



**BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED**

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2007  
AT 6.00pm, PROGRESS HOUSE**

**PRESENT:**

**Non-Executive Directors**

**Independent Directors**

Pat Corless  
Alan Marsh

**Councillor Nominee Directors**

Ron Bell JP (Chair)  
Simon Blackburn  
Jim Houldsworth

**Tenant Directors**

Irene Bishop  
Gwen King  
Bill Rogers  
Alison Stringer  
Doreen Wightman (Vice-Chair)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Peter Jefferson	General Manager
Maggie Cornall	Head of Housing Services
Cyril Holland	Head of Property Services
Neil Jack	Head of Finance
Peter Whittaker	Company Secretary
Peter Cross	Independent Consultant (3E's)
Steve Pullan	Executive Director – Adult Social Care & Housing



	<b>PART A – OPEN MEETING – 16<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2007</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b>  Michael Buchanan, Iris Oldham, Tim Cox, Joan Greenhalgh
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  Ron Bell informed the Board that he had been elected as a Member of Blackpool Borough at the local government elections on 3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2007. He explained that he had therefore ceased to be an Independent Director from that date but had been nominated by the Council to continue to be a Director of BCH.
<b>3</b>	<b>Changes in Board Membership as a Result Of the Local Government Election</b>  Ron Bell explained that it had become necessary for Kath Benson, Michael Carr, Lily Henderson MBE and Kath Rowson to step down from their positions on the BCH Board. The Council had nominated Simon Blackburn, Tim Cox and Joan Greenhalgh to serve on the Board, leaving one Independent Director post to be filled by recruitment. He introduced Simon Blackburn and explained that Tim Cox and Joan Greenhalgh were unable to attend as a result of unavoidable engagements arranged prior to their nomination to the Board.  Ron Bell then expressed his personal thanks as Chair to the Directors who had left the Board for the role they had played in the founding of BCH and he proposed a formal vote of thanks to them from the Board. This was duly seconded and the resolution was passed unanimously.  <b>Agreed</b> That the Board wholeheartedly expresses its thanks to Kath Benson, Michael Carr, Lily Henderson MBE and Kath Rowson for their contribution to the formation of Blackpool Coastal Housing during their time of service on the Board and that the Chief Executive be asked to write to each of them to notify them of this resolution.
<b>4</b>	<b>The Blackpool Housing Market Study</b>  Antony Lockley, the Council's Tourism and Regeneration Policy Manager, presented an outline of and an update on the work being done by the Council to develop a future strategy for intervention to bring about improvements in housing conditions in Blackpool. He explained that, whilst the most severe problems are found in private sector housing, BCH has a significant role to play in helping to bring about improvement through alignment of its strategies with those of the Council and its partners, most notably the Registered Social Landlords active in the town.  <b>Agreed</b> That the strategic work described be noted and that BCH continue to contribute to it in whatever ways are appropriate, practical and effective.
<b>5</b>	<b>Minutes of the Meeting of 21st March 2007</b>  The minutes were agreed as a true record.



<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><u>Item 9 – Domestic Sprinklers</u> The Director of Property Services reported that he had met Fire Service officers to discuss this issue and was waiting for more information from them. When this is available he will report to the Asset-Management Sub-Committee and hopes to do so at its next meeting.</p> <p><u>Item 11 – Director Attendance at Tenant Liaison Forum (TLF) Meetings</u> Doreen Wightman expressed her thanks to Irene Bishop for attending the last TLF meeting.</p>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes of Sub-Committee Meetings</b></p> <p>Operations Sub-Committee – 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2007 Asset Management Sub-Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> April 2007 Finance &amp; Audit Sub-Committee - 20<sup>th</sup> April 2007</p> <p>The Human Resources Sub-Committee had met on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2007 but had been inquorate and had not, therefore, transacted any business other than to informally review its Terms of Reference to identify possible changes to be debated and decided upon at its next meeting</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the minutes of the Sub-Committees now presented be approved and that the position with regard to the Human Resources Sub-Committee be noted.</p>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Matters Arising From Minutes of Sub-Committee Meetings</b></p> <p>In general debate arising it was noted that the Sub-Committees provide a good opportunity for Directors to become more familiar with the issues faced by BCH and to become better acquainted with BCH staff through visits, such as those recently made to Hostels and the Income and Debt Prevention Team. The Chair spoke of the value of developing projects for each Sub-Committee to undertake as a means of doing this and also of using them as the focus of a training and development programme for Directors.</p> <p>In that context Alison Stringer commented upon the value of the Hostels visit, which she had found useful but disturbing in terms of the difficulties faced by the families that they met, and said that she had been impressed by the support work undertaken. The Chief Executive said that BCH had chosen to take on management of the hostels to try to improve facilities within them. He explained that to bring this about may well require RSL Partnership working and Steve Pullan commented that from the Council's point of view a review is in progress.</p>
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>Governance Issues</b></p> <p>The Company Secretary confirmed the detail and impact of the changes to Board membership noted earlier in the meeting. He explained that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ron Bell, as the present Chair, could continue in office if he so wished because he had been nominated by the Council to continue to serve on the Board.</li> <li>• An induction programme for new Directors would be arranged</li> <li>• Recruitment of a new Independent Director would begin to enable the new Director to ideally attend their first meeting in August 2007.</li> </ul>



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(1)**

- The composition of a Shortlisting & Interview Panel and dates for it to meet would need to be decided
- It would be helpful to undertake a skills audit of the Board, as had been done at the inception of BCH, in order to help determine the skills that should ideally be sought in a new Director and also to identify the elements needed in a training and development programme for the Board as a whole.
- Sub-Committee membership would be affected by the changes to the Board

**Agreed**

That:

- A) Changes to Board composition be noted and the need to set up induction arrangements for new Directors be noted.
- B) Recruitment of an Independent Director be started and the composition of a Shortlisting & Interview Panel and meeting dates be decided at the next meeting.
- C) A skills audit be carried out and the results reported to the next meeting.
- D) Changes to Sub-Committee membership should be minimal and ideally reflect the availability of the new Directors who would be asked to state their preferences.

Ron Bell then announced that he intended to resign as Chair because, from both a personal point of view and in the light of Government guidelines, he considered it more appropriate that the Chair of the Board should be either an Independent or Tenant Director. Furthermore he wished to see the Memorandum & Articles of Association of BCH amended to that effect.

The Company Secretary explained that legal advice had been sought on this issue. The advice received was that to make such an amendment would not be contrary to company law but it could only be made by the Council as the sole member of BCH as a company. Therefore, if it wished to see such an amendment in place, the Board could pass a resolution in principle and request the Council to agree to the changes. He also explained that it was important for the Board to note that the amendment could not be made irrevocable and could be reversed at any time in the future.

The Company Secretary then distributed a report setting out proposed arrangements for the holding of an election for the position of Chair and/or Vice-Chair of the Board

Ron Bell formally proposed that the Memorandum & Articles of Association of Blackpool Coastal Housing Limited be amended so that nomination and election to the post of Chair of the Board would be restricted to Independent or Tenant Directors. He was supported by Simon Blackburn, Gwen King and Alan Marsh and the subsequent decision of the Board was unanimous.

Ron Bell then formally resigned as Chair. Doreen Wightman, as Vice-Chair, took the Chair and asked the Board if it wished to confirm her in that position:

1. For the duration of the meeting and
2. Until such time as a new Chair is elected at the next Board Meeting



<p><b>9 Cont (2)</b></p>	<p><b>Agreed</b> That</p> <p>A) The Memorandum &amp; Articles of Association of Blackpool Coastal Housing Limited be amended in such a way as to ensure that nomination and election to the post of Chair of the Board is restricted to Independent or Tenant Directors.</p> <p>B) The Company Secretary, acting in liaison with the Council Member of Blackpool Coastal Housing Limited, takes such action as is needed to give effect to this resolution.</p> <p>C) Doreen Wightman should take the position of Acting Chair until an election for Chair is held at the next meeting of the Board.</p> <p>D) An election for Chair and/or Vice-Chair of the Board be held at the next meeting of the Board on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007 in accordance with the arrangements circulated and described by the Company Secretary.</p>
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Equality &amp; Diversity Strategy</b></p> <p>The Chief Executive presented a report on the development of an Equality and Diversity Strategy, which BCH is required to have by law and for which it must develop supporting Equality Schemes. These schemes are being prepared and will be submitted to the appropriate Sub-Committees for consideration and approval. He emphasised that, quite apart from the intrinsic merits of the strategy and schemes, it is a key area for consideration in the forthcoming Audit Commission Inspection and training for both staff and Directors will be arranged. There is also the possibility that, working in partnership with Stonewall, BCH could become an Equality &amp; Diversity Champion.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the Equality &amp; Diversity Strategy now presented be approved and that the Equality Schemes to be developed be considered by Sub-Committees.</p>
<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>Board Champions</b></p> <p>The Director of Property Services presented a report on the concept of Board Champions, which is looked on favourably by the Audit Commission. He explained that the BCH approach is to take the Audit Commission's three overarching Key Lines Of Enquiry (KLOEs) used in inspections and add to them the area of Health &amp; Safety.</p> <p>He explained that for each Board Champion there will be a supporting senior BCH officer :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access &amp; Customer Care – Directors of Housing Services and Property Services</li> <li>• Equality &amp; Diversity – Director of Housing Services</li> <li>• Value for Money – Director of Finance &amp; Resources</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety – Director of Property Services</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the principle of appointing Board Champions be approved but decisions about the details of their remit and the identification of Directors to become champions be deferred until after the outcome of the Board Skills Audit is known.</p>



<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>2006-07 Performance Milestones</b></p> <p>The Company Secretary introduced the report and explained the basis of the figures within and the colour coding of comparisons against targets and ALMO national results. The Directors of Housing Services and Property Services then explained and commented upon the data relating to their own areas of responsibility.</p> <p>The Board expressed major concern about the reduced performance in rent collection and arrears recovery (BVPI 66a) essentially caused by significant delays in the processing of Housing Benefit (HB) as a result of the Council introducing a new HB computer system and suspending HB processing for 8 weeks prior to Christmas 2006.</p> <p>The Director of Housing Services explained that, whilst she understood the backlog of new cases to have been cleared or almost so, there was still a backlog in respect of changes of circumstance and other amendments for existing HB cases. She explained the steps that BCH had taken to try to redress the effect of the new system implementation and commented that the Client Side officers had been very supportive.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) The Board of Blackpool Coastal Housing wishes to express its deep concern about the severely adverse effect on rent collection performance (BVPI 66a) of the manner of implementation by the Council of a new Housing Benefit Computer System and requests the Council to act speedily and effectively to remove the case processing backlog that still remains.</li> <li>B) Notwithstanding the highlighted problems in respect of BVPI 66a, overall performance in 2006-07 appears good, as does the format of its presentation, but more comment is needed about action being taken on the issues highlighted by the figures and its effectiveness.</li> </ul>
<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>Other Matters</b></p> <p><b>A Recruitment</b> The Director of Finance &amp; Resources reported that recruitment to about 30 posts is in hand and is about one third complete. Delays are being experienced with CRB checks and that is holding up progress.</p> <p><b>B Communication Strategy</b> The Director of Housing Services explained that the strategy is still being prepared but provided written examples of what has been done so far for both tenants and staff. She added that a separate Tenant Involvement Strategy is being developed in parallel with both this and the Tenant Compact and commented that the Stakeholder Mapping being carried out will complement all these communication approaches.</p> <p><b>C Chartered Institute of Housing Conference</b> The Chief Executive explained the nature of the conference and proposed that, rather than one Director attending the whole event, a different Director should go on each of the days of the conference as a day delegate. The Company Secretary will send copies of the conference programme to each Director in order that they may state their preferred attendance day.</p>



<p><b>13 cont</b></p> <p><b>D</b></p>	<p><b>BCH Business Plan</b> The Company Secretary explained that this plan now needed to be prepared and that it was intended to issue it sufficiently in advance of the next meeting to allow Directors to read it before discussing it.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That items 13A, 13B and 13D be noted and the proposal in item 13C be approved.</p>
<p><b>14</b></p> <p><b>A</b></p> <p><b>B</b></p> <p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>Audit Commission</b> The Chief Executive reported that Paul Clarke and Graeme Bennett of the Audit Commission will attend the next Board meeting to make a presentation on the roles of Inspection and Inspectors</p> <p><b>National Federation of ALMOs Award</b> The Chief Executive reported that BCH had been shortlisted for an award and highly commended for its entry in respect of Community Based Partnering</p> <p><b>Audit Plan Queries</b> Directors are asked to refer any queries to the Director of Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Items 14A and 14C be noted</li> <li>B) Item 14B be noted and the congratulations of the Board be offered to the Director of Property Services and his staff</li> </ul>
<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>The Meeting Closed at 8.35pm</b></p>
<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>Date and Time of the Next Meeting</b></p> <p>Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007 in Progress House at 6.00pm</p>