

DERBY HOMES LIMITED

MINUTES OF THE CITY BOARD MEETING

Held on Thursday 20 February 2014

The meeting started at 6.00 pm

Board Members Present:

Mike Ainsley, Tony Holme, Wendy Jessop, Bob MacDonald, Janice Platt,
Margaret Redfern, Dennis Rees (Chair), Ian Veitch

Officers Present:

Mick Archer, Head of Repairs
Murray Chapman, Customer Service Manager
Paul Cole, Resident Involvement Officer
Jackie Durham, Head of Income & Advice Services
Taran Lalria, Company Solicitor
Clare Mehrbani, Head of Housing Management
Jackie Mitchell, Governance Services Manager
Maria Murphy, Director of Derby Homes
Graeme Walton, Housing Manager

Others Present:

Derby Homes Board Members: Bob Osler,
Iain MacDonald
Fiona Walker (arrived at 6.40 pm)

14/01 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Susan Boon and Jim Elks

14/02 Admission of Late Items

There were no late items.

14/03 Declarations of any other business

There were no declarations of any other business.

14/04 Declarations of Interests

The Council Board Member was noted as declaring their interest in matters relating to Derby City Council.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Board Members declared their interests as tenants (as defined in the Memorandum and Articles of Association) of Derby City Council.

14/05 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12 December 2013 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

14/06 Matters Arising

Minute 13/136 Review of Missed Appointments Charge

The City Board received further information as requested at the previous meeting.

Agreed

The City Board agreed to retain the current missed appointments charge, but not apply it and review the issue again in 6 months

14/07 Questions from members of the public

There were no questions from members of the public.

14/08 Items from Part B to be discussed

Agreed

The City Board agreed to discuss item B1, B4, B6 and B8.

14/09 Items for representatives from Contractor Partners

There were no items for representatives from Contractor Partners.

14/10 Items from the Leaseholder Focus Group

There were no items from the Leaseholder Focus Group.

14/11 Reform of the City Board

The City Board was informed the Council and Derby Homes' new partnership

arrangements require some changes to the governance structure of Derby Homes and one part of that is a reform of the City Board and its relationship with the main Board of Derby Homes. The intention is to reform the structure so that more decisions of an operational nature are taken directly by the City Board with strategic decisions left with the main Board.

The proposals reduce the size of the City Board while strengthening the proportion of tenants represented on the City Board, so that they form a majority of those taking decisions. The three remaining main Board Members would retain a referral power to the main Board in cases where they had doubts about a proposal, as the main Board retains the formal responsibility for decisions made by the Company at all levels. This enables the main Board to delegate more responsibility to the City Board and requires the City Board to focus increasingly on making decisions and having the skills required to take on those responsibilities.

The City Board was requested to offer a view of the proposals for reforming the City Board's governance arrangements to the Governance Services Committee and the Board of Derby Homes.

City Board views:

- Janice Platt suggested that the City Board needed more representation from ethnic minorities
- Tony Holme said it would be helpful to provide examples of decisions to be taken by the City Board in information/publicity to help people understand what is involved.
- Ian Veitch suggested including a pre selection process through the DACP before interview
- General acceptance of reduction down to 12 members.

Agreed

The City Board supported the proposals outlined in the report.

14/12 Furniture Packs

The City Board received a report proposing a review of the Furniture Pack Scheme should take place in 2014 with a view to implementation of any changes in 2015/16. Furniture Packs are a useful enhancement to the Council's offer to tenants who cannot afford the initial cost of fitting their home with essential goods and furniture, and the service charge is covered by Housing Benefit as long as certain conditions are met. The charges levied for that service – as for other service charges – have to be aligned with cost over a number of years. A review of those charges is required from time to time to check that they remain reasonable.

Maria Murphy spoke on behalf of main Board Member, Roy Webb who had requested a thorough review of the scheme and investigate the possibility of retaining existing flooring where possible. She said she did not wish this matter to drag on and requested a report back to the April meeting with initial proposals to the June meeting.

With regard to recycling/retaining decent carpets Mick Archer, Head of Repairs and Maria will ensure this matter progresses.

Agreed

The City Board approved a review of the Furniture Pack scheme and required a report back on the proposals to be put forward to the Council within timescales above.

14/13 Fire Safety Policy

The City Board received a report on the Fire Safety Policy which has been reviewed by the Senior Health and Safety Advisor who recommends that the general principles and practices are still current.

Iain MacDonald, main Board Member and Chair of the Derby Homes Health & Safety Forum requested that the policy should be considered at the next Health & Safety Forum before consideration by the City Board.

Agreed

The City Board deferred approval of the revised policy and requested it be considered at the next Health & Safety Forum meeting before being brought back to the next meeting of the City Board.

14/14 Review of Tenancy Conditions

The City Board received a report on progress being made to review the Conditions of Tenancy for Council homes, to take into account changes in legislation and best practice, and to offer the opportunity for the City Board to offer its comments on the proposed changes.

The City Board was advised that Derby Homes would not unreasonably withhold permission for pets in flats but the tenancy agreement will be explicit regarding tenants' responsibility towards their pets.

Margaret Redfern raised concern regarding tenants knocking down walls in their homes. She was advised they would be breaking their tenancy conditions if this was to occur without obtaining permission.

Derby Homes carries out post sign up visits for all new tenants and this will be an opportunity to revisit any areas in the agreement the tenant wants more information on.

Agreed

The City Board supported the revisions to the Conditions of Tenancy.

14/15 Tenancy Fraud

The City Board received a report outlining the new legal framework for controlling tenancy fraud and explaining how Derby Homes will work with the Council on this. The report advised of proposals for a publicity campaign aimed at increasing public awareness of this with the aim of ensuring that fraudulent activity is reported to Derby Homes by other tenants more frequently.

Agreed

The City Board authorised a publicity campaign on tenancy fraud and recommended 'Slam the door on tenancy fraud' as the slogan for the campaign.

14/16 Stockbrook Street Office – Reception Closure

The City Board received a report reviewing the public opening times of the Stockbrook Street Housing Office, following a period of closure to the public because of repair works. They were asked to consider the following options:

Option 1 - excavate the material from the former cellars, backfill with appropriate compacted material, and reinstate the tarmac path

Option 2 - form an alternate public entrance leading from Pelham Street with ramped access to ensure DDA compliance

Option 3 - close the office to the public, turn the front entrance door into a fire escape and provide a stepped escape route from the building. Members of the public would still be able to access officers and services by appointment and wider services by other means.

Maria Murphy advised the City Board that the Council's Chief Executive, Adam Wilkinson, has said the Council will support the closure of the office if this is what the City Board agrees.

Margaret Redfern said she would like to see consultation with ward councillors. She also queried where the nearest Local Office is.

Maria Murphy advised the Council House is the nearest office from where Derby Homes is already providing a service.

Tony Holme said Stockbrook Street is not convenient location for many of the tenants managed by the office and it is not served by public transport. He therefore had no objections to the closure of the reception.

Agreed

The City Board recommended to the Council that the reception service at Stockbrook Street Housing Office is closed on a permanent basis.

14/17 Review of CCTV Requirements

The City Board received a report informing of the outcome of a review of Derby Homes Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) requirements. The review identified a number of improvements to CCTV and how these could be funded through service charges.

Agreed

City Board approved, subject to agreement with the City Council on capital funding being made available:

1. A programme of investment in upgrades to the existing provision in the Derwent and Chaddesden wards
2. Consultation with residents at Whitecross House on a proposal to install video door entry and / or CCTV on a service charge basis
3. Consultation with residents at Exeter House on a proposal to levy a service charge to pay for the CCTV installed at that location.

14/18 Small Scale Estates Pride

The City Board considered a proposal to manage approval for Estates Pride Small Scale improvements, due to the ending of Housing Focus Groups (HFGs).

Agreed

The City Board

1. Approved the Estates Pride Small Scale process and delegation to the Heads of Housing Management and Investment for schemes under £10,000.
2. Requested an update in six months' time.

14/19 Service Delivery Update

The City Board received a joint report prepared by Heads of Service. The report provided City Board Members with a general overview and update on current issues.

Tony Holme volunteered to participate in a review of Derby Homes Anti Social Behaviour policy.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/20 Estate Pride Quick Fix Bids

The City Board received an update on the Quick Fix bids which have been approved.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/21 Rent Arrears and Welfare Reform Update

The City Board received a report giving details on:

- The year-end position on rent arrears
- Current performance
- Current impact of the under occupation charge
- Introduction of Universal Credit.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/22 Intensive Housing Management Pilot Update

The City Board received a report about the findings of the Intensive Housing Management Pilot carried out at Sussex Circus Office between October and December 2013.

Cabinet has agreed 201/15 working to reduce from £600K to £500K split HRA/DH and then down to £400K within management fee and core service.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/23 Satellite Dishes on Flats

The City Board received a report, following a query at the meeting on 24 October 2013, on the number of satellite dishes that was allowed on flats. It was also requested that a policy around satellite dishes on blocks of flats was devised with appropriate enforcement measures included. The purpose of the report was to update the City Board with progress so far on this work.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/24 Audit of Sheds on Communal Areas

The City Board received a report, following a query at the meeting on 24 October 2013, on the number of sheds that had been erected in communal areas, including drying areas.

Each local housing office area has carried out an audit to establish how many sheds are erected in these areas, if a permit has been issued and if the sheds had been erected in appropriate positions.

Bob MacDonald said he doesn't support retrospective permission being given where sheds have been erected without prior permission and asked what happens when a tenant moves or dies – can another tenant take ownership of that shed with permission or demolished?

Clare Merhbani said retrospective permission will only be given when a shed is sited appropriately.

Officers have looked at sheds where permission has been granted, and have now commenced looking at those where it has not. Sheds are classed as tenant fixtures and fittings so tenants will be asked to remove when they move on, but sensible management decisions will have to be made in some cases.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/25 Performance Monitoring Quarter 3

The City Board received a monitoring report which included highlights from key performance measures reported to Derby City Council. The Council monitors Derby Homes' progress against these targets on a monthly basis.

At the end of quarter three (up to 31 December 2013), 87% of measures achieved their quarterly target, with 56% exceeding target. 77% of performance measures are forecast to meet or exceed their year-end target. This compares with 2012/13 performance where 76% of priority measures met or exceeded the target set.

Results are assessed using traffic light criteria according to their performance against improvement targets. Accountable officers provided commentary to put performance into context and identified actions they are taking to address poor performance, shown at Appendix 1 to the report.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/26 Local Offers Quarter 3

The City Board received a report detailing Quarter 3 performance against the Local Offers set by the Tenants and Leaseholders of Derby Homes.

There are 23 Local Offers and covering the Home, Tenancy and Neighbourhood and Community standards. The Value for Money, Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standards are cross cutting and run in conjunction with these.

Tony Holme referred to page 126 regarding keeping residents informed of communal repairs; he said he still hasn't seen any notices on notice boards in flats. Clare Merhabani undertook to carry out a spot check.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/27 Complaints and Satisfaction Quarter 3

The City Board received a report providing detailed analysis of complaints received between 1 October and 31 December 2013.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/28 Equalities Planning

The City Board received a report proposing changes to the way Derby Homes reports on equalities, to drive improvements to service delivery.

Agreed

The City Board noted the report.

14/29 Draft Minutes of the Derby Homes Board 16 January 2014

The City Board received the draft minutes of the Derby Homes Board meeting held on 16 January 2014.

Agreed

The City Board noted the draft minutes.

The Chair announced this was co-optee Wendy Jessop's last meeting and thanked her for her contribution to the work of the City Board.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 10 April 2014 at 6.00 pm in the Large Training Room at London Road.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm.

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CHAIR

Signed as true and accurate record of the meeting held on 20 February 2014.