



**PEAKS & PLAINS**  
Housing Trust

**Minutes of the Trust's Board Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019, 6.00pm at Ropewalks, Macclesfield**

<b><u>Present</u></b>	John Hudson	JH	Chairman
	Matthew Cunningham	MC	Board Member
	Paul Findlow	PF	Board member
	Sam Knuckey	SK	Board Member
	Gordon Richardson	GR	Board Member
	Tom Agar	TA	Board Member
	Tim Pinder	TP	Chief Executive
	Jamie Hutchinson	JaH	Director of Customers
	Beverley Swift	BS	Interim Director of Resources
	Kerry Scott	KS	Interim Director of Development
	Liz Holmes	LH	Assistant Director of Finance
	Gill MacDonald	GM	Executive PA

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:

Kate Lindley	KL	Board Member
Alison Light	AL	Board Member
Simon Leighton	SL	Board Member

**Declarations Of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

**1. Minutes of meeting held 20<sup>th</sup> November and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018 were reviewed.

**The Board decided:**

**706)** That the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018 be agreed as a true and accurate record and be signed off by the Chairman.

**1.1 Matters Arising**

- There were no matters arising

**3. Performance Report including Sector Scorecard**

**3.1 Sector Scorecard** – The Board were pleased to read that the Trust compared favourably on many of the KPIs, particularly operating margin and development. B.S. agreed, though reminded the Board of the challenges in making valid comparisons when despite best

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efforts, there were still variations on definitions and a reluctance from some Associations to follow the set definitions provided by the Regulator, as reported in Inside Housing this week. BS assured the Board that we are using the correct definitions and this has been verified by our auditors.

- 3.2 JH was pleased with the report and even where we may have come in the lower quartile it was clear why that was the case; following a conscious, strategic decision.
  - 3.3 T.A. drew rest of Board's attention to the links in outcomes, for example he pointed out the link between our higher than average re-investment percentage and our similarly higher than average Return on Capital employed. He also pointed out that a higher than average gearing could be seen as positive; because the social units developed score was upper quartile.
  - 3.4 KL had suggested in a comment to JH that our positive comparisons against our peers was the basis for a good news story and should be promoted across the Trust. TP agreed to add this to the Staff Briefings.
  - 3.5 **Performance Report** – Board had asked at the last meeting that the focus this time should be on the development KPIs, given the concern expressed at the previous meeting at the trend of underperformance against target.
  - 3.6 KS updated Board on her initial thoughts on performance to date, the challenge in delivering some of the KPI targets and actions we are taking to do so, particularly trying to maximize our delivery on new build numbers and tackling the 16 unsold shared ownership (SO) homes exceeding four months, against our Board dashboard target of none.
  - 3.7 KS reported that the longest unsold SO properties were the 4 remaining at Wrenbury, which have been empty for some 55 weeks. This was the first scheme we developed where sales were not achieved "off plan." Marketing with the skills we have had in house together with location has proved challenging. The originally appointed local estate agents made little impact. Having changed agents late summer, the current ones have sold three to date. We will now be offering the homes with white goods and carpets installed and, having rerun the appraisal, we are able to reduce the sale value / sale price, offer a minimum of 25% share ( down from 50% ) and still provide a positive NPV.
  - 3.8 KS had also met with Plumlife, part of the Great Places group who we appointed as sales agents for all existing sites bar Wrenbury and Molton ( where we have existing agents in place ) and the 26 new SO properties due for handover by the end of the year. TA challenged the Exec that responsibility was not simply being outsourced. KS reassured the Board that she would instigate regular, effective performance management monitoring of agents on each site they operated.
  - 3.9 JH asked if the product we were developing was suitable for SO. KS confirmed that they were suitable because in all cases they were House-builders house types designed with a "kerb appeal" that works for private buyers and should work for aspirational shared owners. The unsolds are the same house types, within a broader development by the same house-builder, as those that have sold successfully and often off-plan elsewhere. Clearly one issue to explore is location. Another issue has been ineffective marketing, which has been outside of the teams' skills and not as forthcoming from the initially appointed agents
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as we would have wished. We are now confident that we have an experienced partner in Plumlife to plug this gap.

- 3.10 GR asked about the further 26 SO properties due to be handed over and whether they compound the problem. TP responded to say that these were schemes to which we are under contract and therefore committed to. However, we have imposed a moratorium on agreeing any further shared ownership deals until we had made significant levels of sales on those 26 and our existing stock.
- 3.11 JH said that this was reassuring given the current challenges to be resolved. TA welcomed the addition of white goods and carpets to the properties, agreeing that these would be considered a minimum requirement by our target audience.
- 3.12 JH asked if we collected any feedback from people who view the properties but don't proceed. TP confirmed we do but the majority of the time the reason was affordability; we haven't been able to discern enough intelligence from these to help with future site selection.
- 3.13 TA asked whether we could develop an in-house sales and marketing resource, rather than rely on Plumlife to market our future properties. TP responded to say that it might not be economical for us to do so, given the sporadic nature of scheme completions, the geographical spread and the skill specific requirement. However, KS has identified a discreet role (and gap) in the briefing and facilitating of the agents with all the appropriate information to enable timely sales. KS confirmed that we will create a sales administrator role within the Trust to manage information flows to / from Plumlife
- 3.14 Board then reviewed the KPI – New home completions. KS confirmed that there had been no development led starts on site this year and therefore no planned development led completions. Given the need to exercise greater discretion over 106 Agreement acquisitions (previously discussed with the Board) the current thinking was there may be an opportunity to acquire medium-sized sites below the size threshold that private house-builders normally considered. KS had been meeting with land agents to identify plots to acquire and, should such sites be available, thereby generate a pipeline of future development schemes under our control. KS was confident that grant could be accessed through Homes England should such site opportunities be identified .
- 3.15 JH suggested that the Board needed to look at development targets closely to ensure we are not setting ourselves up to fail. Clearly we have fallen significantly behind in our targets for 2018/9 and, if opportunities in our pipeline were not there in the numbers anticipated, we may need to adjust our future targets accordingly. A generative discussion should be arranged to ensure a common understanding on this between Exec and Board ahead of 19/20 target setting.
- 3.16 KS has also met with BLOC who manage grants for our Homes England programme and they are supportive and comfortable with our current plans.

**The Board decided:**

**707) i)** To note the Sector Scorecard

**707) ii)** To note the performance Dashboard

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#### **4. Domestic Violence**

- 4.1 JaH presented information on Domestic Violence, the role we currently play and the scale of the challenge we face. He outlined the types of domestic violence and the resources available to manage it.
- 4.2 He introduced the concept of the “toxic triangle” which was mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence and reported that Macclesfield in particular has high levels of poor mental health and significant and increasing challenges around substance misuse.
- 4.3 Presentation highlighted our potentially important role as a front-line agency, within the important context of a multi-agency approach but that needed to increase our understanding & responsiveness, including through staff training.
- 4.4 We work closely with the Police; we sit on the Serious Crimes Committee.
- 4.5 The new CRM system will be much more effective in pulling together case files much quicker and react when needed. We have a target of 24 hours to harden a property.
- 4.6 The Board welcomed the presentation and was pleased with the work being done and planned. JH noted the valuable role of the IDVA (independent domestic violence assessors) asked about the organisational context for this service. JaH was unsure but would look into this and report back as a matter of point.
- 4.7 JH asked if there might be a need to provide safe accommodation for victims. JaH felt that this was not necessary given our reasonable turnover of void properties at any given time and the often precise requirements of those fleeing violence.
- 4.8 JH thanked JaH for his presentation and the team for all the work involved.

#### **7. Risk Register and Assurance**

- 7.1 At the last Audit Committee KL requested greater context for the risk register to help provide greater assurance about effective risk mitigations. BS has been working with Beaver & Struthers best practice plans, and presented a sample to Board for approval. Board endorsed the suggested approach. BS will now fully populate the register with each of our strategic risks and their associated three levels of assurance. The new register will be taken to the next Audit Committee to be evaluated.
  - 7.2 MC supported and welcomed this new approach.
  - 7.3 GR had attended the NHF Risk Conference in December and would be making a report back to Audit Committee at their next meeting. However, one of the common themes was mapping assurance to a risk register and he also welcomed this new approach. However, one area he feels we could improve was horizon-scanning; which was not necessarily about seeking to predict the future but examining possible future scenarios that might impact on our business and considering how the organisation might best respond. JH gave an example of where we had used this horizon-scanning effectively; when we were looking at the future of Wellbeing services and obtained expert external advice to help us look at the impact of, for example, future advances in technology which helped inform our decisions.
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**The Board decided:**

**710)** To approve the systematic approach to risk and the documents contained in the report which will be presented to the Audit Committee

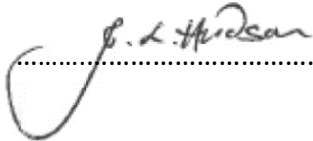
**10. Any Other Business**

10.1 4 customer events were taking place in February; Knutsford, Wilmslow and 2 sessions at Ropewalks. TP reported that we have a good number of customers wanting to attend the sessions and these are spread through the 3 locations. We have been working with someone on the structure of these events to make it more interactive and enjoyable for participants and to ensure that we get what we want out of it as well. It will enable us to work on the Customer Charter. Board members will be notified in the next few days of which event they can attend.

10.2 Interviews for Director of Place and Director of resources will take place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in March

The meeting closed at 20.35

Signed

  
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Date

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