

**BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED**

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2008  
AT 6.00PM, PROGRESS HOUSE**

**PRESENT:**

Irene Bishop  
Tim Cox  
Philip Helm  
Gwen King  
Alan Marsh  
Bill Rogers  
Doreen Wightman (Chair)  
Simon Blackburn  
Ron Bell (Vice-Chair)  
Alison Stringer  
Jim Houldsworth

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Peter Jefferson  
Cyril Holland  
Neil Jack  
Peter Whittaker  
Maggie Cornall

Peter Cross – Independent Consultant

Graham Goldstone-Creasey - Senior Policy Officer (Health) Blackpool Council

	<b>PART A – OPEN MEETING – 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2008</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>  Diane Bellinger, Joan Greenhalgh, Mick Buchanan, Carol Hall
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  Peter Cross declared his involvement at Item 2 in Part B, Board Member Training.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Election of Chair</b>  Only one Director, Doreen Wightman, had been nominated for the position of Chair.  <b>Agreed</b> That Doreen Wightman be re-elected unopposed as Chair of the Board.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Election of Vice-Chair</b>  Two Directors, Ron Bell and Bill Rogers, had been nominated for the position of Vice-Chair. In the ballot 8 votes were cast for Bill Rogers and 5 for Ron Bell.  <b>Agreed:</b> A. That Bill Rogers be elected as Vice-chair of the Board B. That the thanks of the Board be extended to Ron Bell for his past service as Vice-Chair and for his contribution in that role to the work of BCH.

5.	<p><b>Minutes of Meeting 30<sup>th</sup> January 2008</b></p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the minutes be accepted as a true record.</p>
6.	<p><b>Matters Arising</b> None.</p>
7.	<p><b>Minutes of Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008</b></p> <p>Tim Cox proposed that the minutes should not be accepted as presented but should more accurately reflect the strength of feeling that had been expressed during debate at the meeting.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That, subject to Item 3 bullet point 2 being amended to read “a considerable number of Directors were strongly of the opinion that the HQ building should be sited within the Blackpool Borough boundary”, the minutes be accepted as a true record.</p>
8.	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>None, other than as noted in Item 7 above.</p>
9.	<p><b>Minutes of Sub-Committees &amp; Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>A Operations Sub-Committee – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008</b></p> <p>In Mick Buchanan’s absence as the Sub-Committee Chair, Doreen Wightman stated that the Estate Management and ASB team plans, both of which were considered excellent, had been presented at the meeting and a demonstration of the ReACT system used to manage ASB cases had also been given.</p> <p>Jim Houldsworth asked about the incidence and extent of ASB across the housing stock and Maggie Cornall stated that she would provide the relevant information. Alan Marsh asked for information about the incidence of deprivation and it was agreed that it would be provided for him.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. That the minutes be accepted as a true record.</li> <li>B. That the Board considers that the Reassurance Plus approach to neighbourhood management should be extended to other areas and that this view should be communicated to the Council.</li> </ul> <p><b>B Human Resources Sub-Committee – 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008</b></p> <p>This meeting had not taken place because the Sub-Committee Chair had been advised that there was an insufficient number of items of business requiring consideration to merit its being held. Alan Marsh pointed out that there were issues that he had wanted to raise in the meeting but his view on cancellation of the meeting had not been sought.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That in future all Directors on a Sub-Committee be consulted before any decision to cancel or postpone a meeting of it is taken.</p>



	<p>In the general discussion that followed the Board expressed its support for the work being done on these issues but noted that the pace of change and improvement may be quite slow. It was noted that there is as yet no involvement with housing agencies, specifically BCH, on the Health &amp; Wellbeing User Group. Graham stated that he is keen to interact with BCH and for BCH to have a representative on the Health &amp; Wellbeing Group.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That Graham be thanked for his presentation and that Peter Jefferson to discuss further with him the manner in which BCH may become more involved.</p>
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>2008-09 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent Report</b></p> <p>Neil Jack presented the report, which he explained was for information and noting only because management of the HRA and the setting of rent levels for HRA property (i.e. the homes managed by BCH) is the responsibility of the Council, not BCH. The report also deals with the question of the Management Fee to be paid to BCH in 2008-09 and a recommendation that the Council allocate £300k of its HRA balances for BCH to use to carry out environmental improvements on estates.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the report be noted.</p>
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>2008-09 BCH Budget Detail Report</b></p> <p>Neil Jack presented the report and explained that the starting point for the development of the 2008-09 budget was the now anticipated surplus of £142,000 in the 2007-08 budget. This had arisen from a combination of savings from vacant posts and from the fact that it had not been possible to identify and move into a new HQ building during 2007-08.</p> <p>With regard to income he explained that the Council had set the BCH Management Fee at £11,212,000 for the year, which includes the effect of a 3.2% increase in prices and an efficiency savings target of 3%. BCH will also receive a fee for managing the Council's Housing Capital Programme, which is 8% of the programme value. Other income comes from service provided by BCH to the Council's Children &amp; Young People Department and to Blackpool PCT.</p> <p>He further explained that the expenditure proposals made appropriate allowance for national pay awards, increased pension contributions, general cost/price increases and a vacancy allowance in the staff cost element of the budget. A small number of areas had been targeted for investment in service improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement of the now outdated housing management computer system</li> <li>• Electrical &amp; Mechanical Services improvements to dwellings</li> <li>• Full compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act for BCH buildings</li> <li>• Improvement in access to services for BCH customers</li> </ul> <p>After taking into account the effect of a range of savings initiatives amounting to some £510,000 the proposed budget would generate a surplus of £100,000, which would be available for reinvestment in 2008-09 or future years.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. That the proposed 2008-09 BCH Budget be approved.</li> <li>B. That Directors pass any comments or queries they may have about the level of budget detail provided to either Gwen King or Neil Jack.</li> </ol>

13.	<p><b>BCH Business Plan 2008 to 2013</b></p> <p>Peter Jefferson outlined the basis upon which the Business Plan is being prepared and a copy of the presentation was circulated to all present. He explained the timescale for production and the means by which the detail of the plan will be presented to Directors for consideration and approval.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the Business Plan preparation proposals be approved.</p>
14.	<p><b>Organisational Development and Staffing Structures</b></p> <p>Peter Jefferson presented the report and explained that although the total number of staff has increased by nearly 100% since 2005, this has been largely through taking on direct management for previously contracted services. This approach has made service improvement easier and reduced costs. Ron Bell expressed the view that it is very commendable that this approach created savings of almost £700,000.</p> <p>The only area where BCH has invested in additional staffing is for the four extra Estate Management Officers and it is expected that this investment will be rewarded by greater savings arising from better sustained tenancies. Simon Blackburn commented that he was aware that the work carried out by the EMO's has significantly reduced the level of tenancy turnover and improved the condition of properties being vacated.</p> <p>Doreen Wightman asked if the quoted levels for January 2008 are an accurate reflection of the staff needed to run BCH efficiently. Neil Jack stated that they are, apart from the extra posts that will be needed for the enhanced Decent Homes Capital Programme.</p> <p>Simon Blackburn was of the view that proposals for significant changes in staff numbers should be brought to the Board and Cyril Holland referred to future planned changes in the Responsive Repairs workforce where increases can be expected as sub-contractors are replaced by directly employed staff. In view of this, Peter Jefferson offered to bring a further report to the Board setting out the staff numbers and structure for BCH as soon as it has been finalised</p> <p><b>Agreed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. That the report and current staffing position be noted.</li> <li>B. That the finalised structure and staff numbers be reported to the Board.</li> </ul>
15.	<p><b>CLG Response to Blackpool Task Force Report</b></p> <p>A copy of this report was circulated to all for information purposes.</p>
16.	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>Peter Jefferson invited all Directors to attend the Staff Conference taking place on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March at Blackpool Football Club. Ron Bell asked if it would be possible to be given more notice for any future events.</p>
17.	<p><b>Motion to Move Into Part B Closed Meeting</b></p> <p><b>AGREED:</b> That in view of the confidential or commercially sensitive nature of the items for consideration the Board move into closed session and any members of the public and press present be excluded.</p>

	<p><b>PART B – CLOSED MEETING – 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2008</b></p>
<p><b>1.</b></p>	<p><b>Inspection Outcome and Funding Update</b></p> <p>Peter Jefferson confirmed that he had received the final report from the Audit Commission but that it is embargoed for publication until 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008. He also told the Board of the level of funding offered but stressed that a formal letter from CLG had not yet been received and that this information, like the inspection result itself, must remain confidential for now. He asked Directors to raise any issues regarding the report or funding either at Sub-Committees or by contacting a member of the Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Tim Cox expressed his congratulations to the team for their hard work in achieving what he referred to as a fantastic result.</p> <p>Peter Jefferson expressed thanks to Maggie, Cyril, Neil, Peter and their teams for the hard work and effort put into the inspection preparation process.</p> <p>Doreen Wightman thanked Peter Jefferson for the pressure he has applied to CLG with regard to them speeding up their decision on the level of funding to be allocated.</p> <p>The announcement will be made public to tenants by means of a special Newsletter to be delivered on 20<sup>th</sup> March. A draft programme of Decent Homes work will be taken to the Asset Management Sub-Committee meeting in April and then to the Board on 30<sup>th</sup> April for approval. Initial announcements about the programme will be made at the Tenants' Conference.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>A. That all the staff of BCH be congratulated and thanked for their contribution to the very successful outcome of the Inspection and funding bid.</p> <p>B. That Doreen Wightman, as Chair of the Board, will prepare a formal letter of thanks from the Board to the Management Team and their Teams.</p>
<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>Board Member Training &amp; Development</b></p> <p>Having previously declared an interest in this item Peter Cross left the room whilst it was considered.</p> <p>Peter Jefferson presented a report prepared by the Company Secretary setting out costed proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of the Mentoring Service in 2008-09</li> <li>• Development of an appraisal system for the Board and Individual Directors</li> <li>• Developing the capacity of and supporting the Chair in carrying out appraisals</li> <li>• Identifying the training and development needs of the Board and its members and creating a programme to meet those needs.</li> </ul> <p>He commented that the proposals appeared to offer good value for money and recommended them to the Board. Neil Jack explained his belief that the additional costs, as compared to the 2007-08 budget and expenditure levels, could be met from saving elsewhere within the BCH budget. There had, for example, been a particularly prudent approach taken to probable Void Rent Loss and he was confident that the costs could be met from that.</p>

	<p>In subsequent discussion Directors generally expressed the view that the service so far provided had been of high quality and the relationship that they had developed with the Independent Consultant had contributed greatly to that. There was, however, concern that any procurement decisions made should follow a clear procedure, should be transparent and should be in accordance with Financial Standing Orders.</p> <p>Peter Jefferson then suggested that it should be possible to obtain a further two quotations for the work to compare with the costs already submitted. That would be an effective market test and would comply with the requirements of Standing Orders.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. That the Mentoring Service be provided in 2008-09 on the same basis as at present.</li> <li>B. That quotations be obtained from two suitably qualified and experienced companies for the three elements of work identified above as being additional to the Mentoring Service.</li> <li>C. That Peter Jefferson, as Chief Executive, be empowered to determine which of the three quotations should be accepted taking both cost and quality into account.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>No other items of business were raised.</p>
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at 6.00pm in Conference Room 5 at Progress House.</p>
	<p><b>The meeting closed at 9.30pm.</b></p>