

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED
HELD AT COASTAL HOUSE, ABINGDON STREET, BLACKPOOL
ON WEDNESDAY 6 MARCH 2024 AT 5.00PM**

Present:

Councillor N Brookes, Non-Executive Director (Chair)
Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director
Councillor J Sloman, Non-Executive Director
Mr A Szatkowski, Independent Non-Executive Director
Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director
Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director

In attendance:

Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive
Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources
Mr Mark Towers, Company Secretary
Mrs J Stephenson, Assistant Company Secretary

		Actions
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Ms T Johnson, Independent Non-Executive Director and Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations.</p>	
2.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.</p>	
3.	<p>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2023</p> <p>The Board agreed: To approve the minutes of the Board meeting held on 6 December 2023, as a true and correct record.</p>	
4.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>All matters arising from the previous minutes had been completed or were covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p>	
5.	<p>AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MEETING 10 JANUARY 2024</p> <p>Mr A Szatkowski, Independent Non-Executive Director and Chair of the BCH Audit Committee gave a brief overview of the meeting held on 10 January 2024.</p>	

		Actions
8.	<p>scrutiny being given to complaints and regulation as a result of the Housing Act.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon advised that due to the increased number of complaint cases, additional funding would be required. Following an analysis of the Larger Tenant Project Fund Grants, the company had acknowledged that the requests for funding from the budget had reduced and not always been in accordance to the terms in which the monies had been allocated. Therefore the Board was asked to consider redirecting a portion of the fund towards complaints handling.</p> <p>Board Members requested additional data with regards to a breakdown of the complaints, to establish the reasons for the increased number of complaints.</p> <p>Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director, raised concern with regards to the some of the language used in the report and requested the document be amended to remove any language that could be regarded as confrontational.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the contents of the report; 2. To redirect resource from large Tenant Project Fund (TPF) Grants to complaints handling; 3. To agree the refocusing of the Tenant Project Fund (TPF) on smaller grants targeted at tenant engagement; 4. To endorse support from the Board with regards to the Board Member responsible for complaints. <p>KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</p> <p>Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive, updated the Board with the current performance across several key performance indicators.</p> <p>He praised the company with regards to the work towards the reduction in sickness absence.</p> <p>It was agreed that a report regarding the quality and quantity of repairs would be discussed at a future meeting.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon advised that the Fire Safety provider had been replaced, which could have had an effect on the increased KPI for Fire Safety.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the Information contained within the KPI Report.</p>	<p></p> <p>MC</p> <p>JD</p>
	<p>MC/JW</p>	

		Actions
9.	<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>He advised that the situation regarding regulation and inspection continues to evolve, along with the joint preparation which had been undertaken by the Council and BCH.</p> <p>He advised that Ms H Cassidy had been appointed by the Council as the Housing Standards and Compliance Manager, the role would ensure both BCH and the Council were prepared for an inspection. Ms Cassidy would be invited to attend a future Board meeting to provide feedback following completion of the initial review of the joint position.</p> <p>With regards to the Business Plan, Mr Donnellon advised that a holding plan had been created in the interim period while the Levelling-Up decision had been in progress. The Board was advised that a decision had been publicised the day prior to the meeting, therefore the Business Plan would need to be amended accordingly. The Business Plan would be brought to a future meeting of the Board.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon updated the Board with regards to the budget and advised that the Council had also signalled a joint saving target of £422k from the housing companies, the Levelling-Up announcement would have an impact and present an opportunity for efficiencies not least because some of the existing cost would be charged to housing regeneration funding as the roles change and adapted to delivering the levelling up programme.</p> <p>Board Members raised concern with regard to the procurement of ground maintenance, which had been appointed outside of the borough. The Board was assured that the procurement had been complete via tender with local companies eligible to provide a quote.</p>	<p>HC</p> <p>JD</p>
10.	<p>DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES' REPORT</p> <p>Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, presented to the Board the report and provided an update of the staffing issues that had affected the company.</p> <p>The Board was informed that following the production of the report, BCH was hopeful to break even on the outturn at year end with regards to countervailing savings due to high average vacancy levels and secondments not backfilled.</p>	

		Actions
11.	<p>With regards to ASB and Neighbourhoods Mr Dunstan advised that the interim assessment for the work towards the accreditation had been received. Mr Dunstan advised that the report had been generally positive, but gave a number of areas of improvement required to reach accreditation standard, the recommendations were accepted by BHC. It had been recognised that staff turnover had been a key factor, which in turn had created skill gaps.</p> <p>The Board discussed ASB in detail and acknowledged that the staff turnover had maintained a theme nationwide. Work would be undertaken to review the role profile and benchmark with other similar organisations to improve retention of the post.</p> <p>Board Members expressed concern with regards to the need for the accreditation and whether the focus should be on the improvement of the ASB service. Mr Dunstan assured the Board that seeking accreditation would assist with improving the service and the support from 'Resolve' had been helpful. Mr Dunstan agreed to the preparation of an action plan and the Board requested the action plan be presented at a future meeting.</p> <p>The Board discussed the furnished tenancy pilot, which would be initially let to applicants within the highest need band. The eventual analysis of the furnished tenancies pilot could be skewed because the group currently involved in furnished tenancies may require more assistance than the eventual cohort of tenants. The Board advised that this should be considered when conducting the evaluation of the pilot.</p> <p>The new Tenancy Termination Officer was now in post, the role would focus on reducing and the possibility of recycling unwanted furniture and gifting it to new tenants. In addition the possibility of reducing the void period on properties which would in turn decrease void time and assist with reducing former tenant arrears.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the 2024/25 Budget; 2. To approve the revised Health and Safety Policy; 3. To receive an action plan to incorporate the findings received within the accreditation interim report. <p>DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS' REPORT</p> <p>Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive presented the Director of Operations report in the absence of Mrs M Cornall. He provided an update on the significant developments since the last Board meeting.</p>	<p></p> <p>SD</p> <p>SD</p> <p></p> <p>SD</p>

		Actions
	<p>With regards to the Compliance Review, the Board was notified that CIPFA had completed a review of Asset Management, commissioned by the Council's Head of Property Services. BCH await the outcome of the report which would identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon reported that 1000 properties had been surveyed and a low number of defects had been reported.</p> <p>The Board was advised that following the Levelling-Up announcement, BCH was confident that the More Positive Together (MPT) staff would be retained and provided with an extension to their contracts.</p> <p>In respect of registration for Bispham House semi-independent service and the work at Argosy, Mr Donnellon confirmed that BCH had submitted further information as required by Ofsted. In addition the Board was advised that staff would receive training with regards to Ofsted standard.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon would investigate whether it would be appropriate for Board Members to be DBS registered in regards to the work that they undertake in their role of Non-Executive Director with the Board.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To approve the revised Children's Safeguarding Policy.</p>	
12.	<p>MEMBER RELATIONS</p> <p>Mr M Towers, Secretary to the Board notified the Board that the Shareholder Committee would take place in April. Mr Donnellon would share the interim holding report with the Board outside of the meeting.</p>	JD
13.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note its rolling work programme for 2024/25.</p>	JD
14.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>The Board expressed sincere thanks and gratitude to Mr Donnellon with regards to the dedication and work he had undertaken towards the Levelling-Up bid, working closely with Homes England and DLUC, the award of £90 million towards improving the quality of homes in Blackpool had been unprecedented and would be an remarkable asset to the Town.</p>	

		Actions
15.	<p>The Board discussed the procedure for talking to press agencies and requested that clear guidelines be provided to the Board Members going forward.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon updated the Board of the Recall Petition in Blackpool South. He advised that community centres were being used to house the petition signature room during that period and disruption to the timetable and activities over the 6 week period would be inevitable.</p> <p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 30 APRIL 2024</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the date of the next meeting as Tuesday 30th April 2024, 5.00pm at Coastal House.</p>	JD

The meeting ended at 18:45pm

Signed by the Chair

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Councillor Neal Brookes