

## **URH Board Minutes**

### **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2007 at 6.30pm**

### **LG04, Lincoln House**

**Present:**

**TMO Members**

<b>Blenheim Gardens TMO:</b>	Anton Manickim Selina Allis
<b>Loughborough EMB:</b>	Ann Hoad (Chair) (Part of Meeting) Jason Wyatt (Part of Meeting)
<b>Roupell Park RMO:</b>	Mary Simpson
<b>Waltham Estate RMO:</b>	Dilia ('Lia') Conceição Maya Schram
<b><u>Council Representatives:</u></b>	Paul W Cooper Helen Charlesworth-May Cllr Alex McKenna

**Independents:**

Edith Yembra  
Willem Buttinger

**URH Interim CEO:**

Peter Redman

**URH CEO Designate:**

Damian Roche

**URH staff:**

Tim Mathias (Minutes)  
Alexandra Asare  
Clara Odamo  
Vanessa Matthews  
Phil Morris

**Observers:**

Mark Browne (Manager – Roupell Park)  
Dan Howcroft (Manager – Blenheim Gardens)

**Apologies:**

<b>Council Representatives:</b>	Cllr Clive Bennett
<b>Cowley Estate EMB:</b>	Paul Southwell
<b>Roupell Park RMO:</b>	Carla Pall
<b>Independent Representatives:</b>	Scott Cunningham Jo Robinson

## **1 Introductions**

1.1.0 This was the first meeting attended by Damian Roche, who is due to take on the post of Chief Executive URH during February 2007. Selina Allis, also attended the meeting with a view to becoming the second resident director from Blenheim Gardens RMO. The Estate Manager for Blenheim Gardens, Mr Dan Howcroft, also attended the meeting in an observer capacity.

## **2 Minutes & Matters Arising from the Board Meeting on 13 December 06**

### *Minutes*

On page 2 of the papers – for Delia Conceicao read Dilia Conceicao.

On page 6 of the papers – first line should read:-

The Access & Customer Care KLOE has been allocated to **Steve Couzens** NOT Dan Howcroft.

#### *Matters Arising*

#### **Page 3**

##### Action Point - Produce paper on Insurance cover including Directors indemnity cover

This is covered in Item 5 on the agenda.

##### Action Point - Paper on inducting new board members

This will be presented at the February board meeting

#### **Page 4**

##### Action Point - Report back to board – Leasehold TUPE arrangements

Pete has met with Ashley Parrette at Leasehold Services. The decision has been made to go out to an internal advert for the post of Leasehold Officer.

##### Action Point - Proposals for Residents Conference & Staff Conference

As soon as Lambeth pay the URH allowance Tim Mathias can go ahead with booking a venue for the first of these conferences – the staff conference & will produce a paper for the board. It was agreed that both these conferences will be based around 'prioritising the improvement plan'.

Finally, on page 6 of the papers:-

Clara Odamo asked the board to consider appointing a consultant to bring all the strands of the improvement plan together. It was agreed that proposals for additional resources will be presented at the next board meeting.

This will be considered after the Management Fee has been received from Lambeth Council.

Pete Redman attended a Special General meeting at Loughborough EMB on 7 December 2006. This was called following the receipt of twenty signatures, and was attended by representatives of Defend Council Housing. A number of useful comments were taken from the floor. Loughborough board members also spoke eloquently. This meeting eventually ran out of time – a follow up meeting has been called for the 18 January 2007. (*Note – this date has still to be confirmed*).

Pete Redman will discuss this matter with Ann Hoad.

### **3 Interim Chief Executive Report**

3.1.0 Pete Redman asked the board to note that this report is rather shorter than usual. This is because Phil Morris and Vanessa Matthews have now taken on many of the elements of the work that Pete used to cover.

#### 3.2.0 Cowley EMB Ballot

3.2.1 Members will recall that 96% of tenants were in favour when a ballot was held on Cowley estate during November 2006. Cowley EMB has agreed to put the proposal to rejoin URH to a special meeting of their shareholders. This meeting was due to be held sometime in January, but Cowley EMB has yet to set a date. Pete Redman and/or Damian Roche will be invited to speak whenever this takes place.

3.2.2 Cllr Alex McKenna, who represents the Vassal ward, attends the Cowley EMB board meetings and provided an update.

3.2.3 Cllr McKenna stated that in spite of the overwhelmingly positive vote from residents the Cowley board had to be persuaded to call a special meeting. Cowley EMB had set themselves an ambitious response rate of 51%, this objective had not been met. Cllr McKenna believes that Cowley EMB could leave themselves open to challenge from any resident who believes that they should have joined URH. Cllr McKenna is concerned

that events within Lambeth have conspired to instil a bunker mentality within Cowley EMB. Cowley EMB has a number of issues to deal with at the moment – their relationship with the Council; CCTV contract; conflicts with the Vassal Area Regeneration Group. The review of allowances may also have a negative impact on the negotiations.

3.2.4 Cllr McKenna believes that it will still be a challenge to get Cowley EMB back on board – any assistance would be appreciated.

*Note:- Ann Hoad & Jason Wyatt arrived at this point.*

3.2.5 Pete Redman stated that he had to declare an interest at this point. In his new post Pete Redman is responsible for monitoring the TMOs. Pete emphasised that Phil Morris, the URH Interim Finance Officer, is here to support the TMOs during these negotiations. Pete also agreed that this issue could not have been raised at a worse time for URH. It was agreed that Ann Hoad would write to Cllr John Kazantkis expressing URH concerns, and asking for this matter to be dealt with as sensitively as possible.

Action Point	By whom	When
Write to the Cabinet member for housing, expressing concerns re: negotiation of management allowances	Ann Hoad/ Clara Odamo	14 Feb 07

3.2.6 Mark Browne wished to emphasise the impact that these cuts could have. If they went ahead in their present form Roupell Park would not be able to deliver the current level of services. Smaller TMOs would go under altogether.

3.2.7 Phil Morris outlined what he believed to be the position. The first question is has council served right notice? This is important. The TMOs who work under a modular Management Agreement should be given three months notice of any changes before the new financial year starts on 1 April 2007. The letter from Lambeth was dated 29 December, but some TMOs did not receive it until the New Year. Additionally, the letter from Lambeth Council does not set out any figures at all. In view of this does the letter really constitute an official Notice and trigger negotiations?

3.2.8 Cllr McKenna wanted to convey an assurance from Cllr Kazantkis that an agreement will be reached. Lambeth Housing is currently running a significant deficit that must be addressed. The Council wants to reach an amicable conclusion. Cllr McKenna is more than happy to convey any responses. The Council wants to keep TMOs together.

3.2.9 Lia Conceição asked why doesn't the Council cut its own budget? Cllr McKenna replied that budget cuts have been implemented across the board.

3.2.10 Helen Charlesworth-May emphasised that URH is important to the Council. It is important to think tactically, and not back into a corner.

3.2.11 Willem Buttinger summed up what he believed was the current position:-

This has a direct impact on URH.

Budget problems have building for a number of years, has now become a crisis management situation.

URH is in a strong position.

We must work to resolve this dispute.

3.2.12 Lia Conceição expressed the desire to call a special meeting to concentrate solely on allowances. This will be considered.

### 3.3.0 Setting up URH

3.3.1 Pete Redman relayed the news that the Management Fee from Lambeth has still not been paid. URH has been set up as a supplier on Lambeth's Oracle Finance system.

At least five people have to sign this off before a Purchase order number can be produced. When this is available then URH can invoice Lambeth Council.

Action Point	By whom	When
Escalate management fee issue	Pete Redman/ Phil Morris	ASAP

#### 3.4.0 CEO Appointment

Damian Roche will start on the 19 February. Pete Redman will leave during the final week of January. There will be a need for a senior member of staff to provide cover. Pete is asking the board approval for Clara Odamo to cover the CEO post from the date he leaves until 19 February – a period of about two and a half weeks. This was agreed unanimously by the board.

#### 3.5.0 Forward Plan

Agreed unanimously.

### **4 External and Internal Audit**

*Note: Ann Hoad took over chairing this meeting at this point.*

4.1.1 Phil Morris presented this item.

4.1.2 Phil Morris advised that the 28<sup>th</sup> June meeting had previously considered the appointment of auditors and that Scott Cunningham & Willem Buttinger had volunteered to sit on an Audit panel.

4.1.3 The Board paper referred to events at Loughborough EMB and their implications for the need for internal auditors to look at TMO's as well as URH's own systems.

4.1.4 Phil has listed the auditors employed by the various TMOs in the report – along with the fees that they are paid. It would appear that there is a wide variation in the fees paid. This would seem to indicate that the TMOs are receiving different levels of service.

4.1.5 Phil has included a short-list of auditors that the board may like to consider at the end of the report. Phil would like to add Mazars to this list.

4.1.6 Willem pointed out that tendering for work at relatively small organisations can be time consuming for auditors – compared to the amount of business they get. It was agreed to sound out firms prior to inviting them to tender for the contract.

4.1.7 It was agreed that TMOs need to decide on their own auditors, but that there is the ability for them to jointly procure the services of one auditor in order to achieve economies of scale. This matter would be considered further at a later date.

4.1.8 Phil Morris would also like the board to consider whether to appoint joint internal/external auditors. A number of decisions have to be made on this subject – Phil is recommending that a panel is set-up, to make recommendations to the 11<sup>th</sup> March board meeting.

4.1.9 Mark Browne recommended seeking advice from the Federation of ALMOs. Damian Roche advised that TIAA are being considered for an Internal Audit contract for a number of ALMO's including Kensington & Chelsea.

4.1.10 Cllr McKenna stated that this was an opportunity for TMOs to share resources and drive costs down.

4.1.11 A panel was voted as Edith Yembra, Anton Manickam, Jason Wyatt and Willem Buttinger.

### **5 Insurance Cover**

5.1.1 Phil Morris introduced this topic.

5.1.2 This report is in work in progress. It sets out the various types of cover currently available.

5.1.3 Phil asked the board to note that there was a burglary in the building recently.

5.1.4 Cllr McKenna asked whether any form of additional security will be required at Lincoln House. Phil replied that URH plan to acquire an intruder alarm.

Action Point	By whom	When
Phil to work through queries raised in the Insurance Cover report.	Phil Morris	On-going

## **6 Human Resource Update**

6.1.1 Vanessa Matthews introduced this topic.

6.1.2 Tim Mathias has been recruited. Clara Odamo has been TUPEed over.

6.1.3 Sabine Buntu has been recruited to a fixed term contract.

6.1.4 A number of TMO posts are now going out to advert.

6.1.5 A permanent URH Finance Manager will also have to be recruited.

6.1.6 Ann Hoad confirmed that Loughborough have made a settlement with their former Finance Officer. Ann was not at liberty to say how much the settlement was worth, but it was less than the legal costs of continuing the case.

6.1.7 Vanessa is also working on drafting various policies and procedures.

## **7 Recruitment and Selection Draft Policy**

7.1.1 Vanessa Matthews introduced this topic.

7.1.2 This report is for information. It outlines a number of guidelines to be fleshed out, based on discussions that Pete Redman and Vanessa Matthews have had.

7.1.3 Cllr McKenna asked whether Vanessa had sought any guidance whilst drafting out these guidelines. Vanessa replied that no guidance had been sought as yet, but will be sought as appropriate.

7.1.4 Vanessa distributed a sheet 'Recruitment and Selection Training Needs Analysis' and asked that the board complete and return.

## **8 Mystery Shopping**

8.1.1 This item was presented by Pete Redman.

8.1.2 Damian Roche has just completed a similar exercise at Kensington & Chelsea TMO.

8.1.3 Pete is proposing that residents be compensated for their time by provision of vouchers (probably M&S) to compensate. This was agreed.

8.1.4 Pete was keen that mystery shopping should not be looking to catch staff out, and not to be used in any disciplinary matters. This was agreed.

8.1.5 When the Test of Opinion was carried out, there was a question asking whether residents wanted to support URH in any way – about a hundred residents said yes. It was agreed that these people should be targeted to be involved in mystery shopping.

Action Point	By whom	When
Obtain copy of Test of Opinion database	Tim Mathias	30 Jan 07

8.1.6 Lia Conceição stated that they did not want to see TMOs informed about when the mystery shopping exercise would start, and did not see why the results could

not be used in any assessment of staff. It was agreed that the results of mystery shopping should be fed back to staff. TMOs will be informed that mystery shopping is an on-going exercise.

- 8.1.7 Agreed that Mystery Shopping is a form of 'Reality Shopping'.
- 8.1.8 Mark Browne and Dan Howcroft confirmed that Customer Care Service Standards are included in the welcome pack for new tenants.

## **9 Progress on Improvement Plan**

- 9.1.1 Tim Mathias presented this topic.
- 9.1.2 Lack of funds from Lambeth has presented significant movement on a number of items. It is hoped that funds will be received by the end of this month.
- 9.1.3 Paul Cooper asked why some items were only marked as Amber – even though their due date had come and gone. Tim Mathias answered that these are a value judgement as to how urgent they were. Agreed to review the target dates.
- 9.1.4 Paul Cooper asked whether the improvement plan could be printed in colour. Agreed to print in colour for next meeting.
- 9.1.5 Pete Redman suggested that this item is moved further up the agenda for future meetings. This was agreed unanimously.
- 9.1.6 Clara Odamo pointed out that the uncertainty surrounding TMO allowances will affect our ability to move on the improvement plan – understandably TMOs will be focused on surviving instead of improving service.

## **10 Any Other Business**

- 10.1.1 Pete Redman. Scott Cunningham has missed a third meeting. Scott has been working at Devon for a few months. It was agreed that Pete Redman will write to Scott to ask him what his plans for the future are.

<b>Action Point</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>When</b>
Write to Scott Cunningham	Pete Redman	31 Jan 07

- 10.1.2 Pete Redman. Jo Robinson has resigned from the board, due to work commitments. Pete is asking the board to accept Ms Robinson's resignation, and to terminate her appointment as URH secretary. This was agreed unanimously.
- 10.1.3 Pete Redman. The board to consider appointed Phil Morris, the interim Finance Manager, to the post of URH secretary. This was agreed unanimously.

<b>Action Point</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>When</b>
Present proposal to recruit new director	Pete Redman	21 Feb 07

- 10.1.4 Vanessa Matthews. Pete's re-negotiated contract of employment needs to be signed off. This will be discussed with Ann Hoad.
- 10.1.5 Jason Wyatt. Jason will be unable to attend meetings on a Wednesday, due to work commitments. Jason is able to attend meetings on Monday or Friday. It was agreed that meetings on Friday night are not well attended. Some of the Board have other commitments on Monday, so at the moment it looks like Wednesday meetings will remain.
- 10.1.6 Pete Redman's contract with URH will finish at the beginning of February 2007, but Pete will attend the next meeting to present a paper.