

2020
2021



Blackpool Coastal
Housing

BCH

BOARD MINUTES

23.07.2020



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED
HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON THURSDAY 23 JULY 2020 AT 5.00PM**

Present: Councillor G Campbell, Non-Executive Director (Chairman)
Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director
Councillor D Robertson BEM, Non-Executive Director
Mr N Herring, Non-Executive Director
Mrs V O’Shea, Non-Executive Director
Mr A Disley, Non-Executive Director
Mr Szatkowski, Non-Executive Director
Mrs M Thompson, Non-Executive Director
Ms E Upton, Non-Executive Director

In attendance: Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations (items 1 -12)
Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive (items 1 – 12)
Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources (items 1 – 12)
Mr M Towers, Company Secretary
Miss K Rourke, Assistant Company Secretary

		Actions
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Non-Executive Director Ms L Derby.</p>	
2.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.</p>	
3.	<p>APPOINTMENT OF NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHAIR</p> <p>The Board was informed that Councillor Gillian Campbell had been appointed as a Non-Executive Director and Chair of the Company following the Council’s (in its role as ‘Member’) decision to appoint her to replace Councillor Lynn Williams who had stood down from both roles.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the appointment of Councillor Gillian Campbell as a Non-Executive Director and Chair of the Company.</p>	

		Actions
4.	<p>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 30 APRIL 2020</p> <p>The Board agreed: To approve the minutes of the Board meeting held on 30 April as a true and correct record.</p>	
5.	<p>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST BOARD MEETING</p> <p>30 April 2020 Board meeting</p> <p><u>Minute 7</u></p> <p>Mr Donnellon informed the Board that the draft business plan would be discussed under agenda item 8.</p> <p><u>Minute 8</u></p> <p>Mr Dunstan reported that he had looked to revise the business's budget but as there were no significant costs identified in the Company, it was decided that it was not necessary to revise the budget at that time. The Housing Revenue Account would be considered at a later date and was due to be reviewed by an external consultant on 14 August 2020.</p>	
6.	<p>MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 JULY 2020</p> <p>Mr Szatkowski provided a brief overview of the matters considered and approved at the Audit Committee meeting, which included the approval of the Internal Audit Plan 2020/2021. A policy tracker was to be presented at the next Audit Committee meeting that would enable the Committee to monitor the policies and ensure they were fit for purpose.</p> <p>Clarification was sought in relation to the GDPR breaches and how the Committee had come to the decision in regards to one of the GDPR incidents. Mr Dunstan highlighted that the appropriate action, following the advice from the company's Data Protection Officer Jonathan Pickup, had been taken.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee on 2 July 2020.</p>	
7.	<p>REVIEW OF COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Mr Towers, Company Secretary, requested that Board Members' considered a review of the membership of the Appointments and Remuneration Committee and Audit Committee following the Council's recent decision to replace Cllr Williams, which subsequently resulted in the position of Chair becoming vacant</p>	

		Actions
8.	<p>on the Appointments and Remuneration Committee.</p> <p>The Audit Committee had been collaborating and working well and the Board did not deem it necessary to change any of the members of that Committee, although due to the vacant position on the Appointment and Remuneration Committee, Mr Towers suggested that Cllr Campbell could fill the vacant position of Chair of the Committee, as that was previously held by Cllr Williams.</p> <p>Mrs O'Shea expressed that due to other commitments she would no longer be available to attend the Appointment and Remuneration Committee meetings' and as a result stepped down as a member, Mrs Thompson put herself forward as a replacement member.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the appointment of Cllr Gillian Campbell as a member and Chair of the Appointments and Remuneration Committee with immediate effect. 2. To note that Mrs O'Shea had stepped down from her position as member of the Appointments and Remuneration Committee with immediate effect. 3. To approve the appointment of Mrs Thompson as a Member of the Appointments and Remuneration Committee, replacing Mrs O'Shea, with immediate effect. <p>DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2020/2021</p> <p>Mr Donnellon, Chief Executive, presented to the Board a draft of the revised business plan for 2020/21. Board Members' were asked to consider the draft document and subject to any amendments approve the business plan for 2020/2021.</p> <p>The draft business plan presented to the Board Members' reflected the Company's continued ambitions for strong core services, supported housing work and linked to the extended role around the Council's ambitions. The plan also referenced a commitment to be carbon zero by 2030.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon highlighted that the draft business plan had not radically changed as the long-term objectives of the business had not been altered as a result of the pandemic, although amendments were required, following discussions with Board Members', to include the adaptations the business had been required to make to meet the immediate pressures as a direct result of Covid-19.</p>	

		Actions
9.	<p>Board Members' were informed that performance data was still to be added to the draft business plan and that it was intended that the service plans would be updated following the adoption of the revised plan. Mr Donnellon assured the Board that the detailed service plans would remain dynamic and that performance data would be based on the Housemark benchmarking data, the revised indicators that the Company had developed and the changing economic circumstances Blackpool and its residents' had faced.</p> <p>The Board noted the budgetary considerations, it was reported that the business was not seeking to change the level of fees agreed with Blackpool Council at the previous Board meeting, although the option was there to potentially negotiate the level of fee or additional specific income from the Housing Revenue Account if additional services were added.</p> <p>Discussions were held in relation to the impact on the business should a second wave of the pandemic were to hit and whether the revised business plan had accounted for that. Mr Donnellon responded that the business had adapted to a new way of working as a result of Covid-19, staff were working from home and social distancing measures had been implemented for those attending the office. He emphasised that it would be a challenge to fully integrate the new way of working but it was key to the business to get that aspect right going forward. Staff had been surveyed to provide feedback as to how they had found flexible working, the initial results had shown strong support for more flexible working patterns which was beneficial to the business as it intended to embed more flexible working patterns going forward.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To approve the revised draft business plan 2020/2021 and any future amendments required to the draft business plan.</p> <p>CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT</p> <p>Mr Donnellon, Chief Executive, presented a report outlining significant developments or issues that had arisen since the last Board meeting, which included arrangements for a potential second wave of Covid-19 infections and the business impact for 2020/2021.</p> <p>Board Members' were informed that although lockdown restrictions were being lifted, there was an ongoing risk that there could be a second wave of infections and that the focus for the remainder for the year was to reinstate the levels of service being delivered pre-Covid-19, work with new client groups and keep customers and staff safe whilst the virus remained a threat.</p>	

		Actions
<p>10.</p>	<p>Alongside the weekly updates Mr Donnellon had circulated to Board Members' and senior management throughout the pandemic, he recapped on the actions and responses' the business had taken as a direct result of the pandemic and highlighted the success of those responses'.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon summarised the business impact and expressed that although delivery of services' had been temporarily altered in a radical way, performance had remained strong across all KPI's and compared to the business's peers'. He outlined that the Company had categorised three areas that the business would forecast performance going forward, which included rent arrears, void loss and ASB. It was anticipated that rent arrears would rise towards the end of the calendar year and would normalise by March 2021, a similar pattern was predicted for ASB, although it was forecasted that there would not be a sustained increase in void loss.</p> <p>The forecasts' had been an additional tool to help the business focus on performance and reinforced the need to maintain focus as the business emerged from lockdown restrictions'. Discussions had been held within the senior management team to monitor and mitigate the effects of Covid-19 on the business and further measures had been proposed to increase resources in the rents team and around financial support for tenants'.</p> <p>The Board considered the report and discussions were held in relation to a potential recession as a direct result of the pandemic and whether the business had considered that and the risk associated with a recession. Mr Donnellon expressed that it was difficult to predict the outcome of a recession, however the business had prepared for a range of impacts and discussed factors to mitigate the effects of a potential recession. The Chair highlighted that, alongside her work as the Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture at Blackpool Council, she had been in discussion with Mr Donnellon and senior management from Blackpool Housing Company to establish a plan for a 'worst case scenario' situation in relation to a recession directly affecting Blackpool.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the Chief Executive's report.</p> <p>DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES' REPORT</p> <p>Mr Dunstan, Director of Resources presented a report outlining the recent activity in the Resources directorate and asked Board Members' to consider and approve the revised Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Fire Policy and Decarbonisation Strategy presented to the meeting.</p> <p>Board Members' were informed that the business had reported a surplus of £100,000, although it was subject to the result of the external audit conducted</p>	

		Actions
	<p>by Smith Craven and prior to the £500,000 agreed contribution to Blackpool Council previously reported to the Board. Mr Dunstan reported that the surplus was a result of an underspend of £45,000 on the More Positive Together Programme, £38,000 due to vacancies and a £32,000 underspend on the training budget. He also summarised the results of the Housing Revenue Account, as the Company was involved in the financial management of the account.</p> <p>In line with recommendations from internal audit, a capital programme outturn report was presented to the Board. The report highlighted that the planned maintenance programmes were broadly in line with budget although some variations were present at individual spend level. Mr Dunstan reported that there were delays to starting the Troutbeck redevelopment which led to an expenditure of only £1.8 million as opposed to the budget of £3.5 million, although the contractors, Tysons, were confident that the deadline would be met for the project and no further concerns were raised.</p> <p>Mr Dunstan summarised the performance scorecard, he expressed that performance had generally held up overall given the situation the business had faced and that the performance team workplan had been revisited due to the impacts of Covid-19 and in line with the discussion papers circulated to the Board.</p> <p>The performance team had been asked to undertake a comprehensive service review of the rents team, which had been scoped and was underway. It was intended that the review would identify any marginal gains to further improve rent collection which is already an accredited service. Mr Dunstan explained that given the lack of legal action during the pandemic, current performance figures were considered reasonable, although the performance review would clearly be instructive in that regard.</p> <p>The Board discussed and considered the revised Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, it was highlighted that the main amendments had been to clarify the distinction between genuine anti-social behaviours', which were required to be addressed, and other neighbourhood disagreements' which were not required to be investigated under the policy. The Board endorsed the policy and indicated the revised version was clear and concise.</p> <p>Further discussions were held in relation to the housing services' letting service, the initial ICT issues which had been addressed early on in lockdown, the re-launch of the Digital Inclusion Group that would make decisions with regard to a potential Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and a brief overview was given in relation of the health and safety update which was presented at the recent Audit Committee.</p>	

		Actions
11.	<p>Mr Dunstan explained that the revised Fire Policy should have been presented at the previous Board meeting although that had been overlooked, he reminded the Board of the key factors of the policy and reported that an annual review had now been set up and that the supported procedures were in development.</p> <p>Board Members' were informed that work had been ongoing with the Carbon Trust to develop a Decarbonisation Strategy. The strategy outlined that a BCH Climate Emergency Group was to be established which would develop and implement an action plan, it was intended that the group would be made up of representatives from key teams and that the first meeting would be held early next month. Regular updates were to be provided to the Board as part of the Director of Resources report going forward.</p> <p>The Board agreed to approve the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revised Anti-Social Behaviour Policy 2. Revised Blackpool Coastal Housing Fire Safety Policy; and 3. The Blackpool Coastal Housing Decarbonisation Strategy 2020 – 2030. <p>DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS' REPORT</p> <p>Mrs Cornall, Director of Operations presented a report outlining the actions that had been taken since the outbreak of the pandemic and how that had affected the service provided within the operations department.</p> <p>Mrs Cornall updated the Board in relation to staffing and the repairs operations. Staff were still home working, although where appropriate staff had been visiting customers, sheltered staff had returned to work and the capital works and responsive repairs services had now reopened to which staff had returned to their normal duties. As of 1 July 2020, the full repair services' were re-opened, work for small repairs had been in high demand although there was capacity to cope with further influx. The Board noted that the necessary risk assessments and safe systems of work had been implemented and it was reported that they met the Government's Covid secure requirements'.</p> <p>The Head of Asset Management and Operations and Mrs Cornall had recently met with Wolseley Building Supplies to see whether there were any opportunities for further work together given that Wolseley were keen to increase their business within the social housing sector and it was agreed that the Company would continue to test Wolseley as operations returned to normal. Conversations had been had with Procurement for Housing to establish whether testing Wolseley would result in any breach of contract with the current building merchant, the Board was assured that, as there was no</p>	

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	<p>minimum spend to the contract there would be no breach.</p> <p>Further updates were provided in relation to the Company's main partnering contractors Read and Errington and Technical and Electrical Services and the key sub-contractor, North Liverpool Construction which was expected to start removing staff from furlough and return to operations in the near future.</p> <p>A key focus of the Company during the pandemic had been to reduce void costs and turnaround time. Mrs Cornall was pleased to report that the void levels had remained relatively low despite the increase of empty properties and that the training on the void planner had been introduced to help manage that service more effectively.</p> <p>Mrs Cornall summarised the work the Capital Team had undertaken, those included the refurbishment of the Nesswood property, which had been completed and handed over to Jobs, Friends and Houses and the remodelling of Dunsop Court. She further added that the Team had competitively won roofline works, which demonstrated the value for money against the market.</p> <p>The Board was made aware that the Garstang Road West project been stalled due to Covid-19 and a pending bid for European funding for energy efficiency and environmental works. It was anticipated that re-starting the scheme would have resulted in a significant amount of work taking place throughout the winter months, which would not have been ideal for the tenants and as such, preparations had been made to start the work from Spring 20201. In addition to the Garstang Road West project, the assets team had prepared for the acquisitions of potential new properties as part of the Council Homes Investment Plan, which would buy back former right to buy leasehold properties within Council owned buildings.</p> <p>Mrs Cornall informed the Board that compliance work had continued and although there were approximately 26 properties without gas certificates, 22 of which identified as shielded, they were 96% compliant and that further contact had been made with tenants to re-start the electrical testing programme.</p> <p>The Company had continued to support the Council by housing homeless people within the emergency housing units and 40 general needs properties. The Board was informed that the 40 general need properties, used as an extension of emergency housing, over time would need to be reviewed to consider future housing options. Discussions were held in relation to the outcome of the individuals housed in the general need properties once the review had taken place. The Company had also set up the William Lyons House at the end of May, which housed 14 homeless under the age of 25 and had</p>	

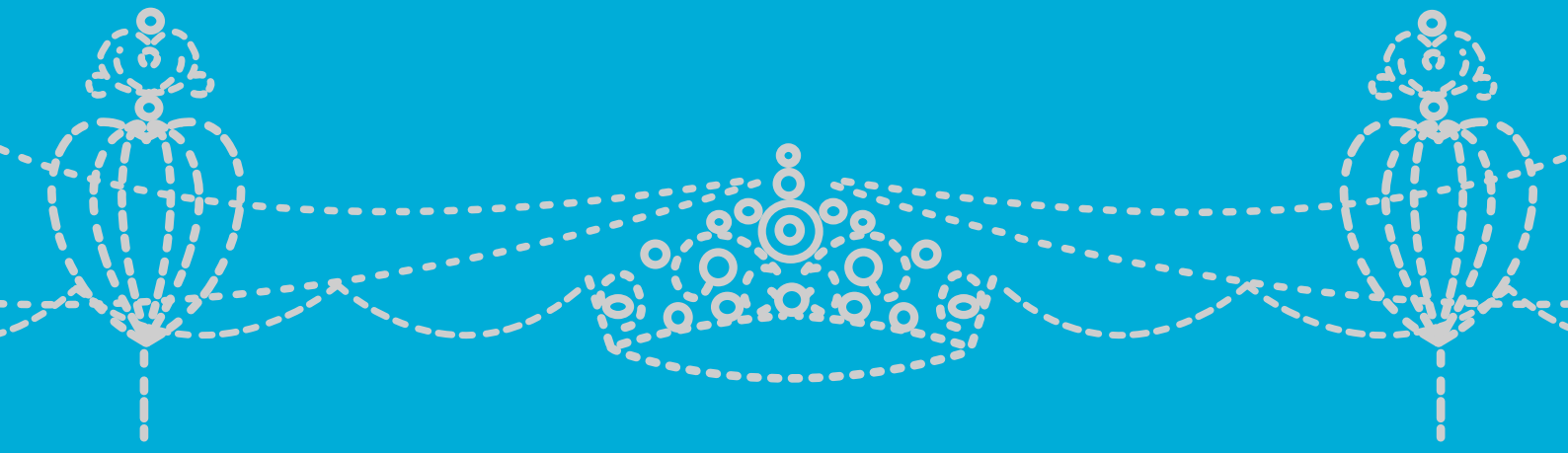
		Actions
12.	<p>proved popular, it was noted that in the long-term the William Lyons House would continue to be used to house people through a joint pathway between Children’s Services and Housing Options.</p> <p>In relation to the Sheltered Housing and Young People’s Housing services’, the Board was informed that both services’ had continued to operate throughout the Covid-19 crisis, although adjustments were required for the Sheltered Housing Services, which included the introduction of warden call technology to contact tenants and staff. As lockdown restrictions had been reduced and staff were re-introduced on site, further measures had been put in place to ensure staff interacted with tenants’ from a social distance.</p> <p>Board Members’ were reminded that the Supported Housing Project had been underway since last autumn after the Board Strategy Day. During the lockdown period new services had been developed, which to the contrary, had expedited the project and effectively changed the direction of the project. The new services and new opportunities were outlined at the meeting and Board Members’ were asked to consider and agree that the Supported Housing Project had reached a conclusion and that a new strategic direction had been established as a result of those activities and opportunities created during the Covid-19 lockdown period.</p> <p>The Board commended the work that had been undertook, especially with the homelessness and other partnerships built throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>The Board agreed that: the Supported Housing Project had reached a conclusion and that a new strategic direction had been established as a result of those activities and opportunities created during the Covid-19 lockdown period.</p> <p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>Mr Szatkowski queried whether the board scorecard needed to be amended further to remove KPI indicators which were not necessarily required to be seen by the Board and whether the Board could be provided with a copy of the HQN BCH management report. Mr Dunstan indicated that the scorecard was suitably balanced, although a review could be undertook to establish which KPI indicators were customer focused and that the Board should be made aware of.</p> <p>In relation to the HQN BCH management report, Mr Towers responded that the report was Council commissioned and that Mr Lockley from the Council had been reviewing the report but it had been delayed due to the pandemic, once the final report had been through the Shareholder Advisory Board, a</p>	

		Actions
	<p>report would be provided to the Board.</p> <p>[Mr Donnellon, Mrs Cornall and Mr Dunstan left the meeting on conclusion of this item.]</p>	
13.	<p>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 14 October 2020.</p>	
14.	<p>CONFIDENTIAL ITEM - APPOINTMENTS AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING</p> <p>Due to the confidential nature of this item, the minutes have been circulated under separate cover.</p>	

The meeting ended at 6.40pm

Signed by the Chairman

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Councillor G Campbell, 14 October 2020



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