



**BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED**

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29th JULY 2009  
AT 6.00 PM, PROGRESS HOUSE**

**PRESENT:**

Diane Bellinger  
 Caroline Cook  
 Cllr Tim Cox  
 Cllr Joan Greenhalgh  
 Carol Hall  
 Cllr Jim Houldsworth  
 Alan Marsh  
 Bill Rogers  
 Paul Whitehead  
 Doreen Wightman (Chair)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Peter Jefferson (Chief Executive)  
 Maggie Cornall (Director of Housing Services)  
 Cyril Holland (Director of Property Services)  
 Neil Jack (Director of Finance & Resources)  
 Peter Whittaker (Company Secretary)

Peter Cross (Independent Consultant)

	<b>PART A – OPEN MEETING – 29<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2009</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b> Cllr Ron Bell, Cllr Simon Blackburn, Judith Mills, Janet Stirling.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> There were no declarations of interest
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting 20th May 2009</b> <b>Agreed</b> That the Minutes of the Board Meeting of 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2009 be approved as a true record.
<b>4</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>
<b>A3 &amp; A9</b>	<b>STATUS 2008 and Balanced Scorecard</b> Tim Cox asked if the issue raised at the previous meeting by Simon Blackburn, about discrepancies between quoted figures for Repair Satisfaction, had been resolved.  Peter Whittaker explained that BCH is not allowed to change the questions in the STATUS Survey to make them equate to its own performance reporting approach. The BCH figure is the more accurate of the two because Sheltered Dwellings are excluded from STATUS whereas the BCH survey covers all tenants receiving repairs. Furthermore the BCH survey method records satisfaction with repairs carried out in the current year rather than in previous years and therefore better reflects the present position.  Both survey methods need to be used because STATUS is a statutory survey, but for general performance reporting and benchmarking purposes the BCH method, which

<p><b>A6A</b></p>	<p>produces the more accurate (and favourable) figure is the one to rely on and report with.</p> <p><b>Sub-Committee Terms of Reference (TOR)</b> Maggie Cornall reported that not all Sub-Committee TOR had yet been reviewed but that it should now be possible to finalise the process for eventual report to the Board.</p> <p>Alan Marsh raised the question of Sub-Committees being granted delegated authority to make decisions and stated that he understood that this was to be part of the review of TOR. The Chair disagreed with that view but stated that she felt it would now be logical and appropriate to address that issue when the overall TOR report is brought to the Board.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the question of granting delegated authority to Sub-Committees be dealt with in a future report on Sub-Committee Terms of Reference.</p> <p><b>B2. Management of Board Meetings</b> Peter Jefferson explained that, in compliance with the Board's request, officers would now give only a brief introduction to their reports. It was noted that Sub-Committee Minutes would similarly be briefly introduced by their Chairs, with only the items requiring ratification being highlighted, rather than a full briefing being given.</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p> <p><b>A.</b></p> <p><b>B.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Minutes of Sub-Committees</u></b></p> <p><b>Finance &amp; Audit Sub-Committee – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009</b> In the absence of the Sub-Committee Chair Paul Whitehead presented the Minutes.</p> <p>In response to questions from Tim Cox, Neil Jack explained that the Scheme of Delegation and the Contract Procedure Rules were both included within the BCH Financial Regulations. They are based on Blackpool Council's Financial Regulations but, as with a range of other BCH policies, were modified to reflect BCH specific requirements and were approved by the Board at an early stage in the company's life.</p> <p>The Chair expressed concern about the debate that had taken place on the Scheme of Delegation and asked if the Sub-Committee had seen the original version as well as the revised scheme. Paul Whitehead confirmed that was the case and that the report had tracked the various changes. The Chair asked that the scheme be referred back to the Sub-Committee for further consideration and stressed her belief that all Directors should have a good understanding of the scheme.</p> <p>Peter Jefferson asked that, in order to maximise the effectiveness of any reconsideration, Directors should clarify exactly what their concerns are. Carol Hall suggested that training on the scheme should be provided and it was noted that this could be done as part of the Strategy &amp; Business Planning Awayday.</p> <p><b>Agreed that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. The Minutes be accepted</li> <li>B. The scheme of delegation be referred back to Finance &amp; Audit Sub-Committee</li> <li>C. A training session on the Scheme of Delegation be included in the programme for the Strategy &amp; Business Planning Awayday.</li> </ul> <p><b>Finance &amp; Audit Sub-Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009</b> In the absence of the Sub-Committee Chair Paul Whitehead presented the Minutes.</p> <p>Tim Cox expressed concern about the potential effect of the Equal Pay Review (EPR) on the "Going Concern" assumption referred to in Agenda Item 5 and asked what would</p>

happen if BCH were to actually fail. Neil Jack explained that the TUPE Regulations would apply to protect staff if BCH were taken back in-house by the Council or sold to another housing management organisation such as a housing association.

In response to further concern expressed by Tim Cox about comparisons between the Council's approach to the EPR and the BCH approach and possible cost consequences, Neil Jack explained that the two reviews were totally separate and that he was confident that the contingency funding in the BCH budget would be sufficient to meet any likely financial consequences. The Chair felt it was important that, when it considered the outcome of the EPR, the HR Sub-Committee should be mindful of cost implications in making its recommendations for Board approval.

Neil Jack provided further information about the FRS17 adjustment for pension fund contributions in the final accounts and reported that a joint information and training session with the Council for the Sub-Committee's members would be held in September.

**Agreed**

That the Minutes be accepted

**C. Asset Management Sub-Committee – 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2009**

Alan Marsh, as Chair of the Sub-Committee presented the Minutes.

He congratulated Cyril Holland and his directorate staff on their success in the North West Regional Construction Awards. Congratulations were also extended to Aimee Bond, of the BCH Trade Workforce, who had been awarded the title of First Year Apprentice Joiner of the Year by Blackpool & the Fylde College where she undertakes day-release studies, and who was to be featured in a forthcoming article in the Blackpool Gazette

Peter Jefferson took the opportunity to inform the Board that BCH, through the work of its Income and Debt Prevention Team with the Council and Advice Link, had shared in winning the Institute of Money Advisors National Debt Advice Partnership 2009 award.

**Agreed**

That the Minutes be accepted

**D. Human Resources Sub-Committee – 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2009**

Carol Hall, as Chair of the Sub-Committee presented the Minutes.

In the list of revised Performance Indicator targets it was noted that ORG04 was not titled. It should have read *"The percentage of new entrants who voluntarily leave within 1 year of their appointment."*

With regard to Agenda Item 5, the Equal Pay Review, Tim Cox queried proposals for the Appeal Process and stated that appeal to the Board should be the final stage of that. The Chair disagreed with this view and was strongly supported by other Directors. It was noted that allowing Hay Group, whose review process was being used, to be the final appeal stage would maximise the objectivity of the appeal process.

With regard to Board involvement in the overall review process it was noted that Diane Bellinger has agreed to sit on the Steering Group. She will report back to the HR Sub-Committee and the Board will be kept informed through presentation of its minutes to them.

**Agreed**

That the Minutes be accepted

<p><b>E.</b></p>	<p><b>Operations Sub-Committee – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2009</b>          In the absence of the Sub-Committee Chair Jim Houldsworth presented the Minutes.</p> <p>He explained that the bulk of the Sub-Committee’s meeting had been taken up with a review of Performance targets and commented that more had been raise than lowered and overall were more challenging than before.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b>          That the Minutes be accepted</p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b><u>New Council House Building</u></b></p> <p>Neil Jack presented this report to provide the Board with information about the Council's proposals for new Council House building. It included as an appendix the report that had been considered by the Council's Executive.</p> <p>In the following debate a range of questions were asked and comments made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs had been calculated by the Council's capital Spending Team in liaison with local Housing Associations and were believed to be robust. They contain a grant level of about 40% with land being provided free. The remaining costs will be met from prudential borrowing.</li> <li>• There is concern among some tenants whose homes or garages are affected by the proposals but it was noted that consultation with them is continuing.</li> <li>• The removal of deck access flats was welcomed, as was the fact that the new homes will be mainly 3 and 4 bedroom family houses with about 30% being built to a “lifetime” standard and the use of the ECO standard being investigated.</li> <li>• The Council sets the Tenancy Allocation Policy for all its homes and the new housing will fall within that so it cannot be reserved for particular groups of people.</li> <li>• The houses will be subject to the Right To Buy (RTB) but given market conditions and the cost of the new dwellings it is unlikely that RTB take-up will be high.</li> <li>• Rehousing of people affected by the proposals will be done on a phased basis, and at this stage BCH must continue letting those properties until the Council, perhaps bearing in mind the effect on void rent loss, decides to tell us to stop.</li> <li>• There are no leasehold properties in the first phase but as the Council recognises that as the schemes develop the need to buy back will probably arise.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed</b>          That the report be noted</p>
<p><b>7</b></p> <p><b>A.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Financial Performance</u></b></p> <p><b>2008-09 BCH Audited Accounts</b>          The Report &amp; Financial Statements for 2008-09, having been audited by Baker Tilly were presented for approval. The need to correct a quoted year date in the list of Directors was noted.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b>          That the Report &amp; Financial Statements for 2008-09 be approved subject to correction of the year date noted.</p>

<p><b>B.</b></p>	<p><b>Quarter 1 2009-10 BCH Budget Monitoring Report</b>  Neil Jack explained that the overall financial position appeared to be satisfactory and the only area of concern related to maintenance expenditure in respect of voids repair work. This was essentially the result of a peak in void levels at the end of the previous, 2008-09 financial year but where the cost of the relet work them is falling in the current year.</p> <p>Some reductions in the cost of responsive maintenance may be expected to offset this as the beneficial effects of planned maintenance programmes begin to be felt. There are also minor savings from staff vacancies that should help to bring expenditure into line with budget by year end.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b>  That the BCH Quarter 1 2009-10 financial position be noted.</p>
<p><b>C.</b></p>	<p><b>Quarter 1 2009-10 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Monitoring Report</b>  Neil Jack explained that expenditure was broadly in line with budget provision although there were some variations, both positive and negative, in a number of budget heads.</p> <p>In response to a question from Jim Houldsworth about the effect of Blackpool’s rents being below Government recommended levels, Neil Jack commented that he felt it was unlikely that the subsidy level for 2009-10 would continue into future years. However, he also explained that, because we have now smoothed the path towards rent convergence, it is not expected that major rent increases will be needed to offset any future reductions in subsidy.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b>  That the HRA Quarter1 2009-10 financial position be noted</p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Operational Performance</u></b></p> <p><b>A. Quarter 1 2009-10 Balanced Scorecard</b></p> <p>Peter Jefferson introduced the Scorecard Report and the Executive Directors responded to questions from the Board. It was noted that the timescale to produce the report was much tighter than normal and thus a small number of errors had crept in, for which apologies were offered. Points of note were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All adverse indicators must have a written comment or explanation</li> <li>• The target for Former Tenant Arrears is a target for write-off, which is good financial management practice as an uncollectable debt cannot be regarded as an asset. It is always possible to “write on” arrears if they do become collectable.</li> <li>• We should not delay the issue of Notices Of Seeking Possession (NOSP), even if not so many cases progress to court, because they are effective in arrears recovery, and the target is to be raised.</li> <li>• There should be a clearer distinction between reporting on cumulative performance and reporting on point-in-time or “spot” performance.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed</b>  That subject to action being taken on the comments made Quarter1 2009-10 Performance be noted and the various revised targets be approved.</p> <p><b>B. Quarter 1 2009-10 Decent Homes Progress Report</b>  Cyril Holland reported that the programme is progressing on target and within budget and that the board needs to further consider targets for employment and satisfaction. In response to a question he also explained that “local” in respect of employment targets</p>



	<p>meant within the Blackpool Borough boundary.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That Quarter1 2009-10 Performance be noted and the various revised targets be approved.</p>
9.	<p><b>Director Recruitment Process Report</b> Peter Whittaker presented a report setting out progress with the elections for Tenant Directors. He explained that the ballot would close on 19<sup>th</sup> august and the results would be publicly announced at the Tenants' Conference on 27<sup>th</sup> August. Whichever two candidates are elected will join the Board at the Annual General meeting (AGM) on 16<sup>th</sup> September and will serve for a three year term.</p> <p>He further reminded the Board that Diane Bellinger and Alan Marsh had been chosen to retire under the Rotation Rules at the AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> September but that they could be re-appointed if they wished to continue to serve as Directors. Both Directors stated that they did wish to continue to serve on the Board.</p> <p><b>Agreed That:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Progress with the election of Tenant Directors be noted.</li> <li>B. The Board will recommend to the Council Member of the Company that Diane Bellinger and Alan Marsh be re-appointed at the AGM to serve as Directors for a further three years.</li> </ul>
10.	<p><b>Board Strategy and Business Planning Event</b> Peter Whittaker presented a report setting out a range of options in terms of timing, format and venue for this year's strategy and business planning event</p> <p><b>Agreed That:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. The event will take place on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10th October 2009.</li> <li>B. The format will be as in previous years in terms of working sessions being held on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning.</li> <li>C. Presentations should be kept to a minimum to optimise time for debating the various issues and making decisions on them.</li> <li>D. Any documents needed for the event will be sent out sufficiently in advance to allow proper consideration of them to be made by Directors.</li> <li>E. Quotations for venue options are to be obtained before making a booking.</li> </ul>
11.	<p><b>Office Accommodation Progress Report</b> Neil Jack reported that, although matters were progressing in the right direction, there had as yet been no written confirmation from the Council of the terms, financial and otherwise, on which BCH would lease the accommodation from them.</p> <p>The Council had not yet bought the building because matters relating to its current ownership, which is part leasehold and part freehold, had not been resolved but it was hoped that BCH could take occupancy by the end of January 2010. It was envisaged that staff would have free parking permits for car parks within half a mile of the building and arrangements for Director parking when attending meetings would also be put in place.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the position be noted</p>
12.	<p><b>Role of the Vice-Chair</b> Bill Rogers presented a report which incorporated a role description for his current</p>



	<p>position as Vice-Chair. The report and the role description were welcomed by the Board and some suggestions to round them out were made and accepted.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the Role Description for the Vice-Chair be approved subject to the inclusion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Subject to being invited by the Chair of the Board to do so, the Vice-Chair be allowed to chair a Board Meeting even if the Chair is present.</li> <li>B. The Vice-Chair to work closely with and if necessary co-ordinate the work of the Chairs of Sub-Committees.</li> <li>C. Subject to being invited by the Chair of the Board to do so, the Vice-Chair be allowed to attend other meetings and functions in place of the Chair.</li> </ul>
<p><b>13.</b></p> <p><b>A</b></p> <p><b>B</b></p>	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p><b>3E Management</b> The Chair reminded the Board that, his company's current contract having come to an end, this was the last Board Meeting that Peter Cross would attend as a consultant.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> That the Board extend their thanks to Peter Cross for his past work with and for them.</p> <p>Peter Cross then left the meeting</p> <p><b>Board Performance Management &amp; Training and Mentoring</b> Jim Houldsworth referred to the email sent to all Directors by the Chair in which she explained that she felt it appropriate that she withdraw from membership of the panel that had reviewed these matters and also requested that another Director take her place.</p> <p>He stated that he would like to volunteer to join the panel as he was unhappy with the content of the Statement of Requirements, which had been prepared for procurement of future appraisal support and mentoring services in accordance with the decision of the Board in March 2009.</p> <p>The Chair reported that concerns had been raised with her by several Directors about the decision made at the March 2009 Board meeting as to the availability of the mentoring service to not only new Directors but current Directors. The Chair also felt that the panel should not include the Chair of the Board but that the panel should make its recommendation to the Chair for implementation.</p> <p>Debate then arose about the volume of mentoring that it was appropriate to procure and the fact that the Board had taken a majority decision (7 votes to 3) in March 2009 to offer only Induction Mentoring to new Directors for a limited time after first joining the Board. It was, however, noted that the Statement of Requirements reflected that previous decision.</p> <p>In recognition of the fact that it would not be possible to resolve the issue at the meeting it was suggested that the Review Panel be reconvened with a slightly larger membership and that it should report on its findings to the September Board Meeting. With some reservations there was concurrence with that view. New Panel members were chosen.</p> <p><b>Agreed that</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. The Review Panel be reconvened to consider these issues and report back to</li> </ul>



	<p>the Board at its September 2009 meeting</p> <p><b>B.</b> The members of the panel would be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simon Blackburn and Alan Marsh (members of the original panel)</li><li>• Caroline Cook, Jim Houldsworth, Paul Whitehead (new members)</li></ul>
<p><b>14.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Date and Time of Next Meetings</u></b></p> <p>Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2009 at 6.00pm</p> <p>Board Meeting – Immediately after the AGM on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2009</p>