

**URH Board Minutes
10 October 2007 at 6.30pm
LG04, Lincoln House**

Present:

Ann Hoad; Selena Ellis; Helen Charlesworth-May; Mary Simpson; Maya Schram; Cllr Clive Bennett; Edith Yembra; David Schwarz;

URH Staff:

Damian Roche (CEO); Tim Mathias (Minutes); Phil Morris; Philip Mahon; Clara Odamo; Patsy Douglas

Observers:

Dan Howcroft (Manager – Blenheim Gardens); Mark Browne (Manager – Roupell Park); Marvella Dublin (Manager – Waltham); Jean Slater (Board Member – Loughborough)

Apologies:

Jason Wyatt; Carla Pall; Dilia ('Lia') Conceição; Cllr Alex McKenna; Paul W Cooper; Anton Manickim; John Pepin; George Pashley

1 Introductions

1.1.0 This was the first attended by David Schwarz, a new independent board member and Patsy Douglas, who has recently been appointed as a Human Resources Advisor for URH.

2 Declarations of Interest

2.1.0 There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes & matters arising from the meeting held on 12 Sept 07

3.1.0 There were no amendments to the recorded Minutes.

3.2.0 Matters arising:-

3.3.0 Action Point 1 - 12 Sept 07

3.3.1 A copy of the latest URH newsletter was included with the board papers.

3.4.0 Action Point 2 – 12 Sept 07

3.4.1 Phil Morris has written to Lambeth Council regarding TUPE implications at Loughborough EMB. This was followed by an exchange of E-Mails. It would seem that the Loughborough Management Agreement states that Loughborough staff are Lambeth employees. Richard Hornby, Director of Finance, has agreed that a consultation process has to be set in motion. Mary Lynch has taken possession of this issue and has referred this back to Lambeth Human Resources for advice.

3.4.2 It was agreed that Damian Roche and Ann Hoad will draft a letter to Lambeth Council, highlighting their concerns regarding delays in progress.

Action Point 1	By whom	When
Draft letter re: Lambeth employees at Loughborough	Ann Hoad/ Damian Roche	12 Nov 07

3.4.3 Two officers pointed that when the former manager was removed from post at Loughborough, he was assimilated into a post at Lambeth Council. This could set a precedent.

3.4.4 It was agreed to wait until Lambeth respond, to avoid receiving conflicting legal advice.

3.5.0 Action Point 3 – 12 Sept 07

3.5.1 Appointment of auditors is covered under the main agenda.

3.6.0 Action Point 4 – 12 Sept 07

3.6.1 Damian Roche stated that the issue of TMO Management Agreements has not been progressed. Lambeth Council and the TMOs are engaged in legal action, this issue will not be resolved until the TMO allowance dispute has been settled.

3.7.0 Action Point 5 – 12 Sept 07

3.7.1 The updated Service Plan is due to be presented at the next board meeting.

4 Chief Executive's Report

4.1.0 Damian Roche presented this report.

4.2.0 TMO Allowances Dispute

4.2.1 The main part of the allowance dispute is covered later on the agenda, however Damian Roche has had to write to Lambeth to seek clarification regarding one issue. Within the Tribal report on TMO allowances, there is statement that seems to suggest that URH will be part funded by the TMOs. URH are still waiting for an official response, but it is understood that this was a misunderstanding by the consultant who worked on the Council model on which Tribal were reporting.

4.3.0 Staff Conference

4.3.1 Clara Odamo is preparing a feedback report.

4.3.2 The event received very positive feedback.

4.4.0 Meeting Dates

4.4.1 Please note list of meetings for the next few months included in the report.

4.5.0 Performance Group

4.5.1 The first meeting of performance group had to be postponed. A different approach has been adopted, URH staff will be going out to assist TMO managers with their Service Improvement plans.

4.5.2 Agreed to review progress in three weeks.

4.6.0 Lettings First Proposal

4.6.1 This is not covered under the board report, but requires an urgent decision.

4.6.2 Lambeth have asked URH to provide a service for their Lettings First unit. Lettings First are part Lambeth's Temporary Accommodation section, they run a number of schemes to prevent homelessness. Amongst these is a scheme to provide a deposit to private landlords when tenants who are unable to raise funds themselves. This can be an effective measure within Lambeth's 'preventing homelessness' strategy. The problem that Lambeth are experiencing is that their finance department can take six weeks to issue a cheque to landlords. Lambeth are asking URH to issue cheques on the Council's behalf. This would be purely an administrative arrangement; URH would be refunded for every cheque issued, plus an administrative fee. A fund would be set up, so that URH does not have to call on its own resources.

4.6.3 In order to make this scheme work in practice, a number of changes to current procedures would be necessary. The number of cheque signatories would have to be increased, it is proposed Clara Odamo is added as a signatory. It would also be helpful to lower the issue requirements to one signatory for cheques under £2,000.

4.6.4 In response to a question posed by Edith Yembra, Phil Morris confirmed that a Memorandum of Understanding will be drawn up. The administration charge would

amount to £20 for the first cheques raised on any particular day, £10 for any additional cheques in the same day. Lambeth would also have to pay for delivery.

- 4.6.5 In response to a question from Mary Simpson, Phil Morris stated that the income generated from this scheme would arguably be tax free, but this would have to be confirmed by auditors. It is anticipated that about ten cheques per week would be issued. Contract periods have not been discussed, suggest one year's trial.
- 4.6.6 Selina Ellis asked how this could square with URH's mission statement. Damian Roche replied that this could be seen to assist Lambeth with their aims and objectives.
- 4.6.7 The average deposit cheque would be £1,500.00. Helen Charlesworth-May stated that although they knew that it would facilitate the issue of cheques, they could still not consider raising the signatory requirement to anything less than two signatories for any amounts over £1,000.
- 4.6.8 Eventually, it was agreed unanimously to pilot the scheme under the following conditions:-
 - i. Clara Odamo to be added as a signatory
 - ii. One signature required for all cheques up to £1,000, thereafter two signatures.

4.6.9 Damian Roche will make a report on progress to the URH board after the agreement had been in operation for three months.

4.7.0 Lambeth Living

- 4.7.1 It is understood that Lambeth Housing will delegate the legal dispute with TMOs re: allowances to Lambeth Living (the new ALMO). It has been stated that the URH will be expected to mirror the arrangements between Lambeth Living and Lambeth Housing, the argument being that they are both ALMOs, and should carry out the same range of functions.
- 4.7.2 This would require amendment to the Management Agreement and would require the agreement of the TMOs.
- 4.7.3 This could bring URH into conflict with the TMOs, as they would be responsible for TMO allowance negotiations, and would be expected to carry out the instructions of Lambeth Housing.
- 4.7.4 After significant discussion it was suggested that URH should not consider any changes to the current positions until the TMO allowance dispute had been finalised. This was agreed unanimously.
- 4.7.5 Damian Roche will seek advice from Trowers & Hamlin if and when a proposal is received.

5 URH Performance Indicators

- 5.1.0 Tim Mathias ran through the report as written.
- 5.1.1 There are three main areas of concern:-
 - i. Rent Collection at Loughborough & Roupell Park.
 - ii. Void turnaround time at Loughborough.
 - iii. Telephone Response rates at Loughborough, Roupell Park & Waltham.
- 5.1.2 Repairs statistics are not available, but should be available next month.
- 5.1.3 Damian Roche stated that he still has concerns about the lack of repair statistics, which could have a significant effect on the inspection results. Damian asked for the boards support in order to write to Lambeth Housing highlighting this issue. This was agreed.

Action Point 2	By whom	When
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Write to Lambeth Council re: lack of repair statistics	Damian Roche	31 Oct 07
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- 5.1.4 Damian Roche assured the board that significant efforts were being made to reduce the void rate at Loughborough. One miscoded long term void has been removed from the statistics. This should produce a significant improvement in the void rates – although they will still be significantly above target. Work will continue to reduce void rates. A Voids & Re-let review is underway, a report will go to the TMOs & URH board shortly.
- 5.1.5 Damian Roche agreed that telephone response rates continue to be a concern. The TMO managers have to explore this.
- 5.1.6 Helen Charlesworth-May was pleased to see some improvement, but noted that the planned Performance Sub-Group had to be cancelled. It is very important that both Performance Indicators and Key Lines of Enquiry are evaluated constantly. The board needs to drill down into the detail around these issues as a matter of urgency.
- 5.1.7 Tim Mathias will send an E-Mail asking for another volunteer for the Performance Sub-Group. Cllr Clive Bennett agreed to sit on the panel should no volunteers be forthcoming, but asked the Board to note that he still has the full range of Councillors duties to undertake.

Action Point 3	By whom	When
E-mail details re: Performance Sub-group	Tim Mathias	31 Oct 07

6 Appointment of Auditors

- 6.1.1 Phil Morris passed around a briefing note.
- 6.1.2 Phil Morris & Damian Roche are recommending the appointment of Mazars for the external audit.
- 6.1.3 The internal audit will become far more important when the Capital Programme starts. It is proposed to ask Mazar's advice on what parts of the internal audit need to be undertaken at the present time.
- 6.1.4 Phil Morris confirmed that the appointment of Finance Manager to work with Loughborough, Roupell Park and Waltham is progressing (Blenheim Gardens are staying with their present arrangements at this time). This will reduce significantly reduce audit costs at Roupell Park, and should produce some savings at Loughborough and Waltham.
- 6.1.5 After some discussion it was unanimously agreed to approve the appointment of Mazars along the lines of Phil Morris's proposal. Mazars will present accounts at the next board meeting.
- 6.1.6 Damian Roche stated that the Annual General Meeting should be called before the next Board meeting.

7 Any Other Business

- 7.1.1 Damian Roche will E-Mail out details of the training session scheduled for 24th October.

Action Point 5	By whom	When
Confirm details of 24 th Oct training	Damian Roche	20 th Oct 07