

URH Board Minutes
Wednesday 20th June 2007 at 6.30pm
LG04, Lincoln House

Present:

Selena Ellis; Anton Manickam; Ann Hoad (Chair); Mary Simpson (part of meeting); Maya Schram; Cllr Clive Bennett; Edith Yembra; Dilia ('Lia') Conceição; Cllr Alex McKenna

URH Staff:

Damian Roche (CEO); Tim Mathias (Minutes); Clara Odamo; Phil Morris; Kevin Creed; Cathy Kempadoo; Phillip Mahon; Alexandra Asare

Observers:

Dan Howcroft; Marvelle Dublin; Lloyd Lewis

Apologies:

Jason Wyatt; Carla Pall; Helen Charlesworth-May; Paul W Cooper; Willem Buttinger

1 Introductions

1.1.0 Phil Mahon recently joined URH as a Leasehold Services Officer.

2 Declarations of Interest

2.1.0 There were no declarations of interest recorded. Edith Yembra asked whether it would be possible for members to sign a declaration of interest form before each meeting? Damian Roche replied that a procedure to register Declarations of Interest is in development.

3 Minutes & matters arising from the meeting held on 17 May 07

3.1.0 Minutes

3.1.1 Two amendments to the published Minutes were recorded.

3.1.2 Paragraph 5.4.0 should read June 2008.

3.1.3 Paragraph 7.5.0 should read Helen Charlesworth-May and Paul Cooper were all volunteered. Noted that neither Edith Yembra nor Maya Schram volunteered to serve on this committee. Apologies to Edith and Maya for any confusion caused.

3.1.4 With these two amendments the minutes were unanimously agreed as a true record.

3.2.0 Matters Arising

3.3.0 Sutton ALMO

3.3.1 Sutton ALMO have been contacted. A visit to Sutton ALMO has been arranged.

3.4.0 Capital programme report

3.4.1 Peter Redman contacted Clara Odamo today, and undertook to forward a full response.

3.5.0 Independent Board Members

3.5.1 Two interviews will be held on 18th July. A third interview has yet to be arranged.

3.5.2 DR will then be considering nominations for Willem Buttinger's position, who is leaving URH in August 2007. Lia Conceição will send a further nomination to Damian Roche for consideration.

Lloyd Lewis arrived at this point.

4 Service Improvement Plan

4.1.0 Damian Roche introduced this item. The two previous plans have been combined, as requested at the last meeting.

- 4.1.2 The URH team have met with TMO Managers, who are each developing their own action plans based on this template.
- 4.1.3 Damian Roche is asking the board to endorse the Service Improvement Plan. This will then be monitored by the Performance Committee that will meet regularly. The Performance Committee will submit progress reports to the board.
- 4.1.4 It was agreed to endorse the Service Improvement Plan.

5 Code of Conduct

- 5.1.0 Damian Roche introduced this item. This Code of Conduct will cover everybody (both staff and board members) involved in running URH. This is still subject to consultation, the amended document will be presented to the next board meeting. After this document has been agreed URH will be looking to review TMO Codes of Conduct to check that they are consistent with current practice.
- 5.1.1 Anton Manickam asked why are staff and board members subject to the same code? Damian Roche stated that he took the view that every item included is relevant to both parties. Edith Yembra argued that these should be separate documents, and that the staff Code of Conduct should be included as part of the Staff Handbook. Edith Yembra also emphasised that 'conflict of interest' principally affects senior staff and board members i.e. those who have a hand in deciding to award contracts. Damian Roche undertook to cover all staff grades in the Staff Handbook.
- 5.1.2 Cllr Alex McKenna was keen to see links with constituent organisations emphasised. Cllr McKenna was also keen to see the reputation of the board protected by for instance, emphasising conduct issues during board training sessions. The issue of 'collective responsibility' must be understood.
- 5.1.3 As regards gifts Anton Manickam was keen to have a value assigned to the term 'monetary value'. It was agreed to set an upper limit of £25-00, to be reviewed annually.
- 5.1.4 A deadline of 3rd July was set for board members to get back to Damian Roche with any recommendations.

Action Point 1	By whom	When
Forward any suggested amendments to the Code of Conduct to Damian Roche	Board members	3 July 07

- 5.1.5 Ann Hoad asked for guidance to be published on how many observers are allowed to attend URH board meetings. Damian Roche will consider and present at a future meeting.

Action Point 2	By whom	When
Draft guidance 'observers at Board meetings'	Damian Roche	Sept 07

- 5.1.6 Lia Conceição asked how many board meetings could a member miss in one year. Damian Roche replied that the current guidance states that after missing four consecutive meetings a member could be asked to resign their seat on the board. DR agreed to report back to the Board on the terms set down in the Articles of Association. It was agreed that Tim Mathias will do a count of how many meetings each member has attended - a report will be presented to the board on an annual basis, the first to accompany the annual report in December 2007.
- 5.1.7 It was also agreed to write to any board member who misses two meetings, inviting them to discuss this issue.

6 Performance Indicators

- 6.1.1 Selena Ellis was keen to emphasise the importance of meeting targets within the improvement plan. Damian Roche suggested that although hitting targets was important, the direction of travel of performance statistics was also important. For

example, Loughborough are having problems hitting BV212 'Average time for routine re-lets', however there have been continuing problems renting out properties on the estate. How you tackle that problem is important.

- 6.1.2 Cllr Clive Bennett stated that the performance of Blenheim Gardens and Roupell Park on voids gives an example of how good practice can combat challenging indicators such as BV212, which is proving to be a problem throughout Lambeth Council at the moment.
- 6.1.3 Mary Simpson & Maya Schram queried '% urgent repairs completed on time' – surely the results for Roupell Park (April 2007) were a mistake? Tim Mathias replied that this was not a mistake, although Roupell Park has queried these results, Lambeth have been asked to look at these again.
- 6.1.4 Ann Hoad confirmed that the void standard at Loughborough estate has been increased, all voids are now an excellent standard. Damian Roche posted the theory that some sort of mini Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme could help Loughborough. Damian Roche will explore the option (a Lambeth wide CBL scheme is supposed to come into operation by the end of the year, but could be delayed).
- 6.1.5 With regard to the desirability of Loughborough estate Maya Schram asked Ann Hoad whether the EMB receives any support from the local police force. Ann Hoad confirmed that regular meetings were held with the Constabulary, but the police were still unwilling to mount regular patrols on the estate.
- 6.1.6 Tim Mathias asked whether any members of the board had any amendments to any other recommendations within the report. All the recommendations were agreed unanimously.

7 URH & TMO Complaints Policy

- 7.1.0 Clara Odamo presented this item. There are two parts to this report. Firstly, a URH complaints policy. Clara Odamo is asking the board to adopt this policy. Secondly, there is Proposal for a new TMO Complaints policy. This is a first draft that will be subject to consultation.
- 7.2.0 **URH Complaints Policy**
- 7.2.1 If this policy is approved it will be advertised via Newsletters and the URH web-site. This policy is fairly similar to the Complaints policy that Lambeth currently operates.
- 7.2.2 A number of members of the board thought that the response times for Stage 2 and 3 complaints were too long. Anton Manikim asked surely the most investigation would be done at Stage 1? Clara Odamo stated that they would prefer to keep their response times as stated. Damian Roche agreed that response times will be reviewed after a history of complaints has been established.
- 7.2.3 Cllr's Alex McKenna and Clive Bennett stated that they wanted a separate procedure established to look into any members' enquiries to ensure that they were resolved quickly and efficiently. It was agreed to establish a 'Member's Involvement Query' strategy. It was argued that this approach could also assist in the resolution of complaints.

Action Point 3	By whom	When
Draft 'Member's Involvement Query' strategy	Clara Odamo	11 July 07

- 7.2.4 The URH complaints policy was agreed.
- 7.3.0 **TMO Complaint Procedure – Proposal**
- 7.3.1 Please note that this procedure is still subject to consultation with both Lambeth Council and the four TMOs.
- 7.3.2 This stands separate from the URH Complaints Policy.
- 7.3.3 Cllr Alex McKenna stated that he was hesitant to endorse the policy as it stood as this seems to make the TMO 'judge and jury' over both stage 1 and 2 complaints. This could increase member enquiries.

- 7.3.4 Maya Schram believed that there was a serious issue of confidentiality at stake. Clara Odamo replied that investigation into a complaint would only involve a few members of the TMO board.
- 7.3.5 Cllr Alex McKenna was keen that the procedure does not become self-fulfilling and actually create more work – conflict resolution should be emphasised.
- 7.3.6 After extensive discussion it was agreed to keep the Stage 2 process as it is, but look to further work on Stage 3 complaints, look at further work involving conflict resolution – including site visits.

8 Capital Programme

- 8.1 Please note that this report was tabled at the meeting.
 - 8.1.1 Following the budget discussions with Lambeth, Phil Morris has produced this draft report. Each of the TMO boards needs to meet to discuss this.
 - 8.1.2 Lambeth has quoted a figure of £1.641 million Major Repairs Allowance, less any funds already committed at any of the TMOs (these figures have yet to be provided). These monies should be spent in this financial year.
 - 8.1.3 Nothing regarding cyclical maintenance has been received as yet. Phil Morris is attempting to arrange a meeting with Lambeth staff as a matter of urgency.
 - 8.1.4 Edith Yembra asked if monies can be set aside on contracts signed at the end of the year. Phil Morris replied that this depends on Lambeth, however normal policy is only to account for work actually done.

9 Any Other Business

9.1 Selena Ellis

- 9.1.1 Selena Ellis asked whether the role each board member could be included on the agenda. Ann Hoad replied that the decision had been made to drop this, in order to make the board more inclusive.

9.2 Ann Hoad

- 9.2.1 Ann Hoad asked if a new contact list could be sent round. Tim Mathias asked if there was any member of the board who wanted their details withheld. Each member of the board confirmed they are happy to have their details circulated. Tim Mathias will circulate a list.

Action Point 4	By whom	When
Circulate contact list for all board members	Tim Mathias	6 July 07

- 9.2.2 Ann Hoad informed the meeting that there are rumours on Loughborough estate that Defend Council Housing intend to attend the General Meeting scheduled for 2 July, and demand that all residents on Loughborough estate are balloted on their continuing membership of URH. Damian Roche informed Ann Hoad that there was no precedent for such a move.
- 9.2.3 Ann Hoad was keen to encourage English language workshops among the TMOs, following Ruth Kelly's recent announcement. Damian Roche will investigate.

Date of next meeting: 11 July 07 at 6.30pm
Unit 4, Lincoln House
1-3 Brixton Road SW9