

**URH Board Minutes – Part A
17 December 2008 at 6.30pm
Loughborough Community Centre**

Present:-

URH Board

Lia Conceicao, Cllr Alex McKenna, Cllr Clive Bennett, Anton Manickim, Jean Slater, Mary Simpson, David Schwarz, Christine Jacobs, Helen Charlesworth-May

URH Officers

Nilavra Mukerji (CEO), Clara Odamo, Tim Mathias (Minutes), Phil Morris, Andrew Walker

Observers

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

Apologies

Edith Yembra,

1 Introductions

1.1.0 Richard Hornby, who works as Divisional Director of Resources, was invited to this meeting to discuss agenda item 3 – Rent Consultation exercise.

2 Declarations of Interest

2.1.0 There were no declarations of interest.

3 Rent Consultation Exercise

3.1.0 Richard Hornby attended the meeting as part of Lambeth's Rent consultation exercise, he has previously engaged in presentations at the Area Forums and Lambeth Living board.

3.1.1 Richard Hornby started his presentation by stating that Lambeth currently has one of the lowest rents in London. (Part 3 of the report.) Members should note that Part 5 of the report gives detail on current housing subsidy.

3.1.2 Part 6 of the report makes reference to Rent Restructuring Policy. The maximum increase under these rules would be £5.03 per week. However, this would be insufficient to cover planned expenditure and ensure prudent balances. The proposals Lambeth has on the table would increase rents by an average of £12.01 per week.

3.1.3 Mary Simpson stated that they were concerned that evictions could rise as a result of this rent increase. Richard Hornby replied that Housing Benefit would cover the increase for at least 60% of tenants.

- 3.1.4 Mark Browne asked whether the Council had factored in a decrease in the Rent Collection rate, which is a normal consequence of rent increases? Richard Hornby replied that these forecasts have been based using the current Collection Rate – 98.9%.
- 3.1.5 Phil Morris made reference to paragraph 5.14 in the report, which refers to loss of Rental Constraint Allowance. Do Lambeth Officers still believe that the Authority is owed funds?
- 3.1.6 Richard Hornby replied that the Council had they had received advice from a barrister that the sanctions against Lambeth 'were not in the spirit of the act'.
- 3.1.7 Phil Morris asked that, since the Council has given up Capital & Limits subsidy in 2010/11, is there an amount of rent you can set. Has this been subject to rent modeling?
- 3.1.8 Richard Hornby replied that modelling had begun; the range of rents is large. Individual properties could be subject to caps. Phil Morris asked the board to note that this particularly affects URH estates.
- 3.1.9 Cllr Alex McKenna reminded that the meeting that rents do have to go up – this is a government requirement. In the past Lambeth has tended to defer above inflation increases, in the long term this has not the best course of action.
- 3.1.10 Richard Hornby added that Lambeth was also considering some additional measures including setting up new tenants at formula rents. This would mean that they would pay higher rents than current tenants. This is fairly common amongst Social Landlords.
- 3.1.11 Mark Browne recommended that Lambeth undertakes an Impact Detail Assessment, as it is possible the proposed rent increases could have an adverse effect on low paid working tenants.
- 3.1.12 Richard Hornby referred members to paragraph 9.3 in the report. This concerns garage rents. Lambeth are looking to establish greater financial freedom so that garages can be let on commercial rates. This proposal will affect both Blenheim Gardens (which has two hundred garages) and Roupell Park. Richard Hornby stated that the same terms will be offered to the TMOs.
- 3.1.13 David Schwarz stated that this report seems to have been presented for information only, this is very disappointing.

4 Minutes & Matters Arising from the meeting on 19 Nov 08

4.1.0 Minutes

- 4.1.1 The Minutes were agreed as read. Please note that due to an administrative error, the Appendix to these Minutes, which gave details of special meeting called to authorise a tender, was not included. This was passed out at the meeting.

4.2.0 Matters arising

- 4.2.1 Action Point 1 – Provide nominations for the post of resident member for Loughborough and Roupell Park.

- 4.2.2 Loughborough are in process of setting up elections for the board, and will nominate a member after this has been set up.
- 4.2.3 Roupell Park have yet to secure a volunteer, they will follow this up.
- 4.2.4 Action Point 2 – Provide skills analysis for the post of independent director.
- 4.2.5 Nilavra Mukerji has sounded some people. He has taken the view that someone with an asset management background would be of most use to the organisation.
- 4.2.6 Action Point 3 – Email Cllr Clive Bennett regarding independent interview panel
- 4.2.7 Cllr Bennett confirmed that he is able to sit on the interview panel.

5 Chair's Actions

- 5.1.0 There were no Chair's Actions to report.

6 Chief Executive's Report

- 6.1.0 Loughborough EMB
 - 6.1.1 Some anxiety has been expressed about the new working arrangements. Various documents regarding the new working arrangements are being drafted. The development of the LEMB website is being accelerated so that these documents can be made available online.
 - 6.1.2 A Newsletter detailing the results of the General Meeting is being circulated.
 - 6.1.3 The Annual General Meeting due to be held on Monday 15 December was not quorate, the meeting is being reconvened in January.
- 6.2.0 Loughborough Service Delivery
 - 6.2.1 The rent collection rate and the voids turnover rate are improving.
 - 6.2.2 Nilavra Mukerji has set up a meeting with Lambeth Council to discuss the challenging impact of Choice Based Letting procedures.
- 6.3.0 Service Standards
 - 6.3.1 Please see separate report.
 - 6.3.2 A repairs sub-group is being established. A draft report will be circulated at the next board meeting.
- 6.4.0 TMO Allowances
 - 6.4.1 Phil Morris has done a considerable amount of work around this project. The feedback from the working group seems to be positive. Please see the report in Part B papers for further information.
- 6.5.0 Inspection – meeting with Audit Commission
 - 6.5.1 Nilavra Mukerji has met with the Audit Commission and provisionally agreed an inspection date of 19 October to 26 October 2009. The Board has up until April 2009 to re-arrange the inspection date.

6.5.2 URH will be organising a joint board session for URH and the member TMOs to be held during January/ February 2009. The October timetable will require URH to submit a self assessment by June 2009.

6.5.3 If URH does not reach a two star standard on the first inspection, then there is one more chance to be inspected. This cannot happen any less than six months from the date of the original inspection.

6.6.0 Key Risks

6.6.1 The key risks at the moment centre around the resources and new working arrangements for Loughborough, which have yet to be finalised.

6.6.2 TUPE advice for tendered staff is being sought.

7 Performance Management

7.1.0 Following a suggestion by Helen Charlesworth-May, it was agreed that a Performance Sub-group should be established as a matter of urgency.

7.1.1 Anton Manickim, Lia Concaicao, Helen Charlesworth-May and Christine Jacobs all volunteered to sit on the Performance Sub-Group.

7.1.2 It was agreed that Nilavra Mikerji will draft Terms of Reference for the Performance Sub-group.

Action Point	By whom	When
Draft terms of reference for the Performance Sub-Group	Nilavra Mukerji	28 Jan 09

8 Asset Management Strategy and Decent Homes Framework

8.1.0 Please note that this meeting was not quorate, so was not able to formally approve this paper.

8.1.1 It was agreed that this strategy seemed straight forward – no board members had any amendments to the current strategy.

8.1.2 It was agreed to develop this strategy and present to the Board again in either January or February 2009.

9 Service Standards

9.1.0 Clara Odamo introduced this report.

9.1.1 This report will also have to go to the TMO Boards for approval. This is still a draft version of the report. This will be developed into a set of draft Service Standards.

10 Capital Programme Update

10.1.0 Andrew Walker introduced this report.

10.1.1 The Financial projections are included at the end of the report.

10.1.2 A detailed breakdown of all schemes is included in the report.

10.1.3 Contractors are already onsite with some works including roofs and LEMB external works.

10.1.4 There has been a slight delay paying invoices due to problems drawing down funds from Lambeth Council, this should be resolved imminently.

10.1.5 The results of the survey regarding windows at Waltham have been received. 57% of respondents preferred uPVC windows.

11 Service Improvement Plan Update

11.1.0 A Copy of the new Service Standards is included in the pack.

11.1.1 A report on the new Performance Management Framework will be presented at the January board.

12 Forward Plan

12.1.0 This lists items for inclusion on board meetings for the next few months. If Board members have any further items they would like considered for inclusion please email tmathias@urh.org.uk.

13 Any Other Business

13.1.0 Thanks were given to David Schwarz for cancelling a prior commitment to attend this meeting at short notice.