



BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15th DECEMBER 2010 AT 6.00PM
IN THE BOARD ROOM AT COASTAL HOUSE**

PRESENT:

Cllr Ron Bell
Diane Bellinger
Cllr Tim Cox
Cllr Fred Jackson
Alan Marsh
Judith Mills
Bill Rogers
Alison Stringer
Doreen Wightman (Chair)
Paul Whitehead

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

PART A – OPEN SESSION

1.	<p><u>Apologies</u></p> <p>Cllr Jim Houldsworth, Carol Hall, Janet Stirling, Cllr Simon Blackburn, Peter Jefferson, Habiba Adam</p>
2.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>None</p>
3.	<p><u>Minutes of Board Meeting 17th November 2010</u></p> <p><u>Agreed:</u> That the minutes be approved as a true record.</p>
4.	<p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <p>None</p>



<p>5.</p>	<p><u>Board Meeting Dates and Committee Membership 2011-12</u></p> <p>Peter Whittaker presented a report setting out the schedule of meetings for the Board and each of the two new Committees Service Delivery (SDC) and Finance, Audit & Corporate Services (FACS)) in the coming year. Cllr Fred Jackson stated that both he and Cllr Simon Blackburn would not be available for the revised February 2011 meeting due to the need to attend another previously arranged meeting.</p> <p>Peter Whittaker explained that the date had been changed to give sufficient time to prepare the 2010-11 Quarter 3 performance report for the Board. He also stated that the AGM in 2011 would now be taking place in November rather than September. This change had been agreed with the Council to create sufficient space in the timetable of meeting for the 2010-11 BCH Final Accounts to be approved by the Board prior to submission to the AGM.</p> <p><u>Agreed that:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The revised Board Meeting Cycle timetable for 2001-12 be approved B. The proposed membership of its Committees be approved.
<p>6.</p>	<p><u>Decent Homes Situation Report</u></p> <p>Cyril Holland presented the report to inform the Board about the potential reduction in Decent Homes Funding and the impact this may have on delivery of the Decent Homes Programme. He stated that BCH had received formal notification from the Homes and Communities Agency that Blackpool had been put back on the funding “bidders list”. The deadline for submission of the bid was 11th January 2011 with the bid outcome expected to be announced in late January or very early February 2011.</p> <p>Judith Mills asked whether BCH would be guaranteed any funding. It was explained that the bidding list had increased in size but the available funding had not. It was believed that some funding would be guaranteed but it was unclear how much at the current time.</p> <p>Neil Jack reported that the seven members of staff who are “at risk” as a result of the funding reduction had been served with the necessary 30 day consultation notices. Letters had been sent to all employees giving them the option to express an interest in taking voluntary redundancy or early retirement. Discussions had also taken place with contractors.</p> <p>Alan Marsh asked whether a recruitment freeze had been put in place and this was confirmed by Neil Jack, unless it was absolutely essential to fill a post. He also stated that the employment of all staff working on a temporary contract basis or through an agency would finish at the end of March 2011. This would create vacancies to allow for necessary redeployment of permanent staff who were “at risk”.</p> <p><u>Agreed</u></p> <p>That the position and proposed way forward be noted.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><u>Housing Subsidy and the 2011-12 Rent Increase</u></p> <p>Neil Jack presented a report which provided a summary of the financial position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Government’s draft Housing Subsidy Determination for 2011/12 and the implications for future rent levels. He explained that the report had already been considered by the Finance & Audit Committee, that any decision on a rent increase was a matter for the Council but that BCH could express its views to the Council.</p>



	<p>In the ensuing debate a number of questions were asked and points raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be a net reduction in properties at Grange Park because more flats were being demolished than there were new houses being built. • If the Council did not follow the Government's rent increase guidelines there would be a loss of income to the HRA. • The 2% increase recommended by the Finance & Audit Committee appeared to be too low and if more income was needed to support the Decent Homes Programme it would be beneficial to have a higher rent increase • Whilst a higher increase might well be offset by increased Housing Benefit entitlement there could be a significant impact on tenants who do receive Housing benefit. • When the Finance & Audit Committee had met, the Decent Homes and Supporting People funding issues were not known and the Committee's view may now need revision. <p><u>Agreed that:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. A recommendation for a 5.4% rent increase be submitted to the Council B. A suitable response to the draft Housing Subsidy Determination be sent to CLG.
<p>8.</p>	<p><u>Review of the Supporting People Funding</u></p> <p>Neil Jack presented a report to inform the Board of the anticipated changes to Supporting People (SP) funding in the Housing Revenue Account for 2011/12 and their impact on the Sheltered Housing service provided by BCH. He explained that SP funding covers the costs of service provision and that BCH wants to minimize the effect of any funding reductions.</p> <p>Maggie Cornall reported that a proposal on a way forward had been given to the Council and their decision was awaited. In the meantime consultation with tenants affected was being arranged. The Chair asked that Sheltered Tenants be treated fairly and that senior members of staff should attend the consultation sessions to ensure that questions are fully answered.</p> <p>Fred Jackson asked that Council Nominee Directors be informed of the dates and venues of the meetings so that, if they wished, they could attend those being held in their respective wards. It was then suggested that this information should be given to all Directors.</p> <p><u>Agreed that:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The report be noted and the approach outlined be approved. B. All Directors be provided with a schedule of the consultation sessions
<p>9.</p>	<p><u>Core Benchmarking Report</u></p> <p>Neil Jack presented the report for 2010/11.</p> <p><u>Agreed</u></p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p><u>Government Consultation – “Local Decisions: a fairer future for social housing”</u></p> <p>Maggie Cornall presented a report outlining the elements of this consultation document, issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government, on the proposed radical reforms to the social housing system. She explained that it was actually a matter for the Council to respond but BCH would have the opportunity to contribute to their response.</p> <p><u>Agreed</u></p> <p>That the position be noted.</p>



11.	<p><u>New Council House Building – Progress Report</u></p> <p>Cyril Holland reported that there had been a handover of new properties at Portree and Cranbrook. The decant arrangements on Grange Park were going well, with the first and second phases almost completed. Work was shortly due to commence on the other two blocks.</p> <p>Agreed: That the position be noted.</p>
12.	<p><u>Minutes of Committees and Matters Arising</u></p> <p>12A <u>Asset Management</u> Alan Marsh presented the minutes.</p> <p><u>Agreed</u> That the minutes be accepted.</p> <p>12B <u>Human Resources</u> Diane Bellinger presented the minutes.</p> <p><u>Agreed that:</u> The minutes be accepted.</p> <p><u>Operations</u> Alison Stringer presented the minutes.</p> <p>12C <u>Agreed</u> That the minutes be accepted.</p> <p><u>Finance & Audit</u> Paul Whitehead presented the minutes.</p> <p>12D <u>Agreed</u> That the minutes be accepted.</p>
13.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>Pensions – Neil Jack stated that he had received the three yearly valuation figures. Overall, the contribution rate is increasing but for BCH it is changing from 12.3% (current) to 12% which will equate to a saving of £100,000.</p> <p>Agreed: That the position be noted</p>
14.	<p><u>Date and Time of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 15th February 2011 at Coastal House.</p>
	<p><u>The Meeting Closed at 7.40pm.</u></p>