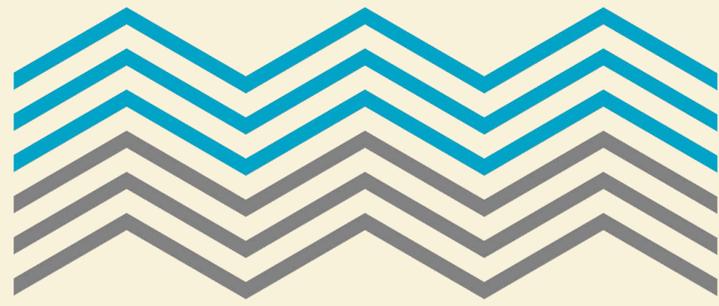


2020
2021



Blackpool Coastal
Housing

BCH

BOARD MINUTES

2.12.2020



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED
HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2020 AT 6.00PM**

Present: Councillor Campbell, Non-Executive Director (Chair)
Mr A Disley, Independent Non-Executive Director
Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director
Councillor Hobson, Non-Executive Director
Mrs V O'Shea, Tenant Non-Executive Director
Councillor Robertson BEM, Non-Executive Director
Mr A Szatkowski, Independent Non-Executive Director
Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director
Mrs E Upton, Independent Non-Executive Director

In attendance: Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive
Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations
Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources
Mrs S Fowler, Chief Executive's PA
Mr N Jack, Chief Executive Blackpool Council (for Items 1-7only)
Ms V Piper, Housing Options Manager, Blackpool Council
Ms C Lamprey, Involvement and Communications Manager (for Items 1-8 only)
Mr D Shakespeare, TOWER Scrutiny member (for Items 1-8 only)
Mr M Towers, Company Secretary
Miss Y Burnett, Assistant Company Secretary

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| 1. | <p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence submitted.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None.</p> | |
| 3. | <p>Minutes of the last meeting of the Board held on 14 October 2020</p> <p>The Board agreed: To approve the minutes of the Board meeting held on 14 October 2020 as a correct record.</p> | |
| 4. | <p>Matters Arising</p> <p><u>Any Other Business</u> Mr Donnellon confirmed that the scorecard KPIs had been discussed as part of</p> | |

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| 5. | <p>virtual Away Day sessions and had been included in the revised Business Plan, which would be presented at a future Board meeting.</p> <p><u>Draft Audited Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2020</u> Mr Towers confirmed that the Audited Accounts had been signed by the Chair and submitted to both the External Auditor and Companies House.</p> <p><u>Performance Report</u> Mr Dunstan confirmed that the Audit Committee at its meeting in January 2021 would consider the Performance Team review of the Rents Service.</p> <p><u>Director of Resources' Report</u> Mr Dunstan reported that he was due to meet Mr Weston later that week to discuss the Climate Change Action Plan and agreed to provide Councillor Hobson with an update after that meeting.</p> | <p></p> <p>SD</p> <p>SD</p> |
| 6. | <p>Non-Executive Director Positions</p> <p>The Board noted that the Council, in its role as member, had re-appointed Mr Andrei Szatkowski as an Independent Non-Executive Director for a further three years, until 6 December 2023.</p> <p>The Board noted Ms Lisa-Marie Derby had resigned as a Tenant Non- Executive and accepted the Chair's recommendation to the Council not to appoint to the position until the outcome of the Council's option paper in the New Year.</p> <p>HQN Report - Review of the Management of Blackpool Coastal Housing</p> <p>Mr Jack informed the Board that the Council had commissioned the Housing Quality Network (HQN) review to evaluate the Company's performance in respect of its role managing Council housing stock on behalf of the Council and to ensure value for money. He added that the HQN report acknowledged the quality service and recommended the retention of the Company as the Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) for Council homes for the next five years.</p> <p>The Board was advised that since the formation of My Blackpool Home (Blackpool Housing Company) and Lumen, there was a need for the Council to explore longer-term aspirations as to how the three companies could work in a more connected manner. Mr Jack explained that the proposed variation to the current management agreement provided a level of certainty during that period.</p> <p>[Ms Thompson joined the meeting].</p> | |

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| <p>Ms Piper advised that overall the HQN report had been positive and supported the work of the Company, but had identified a number of improvements such as void performance and digital access, which the Board could start to consider. She added that the report also commented on the relationship between the Council and the ALMO and the publication of 'The charter for social housing residents: social housing' white paper, which placed more responsibility onto the Council, was timely and the identified measures would be reviewed in the next 12 months.</p> <p>In response to questions from Mr Szatkowski, Mr Donnellon suggested that it would be beneficial to analyse the recommendations with the Board and Ms Piper, particularly as there were areas of crossover with the White Paper. He suggested hosting a virtual session in the New Year and at the same time, consider the development of an action plan. Ms Piper welcomed Mr Szatkowski's suggestion that representatives from the three housing organisations should be given an opportunity to input into the process.</p> <p>Following a question from Mr Szatkowski, Mr Jack explained that the first stage would be for the Council to identify its preferred option/way forward from the closer alignment of the three housing organisations and then work with all three organisations as to how that could be achieved.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To hold a virtual session in the New Year to review the recommendations from the HQN report in conjunction with the White Paper. 2. To note the update. <p>7. COVID-19 Update</p> <p>Mr Jack explained that because Blackpool had been tied to Lancashire, the town would be placed into Tier 3 restrictions with effect from 2 December, but was of the opinion that this was not appropriate as the infection rates in Blackpool were similar to the England average and was looking at how this could be managed. He reported that the Government looked at the positive infection rates per 100,000 over a seven-day period, which for Blackpool was 162, but whilst considering the level of restrictions to impose had looked at the infection rates in the upper tiers, Lancashire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen and not the individual districts. The average for East Lancashire was 289 per 100,000.</p> <p>The Board was advised that the town was not experiencing the same level of community transmission as other areas of Lancashire and had continued to see</p> | <p>JD</p> |

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| <p>a weekly decrease in the infection rates, with a current 20-25% decrease, although it was noted that there was usually a two-week lag between the reduction in infection rates and Government interventions.</p> <p>Mr Jack reported the restrictions would be reviewed on 16 December, which provided an opportunity to present evidence to the Government and Public Health England officials to support a reduction to Tier 2 and both of the town's Member of Parliament were supporting this proposal. He added that the Government did not appreciate the difference geographically, demographically and economically between the different parts of Lancashire and the synergy between Lancaster, Wyre, Fylde and Blackpool.</p> <p>It was reported that Tier 2 was less restrictive and would allow some hospitality to open, but Mr Jack was fearful that some businesses would not survive despite the grant support available for those businesses forced to close or had experienced a detrimental impact.</p> <p>The Board was advised that testing capacity had increased to identify any potential risks and a testing centre had been set up in every Lancashire borough. The testing centre for Blackpool was located on the South Car park and had carried out 1,500 test last week, with 16,000 tests carried out across Lancashire. Mr Jack added that fast acting, lateral flow tests, had been used in the riskier populations such as the homeless community, hostel and regular testing was taking place and not just for those who were symptomatic. The results had indicated that up to a third had identified with low or no symptoms, whereas it had been 10% in Liverpool. It was proposed to use the lateral flow tests to target other areas of risk e.g. sheltered housing.</p> <p>Mr Jack explained that a benefit of being in Tier 3 was the access to mass testing and the plan for Lancashire was targeted, intensive and regular testing. This would allow day services for the elderly and disability services to return to some level of normality. He reported that care home staff were being tested weekly and residents were tested monthly and it was proposed to adopt a similar approach for day care services. It was reported that visitors to residential care homes were also being tested, to lessen the risks and would shortly be able to access testing kits that provided results within 30 minutes.</p> <p>It was proposed that work places, factories, processing plants and call centres e.g. Laila's Fine Foods, that worked within small environments would also be tested. Mr Jack informed the Board that Blackpool Transport had recently tested all its employees, with only one positive result and this enabled their workforce to continue working. He added that the Department of Work and Pensions at Warbreck had also started testing employees.</p> | |

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| <p>Mr Jack informed the Board that a bid had been submitted to the Government for funding to increase the testing capacity exponentially over a period of six weeks with support from military resources. After that, to sustain the testing capacity, a 'Train the Trainer' approach would be adopted with occupational support staff being trained to administer the tests and record the results. The aim was to protect, enable and free residents to live a normal life. He acknowledged that some low-income residents were reluctant to be tested in case they were required to self-isolate and therefore the process to access the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment was being made easier. Mr Jack added that contact tracing would become less important due to the volume of testing being carried out and outbreaks would be controlled by focusing on areas of greater risk e.g. the older population to alleviate the demand on hospitals</p> <p>The Board was informed that the Pfizer vaccine was being delivered to Blackpool Victoria Hospital and Lancaster General Hospital on Monday 7 December as those were the only two hospitals with suitable (-76 degrees) storage facilities. Mr Jack explained that the vaccine was unstable as it could only be stored at room temperature for three hours and was therefore not suitable for wide transportation. It was the intention that on site Health staff would be the first to receive the Pfizer vaccine and then employees in the primary care and social care sectors.</p> <p>Mr Jack explained that the AstraZeneca vaccine, which was expected to be licensed within the week, would be the vaccine given to the majority of people. He informed the Board that the vaccine had been traditionally made and was similar to the flu vaccine in nature, transportable and the clinicians had the experience to administer it. Mr Jack added that it was not planned for the NHS to use the Moderna vaccine.</p> <p>It was reported that it was likely that the AstraZeneca vaccine would be delivered before Christmas and would be administered in two parts, 30 days apart. It was therefore unlikely that the impact would be visible until January 2021. Mr Jack reported that it was hoped that by the end of February the over 55's target group would be vaccinated and the remainder of the population by the end of April. He added that it was not proposed to vaccinate children, as this had not been tested.</p> <p>Mr Jack stressed the importance of getting as many people as possible vaccinated explaining that the Olympia Exhibition Hall at the Winter Gardens would be used as a mass vaccination centre and testing would be by appointment only, booked through websites and smart Apps. He added that Primary Care locations would also be used to assist with the vaccination of housebound and vulnerable residents. It would be necessary to identify the most effective form of communication to encourage people to be vaccinated.</p> | |

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| <p>In response to a question from Councillor Robertson, Mr Jack was unable to provide specific figures, but reported that at one point during the pandemic Blackpool had the highest unemployment rate and the highest number of people on furlough. However, he added that the lost opportunities for those aged 18 to 24 years needed to be urgently addressed and reported that the Council had signed up to host the KickStart Programme to provide six month work placements. The Council was also working with Blackpool and the Fylde College to encourage students to remain in education for longer. Regrettably, the furlough scheme had not protected business from failure, but the support and collaboration from all political parties and MPs had been welcomed.</p> <p>Mr Jack explained, in response to a question from Councillor Robertson, that the second round of the grant system had included more rigorous fraud restrictions, which had resulted in payment delays, but the funding criteria had been extended to include various businesses and supply chains.</p> <p>In response to a question from Mr Szatkowski, Mr Jack confirmed that the Government had agreed to reimburse the Council for COVID related expenditure, which had been predominately in Adult Social Care, but the Council was anticipating a £10m overspend. He added that the sporadic receipt of funding made it difficult when reimbursing businesses, but the Council would continue to 'do the right thing' to support those most vulnerable and hope the necessary funding was received.</p> <p>Mr Jack explained, in response to a question from Mr Herring, that the Council had been aware of the vulnerability of Debenhams for a while and already had plans in place for the space with the expansion of the Houndshell Centre and a new cinema. He added that following the successful bids for £25m of High Streets funding and £39m of Towns funding a number of projects were being developed including the redevelopment of the Abingdon Street Market, office development and the concept of a University in the town centre, all of which would bring employment into the town centre. It was reported that the Business in the Community group was developing a Digital Innovative Strategy following the installation of a transatlantic fibre infrastructure at the Enterprise Zone, along with other ongoing development opportunities, such as advanced manufacturing of medical technologies and the central business district. However, Mr Jack confirmed the primary focus was to ensure businesses continued to trade until next May.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the update.</p> <p>[Mr Jack left the meeting prior to consideration of the following item].</p> | |

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| 8. | <p>Overview of Complaints Handling</p> <p>Ms Caroline Lamprey, Involvement and Communications Manager, provided the Board with an overview of complaints handling and Mr David Shakespeare a member of the TOWER Scrutiny Panel was present.</p> <p>The Board was informed that the Housing Ombudsman had issued a revised Complaint Handling Code in July 2020 and later in September 2020 had revised its own scheme, which put in place new powers to issue complaint handling failure orders and investigate systemic issues. Ms Lamprey explained that as part of the changes to the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, the Company was required to complete a self-assessment of its own complaints service by 31 December and update its policy and procedures by 31 March 2021.</p> <p>Ms Lamprey explained that the aim of the Complaint Handling Code was to provide a framework to promote high-quality complaint handling, greater access and consistency and faster resolution of complaints. The key points of the code was a universal definition of a complaint, the introduction of a reasonable adjustment policy to improve access for residents and raising awareness of the Code to residents, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service.</p> <p>It was reported that the Scheme promoted a two-stage complaints procedure, but the Company operated a three-stage process, which was facilitated by the Involvement and Communication Team who acted as complaint handlers. Ms Lamprey explained the rationale for a three-stage process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal – identified ‘quick’ fixes. • Manager Investigation – Strict 10 working timescale for manager to respond to the complaint. • Appeal Panel – comprising of Director of Service and a trained tenant and convened within 15 working days of a request to escalate. <p>The Board was presented with the Self-Assessment form, which had been completed against the Ombudsman’s standard. It was noted that the majority of existing policies and practices were aligned to the Ombudsman’s Scheme, with the exception of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of a complaint – Proposed to update the complaints policy and adopt the Housing Ombudsman’s definition • Reasonable adjustment policy – Currently does not exist, but would be adopted as part of the updated policy and procedure. • Complaints team and processes – it was noted that whilst the complaint officer did not have autonomy to resolve complaints, it was | |

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| 9. | <p>agreed not to change this as it provided an opportunity for learning.</p> <p>In response to a question from Mrs O’Shea, Ms Lamprey reported that in the event of complaint regarding a contractor, the Company would take the lead and the relevant service manager would undertake the necessary investigations.</p> <p>Mr Szatkowski whilst supportive of the three-stage process suggested that clear reasons why the Company had adopted this process needed to be set out in the self-assessment form. He also welcomed the opportunity to develop the options for communicating the lessons learned to the Board.</p> <p>Ms Lamprey, in response to a question from Mr Herring, explained that telephone calls were not currently recorded, but upon receipt of a complaint, a complaint handler would record the details on the relevant form whilst on the telephone and then send the completed document to the resident for approval prior to submitting it to the service manager. She added that to raise awareness of the revised Scheme, it was the intention for all frontline staff to be trained ahead of the March 2021 deadline.</p> <p>The Chair on behalf of the Board thanked Ms Lamprey and her team for their efforts and Mr Shakespeare for attending the meeting.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To approve the self-assessment form, subject to the additional wording to support a three-stage process.</p> <p>[The Board adjourned for five minutes and Ms Lamprey and Mr Shakespeare left the meeting].</p> <p>Chief Executive’s Report</p> <p>Variation to the management agreement:</p> <p>Following the update from Mr Jack and Ms Piper, Mr Donnellon sought the Board’s approval for the Chair to sign the proposed variation management agreement.</p> <p>COVID-19 Update</p> <p>Mr Donnellon reported that it had been evident that customers had found the second national lockdown difficult and had become weary of the restrictions.</p> | |

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| <p>Business Planning</p> <p>Mr Donnellon was of the opinion that the three virtual away day sessions had worked well and proposed to hold more sessions in the New Year to consider the recommendations from the HQN report, the White Paper and the Blackpool economy. He explained that it was proposed that the existing Business Plan would be rolled forward with the revised Risk Register and in the New Year, once the situation had returned to a level of normality; SMT and the Board could consider pursuing new service areas and potential areas of expansion if the environment had stabilised sufficiently.</p> <p>The Housing White Paper</p> <p>Mr Donnellon was of the opinion that the tone of the White Paper did little to remove the stigma associated with social housing, which the Government had professed to want to change and there was some sense of missed opportunities in terms of a lack of funding and impetus to build more social housing. He informed the Board that whilst the SMT would undertake a detailed analysis of the implications for BCH, none of the proposals was unexpected and many of the measures were already in place. Mr Donnellon proposed to hold a virtual session in the New Year to seek the Board's views.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Chair sign the proposed variation to the management agreement with the Council which would extend the agreement by five years to allow for further investigation of joint working options between BCH and BHC. 2. To note the Chief Executive's report. | <p>JD</p> <p>JD</p> <p>Chair/Co Sec/JD</p> |
| <p>10. Director of Resources' Report</p> <p>Mr Dunstan presented his report to the Board and highlighted the key points.</p> <p>Rent Collection</p> <p>The Board was advised that despite the issues related to the pandemic and the reduced enforcement options available, there had been a relatively low 2.8% reduction in rent arrears and Mr Dunstan reported that financial support officers were working with tenants who were at risk of rent arrears.</p> <p>Mr Dunstan informed the Board that the HQN re-accreditation of the Rents Team had been positive, but had identified two areas for potential improvement, the repairs recharge and former tenant arrears. He added that</p> | |

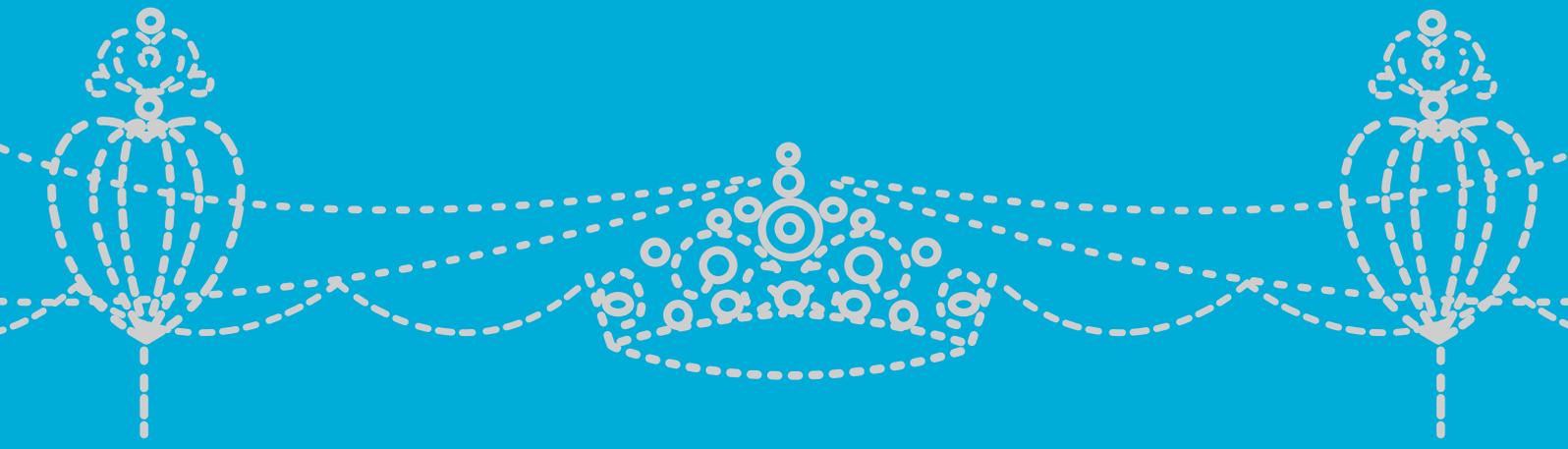
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| <p>the Performance Team following its internal review had also identified the latter and the Company was therefore considering a change of approach. He added that the Audit Committee at its meeting in January 2021 would consider both reports.</p> <p>IT Issues</p> <p>It had been acknowledged that the Company's website needed to be revamped and Mr Dunstan explained that in year efficiency savings would be used to fund the improvements. He informed the Board that a working group was considering whether the required improvements, including accessibility from various mediums could be achieved through existing arrangements or whether a new provider was required. Mr Dunstan confirmed that tenants would be involved in the redesign.</p> <p>In response to a question from Councillor Hobson, Mr Dunstan advised that Engie was a consultant similar to Energiesprong. He explained that working in partnership with Blackpool Housing Company (BHC), a joint Carbon Friendly Design Guide would be developed and as mentioned earlier, Mr Dunstan was due to attend a meeting later that week with Mr Weston and Ms Speakman from BHC to discuss the Action Plan. He was of the opinion that jointly a number of efficiencies could be achieved.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the Director of Resources' report.</p> <p>11. Director of Operations' Report</p> <p>Mrs Cornall, Director of Operations', presented her report to the Board and provided the following updates.</p> <p>Repairs Operations</p> <p>Mrs Cornall reported that the HQN re-inspection of the responsive and void repairs service had been delayed due to the pandemic, but a virtual meeting had been scheduled for next week to complete the re-inspection.</p> <p>The Board was advised that the remodelling of Dunsop Court had continued during the national lockdown and Mrs Cornall was pleased to report that the first handover had taken place and the tenant had been very happy with the refurbishments.</p> <p>Compliance</p> <p>It was reported that the Internal Audit of Statutory Property Compliance had</p> | <p>SD/Co Sec</p> |

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| 13. | <p>juniper day. The Board was informed that employees were also being encouraged to contribute to a collection for vulnerable tenants.</p> <p><u>COVID-19 Vaccine</u> In response to a question from Ms Thompson, Mr Donnellon reported that the lateral flow testing was being used in the hostels and a similar offer would be made to those in Sheltered Housing. He added that he would speak to Dr Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health, to discuss the most effective communication methods to encourage tenants to have the vaccination. He agreed to keep the Board updated between meetings.</p> <p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the dates of the scheduled Board meetings for 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 3 February • Wednesday 28 April • Wednesday 21 July • Wednesday 13 October • Wednesday 8 December 2. To note that until further guidance was received meetings would continue to take place via Microsoft Teams. | JD |

The meeting ended at 7.53pm

Signed by the Chair

.....
Councillor Gillian Campbell, 3 February 2021



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