestions from tenants for other ways of involvement to ensure their views are heard.

Our Menu of Involvement was designed with customers and offers a range of ways to have a say on how services are delivered and to influence how the quality of services is improved. The likely time commitment has been listed against each involvement option listed in the menu. This enables people who wish to participate to identify an option for involvement which suits them and their lifestyle. Options for involvement include:

- An overarching Tenant Representatives Group, supported by a Leaseholder Forum and a Senior citizens Forum;
- Residents Groups;
- Focus groups;
- Task Groups;
- Face to face interviews;
- An annual Tenants' Conference;
- One off events, such as our Money, Money, Money financial inclusion events and Decent Homes Choices events;
- Estate walkabouts;
- Public questions at Board meetings;
- Learning from complaints, compliments and suggestions.

We also gather customers' views through our complaints, compliments and comments process, our annual perception survey and through customer satisfaction surveys at the point of service. Feedback from all of these feedback mechanisms are used to help us make decisions and make improvements.

Wherever possible, tenant views are always taken into account in the decision making process and are used to shape policies and service improvements. It is not always possible or practical to take the individual views of tenants into account, as these may, on occasion conflict with broader tenant opinion or on occasion the broader needs of the business.

Will tenant groups that have folded be encouraged to restart (as resident representation is not equally distributed and still remains patchy, especially in rural areas within our Borough)?

Yes, we offer support to a number of residents' groups in the Borough, helping them to build skills and confidence to enable them to be more meaningfully involved. We are always keen to encourage new groups across the borough and sustainability of existing groups by offering financial support and practical help and advice.

Where there are not enough tenants to support a tenant group, such as a block of flats or in an isolated village, we have a number of Community Representatives. These are volunteers who provide feedback and raise areas of concern for the area where they live.

There were two public questions submitted by Mrs Kathleen Clarke

What consultation process has been used in the formulation and acceptance of the new terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement coming into force in April/May 2010?

Answer:

The new terms and conditions are not yet set – they are in draft format. The draft changes have been agreed with a tenant and resident working group, internal service managers and the Council.

The draft tenancy agreement is to be sent to all tenants of CBC w/c 6th April where a four week consultation period will commence. The letter accompanying the draft tenancy agreement explains the consultation process and ways to get involved. A series of coffee mornings are also being advertised in each area to ensure that there is a local point at which people can discuss the proposed changes with us. The results of the consultation exercise will be fed through to the CNH Board and the Council.

Amendments will be discussed and ultimately sanctioned through both the CNH Board and CBC Cabinet. It is expected that the new tenancy agreement will come into effect at the beginning of June 2010 once the consultation process has been completed, and amendments agreed.

We are told we, as existing tenants, do not have to sign the new agreement, so what happens if, at the end of the consultation process, we do not agree with the new terms and conditions?

Answer:

The proposed tenancy agreement is designed to further strengthen our abilities to help foster our vision of decent homes in decent neighbourhoods. It is unlikely that there are any changes to the tenancy agreement that will adversely affect those who stand for the same values. We welcome resident engagement in this process and will genuinely try, wherever possible, to take into account resident's views. Once the consultation is complete and amendments made, the service of the new tenancy agreement, together with a 'notice of variation' binds all existing tenants to the terms of the new agreement.

Mr Balaratnam and Mrs Kathleen Clarke acknowledged the response and were thanked for submitting his questions.

5) Chair's Report

Independent Board Member Peter Gardner- The Board was advised that tonight is the final Board meeting for PG one of our original Shadow Board members. RM gave a big thank you to PG for his contributions and support to the Board. PG thanked the Board and staff for all their support and wished CNH good luck for the future. SW thanked PG for his support and advice within the development of the investment and repairs area of the service.

Replacement for New Independent Board Member- The Board was advised the recruitment process for the new Board member has started and a possible Director has been identified providing skills within asset management. ST advised that interviews will be taking place in early April. Hopefully therefore, the new member will be in place for the Board Away Day.

Board Away Day- The Board was advised that the Away Day is taking place on Saturday 17 April at Charnwood Borough Council Offices, Committee Room 2, with refreshments provided on the day. A quest speaker has been hired for the day to provide the Board with a stronger understanding of leadership and governance. RM asked for volunteers to assist ST and RM on the setting of the agenda. Board members wishing to volunteer are to email ST.

The Board received the report.

ALL

5) **Chief Executive's Report**

The Board were advised that part of the CEO report would be covered under the exempt part of the meeting.

Page 2- National News- Council Housing Finance – TH brought to the Board's attention recent developments nationally within Housing and advised that ST will be reporting to the Board on future developments.

Page 3- Voids- TH outlined the latest position in respect of voids. ST advised there are 156 properties currently empty which is the lowest figure it has been for a number of months. In future the Board will be presented with the underlying trends for voids and the actual figure. TH made the Board aware that there is still a long journey to complete but there are positive processes in place and we have stronger support from the Council

TH thanked the Board for their support during his time at CNH and wished CNH the very best for future. RM thanked TH on behalf of the Board for his time and support at CNH.

The Board received the report.

7) **2010- 2011 Delivery Plan and Service Plans**

MM presented the latest draft of CNH 2010 – 2011 Delivery Plan report highlighting to Board that since the first draft was presented in December 2009, further consultation has taken place with staff, tenants, key stakeholders. The Plan also incorporates the initial feedback received from the Audit Commission following the Inspection in February 2010. The Delivery Plan is supported by annual Service Plans for each service which feed through to individual staff targets and performance appraisals thus providing the Company's 'golden thread' for performance management.

ST advised this is a smarter, more detailed and cost effective plan than previously presented and responds to the inspection recommendation and weakness. The plan will be monitored and reported back to the Board through the new performance management framework on a quarterly basis.

PC asked if the current service level agreements listed on page 23 of the Delivery Plan were correct. RP advised the list presented is correct and values are to be included. PC asked for the list to be split to distinguish permanent and temporary SLA's.

The Board received the report.

8) Revised Performance Management Framework

MM presented the 2010 – 2011 Performance Management Framework highlighting to Board the revised framework which will enable Board, managers and customers to plan and deliver the strategic objectives of CNH more effectively and improve the management of the identified service improvements shown within the Delivery Plan, linking performance throughout the company.

Appendix 1- Revised Performance Management Framework- outlines how CNH will achieve performance excellence within the organisation from 1 April 2010 supported by the following key documents: Toolkit for Managers on Performance Management and Business Improvement, Toolkit for Managers on the Personal Development Review Process and Business Servicing Guide.

Appendix 2- New Performance Cycle- the cycle will involve all managers, staff and tenants in performance management creating a linkage across the organisation.

Implementation of a Performance and Scrutiny Committee- MM asked the Board to consider the implementation of the new committee focusing on reviewing performance issue on a monthly basis. Board will receive the performance reports on a quarterly basis by exception enabling a more strategic approach to be taken by the Board.

RM asked for volunteers from the Board to attend the new sub committee to be made known to him via email.

NS highlighted that the performance management framework is too complex and will not be easy for tenants to understand. ST advised that the framework was primarily an internal document and that information will be presented to tenants in an easier to understand format. PG welcomed the new approach to performance management as it will uncover blockages of communication within the organisation and ensure performance is more strongly managed throughout the company. RJ supported this.

CP questioned whether a rolling programme is to be set for performance monitoring. MM advised a quarterly report will highlight areas by exception for the Board to address.

NS asked if performance is a function of the Audit Committee. RM advised that within most ALMO's separate committees are established as best practice. The subject is to be further explored at the Board Away Day.

ALL

The Board received the report.

9) Board Training and Development Plan

MM presented the Board Training and Development Plan highlighting that the plan was developed using the following information:

- Board member appraisal interviews
- Board skills audit self assessment
- Draft audit commission recommendations

The Board Forward Plan has been used within the development of the Training Plan by looking at the key decisions the Board will need to take during the financial year and identifying the skills and knowledge Board members will require to best equip them to make informed decisions. The plan will be reviewed quarterly and will be tailored to individual Board members development plans.

RJ asked if the membership of the ALMO Board was flexible. TH advised that within the memorandum and articles it sets out what the Board membership should comprise of. Other ALMO's have set their own Board structure using different models focusing on smaller boards. Over the next couple of months we will be reviewing the best way forward for the Board.

NS asked if the Board Away Day could be held at another venue instead of the Council and suggested the Conference Centre at the National Forest. RM stated he is happy to consider all options on different locations and asked NS to let MM have details of the suggested locations.

The Board received the report.

10) Revised Customer Complaints Policy and Procedures

MM presented the revised customer complaints policy and procedures highlighting to the Board that the current complaints policy was adapted from the Council's when the organisation was established in December 2007 and now requires updating. The new policy is focused on the customer with an emphasis on personal contact and discussion within 3 working days of the complaint being received. It also empowers staff to resolve complaints swiftly. A customer panel is to be established monitoring how complaints are being processed and drawing ideas for service improvements from involved customers. The complaint procedure will be monitored monthly by EMT and quarterly to the Board. Tenants and stakeholders will be kept informed via CNH Newsletter.

KJ commented that a number of staff are still informing tenants that work cannot be completed due to lack of funds. SW advised that the staff in question have been addressed and a firm message has been circulated to staff on the subject.

KJ suggested implementation of a comments process that allows the tenants to make comments on repair work that has been completed, both good and bad. NS supported KJ.

PC asked whether time scales can be added to the stages outlined on page 6 of the policy.

IM suggested asking the TRG on the most appropriate language to be used in response to complaints to prevent over escalation of minor complaints. SB supported IM.

NS stated the wording used throughout the report is not clear enough. On page 6 there is not a clear outline for the decision process for each stage. TH advised that the document presented is for internal usage and a simple leaflet will be produced for tenants making the process easier to understand and will also be on the CNH website.

The Board received the report.

11) Revised Compensation Policy

MM presented the revised compensation policy highlighting to the Board the adoption of new criteria for compensation payments with effect from 1 April 2010. The current CNH compensation policy requires revision in line with best practice and Local Government Ombudsman guidance. The methodology for calculating of compensation payments outlined in the existing policy has proven unworkable and requires revision as outlined on page 8 Appendix 1 of the new policy. A leaflet written in easy to understand language will be made available to customers.

NS questioned whether the policy had received legal services opinion, as the policy states that compensation will exclude tenants who are going to court, which would not be viable to apply. NS further stated there are number of areas that need to be reviewed as the policy is still loose. MM advised that best practice has been applied throughout the development of the policy and that it is standard practice not to make payments where legal action is pending so as not to prejudice the outcome of any such proceedings.

PC stated on page 3 the response time of 28 working days does not fit close within the time scales stated in the Complaint policy. PC further highlighted within Appendix 1(stage 1) it states 'not sorted out' can the phase be reworded.

MH asked whether the pricing on the compensation table was comparable to other ALMO's. MM advised a best practice comparison had been carried out with other ALMOs.

NS asked if it could be made clear whether compensation payments were per day or per complaint. MM advised that it is per complaint and the policy will be updated to reflect this.

MM

The Board received the report.

12) 2010-2011 Board Forward Plan

MM presented the 2010-2011 Board Forward Plan highlighting that it had been developed in conjunction with the Delivery Plan. The document presents the timetable of the Board reports over the forthcoming year and is a working document allowing for additions/ changes to be made.

During the inspection the Audit Commission suggested holding Board meetings at a variety of different locations. The proposals for alternative locations will be presented back to the Board for comments.

RM advised that the schedule of meetings for the Council had now been received and may lead to the movement of Board meeting dates. RM asked Board members to check their availability for future meetings dates well in advance and advise MM accordingly allowing for meeting dates to be moved if necessary. MM further asked Board members that if they will be arriving at Board meetings late or have to leave early can they please let her know in advance of the meeting.

PC asked if it would be possible to move forward the equality impact assessment report to April. NB advised that due to the need to completely review and revise our approach as well as determine the future programme it was not feasible to have this work completed before June.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 20 April 2010, 6.00pm, Committee Room 1, Council Offices

The meeting ended at 8.20pm

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CHAIR

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 30 March 2010.