



PEAKS & PLAINS
Housing Trust

Minutes of the Trust's Board Meeting held on 2nd February 2016, 6.00pm at Ropewalks, Macclesfield

<u>Present</u>	John Hudson	JH	Chairman
	Joy Bishop	JB	Board Member
	Tom Agar	TA	Board Member
	Alison Light	AL	Board Member
	Matthew Cunningham	MC	Board Member
	Gordon Richardson	GR	Board Member
	Kate Lindley	KL	Board member
	Tim Pinder	TP	Chief Executive
	Greg van Enk-Bones	GVEB	Director of Resources
	Jacqui Sinnott-Lacey	JSL	Director of Operations
	Pauline Gosling	PG	Governance Officer
	Rachel Cossey		HCA
	Kerry Brier		HCA

The Chairman welcomed Rachel Cossey and Kerry Brier from HCA who were present to observe the Board meeting as part of the Trust's IDA.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Paul Findlow

2. Declarations Of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

4.1 Minutes of the Meeting Held 17th November 2015

The minutes of the meeting held 17th November 2015 were reviewed. KL asked that 'at first contact' be removed from her comment on page 8.

The Board Decided:

517) That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2015 be agreed as a true and accurate record once amended as above and e signed off by the Chairman.

5. Matters Arising

JSL recapped on the figure reported at the last meeting for call handling and explained that the information had been misinterpreted. What should have been reported was the number of calls presented and answered, which would have given a performance figure of around 98%. Housemark have confirmed that they will back date our performance for quarters 1 and 2 to reflect the correct figures.

JH referred to the stock tour mentioned in the previous minutes saying that this will be arranged for around June time.

Handy Person Service – JSL reminded Board of the decision to end the service as part of the review and restructure to address the 1% rent cut and because the service was an offer document promise a full consultation exercise has been carried out. JSL informed Board that the service had a small number of customers and there had been very little response to the consultation. Some service users were interested in continuing a service and in future customers will be referred to Cheshire East Council who operate a similar low cost scheme should Board approve the proposal.

TP advised Board of the potential long term risk of challenge to this decision in the future and possible reputational risk. However, customers will be notified of the outcome and the alternatives available.

GR asked for an update on the redundancy consultations and the moral of the staff.

JSL updated on the latest position regarding redundancies and TP confirmed that staff saw the new year as a new start. The redundancies have clearly had an impact on staff engagement which is reflected in the performance indicators.

JSL reminded the board that this was a key element of the savings committed to as part of our value for money statement.

JB said that she had been informed by a source outside of the Trust how sensitively the situation had been handled.

The Board Decided:

518) To close the Handyperson Scheme from 1st April 2016.

7. Review of Corporate Risk

Board received a report which covered 3 areas for Board to agree:

- Review of the corporate risk register/risk map

- Review of the risk appetite statement
- Setting Golden rules

TP confirmed that some of the risk scores set by Assistant Directors feel as though they have been underscored but they have been left uncorrected because it is the board's responsibility to set them.

JH felt that development scoring was too low – even for the current business plan, even without the increase in development that was being looked at for the new business plan.

TA said he viewed development as a relatively high risk.

AL highlighted that Community alarm services seems to have a low score for impact given the reputational risk associated with it.

MC commented that failing to work with partners with like minded goals is a risk to us but is it a more of an operational risk rather than significant financially?

GR –working with partners could be a significant reputational risk it is one of our objectives.

GvEB – Clarified it was the intention to include in the risk map a combination of significant financial risks – informed by the Sector Risk Profile report and also to cover the corporate objectives of the Trust – since a risk map should show a strong link to the objectives.

Following discussion the Board felt that the risk for development and alarm services should be increased and the risk of working with partners to be discussed further.

GvEB proposed that the Audit Committee review the risk scoring at its meeting on 11th February.

GvEB explained that the risk appetite has been reviewed in light of the changed landscape and changes to the Board and is linked to the adoption of golden rules also covered by the report. He went on to confirm that the golden rules are bespoke to the Trust and not 'off the shelf'.

GR asked how confident are we that our scoring process is as robust as it can be? The scoring process was explained – the Board review is a key part of the process and the scoring is ultimately owned by the Board.

The Board Decided:

- 521.i)** To approve the strategic risk register / map and request Audit Committee to review the scoring.
- 521.ii)** To approve the risk appetite statement

521.iii To approve the 'Golden Rules'

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8. **Appointment of Subsidiary Board members**

Board received a report which recapped on the background to the subsidiaries which the Trust intends to start using from April in order to reduce tax costs.

The main reason for bringing the report to Board now is to appoint one new Board member to each subsidiary and it was hoped that there would be willing volunteers amongst the Board members.

Board members asked questions around the role of the Audit Committee, turnover and possible future transfer of assets, relating to the subsidiaries.

GvEB confirmed that a report will be brought to the March Board outlining intra group relations, and the contracts and agreements that would exist between the companies. He also suggested that in future we could hold common board meetings where subsidiary business is conducted in front of the whole Board.

Following further discussion, it was suggested that Gordon Richardson be appointed to the Trading subsidiary and Tom Agar be appointed to the Development subsidiary.

The Board Decided:

522.i) That Gordon Richardson be appointed to the Board of Peaks & Plains Trade Co

522.ii) That Tom Agar be appointed to the Board of Peaks & Plains Dev Co

9. **NHF Voluntary Code on Mergers, Group Structures and Partnerships**

Board received the voluntary code which has been produced by the National housing Federation at a time when the sector is under unprecedented and continuous scrutiny. Our efficiency and effectiveness as a sector has been challenged and there are some who believe that the sector is not prepared to push itself to secure value for money or sweat its assets to enable more homes to be built.

TP reminded Board of the discussion at the recent away day where the feeling was that the Trust could continue to deliver its objectives and plans independently.

TP went on to inform Board that today it had been reported that Sanctuary were not adopting the code and that a number of members of the PlaceShapers Network are informally working on the assumption that they will not adopt and are working on a PlaceShapers' version of the code.

TP therefore asked to rescind the recommendation in order to discuss and explore with PlaceShapers and bring a report back to the next board meeting.

The Board Decided:

523) To defer a decision on the voluntary code on mergers awaiting feedback from PlaceShapers

10. Performance Report to December 2015

Board received the performance dashboard to December 2015 which shows 12 green indicators, 2 amber and 2 red. GvEB reported on the red indicators within the report:

Staff engagement – 81.48% against the target of 98%. This downturn is thought to be due to the timing of the reorganisation as a result of the rent cut and the timing of the survey which took place in the middle of the redundancy process.

Maximise operating cost efficiency savings - £15,638 against target of £37,500. We have made some progress here but not many large value tenders have happened to this point in the year, the tender for grounds maintenance and Insurance are due in March. We are predicting not to achieve this target with operating costs are 2% lower than forecast and will be lower next year than this. This indicator was designed to make sure that at the point of retendering that a target was set for improvement.

JSL confirmed that for every day during December there were 0% properties without a valid gas safety certificate and that this was also the position for January.

The report also contained the Housemark benchmarking dashboard for the year 2014/15 which displays an improvement on the comparison for 2013/14.

KL asked if the peer group were all in our area – it was explained that we are in the North West peer group.

KL asked if the FTA's were low because of high write offs or because we are good at collection.

JH said he would also like to see the comparative information on bad debts.

TP agreed to bring a report to the next meeting looking at trend information and comparisons.

AL asked, in relation to staff engagement, how many are responding and why aren't they responding. JH referred to the communications work being undertaken which will include some key messages to staff.

The Chairman summed up by stating that the report shows some really good improvement in performance considering the changing environment. TP said he will feedback to the Assistant Directors.

The Board Decided:

524) To note the performance report to December 2015.

12. Progress Report on Asset and Liabilities Register

Board received a report updating on progress of the asset and liabilities register following approval of the Asset Strategy in September 2015.

JSL informed Board that The Code of Practice running alongside the Regulatory Framework requires us to understand our housing assets and security position and have swift access to this information in decision making and risk management. The Trust will be required to certify in its annual financial statements for 2015-16 that it meets all regulatory requirements, including that the Trust has an effective asset and liabilities register in place and we are confident that we can do so.

JSL confirmed that the register has been completed using the Trust's existing systems rather than buying in a specialist system. The register is live and indexed identifying all properties, garages, land etc., adding that anyone with a particular interest in the register is welcome to examine it in more detail.

KL said she would be interested in finding out more about the data management systems in the future.

13. Feedback from Governance Committee

AL gave feedback from the Governance Committee meeting held on 19th December 2015.

The Board Membership policy was due for review and we agreed to remove it from the policy framework due to the fact that its content is included in other policies

As the Board Chair changed midway through the year, we were asked to review the objectives set for the previous Chair and also set objectives for the new Chair.

We received a presentation from Helen, the Assistant Director of HR, updating the position affecting the 24 posts put at risk of redundancy, as a result of the new business plan approved in September, following the Chancellors announcement of the four years of 1% rent reductions.

The Audit committee had requested that we conduct a review of the Trust's low wage increase assumption in the business plan and what potential risks this presents.

The committee recommended that the 30 year business plan make better provision for salary increases that will allow the Trust to compete in the recruitment market.

All the reports are available via the App.

The Board Decided:

525) To note the feedback from Governance Committee

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business

The meeting closed at 8.15pm

Signed.....

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin Hudson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'C'.

Date: 17 March 2016