

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED
HELD AT COASTAL HOUSE
ON WEDNESDAY 4 MAY 2022 AT 6.00PM**

Present: Councillor N Brookes, Non-Executive Director (Chair)
Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director
Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director
Mrs M Cameron, Tenant Non-Executive Director
Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director
Ms T Johnson, 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 M Towers, Company Secretary
Mrs L Hurst, Company Secretary of Blackpool Entertainment Company,
Blackpool Operating Company and Blackpool Transport Services (Items
1 to 10)
Mrs S Chadwick, Assistant Company Secretary

		Actions
1.	<p>APPOINTMENT OF NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS</p> <p>The Board noted the appointments of Maureen Cameron as Tenant Non-Executive Director and Maggi Gilkes and Tracey Johnson as Independent Non-Executive Directors and welcomed the new members to the Board.</p>	
2.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director, Mr A Szatkowski, Independent Non-Executive Director and Councillor D Robertson, Non-Executive Director.</p>	
3.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2022 AND WRITTEN RESOLUTION APPROVED ON 8 MARCH 2022</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the minutes of the Board meeting held on 2 February 2022 as a true and correct record. 2. To note the Written Resolution approved on 8 March 2022. 	

		Actions
<p>5.</p>	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive, informed the Board that new policies and documents would continue to be added to the recently created SharePoint site for members' information in advance of future meetings. The Chair added that the Housemark report, which was added to the site following the presentation to the Board at its last meeting, was a useful resource.</p> <p>Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, circulated copies of the Housing Revenue Account end of year outturn figures to the Board at the meeting.</p> <p>All other matters arising from the previous minutes had been completed or were covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 23 MARCH 2022</p> <p>Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director and Audit Committee member, provided a brief overview of the items discussed at the last Audit Committee meeting on 23 March 2022.</p> <p>The Policy Tracker was currently maintained on a two year revision cycle and the Committee had recommended that the Board considered adjusting that cycle to three years in accordance with the accreditation framework. The Committee had further recommended that the Board agreed to the adoption of the Council's Covert Surveillance Policy and to consider whether it wished to delegate approval of any future revisions to the Audit Committee.</p> <p>Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director, asked for further detail on the type of scenario in which covert surveillance would be used. It was explained that surveillance was not typically used by the company although a possible example would be to monitor extreme instances of Anti-Social Behaviour, however that had not been required to date. Mr M Towers, Company Secretary, added that the advice from the Office of Surveillance Commissioners was that all the Council's Wholly Owned Companies adopted the Council's policy, rather than each company having its own, in the event of any exceptional circumstances which required covert surveillance to be undertaken in the future. Ms Gilkes noted the information and suggested that any instances in which the policy had to be used in the future should be reported back to the Board which members agreed.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting on 23 March 2022. 	

		Actions
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. To update the Policy Tracker to a three year revision cycle. 3. To agree to the adoption of the Council's Covert Surveillance Policy and to delegate approval of any future revisions to the Audit Committee. 	
<p>7.</p>	<p>AUDIT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>The Board considered the appointment of an additional member to the Audit Committee. Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director, had volunteered to undertake this appointment.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To appoint Ms M Gilkes to the Audit Committee.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE (SENIOR MANAGEMENT) MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>The Board considered the appointment of a Chair and an additional member to the Employment Committee (Senior Management).</p> <p>Mr M Towers, Company Secretary, explained that the new Governance Framework, to be presented later in the meeting, updated the Terms of Reference for the Employment Committee (Senior Management), formerly known as the Appointments and Remuneration Committee. The new framework recommended that the Chair of the Board should not also Chair the Employment Committee to avoid any conflicts from their involvement in undertaking the Chief Executive's appraisal. Mr Towers further advised that it would be beneficial to the Committee for members to have a HR background. As Ms T Johnson, Independent Non-Executive Director, met that criteria and had volunteered to be considered for the role the Board therefore agreed that she would be an appropriate candidate.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To appoint Ms T Johnson to the Employment Committee (Senior Management). 2. To appoint Ms T Johnson as Chair of the Employment Committee (Senior Management). 	
<p>9.</p>	<p>KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</p> <p>Mr John Donnellon, Chief Executive, presented the latest Performance Indicators report which he explained was fairly stable with no major movements to be highlighted since it was last presented to the Board.</p> <p>In response to a question from Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director, as to why there had been a reduction in the number of Environmental cases</p>	

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10.	<p>opened by Neighbourhood Officers, Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, believed this to be as a result of prioritising issues of anti-social behaviour over wider environmental cases but agreed to check and report back to Cllr Hobson.</p> <p>Ms T Johnson, Independent Non-Executive Director, referred to the staff sickness indicator and whilst noting that agile working was beneficial, requested assurance that colleagues' wellbeing was being monitored to ensure staff did not continue working at home should they fall ill. In response, Mr Donnellon explained that the company had a strong focus on wellbeing with communication maintained with staff when not in the office. Agile working would continue in future to allow staff to maintain a healthy work-life balance however staff were not pressured into continuing to work at home when unwell. Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, added that consultations had been undertaken with staff throughout the pandemic and support given at that time to help with issues such as isolation. DSE assessments were not undertaken in the home as the office remained the main place of work however risk assessments had been undertaken at the start of the pandemic with office furniture provided where necessary to comply with health and safety obligations while staff were working from home.</p> <p>In response to a suggestion from Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director, Mr Donnellon agreed to simplify the presentation of the graphs in the report and that further detail could be added to the SharePoint site if required around any of the indicators.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the update.</p> <p>GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK</p> <p>Mr M Towers, Company Secretary, presented the revised Governance Framework to the Board alongside his colleague Mrs L Hurst who was Company Secretary to a number of other companies within the Council group. The Framework, which was last updated in 2018, had been revised in accordance with the recently published Local Partnerships guidance which Mr Towers recommended the Board and Senior Management Team familiarised themselves with, in particular the sections on good practice for both the Council and the company. A model Governance Framework had been agreed by the Shareholder Committee at its meeting on 18 March 2022 to ensure consistency across all the Council's companies and the Framework presented to the Board had subsequently been specifically tailored to Blackpool Coastal Housing.</p> <p>Mr Towers outlined some of the key influences that had helped shape the</p>	<p>SD</p> <p>JD</p>

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<p>Framework in addition to the Local Partnerships guidance such as workshops held with the Audit Chairs, the Social Housing White Paper and recommendations from the Council's Internal Audit Review. The Council's governance role was then summarised followed by the company's governance set-up. In response to a question from the Chair as to how "Teckal" requirements were monitored to ensure the company did not exceed the 80% threshold, Mr Towers advised that guidance was to be produced in conjunction with Anthony Collins Solicitors to set out standard guidelines for each of the Council's companies to use so that a common approach was followed in accordance with public sector regulations.</p> <p>The significant additions and amendments to the new Framework were outlined which ensured consistency across all the Council's companies and members were advised that a number of associated documents and policies would be presented at future meetings for the Board to approve their adoption. Mrs Hurst highlighted a recommendation in the new Governance Framework for Board Members to meet privately with the external auditors prior to the year-end accounts being submitted and arrangements would be made for those meetings to be put in place.</p> <p>A training programme was to be launched and there was an intention to hold a Non-Executive Directors' "Away Day", possibly in June/ July at the Winter Gardens conference centre, where updates would be provided on regeneration initiatives around the town and key projects currently being undertaken by each of the companies. Such an event would give the directors an opportunity to interact with board members from some of the Council's other wholly-owned companies and to benefit from an overview on initiatives in Blackpool as a whole.</p> <p>Mr Towers summarised that the company already had a number of good practices in place and so therefore the new Framework would not present significant changes to the company's way of working.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To endorse the Governance Framework and agree its adoption for Blackpool Coastal Housing Limited. 2. That the Company Secretary and where appropriate the Senior Management Team update associated company documents in line with the revised framework. <p>[Mrs L Hurst left the meeting following this item.]</p>	

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<p>11.</p>	<p>CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT</p> <p>Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive, updated the Board on the significant developments that had arisen since the last Board meeting.</p> <p>All remaining Covid restrictions had been lifted from 1 May although as precautions had eased there had been an increase in mild Covid infections amongst staff. The Business Plan had been finalised and was due to be presented to the Shareholder Committee at its meeting on 27 May. The Troutbeck development was progressing well although the project remained approximately ten weeks behind schedule due to Covid related delays. Work on refurbishing the steel framed properties on Hawes Side, which had suffered from corrosion, had begun with environmental improvements also being incorporated into the improvement programme. Mr Donnellon concluded by reporting that the company had been shortlisted for a number of awards which was especially pleasing given the challenges faced due to the pandemic in the last two years.</p> <p>In response to a question from Mr N Herring, Non-Executive Director, in relation to the effect of rising costs on the company, Mr Donnellon acknowledged the fluctuating price of materials but reported that Tysons, the contractors on the Troutbeck development, had managed the price variations well and there had been no requests for an increase in contract price to date. Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, added that the current developments were less likely to be affected by the volatility in prices due to the fixed contract price but that cost pressures may be experienced in future on maintenance projects and new developments. There had been some concerns over the supply and quality of materials being provided for the agreed cost but the company was continuing to monitor the situation to ensure the contractors could continue to deliver the projects to the required specification without the risk of insolvency.</p> <p>In relation to the Business Plan Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director, considered that it would be useful to have the cost and affordability of the company’s objectives as set out in the plan to be provided to the Board. Mr Donnellon therefore agreed to arrange for the Head of Finance and the Director of Resources to present that information at a future meeting.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the update.</p>	<p>JD</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES’ REPORT</p> <p>Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, presented the key points from his report</p>	

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<p>and asked the Board to consider whether it wished to proceed with the appointment of a Board Equalities Champion.</p> <p>The rent collection figures were reported to be very good as highlighted in the Performance Report with an improvement on the arrears figure from the previous year. Mr Dunstan had circulated copies of the Housing Revenue Account end of year outturn figures at the start of the meeting and emailed the company's end of year draft outturn figures, which had just been received, to Board members during the meeting. Whilst the Housing Revenue Account outturn showed a negative variance for the year, this had been budgeted for due to the bad debt provision being higher than required and the company's figures showed a surplus of £86,000.</p> <p>Recruitment to the vacant Health and Safety Advisor post had been unsuccessful and so arrangements had been made to buy in health and safety expertise from the Council as an interim measure. The Board was assured that adequate health and safety provision remained within the company via the existing Health and Safety Advisor alongside the support from the Council's Health and Safety Team.</p> <p>In regards to the nomination of an Equalities Champion, Mr Dunstan asked the Board to consider whether it should instead have a collective responsibility for equalities issues and reminded members that there were no champions for other specific areas. Mr M Towers, Company Secretary, advised members that the other companies in the Council owned group had identified that it should be part of each Non-Executive Director's role and the Board therefore agreed to not proceed with the nomination of an individual Equalities Champion.</p> <p>In response to a question from Councillor Jim Hobson, Non-Executive Director, Mr Dunstan reported that the Carbon Trust wished to undertake work on emissions and modelling of energy consumption in various property types, which the company was reluctant to accept as this was available free of charge elsewhere. The company would prefer the Carbon Trust to work with the company to input into its Climate Change KPIs and a meeting was due to be held in the near future to agree on the work to be undertaken in the forthcoming twelve months. In order for the company to be carbon neutral by 2030 the development of alternative fuels such as hydrogen needed to be accelerated, however it was noted that this was outside of the company's control unlike insulation projects in new-build and existing properties. Affordability for customers also had to be taken into consideration with the installation of new heating technologies currently being significantly more expensive than traditional boilers.</p> <p>Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive director, asked whether the company was</p>	

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<p>likely to meet its budget in the face of the rising cost of living for its tenants. Mr Dunstan admitted that it was difficult to say but advised that the Rents Team was currently looking at new ideas in how to proactively support customers before they got into arrears and that early engagement with tenants was key if they were struggling to pay their rent but that the situation would be kept under review.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the report. 2. To not appoint an Equalities Champion and for it instead to be a collective responsibility of all Board Members. <p>13. DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS' REPORT</p> <p>Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, provided an update on the significant developments since the last Board meeting.</p> <p>There had been some changes to the structure across Repairs and Asset Management due to internal promotions within the teams. The promotions were seen as a positive sign of the skills and attributes of the existing workforce and succession planning was now underway to fill the vacant posts.</p> <p>There remained some fluctuation in minor works voids numbers however overall these remained at a similar level. Major works voids were reducing although there had been some difficulties in obtaining materials and contractors, however the Board was assured that the company continued to monitor the situation and alternative contractors were being considered.</p> <p>Following a trial of the RepairSense software system it had been decided not to take the project forward. The issues identified by the software were already being identified and dealt with by other means and therefore the cost of the system outweighed the benefits.</p> <p>An update was provided on compliance and progress with moving towards a five year electrical testing programme. Under the leadership of the new Compliance Manager a different approach was to be taken which would replicate the gas inspection process for electrical testing. Whilst there was not the same legal requirement for electrical testing as there was for gas, Mrs Cornall explained that the testing would be done to industry standards.</p> <p>Plans were progressing for further property acquisitions, particularly in relation to the extension of the company's supported housing services. Argosy Children's Home had been acquired from the Council to replace Clare Street which it was hoped could in turn be bought and repurposed as Emergency</p>	

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<p>Housing. A property on Lostock Gardens was being considered for use by Jobs Friends & Houses as a Recovery House and discussions were ongoing with the Council for it to be transferred to the Housing Revenue Account.</p> <p>The Board was informed that work on decarbonisation was continuing. This was an emerging picture as technology moved on and a review of the company's vehicle fleet was to be undertaken to consider how to move to low/no emission vehicles in the future. Alternative heating technologies were being considered such as air source heat pumps but Mrs Cornall indicated that work with Cadent, who were testing hydrogen technology as an alternative to gas, was the most promising option.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the report.</p>	
<p>14. LEVELLING UP</p> <p>Mr John Donnellon, Chief Executive, provided an update to the Board on Blackpool's designation as one of the Government's "Levelling Up" pilot areas and the implications for housing in the town.</p> <p>Much of the information was of a commercially confidential nature however a detailed business case was currently in development. Mr Donnellon agreed to report back to Board at a future meeting when it was hoped more information could be shared when the implications for the company could be considered in detail.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the update.</p>	
<p>15. BUDGET 2022/23</p> <p>The Chair explained that the Budget needed to be approved prior to the start of the financial year to which it related. The timing of Board meetings meant that this had been recommended initially by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 23 March and subsequent ratification was now required by the Board.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To approve the 2022/23 Budget.</p>	
<p>16. MEMBER RELATIONS</p> <p>Mr M Towers, Company Secretary, asked the Board to consider any items it</p>	

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<p>wished to take to the next meeting of Blackpool Council’s Shareholder Committee on 27 May 2022.</p> <p>The company attended the Shareholder Committee at least twice yearly when the Chair, the Chief Executive and Director of Resources provided standard performance and financial reports. For the next meeting the Business Plan was also due to be presented, as under the Governance Framework this was subject to approval by the Committee. Mr Towers added that when there were any key projects to report on, such as Levelling Up, then attendance at the meetings could become more frequent.</p> <p>The Board agreed: That the Business Plan would be presented to the Shareholder Committee alongside performance and financial reports at its next meeting on 27 May 2022.</p> <p>17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>There was no other business.</p> <p>18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING 20 JULY 2022</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the date of the next meeting as 20 July 2022.</p>		

The meeting ended at 7.32pm

Signed by the Chair

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Councillor Neal Brookes