



BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12th MAY 2010
AT 6.00 PM, CONFERENCE ROOM 1 & 2 PROGRESS HOUSE**

PRESENT:

Cllr Simon Blackburn
Caroline Cook
Cllr Tim Cox
Carol Hall
Cllr Fred Jackson
Alan Marsh
Judith Mills
Bill Rogers (Chair)
Janet Stirling
Doreen Wightman

NOT PRESENT:

Cllr Ron Bell
Cllr Jim Houldsworth

IN ATTENDANCE:

Maggie Cornall	(Director of Housing Services)
Peter Whittaker	(Company Secretary)
Peter Jefferson	(Chief Executive)
Neil Jack	(Director of Finance & Resources)
Jackie Grannell	(Brynoka Consulting & Training)
Andrew Miller	(Brynoka Consulting & Training)

PART A – OPEN SESSION

1.	<p><u>Apologies</u></p> <p>Diane Bellinger, Alison Stringer, Paul Whitehead.</p>
2.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>None.</p>
3.	<p><u>Minutes of Board Meeting 24th March 2010</u></p> <p>Alan Marsh queried the figures in Item 5, paragraph 4. It was explained that they were the most significant totals quoted in the full report. They were used in the minutes in order to provide a brief overview of the main components of the projected £22,000 budget shortfall that would require a contribution from reserves in order to balance it.</p> <p>Agreed that:</p> <p>A. For the sake of clarity the minutes be reworded to reflect only the fact that a £22,000 contribution from reserves would be required to balance the 2010-11 budget.</p> <p>B. Subject to that amendment the minutes be approved as a true record.</p>
4.	<p><u>Matters Arising</u></p>



	<p>The Chair welcomed Councillor Fred Jackson as a new BCH Board member.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>360 Degree Appraisal Principles and Process</p> <p>Jackie Grannell and Andrew Miller from Brynoka Consulting and Training presented their report and explained that its purpose was to give the Board the opportunity to consider and approve the competencies to be used and also the timescale for the 360 Appraisal.</p> <p>Andrew Miller explained that the competencies relate to the skills, abilities and behaviours needed to be an effective Director or Senior Manager. They are used in a wide range of major organisations to facilitate performance management and increase both individual and group effectiveness. The competencies used in the appraisal each had a number of sub-categories and were general in nature and not specifically housing related.</p> <p>It was explained that the process is anonymous and confidential so that the people being appraised do not know who has “rated” them and the “raters” themselves are not aware of who has been “rated” by whom. Although there were 135 small, short questions to be dealt with the process usually takes a maximum of 20 minutes to complete. Once the ratings have been collated and analysed, individual feedback sessions of about an hour’s duration are provide to each participant. Feedback for the Board as a whole is also provided and individual and group training and development plans created.</p> <p>In the ensuing debate a number of issues were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given that the “rating” should be done on the basis of observed behaviour rather than “gut feeling” the relatively small amount of contact between Directors may be a handicap. It was explained that even short periods of time can be valuable. • There was seen to be too much material and too many questions to deal with and a simpler approach was needed. It was explained that the questions are very short and not intended for long deliberation, that the number asked ensures statistical validity and provided the detail needed to create training and development plans. • There was an essential difference between the needs of employed SMT members and volunteer Directors and so there should be a different approach for each group. The survey for SMT appeared reasonable but Directors should use a shorter one more suited to their situation, even if this meant variation in the competencies. • There was concern amongst some Directors that their housing knowledge would be insufficient to answer the questions but it was pointed out by others that the questions are not about housing itself but deal with the competencies and behaviours needed to be an effective Board member. • There was concern about the amount of time needed by each Director to “Rate” a number of their fellow Directors and it was explained that overall it would require a maximum of perhaps 100 to 120 minutes. It was argued that complacency could set ii and the same score allocated to each question for ease of answering. • The Board had decided to carry out a 360 and had awarded a contract that should be carried out but should be reviewed once complete. <p>Agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The SMT 360 Appraisal will be carried out as soon as possible using the process as now presented. . B. The Chair will meet with Jackie Granell and Andrew Miller in order to reduce the amount of questions in the Directors’ 360 Appraisal and report back to the Board for approval before proceeding further.



<p>6.</p>	<p><u>BCH Business Plan 2008/13 - 2010 Update</u></p> <p>Peter Whittaker presented the draft, updated Business Plan, referring to the manner in which the covering report highlighted the sections that had been updated. He explained that, as a result of the Board Meeting being deferred by one week, it had been necessary to present the plan to the Tenant Liaison Forum (TLF) for consultation the previous day. No comments had been made at that meeting and the TLF had been asked to respond by the end of May. A copy would also be submitted to the Council, as Client, to seek their views on the revised business plan. The results of consultation would be reported to the Board at its June meeting for full, formal approval</p> <p>Agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The report as presented be approved for purposes of consultation with the Council and the Tenant liaison Forum. B. A report on the outcome of consultations be received at the June meeting
<p>7.</p>	<p><u>Assistance and Advice Inspection</u></p> <p>Peter Jefferson presented the report on the outcome of the indicative inspection that had been carried out for BCH by the Audit Commission.</p> <p>He explained that the next formal inspection will take place between January and March 2011 and that, until formally told otherwise, we must assume that the Audit Commission's previous inspection approach will be maintained. The final report from the indicative inspection was expected shortly and it was proposed that it be submitted to the various Board Committees for detail consideration and scrutiny.</p> <p>It was noted that the inspection was intended to identify and focus upon weaknesses as a means of helping BCH to improve its services and prepare for the full inspection. Key issues highlighted in the report included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing Housing Management computer system was holding back all service areas. However, the new system coming into operation in the autumn would remove current difficulties and provide additional information storage and management tools to assist front line staff with their service delivery tasks. The new system will also benefit the BCH approach to Equality and Diversity by more effective storage and use of diversity data to shape service delivery. • The current telephone system cannot monitor and report upon the volumes and outcomes of the calls it handles. A new telephony system is to be installed enabling more information on call handling to be available. <p>With regard to strengths the inspection highlighted the fact that BCH had generally kept pace with expected improvements in overall service delivery – the “bar” had risen and BCH had risen with it. Particular points of note were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff enthusiasm and commitment and good feedback from “Mystery Shopping”. • Asset Management, the Decent Homes Programme and the management of Responsive Repairs were commended and the inspector commented that they were the best he had ever seen. • The good relationships that had been developed with advice and support agencies and the Credit Union were commended for their assistance in dealing with rent



	<p>arrears recovery and management.</p> <p>In response to a query Neil Jack confirmed that the new telephony system would be installed in the new head office and explained that its use in area offices would be investigated. He stated that telephone numbers would not change and Peter Jefferson commented that, if there were any future proposals for changing numbers, Tenants would be consulted before any changes were made.</p> <p>A query was raised about the reference to the Credit Union. Maggie Cornall explained the link to arrears recovery and management, which is helped by referring people to the Credit Union, thus reducing tenants' reliance on expensive doorstep lenders who target Council estates. She stated that helping to maximise incomes was part of an holistic approach to arrears issues, which also includes referring tenants to debt advice services to help them manage their money if they have other debt.</p> <p>Agreed: That the detailed findings of the Advice and Assistance Inspection be discussed at relevant Committee meetings in the next Board cycle.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p><u>Reform of Council Housing Finance</u></p> <p>Neil Jack presented the report which outlined proposed changes to the Housing Subsidy System and a review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). A more detailed report on these issues had been considered by the Finance and Audit Committee. He explained that a joint BCH and Council response to this consultation exercise is being prepared. It will be discussed in detail at the next Finance & Audit Committee and a draft will be brought to the next Board meeting on 9th June 2010.</p> <p>The basis of the proposal is the replacement of the current, annually determined Housing Subsidy with a sharing out of the national housing debt and each council receiving a "once and for all" subsidy settlement. Councils will retain the rent they collect and any housing capital receipts they generate. There is also a commitment to fund Decent Homes programmes to completion and an increase in the Management & Maintenance allowances in the subsidy settlement calculation. The Government sees the proposals as greatly assisting longer term strategic and financial planning.</p> <p>Councils will become responsible for their own housing debt, which in Blackpool's case could be reduced in the settlement by almost £40 million, with potential for the balance to be repaid within a 30 year period and some funding capacity for new investment also created. There will, however, still be funding issues to be dealt with in respect of maintenance backlogs not connected to Decent Homes such as replacing lifts. The cost of maintaining homes to the Decent Homes standard must also be considered.</p> <p>The Government proposes to start the new system from April 2011 if there is general agreement, although this would be on a voluntary basis and subject to the next Spending Review. If there is insufficient agreement there would need to be new primary legislation introduced that would delay the start by at least a year, although changes to the capital receipt rules are easier to bring about by using Statutory Instrument procedures.</p> <p>The effect of the change of Government on the proposals was queried. Neil Jack explained that, although there appeared to be cross-party support for the proposals, only Labour Party had made a manifesto commitment. Given that the proposal does not create a financial burden and is fiscally neutral there is a good possibility that the changes will be made.</p>



	<p>Agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The report be noted B. The draft joint Council & BCH response to the proposal consultation be brought to the next Board meeting on 9th June 2010
<p>9.</p>	<p><u>Office Accommodation – Progress Report</u></p> <p>Peter Jefferson reported that the Council’s original deadline for completion of the refurbishment and adaptation works had moved back by 6 weeks but this was not expected to affect BCH deadlines for use of the building.</p> <p>There is still no clarity about use of the part of the building not occupied by BCH and the Council is investigating options. The Council had promised that any use would not be incompatible with BCH activities.</p> <p>Agreed: That the progress report be noted.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p><u>New Council House Building – Progress Report</u></p> <p>Peter Jefferson reported that work had started onsite at Draycot Avenue and it was confirmed that planning permission has also been granted for the Gateside Drive site.</p> <p>Agreed: That the progress report be noted.</p>
<p>11.</p> <p>11A</p> <p>11B</p>	<p><u>Minutes of Board Committees and Matters Arising</u></p> <p><u>Operations Committee Meeting – 6th April 2010</u></p> <p>In the absence of the Committee Chair, Maggie Cornall gave an overview of the meeting and explained that major items of business had been consideration of the Responsive Repairs Team Plan and Equality Impact Assessments. The ASB service was also discussed and Committee Members reported back on the content of a seminar on the new regulatory regime that they had recently attended.</p> <p>Agreed: That the minutes be accepted</p> <p><u>Asset Management Committee – 6th April 2010</u></p> <p>Alan Marsh gave an overview of the Asset Management Committee meeting. HT Forrest had given a verbal update on the Decent Homes programme and were complimented on their local employment figures. The issue of scaffolding and its cost had been discussed and it had been noted that it was not financially viable to use local sub-contractors. A report back was given on the Decent Homes tour attended by Alan Marsh, Bill Rogers, Cyril Holland and Ian Grimshaw.</p> <p>Agreed: That the minutes be accepted</p>



<p>11C</p>	<p><u>Finance and Audit Committee – 14th April 2010</u></p> <p>Simon Blackburn apologised for his absence from the meeting. Neil Jack reported that detailed consideration of the Reform of Council Housing Finance had been a major item of business.</p> <p>Agreed: That the minutes be accepted.</p>
<p>11D</p>	<p><u>Human Resources Committee – 5th May 2010</u></p> <p>This meeting had been held after the agenda for the current Board Meeting had been dispatched. The minutes will be considered at the next Board Meeting on 9th June 2010.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>Peter Whittaker raised three items:</p>
<p>12A</p>	<p>He provided Directors with a detailed timetable to confirm the previously agreed arrangements for individual and group discussions in the Governance Review.</p>
<p>12B</p>	<p>He reported that all Leaseholders had been informed by letter of the forthcoming vacancy for a Leaseholder Customer Director. At the time of the meeting there has been no response from any Leaseholders to the invitation to attend an information session before being able to nominate themselves as candidates.</p>
<p>12C</p>	<p>He reminded the Board that sufficient funding is available to allow three Directors to attend the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference as day delegates. He asked that any Director who wished to attend should confirm that to him by the 21st May 2010 in order to allow places to be booked.</p>
<p></p>	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>Wednesday 9th June 2010 at 6pm in Conference Rooms 1 and 2 at Progress House.</p>
<p></p>	<p>The Meeting closed at 7.50pm</p>