

**URH Board Minutes
Wednesday 21st February 2007 at 6.30pm
LG04, Lincoln House**

Present:

TMO Members

Blenheim Gardens TMO:	Anton Manickim Selena Allis
Loughborough EMB:	Ann Hoad (Chair)
RouPELL Park RMO:	Mary Simpson Carla Pall
Waltham Estate RMO:	Maya Schram
<u>Council Representatives:</u>	Paul W Cooper Helen Charlesworth-May Cllr Alex McKenna (Part of meeting)

Independents:

Willem Buttinger

URH: Chief Executive

Damian Roche

URH staff:

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

Observers:

(Part)

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

Marvelle Dublin (Waltham TMO)
Penny Klees (Deputy Chair: Loughborough EMB)

Apologies:

Council Representatives:	Cllr Clive Bennett
Independent Representatives:	Scott Cunningham
Independent Representatives:	Edith Yembra
Waltham Estate RMO:	Dilia ('Lia') Conceição
Loughborough EMB:	Jason Wyatt

1 Introductions

- 1.1.1 Penny Klees, the Vice-Chair of Loughborough TMO and Marvelle Dublin, the Estate Manager of Waltham TMO attended as observers.

2 Minutes & Matters Arising from the 10th January 07

2.1.0 Minutes

- 2.1.1 There were no amendments to the Minutes of the Meeting on 10th January 2007. The Minutes were agreed unanimously as a true record.

2.2.0 Matters Arising

- 2.2.1 **Action Point –Write To Cllr John Kazantzis** (Page 4 of the papers)

This letter was sent on 24th January 2007. A copy is displayed on page 21 of the board papers. No response has been received to date.

2.2.2 Action Point – Escalate management fee issue (Page 5 of the papers)

Lambeth have now paid the management fee.

2.2.3 Action Point – Phil to work through queries raised in the Insurance Cover report (Page 6 of the papers)

Phil is currently working through these issues.

2.2.4 Action Point – Board paper on re-charging policy

This is Item 12 on the agenda.

2.2.5 Action Point – Obtain copy of Test of Opinion database (Page 7 of the papers)

PPCR have provided this database.

2.2.6 Action Point – Write to Scott Cunningham (Page 8 of the papers)

This has been done. A response has been received from Scott. To be discussed under Item 3 on the Agenda.

Note: Mary Simpson arrived at this point.

2.2.7 Action Point – Present proposal to recruit new director (Page 8 of the papers)

This is covered under Item 3 on the Agenda.

3 Interim Chief Executives Report

This report was prepared by Clara Odamo, as Damian Roche did not start employment at URH until 19 February 07.

Note: Maya Schram arrived at this point.

3.1.0 Cowley EMB

3.1.1 Cowley EMB have confirmed they do not wish to re-join URH. They will write formally to confirm this.

3.1.2 Paul Cooper asked how could Cowley EMB justify leaving URH, when the Ballot showed overwhelming support on the estate?

3.1.3 Clara Odamo replied that Cowley EMB declined to rejoin URH because they did not reach the 51% response rate that they had set as a minimum. Many members of URH believe that this was an unrealistic figure to aim for, however it was agreed that this was a matter for Cowley EMB.

3.1.4 Paul Cooper asked why are Cowley EMB consulting URH on the TMO Allowances?

3.1.5 Damian Roche stated that since starting work at URH he has reviewed the methodology around this relationship. At the moment Cowley EMB and Holland Rise TMO are the only TMO that have agreed to meet directly with Lambeth Council. Twelve other TMOs have referred Lambeth to their solicitors. It is clear that URH has benefited even more than Cowley EMB from an on-going dialogue over this matter. It would probably be more accurate to state that URH is working with the TMOs as a group in this matter, for the benefit of the URH TMOs. That being said, URH exists to serve its members, who will always take priority.

3.2.0 Staffing & Recruitment Update

3.2.1 Short-listing for the post of Leasehold Officer will take place within the next week.

3.2.2 Only received two applications were received for the post of Finance Manager, one of these applicants was ineligible to apply, so we may have to advertise externally. Clara asked the board if they would agree to retain the services of Mr. Phil Morris until September 2007. Phil Morris is currently working closely with the TMOs during the allowance review. The proposal to retain Phil Morris was endorsed by Willem Buttinger, and seconded by Paul Cooper. The proposal was agreed unanimously. URH will now look to recruit a permanent Finance Manager by September 2007; this will go out to advert in the summer.

3.2.3 The CEO report also contains a proposal to recruit a Performance Officer, whose role would be to assess each of the TMOs, and work with them on drawing up individual TMO Action Plans. The board agreed to the proposal in principal. Damian Roche will review the current structure to determine whether it would benefit URH or not.

3.3.0 Mystery Shopping

3.3.1 Pre-paid envelopes for the Mystery Shopping exercise were received today. This exercise will be carried out by PPCR and will start on 19 March 07. PPCR will soon confirm four training sessions, all to be held in the evening. For further information contact Alexandra Asare on 0207 582 9469 E-Mail: AAsare@urh.org.uk.

3.4.0 Staff Conference

3.4.1 Tim Mathias is arranging a staff conference. Currently looking at dates in late April. Contact Tim Mathias on 0207 572 9481 E-Mail: TMathias@urh.org.uk.

3.5.0 TMO Board Training

3.5.1 Alexandra Asare has been putting together a list of training courses for TMO Board members. The idea behind this strategy is to remind board members what useful training courses are available. Recruitment & Selection will be the first in-house training session, this was the issue seemed top of TMO Board members priorities when enquiries were made during local board meetings held during January 2007. Please note that it was not possible to contact Roupell Park during this exercise, as both of the estate board meetings scheduled had to be cancelled.

3.6.0 Forward Plan

3.6.1 The forward plan on page 11 of the papers was agreed unanimously.

3.7.0 Cheque Signatory

3.7.1 Pete Redman was a cheque signatory. Agreed to remove Pete Redman and replace with Damian Roche.

3.8.0 Vacant Independent Director Post

3.8.1 Damain Roche asked the Board how they want to go about replacing the Independent Director's post vacated by Jo Robinson. Reference should also be made to Scott Cunningham's position as he has been absent from the URH board since November 06 due to work commitments in Devon.

3.8.2 After some discussion it was agreed to advertise for Independent Directors – but not to specify how many positions are vacant. It was also agreed to tap into the recruitment drive currently being undertaken at the Lambeth ALMO. Damian Roche will be meeting Peter Redman next week and will discuss this matter.

3.8.3 Damian Roche provided an update on the current position re: Scott Cunningham. Scott's contract at Devon will finish at the end of March. Scott will be available to attend the meetings of the April and May boards, but will be taking a three month sabbatical starting in June. From September he should be able to attend board meetings regularly.

3.8.4 It was agreed by the board that they would like to retain Scott Cunningham if at all possible. Phil Morris advised that under the terms of the constitution it was not possible to appoint a temporary replacement Director.

3.9.0 Performance Review

3.9.1 Damian Roche has received correspondence from Lambeth setting out their proposals for a Performance Review Methodology. Lambeth's proposals seem reasonable. Damian Roche will be discussing this matter with Earl Neil next week, and will present a full set of proposals to the next board meeting.

Action Point 1	By whom	When
Present proposals on regular performance review	Damian Roche	14 March 07

3.10.0 SX3

3.10.1 Damian Roche has been informed by Pete Redman that Performance Reports will be available by 2nd March 2007. Tim Mathias stated that he thought that this was highly unlikely. Lambeth have promised to produce reports on a number of occasions, none of these deadlines have been met. Damian Roche will bring up this matter when he meets with Mary Lynch next week.

3.10.2 Damian Roche asked Mark Browne whether SX3 is affecting service delivery. Mark Browne replied that staff still do not have confidence in the system; simple tasks such as printing a rent statement are proving labour intensive.

4 Management & Maintenance Allowance

4.1.1 Clara Odamo introduced this item.

4.1.2 At the last board meeting, Ann Hoad & Clara Odamo were asked to write to Cllr John Kazantzis. This letter is on pages 21-22 of the board papers. This correspondence was posted on 24 January. No reply has been received to date.

4.1.3 Damian Roche provided an update on meeting that was held with Cllr John Kazantzis and Cllr Steve Reed, with Mark Browne in attendance, on 19 January 2007. Damian stated that this had seemed to be a positive meeting, both Councillors had agreed that there should be an openness about figures. Damian Roche and Mark Browne had consistently underlined that they believed the Council had not followed the correct legal process. A request was tabled to pay the first quarter's allowances to cover the TMOs until September 2007.

4.1.4 Damian Roche stated that although this meeting was generally positive, no formal confirmation has been received following this meeting.

Action Point 2	By whom	When
Chase up response to Ann Hoad's correspondence	Damian Roche	14 March 2007

4.1.5 Paul Cooper asked whether there was an official record such as Council Minutes that URH can refer to. Phil Morris replied that the main problem lies in the fact that Lambeth do not accept that their financial models are faulty. Furthermore Lambeth believe that they have followed due legal process, a position that the TMO's solicitors are challenging vigorously. Records of meetings called by Lambeth Council reflect this position.

4.1.6 Willem Buttinger asked Phil Morris if they have any idea what the actual state of play is at the present time. Phil Morris stated that the TMO allowances may have to be reduced, but that Lambeth Council is trying to achieve this by inappropriate measures.

Note: Alex McKenna arrived at this point.

- 4.1.7 Clara Odamo confirmed that the group of twelve TMOs, organised by the Thorlands Action Group, are pressing ahead with legal action.

Note: Dan Howcroft arrived at this point.

5 Progress on Improvement Plan

- 5.0.1 Alexandra Asare introduced this item.

- 5.1.0 There are six items with a red status. Three of these have arisen because of the lack of statistics from Lambeth Council.

5.1.1 URH Web-site

- 5.1.2 Alexandra Asare has now received advice from Damian Roche, and can progress this issue. Kevin Creed will maintain the web-site when he starts work.

- 5.1.3 Mark Browne stated that they believed that TMOs would have web-sites following an identical template, which were supposed to interface with each other. Damian Roche undertook to consider this matter.

5.2.0 Mystery Shopping

- 5.2.1 Freepost envelopes were delivered today. This will now proceed. All tenants who expressed an interest should receive an invitation to attend a workshop.

- 5.2.2 There are four items with an amber status.

5.3.0 Leaflets

- 5.3.1 A database of leaflets is being set-up.

- 5.4.0 There are two items with a green status.

5.4.1 Aids & Adaptations

- 5.4.1 RMOs hold information on Aids & Adaptations but this is not recorded on SX3.

- 5.4.2 Paul Cooper informed the meeting that Dazzle, a disability advice service database is in the process of being set-up. Paul is unaware of any housing office that keeps records of adaptations to properties.

- 5.5.0 Willem Buttinger asked how serious the situation was at the moment. Alexandra Asare replied that as regards the lack of statistics, the situation is very serious.

- 5.6.0 Damian Roche stated that there were two main issues that are impacting upon URH's ability to prepare for the inspection:-

- Agreement around TMO allowances
- Operation of SX3

- 5.6.1 These issues will be taking up a significant amount of operational time at TMOs. If this is not resolved in short term, then services could begin to be seriously affected.

Note: Carla Pall left the meeting at this point.

- 5.7.0 Ann Hoad attended a meeting, convened by Defend Council Housing at the Town Hall recently. Ann Hoad believes that a lot of mis-information about URH's intentions was aired during discussions. In order to help dispel this Ann requested that a regular briefing note be circulated to keep Lambeth residents aware of our activities.

Action Point 3	By whom	When
Prepare regular briefing note – update on activities	Damian Roche	14 March 2007

- 5.7.1 Damian Roche emphasised that URH board meetings are public meetings – anyone can attend. URH should look to advertise their board meetings. Most issues discussed are not confidential, but there will be some business papers that will be confidential e.g. business tenders. Damian Roche will prepare a suggested approach by the next meeting.

Action Point 4	By whom	When
Prepare confidentiality strategy	Damian Roche	14 March 2007

6 Performance Indicators

- 6.1.0 This issue was discussed in full earlier in the meeting.

7 URH Terms & Conditions

- 7.1.1 Vanessa Matthews introduced this subject.
- 7.1.2 Vanessa is recommending that the board adopts the Green Book's set of terms and conditions or current Lambeth local arrangements (where better than the Green Book) and that contracts are amended and issued accordingly.
- 7.1.3 Willem Buttinger stated he was happy with the principles behind the original paper, but would need time to consider the details in the paper tabled at the meeting.
- 7.1.4 This paper was agreed.
- 7.1.5 Helen Charlesworth-May advised that Adoption should be changed to residency leave, following a recent legislative change.

8 Human Resources Panel

- 8.0.0 Vanessa Matthews introduced this subject.
- 8.0.1 This report is informed by two main issues.
- 8.0.2 Appropriateness including confidential issues such as pay etc.
- 8.0.3 Timing – the panel can be called together to discuss any urgent or pressing issues.
- 8.0.4 Damian Roche stated that he fully supported the recommendations made in the report. It is good practice to have a 'Staffing & Recruitment Committee' or some such body with a similar remit.
- 8.0.5 Damian will draw up terms of reference for the panel.
- 8.0.6 This proposal was agreed.

Action Point 5	By whom	When
Draw up Terms of Reference for Human Resources Panel	Damian Roche	14 March 2007

9 URH Expenses Policy

- 9.1.0 Clara Odamo introduced this topic.
- 9.1.1 This issue arose after a board member asked if they could make a claim for child care costs. Clara has researched the topic of payment for board members (as opposed to the payment of expenses) and recommends that this issue be explored in some depth at a later date.
- 9.1.2 For now Clara is asking that the Board accept the recommendations for basic expenses that can be claimed, and endorse the claim form included on page 36 of the board papers.
- 9.1.3 These recommendations were accepted unanimously.

10 Service to TMOs

- 10.1.1 Phil Morris presented this item.
- 10.1.2 This report sets out some general principles regarding services that URH can provide to TMOs, and what items will be subject to a re-charge. Decisions will need to be taken as to what services TMOs require e.g. Human Resources, and what priority the TMOs put on them.
- 10.1.3 It was agreed that Mark Browne will discuss this paper with all the Estate Managers; and feed-back to the board.
- 10.1.4 Damian Roche stated that he supported the setting up of Service Level Agreements between the TMOs and URH. This was agreed unanimously.
- 10.1.5 At present there is no formal agreement between TMOs and URH, they both work as agents of Lambeth Council.
- 10.1.6 Agreed that re-charging will be the subject of continued negotiation between each TMO and URH. TMOs must be clear about what they can expect from URH as part of URH's management agreement and what might be chargeable as extra.
- 10.1.7 Specifically around Human Resource issues, TMOs will be asked whether they want this service and how they wish to be re-charged, before the URH board meets in March 07.

Action Point 6	By whom	When
Meet with TMOs to discuss principles around re-charging	Damian Roche & Phil Morris	14 March

- 10.1.8 Ann Hoad stated that Loughborough has a clear need for HR support.

11 Any Other Business

- 11.1.1 Paul Cooper attended a seminar run by the Federation of ALMOs on 18 January 07. It was clear to him that there are a number of significant developments underway in this field. Could officers look into ways of feeding back national developments to board members?

Action Point 7	By whom	When
Monthly board Member briefing on matters of interest	Damian Roche	14 March 07

- 11.1.2 Recent developments that could be included include the CAVE review on regulation and the Hills report.
- 11.1.3 Items could either be included within board papers or separate pack (not for discussion).
- 13.2.1 Mark Browne stated that he wanted to see some investment on the ground as soon as possible. This would have the effect of increasing resident support for URH.
- 13.3.1 Loughborough board are considering setting up a sub-committee to discuss URH related activities. Damian Roche stated that he would be happy to see this happen – needs clear Terms of Reference.
- 13.4.1 Phil Morris asked whether the board would support the appointment of Selena Ellis as Director, as soon Paul Southwell tenders his resignation. This was agreed unanimously.