

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED
HELD VIA HYBRID MEETING AT COASTAL HOUSE
ON WEDNESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2022 AT 6.00PM**

Present: Councillor N Brookes, Non-Executive Director (Chair)
Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director
Ms M Cameron, Tenant Non-Executive Director
Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director
Mrs M Thompson, Independent Non-Executive Director (Via MS Teams)
Mr A Szatkowski, Independent Non-Executive Director
Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director

In attendance: Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive
Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations
Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources
Mr J Weston, Head of Asset Management and Operations (Items 1-5)
Mrs L Murphy, Head of Finance (Items 1-5)
Mrs S Fowler, Chief Executive's PA
Mrs S Chadwick, Assistant Company Secretary
Mrs S Wadsworth, Assistant Company Secretary

		Actions
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Ms T Johnson, Independent Non-Executive and Mr M Towers, Company Secretary.</p>	
2.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.</p>	
3.	<p>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2022 AND WRITTEN RESOLUTION APPROVED ON 9 NOVEMBER 2022</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 October 2022 as a true and correct record. To note the Written Resolution approved on 9 November 2022. 	
4.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p><u>Minute 4 – Matters arising</u> Mr J Donnellon, Chief Executive, explained that negotiations in relation to the rents levels were still ongoing. There was no indication that the BCH fee would</p>	

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<p>be reduced at this stage. The budget for 2023/24 would be on the agenda for the February 2023 meeting.</p> <p>Mrs M Cornall advised that no further clarification had been received from the Blackpool Council on what was to be expected from a proposed Equipment Hub and it was therefore agreed that the matter would be removed from the agenda until further instruction had been received.</p> <p><u>Minute 6 – Service Discussion – ASB and Neighbourhoods Service</u></p> <p>Mr Donnellon confirmed that staff received regular reminders on the availability of wellness and resilience support apps and that initial take-up had been good, although ongoing usage was not monitored.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon advised that an in-depth report would be presented at the February Board meeting to discuss tenant survey options following work undertaken by Richard Jones, Performance Manager, in preparation for requirements implemented by the White Paper.</p> <p>All other matters arising from the previous minutes had been completed or were covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p>	<p>JD</p> <p>JD</p>
<p>5. 30 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME</p> <p>Lisa Murphy, Head of Finance and Jamie Weston, Head of Asset Management and Operations gave a presentation on the 30 year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and Capital Programme.</p> <p>Board members heard how the budget setting was broken down into five year periods. The first year related to the following financial year and had fixed costings with the next four years being indicative.</p> <p>Mr Donnellon highlighted that the Carbon Zero pledge created additional pressure but some works, for example the Grange Park new-build development and works to Garstang Road West, attracted grants. Another additional pressure on the HRA was that any disability adaptation costs were borne by the Housing Revenue Account as Council Housing could not access Disabled Facilities Grant Funding.</p> <p>The Queens Park properties were approaching eligibility for the Right to Buy discount and some purchase enquires had been received. The HRA Business Plan factored in loss of stock due to the scheme. There were currently two more years of new build from the Council Homes Investment Plan (CHIP) scheme however there was no further provision in the 30 year plan for new builds after that and the CHIP would need reviewing.</p>	

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6.	<p>Ms M Gilkes, Independent Non-Executive Director, requested further details as to the number of maintenance projects that had been completed within the budget. Mr Weston gave assurances that there was a planned programme of works for gas central heating and double glazing replacement and also for the renewal of kitchens and bathrooms on void properties with those programmes monitored by the Asset Management Committee involving representatives from BCH and Council Officers. Replacement numbers were currently low; under the Decent Homes programme most units had been replaced relatively recently but the number was set to increase as they came to the end of their life cycle. Mr Weston agreed to provide figures to the Board detailing the number of works that had been scheduled against work actually undertaken so the Board could monitor progress against the annual programme.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To note the information. <p>[Mr Weston and Mrs Murphy left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.]</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>Consultation was ongoing in relation to rent setting for the forthcoming financial year. It was noted that the Government had set a 7% cap on social rent increases for 2023/24 but that the final decision on how much to raise rents up to and including 7% lay with the Council, with Mr Donnellon adding that consideration would need to be given to maintaining a balance between keeping the HRA viable and cost of living pressures for tenants.</p> <p>An increase in calls from tenants had been reported in relation to queries and concerns over the cost of living and the Board was advised that the number and types of calls would be monitored.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted the importance of recognising that staff could also be impacted by the cost of living increases, especially those that did not work in the office environment. Mr Donnellon assured the Board that all staff were provided with support in the form of provision of breakfasts, tea and coffee and a food swap arrangement.</p> <p>Mr N Herring, Tenant Non-Executive Director, asked if the Board was involved with providing support for homeless persons, especially with the recent cold weather warning. It was noted that BCH provided the Council’s statutory</p>	<p>JW</p>

	Actions
<p>Homeless Hostels but that the Council put into place separate arrangements for rough sleepers as and when temperatures reduced as it had done recently.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the update.</p> <p>7. DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES' REPORT</p> <p>Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, presented the highlights of his report to the Board.</p> <p>The Board was asked to consider granting a dispensation from the tendering requirements to extend the current contract with Rent Sense. Other options had been considered but the company was keen to avoid disruption around the rents collections process and no viable alternative had been identified. The Board agreed to the contract extension but requested that alternative options were considered when it was next due for renewal.</p> <p>The accreditation report was due to be published and would be circulated to the Board when available.</p> <p>Mr Dunstan was pleased to announce further awards success for the company at the Active Lancashire finals when BCH had won the Lancashire Active Workplace Award for employee wellbeing. BCH had also been shortlisted in the Housing Digital Awards which would be announced in February 2023. The Board praised the company's success and further to a suggestion from the Chair an area to display the awards would be looked into.</p> <p>The Board was concerned about the lack of call monitoring capability of the current telephone software system. Mr Dunstan assured the Board that the White Paper did not require dropped calls to be tracked but it was good practice to know the total call volume and areas where the service could be improved. He would continue to work with Blackpool Council for a solution.</p> <p>Mr Dunstan concluded by highlighting the ongoing dialogue with Blackpool Council in relation to eligibility of charges on benefit claims. The changes would affect the management charge element on supported housing and if no longer eligible would impact on the funding for those services. Mr Dunstan confirmed that the issue and concerns had been raised and further guidance was awaited.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the update. 2. To approve the extension of the contract with Rent Sense for support to the Rents Team. 	

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<p>8.</p>	<p>DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS' REPORT</p> <p>Mrs M Cornall, Director of Operations, provided an update on the significant developments since the last Board meeting and highlighted the following areas.</p> <p>A report by TOWER, the tenant led scrutiny team, into the repairs service would be presented at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>Mrs Cornall provided the Board with a draft copy of the response from BCH that would feed into the overall Council response to the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in relation to Damp and Mould following the death of a two year old boy in a home owned and managed by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing. Following discussion, the Board requested that the response included that BCH did not use lifestyle as an excuse for issues of damp and mould in line with the comments arising from the Ombudsman report.</p> <p>The Board was reminded of BCH's Damp and Mould Policy which it had approved in December 2021 and was appraised of the work being done to encourage tenants to report any issues with damp and mould. Training was being provided for visiting staff to look for signs of damp and mould in properties on any type of visit and to report any concerns that a tenant might be struggling with heating costs. This also included contractors carrying out annual inspections for gas and electrical compliance. A targeted approach would be made on properties that had had no repairs carried out.</p> <p>Following a suggestion from Councillor Hobson, Non-Executive Director, the Board considered whether damp and mould should be added to the risk register. Mr Donnellon assured the Board that he believed the issue was being managed effectively due to the existing policy and procedures that were in place but for assurance the matter would be added to the risk register.</p> <p>It was suggested that a deep dive into the approach of dealing with damp and mould could be carried out by either the Audit Committee or the TOWER scrutiny team. Following discussion, the Board agreed that TOWER should carry out a customer journey review.</p> <p>Mr Szatkowski, Independent Non-Executive Director, suggested that a KPI was developed as part of the scorecard and presented to the Board around issues relating to damp and mould. Mr Donnellon agreed to work with the Director of Operations to develop an appropriate KPI.</p>	<p></p> <p>JD</p> <p>MC</p> <p>JD</p>

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<p>Mrs Thompson raised concerns over the situation at Gorton Street hostel and the potential safety issues for staff and residents. It was suggested that the risk of safety should be included on the risk register.</p> <p>Mrs Cornall assured the Board that regular meetings between staff had been taking place and additional support was available. The police were monitoring the young people involved in the ASB and a suggestion of obtaining a housing injunction was being considered. It was confirmed that the risk to staff was being monitored by the operational risk register for the hostel but was not yet deemed a strategic risk.</p> <p>The delays to the new build project on Grange Park was confirmed as being due to a variation to the design to fit solar panels and was not envisaged to have a major impact on completion times.</p> <p>The Whitegate Manor development new-build site was in the relative early stages. Once proposals had been confirmed the units would be included in the HRA.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the update. 2. To add damp and mould to the Strategic Risk Register. 3. That the TOWER scrutiny team would undertake a deep dive into the process of dealing with reports of damp and mould. 	
<p>9. 2023 WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>The Board considered the 2023 work programme.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the 2023 work programme.</p>	
<p>10. MEMBER RELATIONS</p> <p>Board members considered any items that the company wished to raise with Blackpool Council in its role as member when it next attended a meeting of the Shareholder Committee on 19 December 2022.</p> <p>It was noted that the Strategic Risk Register and Annual Audit Report were due to be presented at the meeting. No additional matters were raised.</p>	
<p>11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	

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12.	<p>PROPOSED 2023 MEETING DATES The Board considered proposed dates for its meetings and those of the Audit Committee in 2023.</p> <p>The Board discussed and agreed on a preferred start time of 5pm for the Board meetings.</p> <p>It was noted that Audit Committee Members would be consulted separately for their preferred start time.</p> <p>The Board agreed: The schedule for Board and Audit Committee Meetings as follows:</p> <p>Board (in person at Coastal House to commence at 5pm) Thu 9 Feb Wed 29 Mar Wed 12 Jul (accounts) Wed 18 Oct Wed 6 Dec</p> <p>Audit (via Teams) Wed 25 Jan Wed 22 Mar Wed 28 June (accounts) Wed 13 Sep</p>	Co Sec

The meeting ended at 7.46pm

Signed by the Chair

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Councillor Neal Brookes