

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF  
BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED  
HELD VIA HYBRID MEETING AT COASTAL HOUSE  
ON WEDNESDAY 20 JULY 2022 AT 6.00PM**

**Present:** Councillor N Brookes, Non-Executive Director (Chair)  
Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director  
Councillor D Robertson, Non-Executive Director  
Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director  
Ms M Cameron, Tenant Non-Executive Director  
Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director (via MS Teams)  
Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director  
Ms T Johnson, Independent Non-Executive Director (via MS Teams)

**In attendance:** Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations [Items 1-15 only]  
Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources [Items 1-15 only]  
Ms Denise Williams, Head of Support [Items 1-8 only]  
Ms Jane Hearne, Resilience Manager [Items 1-8 only]  
Mrs S Fowler, Chief Executive's PA [Items 1-15 only]  
Mr M Towers, Company Secretary  
Mrs S Chadwick, Assistant Company Secretary

		Actions
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive and Mr A Szatkowski, Independent Non-Executive Director.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.</p>	
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 4 MAY 2022</b></p> <p><b>The Board agreed:</b> To approve the minutes of the Board meeting held on 4 May 2022 as a true and correct record.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <p>An update was provided on matters arising from the minutes of the meeting on 4 May 2022:</p> <p><u>Minute 9 – Key Performance Indicators</u> Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, confirmed that the reduction in the number of Environmental cases opened by Neighbourhood Officers was as a</p>	

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<p>result of prioritising issues of anti-social behaviour over wider environmental cases.</p> <p><u>Minute 11 – Chief Executive’s report</u> Mr Dunstan advised of the intention to present the Board with details on the cost and affordability of the company’s objectives as set out in the Business Plan at the company’s Strategy Day in October. Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director, requested the information was provided before that event which Mr Dunstan agreed to circulate.</p> <p>All other matters arising from the previous minutes had been completed or were covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p><b>5. MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 JULY 2022</b></p> <p>Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director and Audit Committee member, provided a brief overview of the items discussed at the Audit Committee meeting on 13 July 2022.</p> <p>The company’s external auditors, Xeinadin Audit Limited (formerly Smith Craven Chartered Accountants), had attended the meeting to present the draft accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022 which, following its consideration, the Committee had agreed to recommend to the Board for approval. In line with the Governance Framework, the Directors had also met privately with the external auditors at the end of the meeting when they had an opportunity to discuss the accounts without members of the senior management team in attendance.</p> <p>Good progress was being made with regard to actions on the Audit and Scrutiny Tracker. The Committee had requested that the officers responsible for any outstanding actions that had not been completed by the time of its next meeting in September would be invited to that meeting to explain the reasons for the delay. Two internal Audit Reports had been received on Governance and Customer Satisfaction and Core Financial Controls Compliance Testing on the Housing Rents System, the recommended actions from which were to be added to the Audit and Scrutiny Tracker.</p> <p>The Committee had recommended the updated Strategic Risk Register and a programme of “deep dives” to the Board for approval, subject to “risk owners” being added to the Register. Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, suggested that a draft copy of the Register, once amended, was circulated to Board Members for comment prior to the final version being agreed by way of Written Resolution ahead of the next meeting.</p>	<p>SD</p> <p>SD / Ass. Co. Sec.</p>

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<p><b>The Board agreed:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To note the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 13 July 2022.</li> <li>2. That a draft copy of the Strategic Risk Register would be circulated to Board members for comment in advance of the final version being agreed by way of Written Resolution ahead of the next meeting.</li> </ol> <p><b>6. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022</b></p> <p>The Board considered the annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022 and noted that the Audit Committee had recommended them for approval at its meeting on 13 July 2022.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. With the judgement of the auditors, Xeinadin Audit Ltd (formerly Smith Craven Chartered Accountants) and senior management, that the company would continue as a going concern;</li> <li>2. That the accounts gave a true and fair view of the company's assets, liabilities, financial position and profit and loss;</li> <li>3. To approve the Statutory Accounts made up to 31 March 2022 as submitted and duly authorised the Chair to sign the balance sheet and directors' report on behalf of the company;</li> <li>4. That the accounts, once signed, be filed with the Registrar of Companies;</li> <li>5. The Letter of Representation as submitted and authorised the Chair to sign the letter on behalf of the Board.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>7. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b></p> <p>The Board considered the latest performance indicators report. Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director, highlighted a drop in the repairs satisfaction figures which Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, explained related to the number of returned reports rather than actual satisfaction levels. The company was exploring ways to increase those figures such as calling customers for feedback following repair work and Mrs Cornall did not consider there was any particular issue of concern with regard to repairs, other than difficulty in recruiting a qualified plumber to the team which had caused some minor delays.</p> <p>Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director, expressed concern that of the 16 performance indicators, 13 showed a downwards trend. Mrs Cornall explained that some quarterly statistics were compared to annual figures which were lower during the first quarter but would pick up as the year progressed. Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, added that a lag in the Council's payment system had caused a delay in the company receiving rent income, hence the</p>	

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<p>downwards trend in that indicator. That issue was due to be resolved however Mr Dunstan acknowledged that it would be challenging year for rent collection due to the cost of living crisis and the migration of benefit payments to Universal Credit for a number of tenants.</p> <p>Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director, referred to the sickness absence figures which remained above target and asked for clarification as to the company's approach to sickness recording, in particular what the policy was on Covid absence and whether it was recorded differently to absence due to other illnesses. It was agreed that Mrs S Fowler, Chief Executive's PA, would clarify the policy with HR and confirm those details to Board members following the meeting. The Chair indicated that he believed other public sector bodies now recorded Covid absence in the same way as other sickness and suggested that further discussion around the company's policy took place at the next Board meeting in October. Ms T Johnson, Independent Non-Executive Director and Chair of the Employment Committee, referred to the current government guidelines which now only required five days of isolation even if still testing positive and suggested that the company needed to be mindful of colleagues' health and wellbeing, particularly for those with vulnerabilities, as the company moved towards living with Covid.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To note the update.</li> <li>2. That at the next Board meeting in October the company's HR policy in regards to Covid sickness absence recording be discussed in more detail.</li> </ol>	<p><b>SF</b></p>
<p><b>8. SERVICE DISCUSSION – MORE POSITIVE TOGETHER</b></p> <p>Ms Denise Williams, Head of Support and Ms Jane Hearne, Resilience Manager, gave a detailed presentation on the "More Positive Together" (MPT) project. Ms Hearne, who managed the MPT service, outlined the programme's aims and explained that by involving participants in meaningful activities it helped to improve their health and wellbeing, reduced anti-social behaviour and made them feel more a part of the community.</p> <p>Acknowledging Blackpool's social challenges, the project targeted unemployed over 16s from the most chaotic backgrounds who had not engaged with other support services. Officers worked with referrals on a personalised one-to-one basis to help with issues such as sustaining tenancies, upskilling, job applications, addiction and physical and mental health wellbeing and the service was available to both BCH and private tenants.</p> <p>In total over 2,000 referrals had been received to date and, whilst not all had</p>	

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<p>embraced the project, the service had worked with over 1,000 people with many providing positive feedback about the impact of the scheme on their lifestyle. Ms Williams explained that the project was funded until December 2023 with the majority of funding coming from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the remainder contributed by the HRA. No further European funding would be available after December 2023 and therefore alternative options for funding were being explored with Active Lancashire and from opportunities arising from Levelling Up.</p> <p>In concluding the presentation Ms Williams asked the Board to consider whether the company wanted to continue its involvement in similar services going forward, how it fitted into the wider Levelling Up agenda and which funding streams to pursue. Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, highlighted the funding arrangements and the vulnerability of the project post-December 2023 as a particular area for the Board to think about.</p> <p>Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director, queried how employment retention figures were monitored to see whether those who had found work remained in their jobs. In response, Ms Williams advised that participants' employment status was tracked by the Department for Work and Pensions. MPT discharged participants from the scheme once work had been found but checked their employment status after 6 months when on average 70% had remained in work. Ms Williams acknowledged that there was a lack of support from the current scheme for participants once employment had been found and it was hoped that future funding could be put towards continued support to plug that gap.</p> <p>Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director, asked how much funding would be required to maintain the project and the financial impact on the company. Mrs Cornall explained that the company provided "in kind" non-cash match funding, but the total actual cash cost of providing the service and for which funding was required was around £600,000 annually. Ms T Johnson, Independent Non-Executive Director, suggested that developing a narrative around the project's social return could help to attract further funding. Mrs Cornall responded that two evaluations had been undertaken on the Lancashire wide project which provided that information.</p> <p>In response to a suggestion from Mrs Thompson regarding promoting the scheme's work to key bodies within the healthcare system and the potential funding streams available from those bodies, Mrs Cornall reported that this was actively being investigated as she believed that the work of the scheme fed into the objectives of the NHS Preventative Strategy and as part of the Health Equality Commission within the Lancashire and South Cumbria health area. Contact had also been made with Blackpool Teaching Hospitals and it was</p>	

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<p>hoped that access may be given to trial funding which could be put towards maintaining the service.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Ms Hearne and Ms Williams for the presentation. The Board unanimously praised the project and the positive impact it had on its participants and expressed its wish for the scheme to continue, noting how its aims fitted in with the Levelling Up agenda.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed:</b> To support the continuation of the project and for future funding streams to continue to be investigated.</p> <p>[Ms D Williams and Ms J Hearne left the meeting following this item.]</p> <p><b>9. JOBS, FRIENDS &amp; HOUSES</b></p> <p>The Board considered the next steps with regard to the relationship between Blackpool Coastal Housing and Jobs, Friends &amp; Houses (JFH) Community Interest Company.</p> <p>Mr M Towers, Company Secretary, explained that BCH provided “in kind” management, operational, financial and company secretary support to JFH through an informal arrangement and there was now a proposal to formalise that relationship. Consultation had taken place with the Council’s Shareholder Committee and the JFH Board who were supportive of the proposals with initial legal advice being provided by Anthony Collins Solicitors.</p> <p>It was suggested that JFH was converted from a Community Interest Company to a Community Benefit Society with exempt charitable status which would enable the organisation to apply for charitable funding whilst becoming a formal subsidiary of BCH. In order for the proposal to be progressed the current position of Lancashire Constabulary in relation to JFH needed to be clarified as it was still a Member of the company, however Mr Towers expected them to confirm their wish to withdraw as a member of JFH.</p> <p>Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director, asked what the advantages were to the company if JFH became a formal subsidiary. In response, Mr Towers referred to the profile of JFH within Blackpool and its previous difficulties during the early years of its inception when BCH had been involved in an intervention package to assist in the management of the organisation. There was a willingness from the company and the Council for JFH to continue with Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, adding that JFH had close links to projects such as MPT and that the recovery housing was provided from within the HRA with members moving into BCH properties once leaving the scheme.</p>	

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10.	<p>Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director, suggested that further detail on the benefits of the proposal to the company, alongside the risks, should be provided in future reports to provide assurance to the Board which Mr Towers and Mrs Cornall agreed to do. In response to a query from Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director, Mrs Cornall confirmed that other than the legal costs there would be no additional cost to the company should the proposal be agreed.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed:</b> To pursue the option of Jobs, Friends &amp; Houses being converted to a Community Benefit Society with exempt charitable status, subject to Lancashire Constabulary agreeing to withdraw as a member of JFH, and for the Company Secretary to report back on the decisions required.</p> <p><b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT</b></p> <p>The Board considered a report from Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive, which outlined the significant developments that had arisen since the last Board meeting.</p> <p>Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director, asked whether the company had any concerns about the future of the Levelling Up agenda following recent ministerial changes at Westminster. Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, advised that progress had slowed due to the recent political changes but she was not aware that any of the prime ministerial candidates had proposed any differences in strategy with regards to Levelling Up. She therefore hoped work would continue as planned once a new Prime Minister was in post.</p> <p>Mr M Towers, Company Secretary, added that the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Greg Clark, had continued the work of his predecessor Michael Gove, albeit at a slower pace. The Chair referred to the significant work undertaken and resources committed already by the Civil Service and Homes England and his expectation was that the Levelling Up agenda would continue as planned.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed:</b> To note the update.</p>	MC / Co.Sec.
11.	<p><b>DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES' REPORT</b></p> <p>Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, presented his report to the Board. Quarter 1 Financial Performance data had been circulated in advance of the</p>	



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<p>meeting with a small surplus forecasted for the company which was attributed to current staff vacancies. BCH's success at the Northern Housing Awards was highlighted with the company winning two awards for "Best Approach to Diversity and Inclusion" and "Best Approach to Employee Wellbeing."</p> <p>In relation to the Staff Consultation section of the report, Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director, referred to the Joint Consultative Committee meeting which had been due to be held on 19 July to discuss the impact of rising costs on staff and asked if there had been any feedback from that meeting. In response, Mr Dunstan advised that no particular issues had been raised locally but that preparations were being made for ballots on industrial action at a national level. Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, advised that union membership in the company was currently at a relatively low level and she reminded Board members that a number of essential services had union agreement that those "protected" services could continue to be provided during any periods of strike action. The company was therefore confident that cover for essential services would continue throughout any strike periods.</p> <p>Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director, referred to the company's work with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust in relation to lone working and asked for further detail as to the current arrangements and future proposals to ensure staff were safe in the course of their work. In response, Mr Dunstan advised that it was a priority for the Health and Safety Committee, adding that staff had been issued with Personal Safety Devices and he agreed to share further details of the company's lone working arrangements with Board members.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed:</b> To note the update.</p> <p><b>12. DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS' REPORT</b></p> <p>Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, provided an update on the significant developments since the last Board meeting. A problem had been identified with some completed properties on Garstang Road West which were not yet in a position to be let as they were awaiting the installation of gas meters. The company was therefore having to go through OFGEM's "Supplier of Last Resort" process to resolve the issue.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group continued to meet regularly and as part of its work was actively exploring options for setting up a Furnished Tenancy Scheme. The first report prepared by the new Compliance Manager was presented for Board Members' information which Mrs Cornall advised would also go before the Health and Safety Committee and Audit Committee for scrutiny with any</p>	<p>SD</p>



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<p>significant issues being raised at Board meetings in future.</p> <p>The University of Brighton was undertaking a research project in conjunction with BCH in relation to the support the company provided to care leavers and young people still in the care system. The programme would run throughout the summer with the aim being to support young people from the care system to take a more positive outlook on their lives going forwards.</p> <p>A review of Sheltered Housing had been undertaken with the key recommendations that had been agreed jointly with Housing Options outlined in Mrs Cornall's report. A consultation exercise would now take place with tenants as to the proposed changes.</p> <p>Mrs Cornall asked the Board to consider proposals for the development of an Equipment Hub which would be an extension of the existing Care and Repair Service providing health care items such as walking frames and home help equipment. Blackpool Council's Adult Social Care Service and the NHS had proposed a formal arrangement whereby a warehouse would be acquired and used as a storage and distribution centre for such equipment and BCH had been asked to help establish and manage that Hub.</p> <p>In response to a question from Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director, Mrs Cornall explained that, if the proposal went ahead, BCH would be commissioned to provide the service which would be fully funded and she did not expect the company to have to subsidise the scheme. Mrs Cornall acknowledged that there may be some health and safety risks associated with managing a warehouse which would require risk assessments to be completed although the existing Care and Repair Manager was experienced in health and safety management and additional expertise could be bought in if required due to the diversification in services.</p> <p>Councillor D Robertson, Non-Executive Director, enquired whether new equipment would need to be purchased for the Hub. Mrs Cornall responded that initially a supply of regularly used items would need to be purchased to keep in stock at the warehouse using the Better Care Fund budget which would also be used to commission BCH to provide the service.</p> <p>Mrs M Thompson, Non-Executive Director, requested that a more detailed report was presented to the Board at a future meeting on how the company proposed to manage the scheme and the associated risks. Mrs Cornall explained that if the Board agreed to the proposals being explored further, an in depth report would be brought to a forthcoming meeting before being asked to consider approving BCH's formal involvement in the scheme.</p>	<p><b>MC</b></p>

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<p><b>The Board agreed:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To note the update.</li> <li>2. That the company would explore the benefits and risks associated with managing the Equipment Hub and bring a detailed report for Board members' consideration to a future meeting.</li> </ol> <p><b>13. MEMBER RELATIONS</b></p> <p>Councillor Neal Brookes, Non-Executive Director (Chair) and Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, provided the Board with an update following the company's attendance at the Shareholder Committee meeting on 27 May 2022.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted that the issue of Sheltered Housing had been raised at the meeting with a particularly suitable location identified on Whitegate Drive. The Committee had supported the proposal for that site to be used as Sheltered Housing and since that meeting an informal agreement had been reached for the site to be used for that purpose.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed:</b> To note the update.</p>	
<p><b>14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	
<p><b>15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 19 OCTOBER 2022</b></p> <p><b>The Board agreed:</b> To note the date of the next meeting as 19 October 2022.</p> <p>[Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources and Mrs S Fowler, Chief Executive's PA left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.]</p>	
<p><b>16. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM - MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25 MAY 2022</b></p> <p>Due to the confidential nature of this item the minutes have been circulated under separate cover to Board members only.</p>	

The meeting ended at 7.41pm



**Signed by the Chair**

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**Councillor Neal Brookes**