

URH Board Minutes
12 September 2007 at 6.30pm
LG04, Lincoln House

Present:

Helen Charlesworth-May; Anton Manickim; Mary Simpson; Maya Schram; Cllr Clive Bennett; Edith Yembra; Dilia ('Lia') Conceição; Willem Buttinger; Paul W Cooper; Cllr Alex McKenna;

URH Staff:

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

Observers:

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

Apologies:

Jason Wyatt; Carla Pall; Selena Ellis, Ann Hoad; David Schwarz; Willem Buttinger

1 Introductions

- 1.1.1 Each member of the Board introduced themselves.
- 1.1.2 Neither Ann Hoad (Chair) or Willem Buttinger (Vice-Chair) was able to attend tonight. Willem Buttinger (Vice-Chair) is due to retire from the board as soon as replacement independent members are found, he cannot guarantee attendance at every meeting.
- 1.1.3 Damian Roche confirmed that a further round of interviews for Independents was held just this evening. Subject to the board ratifying appointments, each of these places can now be filled. Elections for Vice-Chair will be held at a future meeting.
- 1.1.4 In the absence of both the Chair and the Vice-Chair Edith Yembra agreed to Chair this meeting.

2 Declarations of Interest

- 2.1.1 There were no declarations of interest

3 Minutes & Matters arising from Meetings held on 20th June & 2nd Aug 07.

Minutes & Matters Arising - 20th June 2007

Please note that paragraph numbers refer to the original Minutes.

- 2.1.0 **Amendment:** Edith Yembra favoured an annual return instead of a declaration each month.

Action: Tim Mathias stated a further two members were needed on the URH Performance Sub-Group. It would be preferable to have more resident representatives. Tim Mathias will send an E-Mail to all board members.

- 5.1.4 **Action:** Damian Roche stated that no amendments were received. The Code of Conduct has now been formally adopted.

- 5.1.5 **Action:** Damian Roche has researched this topic. He is not aware of any official guidance on the attendance of observers at board meetings. He does not believe that it is likely to be a significant issue.

- 7.2.3 **Action:** Clara Odamo has adopted the strategy as agreed at the 20 June meeting. Cllr's Clive Bennett and Alex McKenna stated that still wanted further involvement in the complaints procedure, the aim being to resolve complaints at an earlier stage. It was agreed to review the complaints procedure at the next board meeting.

- 10.2.1 **Action:** Tim Mathias circulated a board member contact list some months ago. It was agreed to circulate a new list in a few weeks, as soon as the appointment of new independent board members was confirmed.

Minutes & Matters Arising - 2nd August 07

Please note that this was an emergency meeting called to discuss Management Fee proposed by Lambeth Housing. The Minutes were agreed with no amendments.

Damian Roche stated that he had, as agreed, written to Lambeth Housing, stating that no further reductions will be considered. A reply has been received thanking us.

Edith Yembra asked Damian Roche whether we are able to live within the agreed budget. Damian Roche confirmed this was possible.

4 Programme of Service Reviews

- 4.1.1 Damian Roche presented this item. This has been drafted in consultation with the TMO managers.
- 4.1.2 A full programme of Service Reviews needs to be undertaken for the reasons outlined in paragraph 1.1. Damian Roche will present a list of prioritised items at the next board meeting. Two issues have been identified as the first two service reviews:-
- (i) Voids & Re-lets &
 - (ii) Income Collection
- This is because these are such important parts of any Housing Management service and clear performance issues have been identified.
- 4.1.3 Damian Roche requested the board's view as to any priorities and any suggestions for further items.
- 4.1.4 Cllr Clive Bennett asked whether a sufficient training budget had been set aside. Damian Roche replied that two members of staff had already attended a Prince2 course. The rest of this project has resource implications, but no demands on the training budget.
- 4.1.5 Maya Schram asked why Responsive Repairs had been treated as an issue separate to estate services? Damian Roche replied that responsive repairs covers such an extensive area - being resource intensive and of particular importance to tenants, the decision had been taken to consider as a separate issue. When conducting the service reviews lines will occasionally be blurred and overlap.
- 4.16 Cllr Clive Bennett welcomed the plans for staff conference. Damian Roche stated that board members are welcome to attend particular slots. Ann Hoad will be in attendance. Alistair MacIntosh (HQN) will also give a speech.
- 4.1.7 Damian Roche reminded the meeting that URH newsletters are sent to every resident on a quarterly basis. A residents conference is planned in the spring, in the run up to the Audit Commission inspection. Board members will be sent a copy of every URH newsletter in future.

Action Point 1	By whom	When
Send copy of URH newsletter to each Board member	Damian Roche	30 Sept 07

Cllr Alex McKenna left the meeting at this point.

5 Void Property and Re-let Process Review

- 5.1.1 Damian Roche introduced this item. As previously mentioned, two areas have been prioritised for a service review. The Voids process is the first.

- 5.1.2 The Project Brief essentially outlines the Business Case for the programme, highlights what is considered Best Practice, leading onto significant details regarding finance, tenant satisfaction etc.
- 5.1.3 Section 3.2 of the Project Brief defines the scope of the Project.
- 5.1.4 Section 4 outlines a timetable – all tasks must be time bound.
- 5.1.5 Section 6 the make-up of a Project Board. Damian Roche is keen to draw representatives from across the process, and across the RMOs. A resident representative will also be required.
- 5.1.6 Damian Roche is asking the board to comment on the brief, and approve with any amendments.
- 5.1.7 Paul Cooper stated that he would like to see work to effectively identify properties adapted for the disabled. Helen Charlesworth-May reminded the meeting that Lambeth Social Services has a significant number of people in residential care who could be housed if suitable accommodation became available.
- 5.1.8 Tim Mathias stated that there is a recognised procedure to follow when an adapted property is identified. Paul Cooper stated that this was not applied uniformly. It was agreed that this would be embedded in the review.
- 5.1.9 Damian Roche is aiming to produce an outline timetable and convene the first meeting of the project board next week.

6 Draft Mystery Shopping Exercise Report

6.1.0 Introduction

- 6.1.1 Clara Odamo introduced this item. The URH sanctioned a Mystery Shopping exercise in February 2007. Following this URH wrote to every tenant. There was a slight delay as the original training package had to be re-tendered, training sessions took place during June 07. The Mystery Shopping exercise took place between 18 June and 20 July 07. The majority of residents who took part were from a Black African or Black Caribbean background. A number of means of communication were used in the exercise – letters, E-Mail, telephone and office visits.
- 6.1.2 The overall feedback was positive, with some concerns about Loughborough EMB.
- 6.1.3 A template for further action is on page 63 of the board papers. A ‘✖’ indicates an area which the TMO has to look at again. A ‘O’ indicates everything was found to be in order. Clara Odamo and Alexandra Asare will continue to work with the Estate Managers. The results of this exercise will be published formally. The board agreed to send every participant be sent a copy of the report.
- 6.1.4 Clara Odamo asked for comments from the board.

6.2.0 Comments

- 6.2.1 Cllr Clive Bennett congratulated Ms Odamo and Ms Asare on the report. Cllr Bennett noted that according to the report none of the TMO staff wore name badges. Clara Odamo stated this was a snapshot at one point in time. TMO staff have name badges, plans to produce URH badges have suffered setbacks as the original supplier did not think the order big enough, this is being pursued with an alternative supplier.
- 6.3.1 Paul Cooper stated he would have liked further analysis around why shoppers were satisfied or dissatisfied (it is recognised that this could be subjective).
- 6.3.2 Paul Cooper would also like a summary of progress since the report was compiled e.g. it has been reported that disabled bell at one TMO office was fixed an hour after being reported, but this is not stated here.

- 6.3.3 Paul Cooper pointed out that some of the items covered in the report could be covered by staff on site visits – URH staff could conduct site visits to check office specifications themselves.
- 6.4.1 Helen Charlesworth-May stated that this report served as a good base-line to start with and asked when will this be repeated?
- 6.5.1 Damian Roche proposed carrying out on a quarterly basis. Clara Odamo stated that they did not want to over-use mystery shoppers, who are providing their services for free. Some discussion was held as to when to report up-dates and when to carry out another full exercise. Finally, agreed to present updates quarterly, frequency of actual Mystery Shopping exercises to be determined.
- 6.5.2 Finally, officers' names will be removed from page 33 of the papers.

7 URH Performance Indicators

- 7.1.0 Tim Mathias introduced this item.
 - 7.1.1 The good news is that Lambeth Council are beginning to produce a more regular stream of performance information. Repairs data still needs to be sorted out, this is being worked on. The bad news is that the results give cause for concern.
- 7.2.0 There are three proposals on the table:-
 - 7.2.1 Seek to reassure TMO managers that the figures are accurate. Lambeth Housing have stated that they can 'open up the books' to show how these figures are calculated.
 - 7.2.2 Increase presence at each of the TMOs. To start with a monthly meeting at each of the TMOs to go through income collection and void figures.
 - 7.2.3 Encourage good practice across the TMOs.
 - 7.2.4 These proposals were agreed unanimously.
- 7.3.0 **Good Performance**
 - 7.3.1 Paul Cooper stated that they wanted more to be done to recognise good TMO performance such as award for outstanding performance three months running. This will be considered.
 - 7.3.2 Damian Roche reminded the meeting that URH had already contributed a significant body of work improving TMO performance.
 - 7.3.3 Mark Browne asked that future reports could highlight pressures that the TMOs are working under. For instance, the delays in court hearings.

8 Capital Programme

- 8.1.1 Phil Morris introduced this item.
- 8.1.2 22 submissions have been made to Lambeth Council, with the support of the TMOs.
- 8.1.3 Phil Morris is trying to arrange a meeting with Lambeth Housing to discuss these.
- 8.1.4 Priority schemes include roof replacement at Blenheim Gardens (houses) and window replacement at Loughborough.

9 Appointment of Auditors

- 9.1.1 Phil Morris has assessed five applications. Following feedback from firms that have tendered, it has been decided not to appoint separate internal auditors.
- 9.1.2 Two tenders have been deemed suitable for appointment.
- 9.1.3 The Board has to make the decision either to appoint a panel to assess the tender or delegate the decision making power to Phil Morris.

- 9.1.4 Damian Roche stated that he had read both tenders, and had no concerns about either of them.
- 9.1.5 Paul Cooper stated he was happy to delegate this decision to The Chair based upon a recommendation from Phil Morris and Damian Roche.
- 9.1.6 It was agreed to delegate this decision to The Chair.
- 9.1.7 Following a suggestion from Edith Yembra, Phil Morris will arrange a presentation to the board by the successful auditor.

Action Point 3	By whom	When
Audit presentation to the board	Phil Morris	10 Oct 07

10 Any Other Business

10.1.1 Damian Roche

10.1.2 Contingency plans need to be drawn up now that legal action regarding TMO allowances looks more likely.

10.2 Paul Cooper

10.2.1 Please can an update regarding negotiations on the TMO Management agreements be provided to the next meeting?

10.2.2 Phil Morris replied that this has been temporarily superseded by the TMO allowance dispute. Lambeth are relying on the provisions of the current management agreements, and the 1994 Guidance from DCLG, in the negotiations of the TMO allowances. New agreements would introduce the 2005 Guidance instead. Damian Roche will take up this matter with Mary Lynch, and provide a statement on the current position to the next board meeting.

Action Point 4	By whom	When
Report on status of Modular Management Agreements	Damian Roche	10 Oct 07

10.2.3 Paul Cooper requested that an update on the Delivery/Service Plan. This was agreed.

Action Point 5	By whom	When
Update Service Plan	Damian Roche	14 Nov 07