

## **URH Board Minutes**

### **16 July 2008 at 6.30pm**

### **Loughborough Community Centre**

#### **Present:-**

##### URH Board

Cllr Clive Bennett, Anton Manickim, David Schwarz, Cllr Alex McKenna, Ann Hoad, Lia Conceicao, Helen Charlesworth-May, Maya Schram, Jean Slater, Mary Simpson, Selena Ellis

##### URH Officers

Damian Roche, Clara Odamo, Tim Mathias (Minutes), Phil Morris

##### Observers

Lloyd Lewis (Manager – Loughborough EMB), Dan Howcroft (Manager – Blenheim Gardens), Mark Browne (Manager – Roupell Park)

##### Apologies

Carla Pall, John Pepin, Christine Jacobs, George Pashley, Edith Yembra

#### **1 Introductions**

1.1.0 There were no introductions.

1.1.1 Phil Morris stated that at this point, an AGM was held just before this meeting took place, it would be normal to elect a Chair and Vice Chair. Under the URH constitution post of Vice Chair is optional and has been empty since Willem Buttinger resigned their post. At the moment the Loughborough proposal is still being negotiated between LEMB, URH and Lambeth Council. In normal circumstances Ann Hoad would seek re-election as the URH Chair, however she also sits as Chair of Loughborough EMB (LEMB). In view of this, it was agreed that the election of both Chair & Vice Chair will be deferred until the next meeting in September, when greater clarity should have been achieved over the relationship between LEMB & URH.

#### **2 Declarations of Interest**

2.1.0 Ann Hoad and Jean Slater are both members of the LEMB Board, as such they declared an interest in the Loughborough Management Proposal.

#### **3 Minutes & Matters Arising from the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 08**

##### **3.1.0 Minutes**

3.1.1 The Minutes were agreed unanimously as read.

##### **3.2.0 Matters Arising**

3.2.1 Action Point 1 - Following request from Cllr Clive Bennett, send a clear message to Lambeth officers that URH are united on this matter

3.2.2 Damian Roche confirmed that a clear message had been sent to Lambeth officials.

3.3.0 Action Point 2 - Draft Response to Lambeth Council

- 3.3.1 This is covered under the main agenda.
- 3.4.0 Action Point 3 - Arrange meeting with senior Lambeth officers/ Councillors
- 3.4.1 This is covered under the main agenda.
- 3.5.0 Action Point 4 - Meet or discuss Loughborough proposal with both NFTMO & Nat Fed of ALMOs. Report to next meeting
- 3.5.1 This is covered under the main agenda.
- 3.6.0 Action Point 5 – Please note there is a mistake in the minutes this had previously been merged with Action Point 4
- 3.7.0 Action Point 6 - Set up first meeting of the URH Performance group – establish available volunteers and set date.
- 3.7.1 An Email asking for volunteers will be sent out later this week.
- 3.8.0 Action Point 7 - Revise report and set targets for the new financial year
- 3.8.1 Damian Roche reported that targets for each TMO has been set in January 2008. This report will be re-distributed to TMO managers.
- 3.9.0 Action Point 8 - Check and report on DHS16 figures
- 3.9.1 Tim Mathias reported that the DHS16 figures have been revised. The standard performance report has had to be pulled from tonight’s meeting as the figures were only provided by Lambeth yesterday, a number have had to be queried. This matter will be taken up with the Estate Managers.
- 3.10.0 Action Point 9 - Note on impact of Choice Based Lettings
- 3.10.1 This is not due to be completed Sept 08.
- 3.11.0 Action Point 10 - Report on Capital Programme
- 3.11.1 This is covered under the main agenda.

#### **4 Chief Executive Recruitment**

- 4.1.0 Before discussing the report, Ann Hoad stated that she wanted to express her concern that the confidentiality agreement, agreed at the last meeting, was not observed. If the person responsible would like to approach Ann Hoad after the meeting she would like to discuss this.
- 4.1.1 Cllr McKenna stated that although keeping confidentiality was a noble aim, sometimes this is not possible, especially when over fifteen members were present. As the present situation stands, URH is losing a very good, knowledgeable CEO. He would have had more concern if the news had leaked at the same time as Damian Roche re-considered his position.
- 4.1.2 Turning to the report, this was introduced by Damian Roche. The problem that the board faces at the current time is that recruiting to a Chief Executive position would take at least three months, even assuming that the first round of interviews was successful. The successful candidate would probably have to give three months notice to their employers. This gives a lead in time of six months, without even allowing for any set-backs. This could lead to a Chief Executive starting work with only a few months before an Audit Commission inspection.
- 4.1.3 This report is recommending that the Board seriously considers the option of appointing an interim CEO, who would be appointed for twelve months. The one potential drawback to this approach was that the Audit Commission could have concerns about the organisation being run by a temporary post-holder.

Damian Roche stated that in his opinion this could affect 'prospects for improvement', but should not affect the star rating. Generally, Damian is of the opinion that going for the temporary option has far fewer risks attached, compared to the alternative of seeking a permanent appointment.

- 4.1.4 A suitable candidate would be sought by approaching recruitment agencies, possibly going out to advert and approaching the National Federation of ALMOs. The last option will include a possibility of seeking a secondment from senior officers at existing ALMOs. David Schwarz informed the meeting that a specialist recruitment agency would have a number of contacts that they could approach.
- 4.1.5 Mark Browne pointed out that the Job Description for this post has been amended significantly; far more extensive management responsibility has been taken for the performance of the Loughborough office. Also, could it be possible twin track appointments for the permanent and temporary CEO at the same time?
- 4.1.6 David Schwarz informed the meeting that it would be normal practice to appoint a temporary CEO, and then charge them with the responsibility of recruiting to the permanent post. This is built into their Job Description, as part of the overall strategy they should be building for the organisation.
- 4.1.7 Anton Manickim asked whether it would be possible to advertise the post, indicating there was a possibility it could become permanent.
- 4.1.8 Damian Roche replied that it used to be far more common to advertise posts in this manner i.e. 'this is temporary post but could lead to a permanent appointment'. However, as employment legislation has developed, this practice has become far less common.
- 4.1.9 Helen Charlesworth-May assumed that you would have to pay a premium for a temporary CEO? Damian Roche confirmed this was correct. Phil Morris confirmed that the URH management fee for 2008/09 has yet to be agreed.
- 4.1.10 An interview panel will have to be made up of board members. Any volunteers please contact Ann Hoad. Cllr Clive Bennett confirmed that he was happy to volunteer. It was agreed that Ann Hoad will Chair the recruitment panel, at least for the moment.
- 4.1.11 Dan Howcroft & Mark Browne confirmed that they were happy to take on any tasks in the interim.
- 4.1.12 Cllr Bennett asked whether it was preferable to appoint a candidate from outside the housing – a private sector candidate?
- 4.1.13 Damian Roche replied that although a few other councils have appointed candidates from outside the public sector, these have been in far bigger organisations, with a more extensive support team, and are for permanent positions. This temporary appointment would require someone who was very familiar with the public housing sector.
- 4.1.14 Lia Conceicao proposed waiting until the Loughborough management arrangements were clarified. However, this proposal was not seconded. The original proposal to press ahead with a temporary recruitment was carried, with one representative abstaining.

## **5 Service Improvement Plan – Update**

- 5.1.0 This report was introduced by Clara Odamo. The URH team has taken on board comments made at the last meeting, and have attempted to make the report more concise and accessible. This is an exception report that outlines

all tasks due to be completed by the end of June 08. A summary regarding progress on each area is also included.

#### 5.2.0 Access & Customer Care

5.2.1 One task remains – the development and launch of the Loughborough EMB web-site.

#### 5.3.0 Equality & Diversity

5.3.1 One task outstanding, join 'Positive About Disabled People' scheme.

#### 5.4.0 Resident Involvement

5.4.1 The Residents' panel will launch on 24<sup>th</sup> July 08.

5.4.2 Tenants' Compacts still need to be developed at the three of the TMOs, Blenheim Gdns have already completed. Selena Ellis recommended Acclaim Consulting to develop compacts. Clara Odamo agreed with this recommendation. Selena Ellis informed the board that Tenants Compacts have a significant lead in time – taking at least three months to complete.

#### 5.5.0 Stock Investment & Asset Management

5.5.1 Although a number of tasks are outstanding, most are in progress.

#### 5.6.0 Access & Customer Care

5.6.1 There is one major item outstanding (51) Extend use of telephone surveys.

#### 5.7.0 Stock Investment & Asset Management

5.7.1 There are a number of items outstanding.

#### 5.8.0 Leasehold Services

5.8.1 The Leasehold Officer has been very busy for the past few months. It has been agreed to revise all target dates to September 2008.

#### 5.9.0 Value for Money

5.9.1 A comprehensive Value for Money strategy still has to be developed.

#### 5.10.0 Prospects for Improvement

5.10.1 Performance Management Framework needs to be rolled out to all officers.

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5.11.1 Cllr McKenna asked whether the individual TMOs discuss the Service Improvement Plans at their own board meetings.

5.11.2 Damian Roche replied that URH officers are assisting the TMOs to develop their own plans. When the working arrangements between LEMB & URH are worked out, then we will be able to concentrate on the other TMOs.

5.11.3 Cllr Bennett queried the statement under task (81) regarding the level of pre- & post- inspections. Damian Roche explained that although more inspections may seem to be positive, the Audit Commission takes the view that officers can often make better use of their time. The Audit Commission wants to establish that the landlord has set an appropriate level of inspections, suitable to their own circumstances and the type of repairs ordered. The AC is also keen to see a concentration on inspecting higher value jobs.

5.11.4 Mark Browne pointed out that it the responsibility of the URH resident board members to feedback to their own board.

## **6 URH Performance Indicators**

- 6.1.0 It was not possible to present a report at this meeting. The figures from Lambeth Council were only provided on the day of the meeting, and a number have had to be queried. A report will be sent out to the TMO managers.

## **7 Loughborough EMB proposal**

- 7.1.0 Damian Roche passed around Notes from a meeting held with Lambeth Council on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008. This meeting was attended by representatives from URH, Lambeth Council and LEMB, along with two local Councillors.
- 7.1.1 Damian Roche provided a review of recent events. At their last board meeting the LEMB board decided that they could not make a decision because clarification on some issues was needed from Lambeth Council, and independent legal advice would have to be sought. The LEMB board are currently seeking legal advice; however this is not yet available.
- 7.1.2 Turning to the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July, notes from which are attached as Appendix A. Damian Roche stated that this meeting had a slightly uncertain beginning, but improved rapidly as each side agreed to make concessions. The LEMB board were particularly concerned about their status as a TMO; they need to retain significant decision making abilities. Lambeth have conceded that setting up another committee on the estate would not be practical. It was also confirmed that LEMB representatives on the URH board will have full voting rights, unless there is an express conflict of interest.
- 7.1.3 It was also agreed that this was an interim arrangement. There was some discussion about who would make the assessment to ensure that the LEMB board were ready to take back on full management responsibility. It has been suggested that agencies established by CLG could undertake this type of assessment.
- 7.1.4 Ann Hoad pointed out that the TUPE issue for Loughborough staff with Lambeth contracts has yet to be sorted out. It is understood that Lambeth is currently taking legal advice on this matter.
- 7.1.5 In response to a question from Lia Conceicao, Ann Hoad confirmed that the previous claims that Loughborough have made against Lambeth Council, were not discussed. Discussions regarding the Capital Programme are on-going.
- 7.1.6 Selena Ellis asked when these working arrangements would be put into practice. Damian Roche replied that these would be implemented as soon as possible, within the next few weeks. This will be enacted on a 'gentlemen's agreement' basis at first, before tripartite agreements are drawn up later in the summer. The signing of any such agreement would be an effective trigger to review the Loughborough management agreement, which should be updated to the modular management agreement anyway.
- 7.1.7 Damian Roche and Phil Morris stated that they believed the establishment of Lambeth Living would improve relations between Lambeth Council and URH, as Lambeth adjusts to working on a client basis.

## **8 Finance Monitoring - confidential**

## **9 Appointment of Consultants (Item tabled at meeting)**

- 9.1.0 Phil Morris passed tabled the attached report.
- 9.1.1 As proposed work on the Capital Programme expands, the list of Capital Programme consultants needs to be extended.

9.1.2 This paper proposes the addition of Potter Raper and Frankhams. Both of these contractors are approved under the Lambeth Framework Agreement. Andrew Walker, the Capital Programme Manager, has worked with both of these firms.

9.1.3 It was agreed to appoint both firms.

## **10 Any Other Business**

10.1.0 Clara Odamo

10.1.1 The launch of the residents panel will commence take place on 24 July 08.