

# MINUTES

28<sup>th</sup> January 2009

7:00pm Third Floor Board Room, Sutton Gate



## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT SUTTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

**Present:** Mike Davis (Vice Chair, Chairing), Michael Baldwin, Wendy Mathys, Lesley O'Connell, Ken Morgan, Dilys Lee, Terry Haswell and Samantha Bromige

**Staff:** Andrew Taylor, Joanne Cambra, Brendon Crossan, Sara Tutton and Liz Bosch, Derek Vaughan, Dawn Eustace, Danielle Hough, Sally Bell

**LBS Representative:** Simon Latham

**Also attended as observers:** Steve Leitch (SHP), Asha Isaac (SHP) and Beverley Brigden (Secretary of SLA)

### 1. Apologies

Findlay Macpherson, Enid Bakewell and Jean Crossby (Chair of SFTRA).

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising

Asset Management Strategy – final strategy included in the Board papers for information.

Gas Safety – residents on Durand have been informed of the issues now by way of a letter and a few queries have come in about it which ST's team will respond to. MB raised whether the boilers would be recycled and it was confirmed that they would be and the residents have been informed of this.

LAPN – KM raised issues with ST separately on this item as he was unable to attend the last Board meeting. ST to contact KM separately to deal with his concerns. **ST**

**The Board agreed all decisions made at the last Board meeting due to the last Board meeting not being quorate. The minutes were agreed as being accurate.**

### 3. Strategic Planning

The actions taken on strategic planning are in response to the Audit Commission's recommendation 2. The Board have seen the first draft of the strategic planning document at their Away Weekend in November. The vision, mission and priority objectives have been

reworded to make them clearer as part of this process. LOC asked whether LBS have agreed to SHP sharing their vision. BC confirmed that he has had LBS's agreement on that and has consulted with LBS on the entire strategic planning process.

MD commented that the Board need to focus on the strategic objectives found in the document. MD also asked whether overall satisfaction is an appropriate objective to have on the Leaseholder Services objectives. BC will take this point back to the manager concerned. **BC**

**The Board agreed the following recommendations:**

- (i) Approved the Planning document**
- (ii) Approved the updated Vision, Mission and Priorities**
- (iii) Approved the strategic objectives of each strategy**

#### **4. SHP/HRA Budget 2009/10**

High rent increase this year of 6.27% which is driven by high inflation and the amount payable to the government as a negative subsidy has increased.

Issues raised by customers on the budget process have been fed back to the council and are included in the council's report to the Executive.

The Budget Committee has met and gone through the budget in detail. The budget hasn't moved in cash terms leaving the cost of inflation to be met through efficiencies and savings.

TH said that the budget for customer involvement has been reduced and is concerned because of our commitment to involving customers. AT responded and referred to page 3 of the report where it explains the restructure of the customer involvement team in order to improve our services in that area. Once the Resident Compact is rolled out to staff, resourcing for the customer involvement team will be looked at again to ensure it is adequate. AT also reminded the Board that customer involvement is across the organisation not just in one team. TH asked whether this explanation can be added the budget spreadsheet to make it clear. Agreed that it would be cross referenced to the report. **AT**

WM raised the legal costs and whether SHP are getting value for money by using the council's legal services. AT explained that work is being done on this. SHP have been liaising with the council's legal services to change the way they bill us so that the costs are broken down further and we can have a clear picture of where the money is being spent. There will then be an exercise to look at the market and see whether we can get better value for money elsewhere. AT also added that SHP are looking at having SHP staff presenting at court cases rather than using legal services to further reduce costs.

KM also added whether the current market in terms of rental income was considered when setting the bad debt budget. AT added that he was conscious of the current climate and although the budget hasn't been adjusted to cover this risk, there is work being done to

improve support for tenants facing difficulties paying their rent. TH asked for details of which resident associations were consulted and how this was done. AT to send the details of this to the TH. **AT** KM asked whether the budget reflected what the residents had commented on in the budget survey and why only 127 survey responses were received. AT responded that the customer involvement in the budget this year has improved significantly from last year, but did recognise that more needs to be done next year to further expand involvement from our residents.

MB raised his concern that the repairs budget could be overspent this. ST responded in terms of the work being done in liaison with Asset Management to look at which repairs can be put to the planned maintenance budget in order to achieve a better balance with the cost of responsive repairs. Voids have been difficult this year and have caused the added pressure on the repairs budget. Next year's budget shows an increase in the voids budget in order to relieve the pressure on the repairs budget.

Beverley Brigden raised a point on behalf of leaseholders – the legal service that is delivered by LBS and the speed of the service is poor. Recharges to the HRA in terms of central costs and core democracy costs have increased. Leaseholders are not clear what the central costs are and would like an explanation. AT responded that it is not always clear what the breakdown of central costs is. SHP have challenged this with LBS and will continue to challenge until this is resolved.

WM also added that it would be useful to have an update on the legal issues raised and Beverley's concerns about the service from LBS.

SL commented that the breakdown of the recharges can be provided to the Board. He added that the methodology for calculation the core and democratic costs is complex but LBS have a commitment during 2009 to visit this to make it more transparent.

**The Board agreed the recommendation:**

**(i) Approved the draft 2009/10 budget.**

## **5. Repairs Review**

Derek Vaughan directed the Board to the key appendix of the report (appendix M) and produced a summary sheet for the board on the recommendations explained in appendix M. Derek went through the summary sheet.

MB gave positive praise to Derek on a good, clear, easy to understand the report and a good action plan.

Derek confirmed in response to LOC's query on paragraph 5.4 of the report that this is the time between the repair request and the start of the work.

KM also gave Derek positive praise for the work done on this review and raised his concern that the handyman service would only be considered in March 2010 and wondered whether this could be any quicker. Derek explained that it will be no later than March 2010 so is likely to be before that date. He explained the provision of a

handyman service had been reviewed and it was not viable currently. The action was for further investigation following other changes to be implemented by KNK. MD added that the Board would like to see the handyman implementation taking place as soon as it is viable to do so.

KM also raised whether there have been targets set for KNK in terms of the point made about reviewing KNK's service by 2010. Derek explained that he has been in discussions with KNK over what we expect from them and how they need to be on the journey with us to quickly achieve our aspirations for an improved service. In these discussions KNK have been positive, but Derek has arranged monitoring meetings with them and feels confident that KNK will continue to respond to service improvement.

KM commented on VFM and customer care which he doesn't feel from the report is being embedded within the team. Derek assured KM that these two areas are being embedded and he is working with asset management in these areas.

Beverley commented that she feels more confident that things will improve and hopes that SHP will support Derek and his team to achieve these recommendations. Beverley passed on her thanks to Julia Cornish who attend the recent repairs inspectors meeting as she was very helpful. Beverley is now receiving responses to the repair satisfaction slips and they are going to KNK and coming back to her with a response.

SL also thanked Derek for his work on the report and particularly because he is new to the organisation. SL mentioned that support is required for residents for mystery shopping and other programmes for them to work effectively.

SL felt that diversity needed to be highlighted more in the report.

Derek reassured him that diversity issues are a high priority for the service. SL also agreed with KM over the handyman service.

SL felt that there was a big challenge in equipping residents with the skills to develop the process for commissioning and tendering aspects of this. Need to have full involvement of residents when contract is up for review. ST confirmed to SL that there will be involvement with residents over whether to retender in 2010. Once we have the large suite of indicators on this, we will be able to make a better decision as to what will happen in 2010.

ST added on the diversity issue that there will be a process of contacting those residents that have indicated that they are dissatisfied with the repairs service to find out what their particular issues are.

TH expressed his praise for a good report and hopes that the actions are taken as expressed in the report.

MD thanked Derek and ST for their work on the review and looks forward to the implementation and feedback on this.

**The Board agreed the following recommendations:**

- (i) Set out in the Review Findings section and more fully in the action plan, appendix G.**
- (ii) The Board to receive a progress report in July 2009.**

## **6. Sheltered Housing Review**

Sally Bell introduced the report and explained that the review was carried out in order to improve the service provided to customers and to respond to their diverse needs.

LOC questioned when the research project mentioned in 2.19 would be completed. SL confirmed that it would be by early May this year. The Draft Service Strategy will be available by March.

Sally explained, following LOC's question, about older people who are not residents but may need our services. The pilot project will look at this in the wider community and more locally, but would mean that the service would have to be paid for by non residents.

LOC also raised what the potential impact on staff would be for the two pilot projects. Sally responded that the potential impact on staff is limited in pilot 1. Sally has spoken to staff about how they can be involved.

The question about Supporting People possibly not supporting the project was raised by LOC but Sally confirmed that there is an on-going discussion with LBS on this issue.

MB raised that he doesn't like the new proposed title for the service. It was agreed that the title will be further considered by asking residents.

MB mentioned that the club room in a property is part of the tenancy and liaison with tenants needs to take place before anything can be done with the club room. He also asked whether there are sufficient toilet facilities. He also asked whether there is a role for housing benefit to meet some of the charges.

Sally responded to MB's issue on the communal facilities – there has been consideration about the use of the communal lounge which will benefit the residents and the income would go into the resident funds. Risk assessment needs to be carried out on the toilet facilities. MB also felt that there needs to be more resident involvement on this. Sally assured the Board that wider resident involvement will take place and has already started.

SL mentioned about the capital bid to look at DDA improvement to estates. Should the bid be successful we would want to also use this for the sheltered schemes.

LOC asked whether older people with learning disabilities are included in this review. SL assured LOC that this will be looked at as part of the Council's review. **SL**

WM raised the budget for this work and how it differs for Social Services Clients and for SHP customers. WM also added issues about assessment.

Who provides for this needs to be clear, SL added that the issues WM has raised are not straight forward and has proposed that Mariette

Akkerman attends a Board meeting to speak about the role of LBS in this area. SL will arrange through AT. **SL**

WM was also unclear about Elizabeth House and what is happening with that.

Sally confirmed that the decision on the future of Elizabeth House is to be decided on 3<sup>rd</sup> February by the council's Executive Committee.

Elizabeth House – letters have gone out to residents this week about the consultant's report. SL has met with the press.

Once the Executive Committee has agreed the report on Tuesday a more detailed dialogue with residents will be held. Redevelopment rather than refurbishment is what is being recommended by the consultant. SL agreed to circulate the report to all Board members.**SL**

SB will email her comments to Sally and JC.

JC expressed responded to MB's comment about customer involvement. There had been a number of customer involvement activities for this review as listed in Section 13.

MD thanked Sally and JC for their work on this review.

**The Board agreed all recommendations stated in the report except the first one about the name change as further consultation with residents on the name will take place.**

## **7. Customer Access Review**

Dawn Eustace asked the Board to approve the recommendations. The action plan would have further consideration with managers in early February to link it with other actions within other service areas.

MB praised the report and it was easy to follow.

SB asked whether there was a barrier around ICT and whether there are any "quick wins" in this area.

Dawn responded that there were changes that have been put in place on the system that have helped understand our customers and their needs. Staff need to be trained further to ensure they can use the information. CRM is the system that we ideally need but it is expensive. Mark Feehan is looking into the costs.

KM asked what was happening on trying to reach customers that don't/cant use our services. Dawn raised that contact details were being made clearer. She also highlighted the recommendation to pilot a later opening time for the telephone service. KM also said that page 43 talks about the fact that the review has considered all the needs of all SHP customers, but we didn't have all the information yet for all customers. Dawn to amend this paragraph.**DE**

SL raised how excellence is addressed in the action plan. SL feels that this area needs more work and needs to be led by residents to turn it into a gold standard service. Dawn mentioned that the Customer Care ALMO Group will be looking at the excellence agenda SIG it will also be looking at journey mapping.

MD asked for the action plan to be brought back to the Board incorporating SL's point about excellence.

MD asked that the language of the report is looked at and reworded as appropriate and a final version sent to the Board for their information.

**The Board agreed the following recommendation:**

- (i) To agree the recommendations with specific actions across the organisation. Approve the action plan which will be further refined with managers.**

## **8. Review of SHP Complaints**

Danielle Hough introduced her report and explained the proposal for a 3<sup>rd</sup> stage in the complaints process.

Danielle also referred to the plans to improve service delivery by learning from complaints.

WM agreed that the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage may help reduce the number of Ombudsman enquiries but is not sure that the panel will be independent, unless they haven't been involved in the complaint before. WM feels it is worth trying to see if it works.

Danielle confirmed that the appeals panel members will not be part of the process before stage 3. Danielle added that we have gone for a more representative panel unlike most other ALMOs which only have the Chief Executive.

LOC asked whether DL and TH would be comfortable being part of the panel and they both agreed that they would be.

SL added that it would be good for the tenant to have a representative with them for support when going in front of the panel.

Danielle confirmed that the complainant will be contacted either by phone or in person in the early stages.

LOC thought the panel may be too big. MB commented that from his experience Directors are often involved in the panel instead of the CE. Other members of the Board could also be used instead of just the resident Board Members. MB also added that the panel is not always able to make a decision straight away. Danielle commented that there is a time limit in the procedure on when the panel needs to respond by.

MD commented that if the stage 3 causes resourcing issues for the Board then it can be reviewed. MD thanked Danielle and Dawn for their work.

**The Board agreed the recommendation:**

- (i) Approved the proposed recommendation including the revised process and inclusion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage approach.**

## **9. Resident Involvement Compact**

JC introduced the compact and explained that it has been significant partnership working with residents, SHP and LBS.

TH asked whether LBS council tax payers should be included in the Glossary of Terms. He also wanted to know what financial support was coming from LBS for the Compact.

SL responded by explaining that the Resident Compact is about SHP's relationship with the residents as the council's agent. If it was the council's Compact it would be a wider document that would include other areas that the council provide services for. SL feels household members should be included in the Glossary of Terms. SL did not agree that the council tax payers should be included in the compact as it is not about them but about council tenants.

SL responded to TH's question about money. It was complicated as it relates to the General Fund resources.

MD highlighted that freeholders who are members of recognised resident associations could fall into the definition within the compact. SL made a commitment to talk further about the issue of finance with TH, JC and appropriate members of staff.

Beverley issued a caution about amending details in terms of the reference to the rest of the document.

MD thanked JC, Alexa and team and TH for their work on the Compact.

MD made a general comment of thanks to all those involved in the various service reviews as they have clearly set out the type of service delivery organisation we want to be and how we will continue to improve to get there.

TH raised that the Garage Review was due to come back to this meeting. ST to circulate the Garage Review to the Board and to be added to the next Board meeting Agenda. **ST**

**The Board agreed to recommendation:**

**(i) Approved and adopted the Resident Involvement Compact, subject to the comments raised above.**

#### **10. Delivery Plan 2009/10**

Annual process to be agreed with LBS. Final approval in March 2009. Draft Delivery Plan to go to Housing Advisory Group in February. Service Improvement Plan should be ready to go to Housing Advisory Group in February but Performance Plan may not be ready.

**The Board noted the report.**

#### **11. Performance Monitoring - Better for Customers**

AT reassured Board members that EMT are focussed on this. The high level inspection items are being completed and evidence gathered to get these signed off. AT spoke about the work that Tribal is undertaking on the self assessment and their interviews with staff. AT assured the Board that they will see an improvement on this report at the next meeting.

**12. Performance Monitoring – Key Performance Indicators**

TH pointed out that the RIG was shown as RIRG which is the old title. MD commented on the Voids performance as it was exceptional in December and had now returned to the previous "Good level". ST has an issue with the commentary for this item as it is not solely KNK that is responsible. There is a weakness in our own procedures that has also added to the performance issues, which is being addressed. Rent collection was raised – BC explained that there were processing issues around the rent free weeks. These issues should be resolved in the next couple of weeks. BC commented that the SHP is working closely with LBS on the provision for debt advice particularly in the current climate. WM asked if the Board can have an update on the situation on of debt advice at the next meeting. **BC**

WM mentioned that the mobile response is behind target but only by 1 or 2 minutes. It may be useful to have another column that provides this information. JC will consider the analysis and how this can be displayed but does not want to alter the service standard. **JC**

**13. VFM and Financial Monitoring**

MD raised the question about capital being £900,000 underspent and whether ST's team are confident that they will reach 100% by year end. ST commented that her team are changing the payment process as it is slow and ST is confident that they will reach 100% spend. MD asked ST to pass on the Board's concern to the team. **ST**

**14. Resident Involvement Activities**

JC to meet with KM separately to go through his issues. **JC**

**15. Any Other Business**

JC commented on the EMT 360 appraisal process which happened last year and will take place again this year. JC asked Board members who are interested in being a part of this process to let LB know.

The Meeting ended at 9:45 pm

**Date of the next meeting:** 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at 7pm

**Venue:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Sutton Gate

Chair	
Date	