



CHESHIRE
PEAKS & PLAINS
HOUSING TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of the Trust's Board held on 18th November 2008 at 6.00 pm at Ropewalks, Macclesfield.

Present

David Gooda	Chairman
Louise Booth	Board Member
Sheila Coulson	Board Member
Jim Crockatt	Board Member
Carolyn Andrew	Board Member
Margaret Pickup	Board Member
Don Ellis	Board Member
Jan Hennessey	Board Member
Shirley Sockett	Board Member
Roger West	Board Member
David Kent	Board Member
Tony Ranfield	Board Member
Tim Pinder	Chief Executive
Jacqui Sinnott-Lacey	Director of Customer Services
Greg Bones	Director of Resources
Pauline Gosling	Executive Support
Liz Holmes	Head of Finance
Oriel Gordon	Head of Performance & Quality
Dianne Hutter	Service Development Manager

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from David Robinson .Post meeting apologies received from Kevin Richardson.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Tony Ranfield declared that he is a Board member of Manchester Methodist Housing Association.

The Chairman advised that there was a potential conflict of interest for some Board members who are tenant panel members with agenda item 8.

3. **Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

4.1 Minutes

Board reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting.

The Board Decided:

- 0.90)** That the minutes of the meeting held 21st October 2008 reflected a true and accurate record and should be signed as such by the Chairman

4.2 Matters Arising

The Chairman informed Board that he had recently visited MACC (Macclesfield Accommodation Care and Concern) to discuss how the Trust may be able to improve things for them. MACC have asked if we could look at creating a work experience stream for them. There could be the possibility of the Trust becoming adult learning accredited. The Chairman said he would write up the notes from his meeting and circulate to Board.

The Director of Resources informed Board that the £10m fix discussed at the previous meeting was secured at a rate of 4.2% which was better than expected.

6.0

Floating Support Policy

This is a new policy developed to ensure a planned strategic approach to the provision of support and delivery of the service.

It was explained to Board that the service is aimed at preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness by assisting eligible vulnerable people over the age of 16 to maintain their tenancy. It was further explained that Supporting People funding is currently available to assist up to 15 people at any one time. Supporting p [people also monitor the service.

A Board member questioned whether the report should have gone before the Tenant Panel before it came to Board. It was agreed that this should have been the case but that it had been an oversight.

A Board member also asked for confirmation that the definition of vulnerable included sexual orientation and transgender.

The Chairman stated that although he was comfortable with the policy as it stood he would be happier if it went to Tenant Panel for approval.

The Board Decided:

- 0.93)** To approve the Floating Support Policy subject to no further amends by Tenant Panel.

7.0

Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy

The Head of Finance informed Board that the policy was put in place in June 2006 and was now being reviewed in accordance with the review process. The minor amendments are highlighted within the policy which was presented to Tenant Panel on 21st October.

Board was further informed that the policy is likely to be brought back in the new year when the service charge review is complete.

A Board member asked what would happen if deflation occurred? The Director of Resources stated that there will be some scenario testing carried out on the business plan to identify any possible effects, which would be considered by Board when assessing the business plan in February.

The Director of Resources reminded Board that the Trust has to meet rent convergence targets by 2012 and that a rent plan update paper will be brought to the next meeting.

The Board Decided:

0.94) To approve the Rent Setting and Service Charges Policy

8.0

Resident Involvement (RI) Service Review

Members of the Tenant Panel joined the meeting to observe.

Board members had received papers submitted by the Tenant Panel to be considered in conjunction with the report by the Trust's officers

The Chairman stated that he was very well aware of some very strong feelings about this agenda item but urged cool consideration by Board members. He went on to say that many items brought to Board would not reach a conflict of interest but if and when they do any member who is also a Tenant Panel member can only remain in the meeting at the request of the rest of the Board in accordance with section 47 of the articles of association. The Board unanimously agreed to request them to do so.

The Head of Customer Services gave a presentation on the drivers for the service review, an overview of the service review project, the findings and recommendations.

The Chairman suggested that Board work through the recommendations within the report to find a way forward to encompass all that everyone involved wished for.

The Chairman further stated that RI needs to be flexible and attractive to the people we need to get involved. He went on to say that he suspected that any differences between the Panel and the Trust staff regarding a new proposed structure may have arisen through misunderstanding and misinformation.

A Board member then said that there was too much paperwork to digest and understand and asked for the item to be deferred. The Chairman replied that it was not appropriate to defer the item any further, commenting that it had been under discussion for several months with the Tenant Panel.

The Board discussed the proposed structure for RI and the Head of Customer Services confirmed that the structure as it was set out on paper did not reflect a hierarchy, it merely grouped together the various ways in which residents may become involved.

Some Board members felt they could not accept the recommendation that Tenant Board members could not be part of the Resident Involvement structure. A consensus was arrived at that suggested that potential conflicts of interest be avoided by developing a clear code of conduct to be signed and that people were trained on.

There seemed to be an impression by its members that the Tenant Panel was being cast aside to make way for the Outcome Monitoring Group. The Chairman confirmed that this is not the case.

A Board member asked for an explanation of the difference between the Tenant Panel and Outcome Monitoring Group. It was explained that there would be smaller much more specialised groups to monitor service delivery. The Outcome Monitoring Group would challenge the outcomes of these groups and be the link between them and the Board, it would also be responsible for the budgets of these groups and be independent of all other recognised involvement groups.

The Chief Executive explained that there was no guarantee at this stage that the structure would work but that the Trust is obliged to maximise the number of residents involved and that resident involvement needs to be outcome focussed. This was highlighted by the HQN inspection and will become even more critical with the introduction of Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

A Board member asked who would review policies currently reviewed by Tenant Panel? It was confirmed that reviews would be undertaken by the specific service delivery groups.

A Board member asked what the recruitment process for the Outcome Monitoring Group was. The Head of Customer Services informed Board that this had come out of the second session the Tenant Panel held with an independent tenant advisor.

The Chairman clarified that recruitment could be carried out as an outreach rather than selection process.

At this point a Board member stated that Board had an excellent professional report in front of them and that they must make a decision today or must have a very good reason why not and identify who will carry it forward.

The Chairman said that he had compared the Tenant Panel suggested draft structure alongside the structure suggested by the Trust and could see only two differences, one being that the Trust's structure has one more monitoring group and the other being that the Tenant Panel is replaced by the Outcome Monitoring Group.

A Board member said that the Outcome Monitoring Group would be influenced by the Trust rather than tenant led. The Chairman replied that the chairing of the group would have to be agreed by both parties and that one potential option might be for a Board member to chair it.

It was suggested that the Tenant Panel as it exists should work towards becoming the Outcome Monitoring Group.

It was explained that taking policies etc. to the monitoring groups would allow the Outcome Monitoring Group to have more strategic views.

A Board member felt that the Tenant Panel was being criticised and commented that the TSA was all about empowerment for tenants.

The Chief Executive explained that the Trust was in no way belittling the hard work and commitment of tenants but reminded Board that the Housing Corporation, Audit Commission and soon to be TSA all require evidence of outcomes.

The Chairman stated that he could see two key issues – the naming of the group and the Trust's involvement in it. He thought that these matters should be negotiated outside this meeting and commented that the commitment and enthusiasm demonstrated shows clearly that there is a lot of energy behind RI and suggested that the policy be adopted.

The Chairman suggested that the key group be called either Service or Outcome Monitoring Group and that the Trust's involvement be the chairing and management of the group – this to be the subject of negotiation with the current Tenant Panel.

The Chairman stated that he did not wish Board to vote on the matter, but rather to reach a consensus decision.

A Board member commented that if Board leave this evening with the Tenant Panel simply becoming the Outcome Monitoring Group then nothing will have changed, we have to demonstrate a commitment to get more tenants involved.

The Chairman confirmed that the Outcome Monitoring Group will carry out a different role to the Tenant Panel and this will not simply be a re-badging exercise.

The Chairman summed up by stating that during the debate over the last two hours he had a sincere feeling that there was a match of 99% between the thoughts of the Trust and the Tenant Panel. He acknowledged that there were still some implementation questions to be answered but was comfortable that these were addressed outside of this meeting.

The Chairman went on to say that the structure of the report and recommendations are robust and the recruitment processes need to be agreed with the Tenant Panel. There had been so much agreement reached it would be foolish to throw that away. The Chairman also confirmed that paragraph 9.3.1.1 relating to Tenant Board members being precluded from being involved in other groups would be removed.

A Board member asked if a time limit could be set for demonstrating that we have gone out and got other people involved.

The Chairman felt that three months was an acceptable time limit and that it would be expected that recruitment would have taken place within this time limit and the Outcome Monitoring Group would be up and running three months from today.

The Board Decided:

0.95) To accept the Service Review of Resident Involvement with the following conditions.

- I. that paragraph 9.3.1.1 relating to Tenant Board members is removed
- II. that the name and role of the overall monitoring group be agreed between the Tenant Panel and Trust officers
- III. that the chairing/management of the monitoring group be agreed between the Tenant Panel and Trust officers
- IV. that recruitment will have taken place and the monitoring group will be up and running three months from today.
- V. an update report is provided to Board in three months.

9.0 Performance Reports For The Period 1st August to 30th September 2008

The Head of Performance & Quality informed Board that there was one correction needed to the report they had received, namely that the lettings to BME tenants should be a green traffic light, not amber. This in turn changes the executive summary to 16 green and 9 amber traffic lights.

The Head of Performance & Quality also informed Board that the report was in a revised format following comments from Board and that a further survey will be sent out shortly to gauge satisfaction with the format.

A Board member showed concern at the direction of rent collection. The Head of Customer Services explained that the income team are carrying out a programme of proactive work including analysing any changes in payments and whether these are in a particular area. The team are also reminding people through various methods of the need to pay their rent in the run up to Christmas. The income team have individual targets sets for collection each week and are clear that any target missed must be made up.

A Board member showed concern at the level of voids. The Director of Customer Services confirmed that the voids process is currently under review.

A Board member pointed out that customer satisfaction with the improvement programme and overall customer satisfaction were both in the 90+% which is very encouraging. The Chief Executive stated that he had recently visited a sheltered scheme where improvement were taking place and the residents were delighted with the activities arranged for them during the works.

10. **Presentation on Short Notice Inspection**

It was agreed that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

11. **Any Other Business**

.1 Update on Board Away Day

The Director of Resources informed Board that the content of the proposed away day has been broken down into three parts. The objective setting is time critical in order to fit in with service delivery plans. Liz Cross is available on the day of the next Board meeting (16th December) and it is suggested that a session be held that afternoon. The Chairman suggested that the session be held between 1 and 5pm on 16th December.

.2 Inspection Steering Group

The Head of Performance and Quality informed Board that volunteers would be sought shortly to join and inspection steering group.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed.....