



**Ealing Homes Limited (the “Company”)
Company number 5120243
Company Limited by Guarantee
Companies Act 1985 - 2006**

Minutes of Part A of a meeting of the Board of Directors, open to the public

Present:

Greg Birdseye	(‘GB’) in the Chair
Abdi Ali	(‘AA’)
Romana Baig	(‘RB’)
Eddie Brown	(‘EB’)
Donncha Downey	(‘DD’)
John Gallagher	(‘JG’)
Deborah Haynes	(‘DH’)
Dawn Larmouth	(‘DL’)
Carole Lorrington	(‘CL’)
Diana Pagan	(‘DP’)
Brian Reeves	(‘BR’)

Apologies:

Russell Caller	(‘RC’)
Ziggy Brennan	(‘ZB’)
John Popham	
Fatima Williams	

In attendance:

Peter Driver	(‘PeterD’) London Registrars, Company Secretary
Phil Boxhall	(‘PB’) Head of Asset and Investment
Peta Caine	(‘PC’) Director, Housing Management
Paul Davey	(‘PD’) Director, Corporate Org & Development
Surjit Dhande	(‘SD’) Chief Finance Officer
Dominic Rebeiro	(‘DR’) Programme and Performance Manager
Pat Ronayne	(‘PR’) Head of Housing Management
Susmita Sen	(‘SS’) Chief Executive

Euan Ramsay	(‘ER’) Feedback, National Housing Federation (for presentation)
Cathy Osborn	(‘CO’) Assistant Director, Housing Supply, LBE
Mark Aldelamy	(‘MA’) Client Mgt and Performance, LBE

Place: Committee Room 3
Ealing Town Hall
New Broadway
Ealing, W5 2BY

Date/time: 19 November 2009 at 6.30pm

Ealing Homes Status Survey 2009: presentation of key findings

GB was appointed Chairman of the meeting in the absence of RC, who was on leave. He welcomed Euan Ramsay from Feedback, the National Housing Federation's (NHF) market research arm to the meeting.

ER noted that Feedback had undertaken the 2009 status survey during Summer 2009 on behalf of EH. The Tenants Services Authority (TSA) required all ALMOs, including EH, to undertake a bi-annual residents' survey using standard questions. The survey methodology provided a snapshot of each ALMO's performance against its peers across the country, and tailored surveys had been provided to three tenure groups: general needs, sheltered housing and homeowners.

The survey results were statistically significant and reliable to + or – 3% in line with STATUS methodology expectations. The results showed higher levels of satisfaction for residents in sheltered housing, compared with general needs tenants with lower levels of satisfaction among leaseholders.

Overall, the results showed that EH's satisfaction ratings were higher than its peer group although not as high as the NHF national average. This was in line with expectations as satisfaction tends to be higher generally outside of large, multi-cultural inner city housing organisations. The results showed substantial progress compared with the external survey undertaken in 2004. There were lower satisfaction ratings for ethnic minority residents and higher satisfaction levels amongst older tenants (who tended to be white British) in line with the pattern for the peer group. In subsequent discussion, ER undertook to provide further information on the composition of the peer group.

[Action: Euan Ramsey]

The survey showed that the key drivers for overall tenant satisfaction were the quality of the home and the account taken of residents' views. The satisfaction levels for repairs were in line with expectations and compared favourably against the scores achieved by EH's peer group, against the national average and against the results of earlier status surveys. The survey results on customer contact indicated room for improvement in residents' satisfaction levels, although good progress had been made since the 2004 survey. Residents had indicated a clear preference for receiving written communications from EH.

The results on residents' key priorities were as expected: leaseholders' were concerned with value for money and tenants with repairs and maintenance. Key concerns for all residents were rubbish and litter and car parking. Anti-social behaviour issues were also a concern, across a range of categories and, in line with expectations, residents who had complained about anti-social behaviour were disappointed with the result of their complaint.

The results for residents' satisfaction with the quality of service provided indicated that it could be useful to identify leaseholders' expectations more precisely, to address the issues raised in the survey. The demographic results of the survey indicated the range of social issues with which EH residents were dealing, including low income.

GB thanked ER for his review of the survey results. In subsequent discussion on how to make residents aware of the results of the survey, it was noted that some headline results would be included in the next residents' magazine. Board members agreed that, if more detailed results were to be made available, it would be necessary to explain the background and context of the results to make the information accessible to all residents.

Susmita Sen reported that the Executive Management Team was considering holding a focus group for black and minority ethnic residents to address the issues raised in the survey. It was also suggested that further work could be done to identify the expectations of younger residents. ER agreed that further research could be useful to identify the causes of the lower levels of satisfaction for these groups, which also occurred in other ALMOs.

Board members suggested that, when communicating with residents, some Board members needed to be taken of the fact that some did not have regular access to the internet. Some Board Directors were of the view that anecdotal evidence did not bear out the survey result relating to higher levels of satisfaction amongst older residents.

Councillor Reeves proposed that more accurate survey results may result from face to face interviews with residents but this falls outside of STATUS methodology which requires postal surveys for consistent benchmarking of results with other housing organisations.

In conclusion, GB noted that one survey could only provide part of the picture of residents' views of EH and a range of methods were used to communicate with residents and address their concerns. GB thanked ER for his helpful explanation of the survey conclusions.

ER left the meeting.

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

288. GB noted that apologies had been received from Russell Caller, Ziggy Brennan, John Popham and Fatima Williams. John Tunney was away and unable to attend. GB welcomed Mark Aldulaimi, who worked with Tim Willis.

289. Board members confirmed that they had no conflicts arising from the items on the agenda.

2. Notice and Quorum

290. The Secretary reported that notice had been given to all those who were entitled to attend the meeting and, as per the Articles of the Company, the quorum necessary for the conduct of the meeting was present.

3. Minutes and matters arising

Minutes of Part A of the last meeting (item 2)

291. The minutes of Part A of the meeting held on 17 September 2009 were APPROVED and SIGNED by the Chairman as a correct record.

Matters arising from last meeting (item 3)

292. The Secretary circulated a list of matters arising from previous meetings and the Board NOTED the following items not covered on the agenda.

293. *Governance manual*: SS reported that PD, who had joined EH in September, would be picking up the work to review and update the Manual.

[Action: PD]

294. *Equality and Diversity*: an update was provided in the Chief Executive's report and a regular report would be provided with effect from the January meeting.

[Action: PD]

295. *Pension Plan*: the Board noted that a briefing had been provided on the complex issues relating to the funding of the Plan. SD would provide further briefing for Board members outside the meeting.
[Action: Board members/SD]
296. *Estate visits/Decent Homes*: visits would be arranged by Dominic Rebeiro for Board members who wished to review progress during January.
[Action: Board members/DR]
297. *Audit and Risk Committee membership*: no Board members had, as yet, volunteered to join the A&RC. SS noted that Committee membership would be reviewed as part of the Board appraisal process, which would begin in January 2010. In the meantime, if Board members wished to join A&RC, they should let Brian Reeves know.
[Action: Board members]
298. *Board intranet site*: PD suggested that Board members contact him with any queries about access to the intranet.
[Action: Board members]

IV Committee reports

Update on Audit and Regulatory Committee meeting

299. BR referred to the meeting held on 13 October 2009, which had been attended by the LBE Internal Audit team. A detailed discussion had focussed on the control weaknesses identified by the audit team. Other issues covered included counter-fraud work, business continuity, and IT issues.

Update on Asset Management Committee meeting

300. GB noted that many issues discussed at the AMC meeting held on 26 October 2009 were on the Board agenda. AMC had reviewed the KPIs in detail and the variations in performance of the Decent Homes contractors. Other issues discussed included an update on fire safety, the capital programme 2010/11 and progress on Decent Homes.

V Discussion and decisions

Financial Inclusion Strategy

301. PC introduced the paper and noted that it set out the work currently being done on financial inclusion and the work planned to enhance the services provided to financial excluded residents. EH was working with other agencies to develop the financial inclusion strategy and identifying ways in which assistance could be provided, e.g. with providing premises for a re-employment scheme.
302. The intention of the strategy was to co-ordinate and streamline work currently being done and to provide a framework for the staff working with deprived residents to assist in the provision of targeted services.
303. Board members suggested that efforts should also be made to assist residents who were working and not receiving housing benefit as they could be targeted by loan

sharks etc. PC outlined the efforts being made to provide information to all residents regarding credit unions and other sources of information about debt management.

304. Board members referred to the challenges involved in encouraging residents to join credit unions. Personal advice was provided to residents on a range of financial issues at a local Sure Start Centre and this was likely to be a more effective way of reaching the residents who needed assistance than using leaflets and magazine articles etc.
305. The proposal in the paper to encourage contractors working on Decent Homes to employ local people as apprentices was commended and it was suggested that EH could also increase its efforts to employ apprentices. SS confirmed that contractors were expected to employ local people and outlined plans to engage with people from a range of backgrounds on which a report would be provided at the next meeting.
306. In conclusion, the Board NOTED the work that was currently being done on financial inclusion and APPROVED the Strategy and Action Plan to end March 2011.

Business Plan 2010/11 (agenda item 6)

307. PD introduced the paper, which was an early draft of the Plan, and noted that Board members' views on the direction of the draft were welcome. The draft set out the proposed themes for the Plan and Performance Objectives. The preparation of the plan would continue until the final draft was presented to the Board for approval at its March meeting.
308. The draft incorporated comments from LBE and EH officers and took account of the new regulatory framework introduced by the Tenant Services Association.
309. GB suggested that it might be helpful to set up a small group of Board members to review the draft Plan in detail, but it was also important to ensure that all Board members had a chance to contribute to the development of the key themes in the Plan.
310. During discussion, Board members suggested, and it was agreed, that references to high levels of satisfaction should be matched with ratings over 80% rather than 75%. In response to queries, SD noted that efficiency savings could be made without reducing the cash spend, e.g. through reducing staff sickness absence.
311. On KPIs, PD confirmed that those included in the draft plan were intended to illustrate EH's performance of the basic landlord's functions.
312. The Board RESOLVED:
 - to give in principle agreement to the content and format of the draft business plan 2010-11;
 - to forward any suggested amendments and additional objectives for 2010-11 for inclusion in the final draft for consideration by the Board at its meeting scheduled for 25 March 2010; and
 - to set up a sub-group consisting of RB, EB and CL to meet two/three times by the end of February to make most of its input by then and to complete its work by late March, with GB, ZB and RC also to participate as needed. PD was to make all necessary arrangements. The sub-group was to report to the Board via a section of the CEO's report.

[Action: RB/EB/CL/GB/ZB/RC/PD]

VI For information

Finance Reporting (agenda item 7)

313. SD introduced the report on finance performance to 30 September 2009, mid-year budget 2009/10 review, and progress on a budget 2010/11.
314. The financial report at Appendix A showed a surplus of £793k, but there were a number of major expenditure items outstanding, e.g. on repairs and maintenance and capital spend, and the year-end surplus would be just over £100k.
315. Section 5.2 set out funding proposals for the mid-year budget review. Board approval was sought for the revised budget, with no change to the overall total, set out in Section 5.4.
316. Section 6 reported on progress in drafting the 2010/11 budget, with the savings to be made identified in Section 6.3. These savings were spread across all the budget heads. The split between delegated and directly managed budget savings would be reported to future meetings. The draft budget would be completed by the end of December and available for the next Audit and Regulatory Committee and the Board meeting in January, to be finalised at the March Board meeting.
317. CO commented that the Council had not yet received a subsidy determination from HMG to enable it to come to a final view of the resources available to it next year.
318. A special presentation on Decent Homes would be made to the next Board meeting, to explain how Ealing Homes are managing the programme.
319. The Board:
- NOTED the financial results for the six months to 30 September 2009;
 - NOTED and APPROVED the revisions to the 2009/10 budget in view of the current budgetary pressures; and
 - NOTED the progress made on the budget for 2010/11.

[Action: SD]

Performance Reporting (agenda item 8)

a September/October 2009 Performance Indicator Monitoring report

320. PD's report had attached a copy of the September 2009 Performance Indicator Monitoring report. A Performance Indicator report for October 2009 was laid round, as this was not available by dispatch of the original papers to Board members. The reports were in a new format introduced following comments from various sources including the Chair of the Asset Management Committee.
321. A simple red/green split between not on target/on target results was now used. In some areas EH was well short of the target and would need to concentrate on improving performance.

322. The use of the radar graph to report on the headline benchmark figures was welcomed.
323. On specific figures, CL asked what action had been taken against the two contractors who had not met the targets for completing urgent repairs on time. PD replied that until October, contractors' performance had not been analysed individually in this way. SS said that this would now be addressed by the Asset Management Committee. The problems appeared to be in certain specific areas of work, not across the two companies' whole range of services. All figures showed an improvement in September.
324. GB pointed out that in some areas performance was improving although targets had not been met. The Board and Committees needed to learn how best to analyse the information provided to be able to question the Council on continuing shortfalls.
325. Members were asked to let PD have their suggestions on how the format of the report might be further improved.
[Action: Board members]
326. The report was NOTED.
327. (JP left the meeting at this point).
- b Improvement Plan 2009/11
328. PD introduced his report on implementation of the Improvement Plan 2009/11. This contained amber status reports as well as red and green to show where non-quantified targets had been missed but with clear target dates and work plans in place. The report was monitored monthly by the Leadership Team.
329. PD reported that the task reference R3.7a (clarify the future of long-term of sheltered accommodation) was now at amber status. PriceWaterhouseCooper were due to report. The Council already had a strategy in place.
330. It was suggested that a new date column be included to show revised target dates where needed.
[Action: PD]
331. GB stressed the need to work closely with the Council to ensure that progress with reaching the targets was continued.
332. The report was NOTED.

Decent Homes Update (agenda item 9)

333. DR introduced this report on progress with the various programmes.
334. GB reported that a more detailed version of the report had gone to the Asset Management Committee meeting on 26 October. They would be keeping progress under close scrutiny to ensure full spend by the end of March 2010.
335. DR added that it was the intention to close enquiries within five working days, through local project managers where possible. SS said that a report on enquiry handling would be considered at the next Task Force meeting. Progress with the programme was being monitored at all levels of the Council to ensure full

implementation.

336. The report was NOTED.

Capital programme 2010/11 (agenda item 10)

337. PB introduced this report.

338. The total funding required was £48.6m. The amount already available from the Council in the three-year budget for 2008/09 to 2010/11 was £46.9m and in consequence it was necessary to submit a bid to Star Chamber for an additional £1.7m.

339. The primary objective was to complete the Decent Homes programme across the borough by March 2011. This would take two-thirds of the 2010/11 capital budget and steps were being taken to ensure that the work would begin promptly in April 2010.

340. Another major item next year would be replacement of mechanical, water and electrical systems.

341. It was pointed out that Appendix A to the paper was still confidential to the Council and should be withdrawn from circulation. Members were asked to return their copies to PeterD.

[Action: Board members]

342. The Board NOTED:

- the recommendation of the Asset Management Committee to approve the Capital Investment Plan 2010/11 in accordance with the Committee's terms of reference; and
- that the Council's Cabinet had considered the report at its meeting on 10 November 2009 and that it would be implemented on 23 November (having not been called in) and that the Council must confirm the availability of the necessary capital resources.

Business Continuity Plan (agenda item 11)

343. PD introduced the report. He proposed the addition of a brief covering summary to advise Council staff of the purpose of the Plan and how to use it.

344. It was planned to test the effectiveness of the Plan in various scenarios by carrying out dry runs of the necessary actions. It was pointed out that this should only be attempted after the Plan was circulated and staff were fully aware of its content. Post-holder titles should be shown in the report rather than individual staff names. A mechanism needed to be specified for reviewing and updating the detail of the Plan.

345. It was reported that the Plan had been scrutinised in detail by the Audit and Regulatory Committee, who had recommended its acceptance by the Board with the same caveats. SS commented that it was for the Committee to ensure that they put forward documents for ratification by the Board only when they were fully satisfied that they were in final form: the volume of papers put to the Board meant that it could not act as a reviewing body.

346. The Board:

- NOTED the plan, for further consideration at the next meeting of the Audit and Regulatory Committee for a further report to the next Board meeting.

[Action: PD]

Chief Executive's report (agenda item 12)

347. SS introduced her report.

348. Copies of the weekly EH staff briefing would be circulated to the Board in future.

349. Directors were welcomed to attend the weekly CEO-staff lunches.

350. The Organisational Working Group was considering the issues likely to arise from EH's closure. They were looking at risk areas, in particular the effect of losing key staff, and had agreed that a contingency plan be drawn up. SS hoped to be able to put the risk assessment produced to the next Board meeting.

351. Board members suggested that the letter sent to Ealing tenants to invite them to meetings to discuss the end of the arrangements with EH in March 2011 did not make it clear what the consequences would be. It did not appear that the letter had been delivered to all tenants in sufficient time to allow them to attend: this might be because the delivery team had not got past electronic door systems to deliver to flats whereas the Royal Mail would do so.

352. The report was NOTED.

Company Secretary's report (agenda item 13)

353. There was nothing to report.

Any other business/Date of next meeting

354. CL asked how the companies involved in tendering for the three area contracts would be able to make a return on their work in the absence of Council funding.

355. SS asked members to let her have notice of similar relevant questions in advance of the January Board meeting, which Cllr Will Brooks was due to attend. She would forward questions in advance to Council officers for full consideration at the next Board meeting, to facilitate the discussion as the agenda for that meeting was already substantial.

356. The next Board meeting would be held on 28th January 2010.

357. The meeting was declared closed at 9:10pm.

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Chair