

**Northwards Housing - ALMO Board Meeting
Board Room, Hexagon Tower**

Tuesday 11 November 2014 at 6:30pm

Chair: Robin Lawler (first two items only), Sue Abbott

Present	Sue Abbott (SA) Hilary Vaughan (HV) Anna Trotman (AT) Noel Sharpe (NS) Fiona Sharkey (FS) Sharon Thomas (ST) Guy Johnson (GJ)	Board Member (Chair) Board Member (Vice Chair) Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member
In Attendance	Robin Lawler (RL) Mike Stevens (MS) Larry Patrick (LP) Robbie Chapman (RC) Steve Finegan (SF) Tara Kelly (TK) Pamela Welsh (PW) Mark Goodfellow (MG)	Chief Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services Director of Property Services Head of Finance Head of Business Effectiveness & Communications (part meeting) Governance Manager (Minutes) Media & Communications Specialist (part meeting) Experian (part meeting)

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>RL welcomed everyone to the meeting. RL explained that he would be chairing the meeting for the first two items.</p> <p>Confirm Quorum</p> <p>The meeting was confirmed as quorate.</p>	
2	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Mark Hackett, Madeline Mendy, Paul Moran, Val Edwards, Naeem Ul Hassan, Mark Leach, Stephen Brown</p>	
3	<p>Appointment of Board Chair/Vice Chair</p> <p>Members gave their approval for the re-appointment of SA as Board Chair, and HV as Board Vice Chair.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved the re-appointment of Sue Abbott as Board Chair • Approved the re-appointment of Hilary Vaughan as Board Vice Chair 	
4	<p>Declaration of Interests / Confidential Matters / Requests to un-star information items</p>	

	None.	
9	FINANCIAL	
a	<p>Rental Exchange Project</p> <p>This item was moved forward to accommodate the presentation by Mark Goodfellow from Experian.</p> <p>MG delivered a presentation to members on the Rental Exchange Project, and the potential benefits to Northwards' tenants. MG explained that if Northwards were to be involved they would need to issue a 'Fair processing' notice under data protection law to tenants of their intention to do so. This would give tenants the option to opt out of the project.</p> <p>AT said that, whilst she thought this was a fantastic project, she would prefer that tenants were able to opt in rather than opt out. MG explained that to do this would make consent very difficult to obtain, and that the opt out option does comply with data protection obligations.</p> <p>FS suggested that Northwards could communicate its intention to be involved prior to the Board making a decision, and consult with engaged tenants to get their feedback. AT agreed this was a good idea.</p> <p>NS said that she thinks it is a good project, and that members should note that the priority role of the Board is to secure financial viability, whilst supporting tenants.</p> <p>RL said that he would check whether Northwards would require consent from the Council to be involved.</p> <p>Members thanked MG for the presentation. MG left the meeting at 7.05pm.</p> <p>The Board noted the presentation, and agreed to defer a decision pending feedback from engaged tenants.</p>	RL
	CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS	
5	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS (Confidential)	
a	<p>Board 9 September 2014 (Confidential)</p> <p>Please see confidential minutes.</p>	
b	<p>Resources 23 September 2014 (Confidential)</p> <p>Please see confidential minutes.</p>	
c	Audit 23 October 2014 (Confidential)	

d	<p>Please see confidential minutes.</p> <p>Confidential Matters Arising</p> <p>Please see confidential minutes.</p>	
NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS		
6	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS</p> <p>a Board 9 September 2014</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2014 were approved.</p> <p>b Northwards AGM 16 October 2014</p> <p>The Board noted the minutes of Northwards AGM, and agreed they were an accurate account. The minutes will be formally approved by the Council at Northwards' AGM 2015.</p> <p>c Matters Arising</p> <p>All matters arising were on the agenda.</p>	
7	<p>CHAIR'S ITEMS</p> <p>a Board Appraisals Update 2014</p> <p>SA confirmed that all appraisals, including her own, were now completed.</p> <p>TK informed members that the overall training plan for the Board in 2015 will be presented at January's meeting. TK also advised that she will be sending everyone an e-mail with their e-learning user names and passwords. TK will discuss potential courses with individual members.</p> <p>RL confirmed that tenant board members have also been offered a place on this year's Board ILM Programme. SA requested that the course is also offered to co-optees. TK said she would send them the details.</p> <p>b NFA Chairs and Board Member Event</p> <p>SA and ST gave a verbal update on the NFA conference they recently attended in London. ST noted that the session by Eamon McGoldrick on ALMO diversification was particularly interesting, especially the work Stockport Homes are doing with local schools.</p> <p>c Cheetham Festival 2014</p>	TK

	<p>SA informed members that Northwards had taken part in this year's Cheetham Festival.</p> <p>SA said that she, HV and ST had attended the faith venues tour as part of the Cheetham Festival, and that Northwards had sponsored the coach and tour guide.</p> <p>SA said Northwards hopes to be involved in the festival again in 2015.</p>	
8	STRATEGIC AND PERFORMANCE	
a	<p>Corporate Performance 2014/15 Qtr 2</p> <p>SF presented the Quarter 2 performance data report.</p> <p>SF asked the Board to note that there was one error in the report: % Written Responses to Councillors and MPs Within Five Business Days – target should state 80% or more, not 95%.</p> <p>In reference to NHL902a Void Rent Loss, HV enquired whether Northwards needed to invest more resources in this area next year. RL confirmed this was part of the discussions currently taking place with the Council around next year's management fee.</p> <p>The Board noted the report.</p>	
b	<p>Risk Management Report</p> <p>SF advised members that a report on risk management is presented to the Board twice a year, with regular monitoring delegated to the Audit Sub-Committee.</p> <p>SF confirmed that there has been no significant changes since the last report to Board.</p> <p>RL advised that there are now 24 tenants on Universal Credit.</p> <p>SF told members about this year's business continuity exercise. The exercise was designed to test managers' knowledge of the Business Continuity Plan itself, and included an online test that required managers to refer to the plan for answers.</p> <p>HV asked if there was a drift upwards in terms of risk. SF said no and, if anything, it's more the other direction.</p> <p>The Board noted the report.</p>	
c	<p>Health & Safety Roles and Responsibilities</p> <p>SF said that the purpose of this report was to remind the Board of their obligations as company directors in respect to health and</p>	

	<p>safety. SF said that whilst actions around health and safety can be delegated, responsibility cannot be.</p> <p>AT asked how often Spectra Safety attend Audit Sub-Committee meetings. SF confirmed that Spectra attend as often as the Sub-Committee requests.</p> <p>SF reminded members that the next Board training session in December is on Health & Safety. Mark Leach is currently the Board Lead for Health & Safety. SF confirmed that Mark is happy to pick up any questions from other members at this session.</p> <p>The Board noted the report.</p> <p>d Northwards Communication Plan</p> <p>PW presented members with a Communications Plan for Northwards. PW explained that there was a need for better forward planning of communications across the organisation, with a greater focus on realising communications objectives.</p> <p>PW referred to the Government Communications Plan as an example of good practice for effective communications. PW said that Northwards Communications Plan aimed to ensure that more data is being used and collected to target communications and evaluate the impact.</p> <p>FS commented that the plan was really good, and asked if the plan was cyclical. PW said that some actions are cyclical, while others will be specific to an event or incident.</p> <p>NS commented that perhaps it should be made clearer that Welfare Reform is a top priority. PW agreed and said she would action this.</p> <p>The Board approved the Communications Plan.</p> <p>PW and SF left the meeting.</p>	
<p>e</p>	<p>Welfare Reform Update</p> <p>RL informed members that Tracy Langton will be sharing an update report on Welfare Reform with the Board via e-mail.</p>	<p>PW</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>FINANCIAL</p>	
<p>b</p>	<p>Financial Regulations and Standing Financial Instructions</p> <p>RC explained that the purpose of this report was to recommend to the Board the revised Financial Regulations and a new set of Standing Financial Instructions.</p> <p>RC said that the key change was around the scheme of</p>	

<p>c</p>	<p>delegation, as Northwards is looking to clarify the limits of what people can approve.</p> <p>RC explained that the regulations and standing instructions have been presented to Resources Sub-Committee. One area of discussion was around the introduction of the provision that, in certain instances, the Director of Business Services may decide to forego the normal procurement route and select a specific supplier.</p> <p>RC said that it was not anticipated this would be a regular situation, and that any such decision would be reported to Resources after the event. The intention of the provision is to enable Northwards to act more quickly when such situations arise. RC cited the recent example of the request for approval from Resources Sub-Committee to grant a suspension of the Financial Instructions in relation to Cooler Projects for Carbon Literacy training.</p> <p>HV commented that she had requested at Resources Sub-Committee that the new provision should include the necessity to refer back to the Chair during the decision making process.</p> <p>RL commented that there has never been a situation where a decision is referred back to one specific Board member, and if matters are of operational imperative a decision would need to be made. RL confirmed however that all strategic decisions would continue to come to the Board for prior approval.</p> <p>RC also commented that all such decisions would have to be reported to Resources. If they were not happy with the decision made they could determine that the waiver could not be used in similar situations in the future.</p> <p>HV suggested that perhaps the term 'operational' should be added to give more clarity on times where the waiver decision can be made. RC to action.</p> <p>RC asked the Board to note that the Procurement Strategy has also been updated, and is going to Resources Sub-Committee for approval.</p> <p>The Board approved the revised Financial Regulations and new Standing Financial Instructions.</p> <p>Value for Money Statement</p> <p>RC reminded the Board that there is no regulatory requirement for Northwards to produce a Value for Money (VFM) Statement. However organisations are expected to be able to comply or explain to the HCA.</p> <p>RC presented a report outlining the key areas he felt should be</p>	<p>RC</p>
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<p>d</p>	<p>included in the VFM Statement. RC commented that the HCA are clear that the statement should be driven by the Board.</p> <p>RC said that discussions have taken place with Heads of Service with regards to the resources required. RC also confirmed that Northwards has already committed to all of the financial elements.</p> <p>RC said the statement will bring together the good work Northwards has already carried out with tenants. The Board can use the statement to seek assurance about what Northwards has done, and can publish it if they wish.</p> <p>SA commented that she would see the statement as a living document that would be updated and refreshed each year.</p> <p>FS said she felt all the key aspects were covered.</p> <p>GJ enquired about the return on assets and asked if environmental assets were included. RC advised that they were. GJ commented that staff are also assets, and said that this is something to be considered in the statement.</p> <p>RC said that he would bring a draft statement back to Board if members were happy to approve the format and contents proposed in the report.</p> <p>The Board approved the format and content for inclusion in the Value for Money Statement.</p> <p>Yes Annual Accounts</p> <p>RL confirmed that the Yes Annual Accounts were approved at their AGM on 5 November 2014, and that Larry Patrick had attended to represent Northwards as sole member.</p> <p>RL also asked the Board to note that Yes are in the process of appointing their own auditors, and they will audit Yes Annual Accounts next year.</p> <p>The Board noted that the Yes Annual Accounts which were approved by Northwards on 5 November 2014.</p>	
<p>10 a</p>	<p>RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL</p> <p>MEAP Review Update</p> <p>RL informed the Board that the consultant's report is still awaiting sign off with the Council.</p> <p>RL confirmed that there are two aspects for Northwards to consider - rehousing and major adaptations.</p>	

	<p>RL confirmed that there are service design workshops being arranged to look into what this would involve, and the resources that would be required to deliver these services.</p> <p>AT asked whether these would be any type of adaptations. RL said that this depends on where the line will be drawn between major and minor adaptations, and what staff come over to deliver the service. RL said however that assessment will remain with the Council.</p> <p>RL said that he will report back to the Board when the position is clearer.</p> <p>The Board noted the update.</p> <p>b Management Fee Negotiations</p> <p>RC gave a verbal update on the Management Fee negotiations.</p> <p>RC confirmed that the most recent meeting with the Council was on 5 November 2014. Proposals were put to the Council around increasing the fees per property, and Northwards were also pushing for specific revenue streams that the Council could assist with. For example court fees and disposal of waste costs from Open Spaces Team.</p> <p>RC said that the Council requested a report outlining these proposals, and this has been sent to them to go before the HRA Board which was taking place on 11.11.14. RC said that no response has been received as yet, but also reminded the Board that Northwards still must find a more financially sustainable way forward.</p> <p>MS said that the figure being discussed in relation to Supporting People is 12% reduction or more, which also needs to be forwarded into budget setting.</p> <p>RL confirmed that if necessary a specific financial strategy meeting will be called in December.</p> <p>The Board noted the update.</p> <p>RC left the meeting.</p>	
<p>13</p> <p>a</p>	<p>GOVERNANCE</p> <p>Northwards Memorandum & Articles</p> <p>RL presented Northwards Memorandum & Articles, and explained that they have been updated in line with governance best practice, and updates to Company Law.</p> <p>TK confirmed that there have been a few minor changes,</p>	

	<p>including the incorporation of the 9 year maximum term rule for Board members. TK said that the Memorandum & Articles have been sent to Northwards' solicitors and they have not proposed any other amendments.</p> <p>TK confirmed that, if the Board approves the Memorandum & Articles, they will be sent to the Council so they may pass them through their solicitors. Following this an Extra General Meeting (EGM) will be called to get final approval for the updated Memorandum & Articles.</p> <p>HV queried whether the objects meant to cover private rented property. TK to check.</p> <p>The Board approved the updated Memorandum & Articles, and requested that they be sent to the Council for review by their solicitors.</p>	TK
b	<p>Yes Memorandum & Articles</p> <p>RL presented Yes Memorandum & Articles to the Board. RL advised that, as sole member, Northwards is responsible for approving Yes' company rules.</p> <p>TK explained that Yes Memorandum & Articles were sent to Northwards' solicitors and they have not suggested any amendments.</p> <p>HV noted that there was a typing error on P.10. TK will ask Yes to amend.</p> <p>RL confirmed that if the Board approves the Memorandum & Articles, Yes will seek CIC regulator approval and then call an EGM to formally adopt the rules.</p> <p>The Board approved the updated Yes Memorandum and Articles.</p>	
c	<p>Northwards and Yes Intra-Group Agreement</p> <p>RL presented the proposed Intra-Group agreement between Northwards and Yes. RL explained that the agreement is designed to clarify the responsibilities of Northwards as parent, and Yes as subsidiary.</p> <p>TK confirmed that the agreement had also been sent to Northwards' solicitors, and recommendations have been included.</p> <p>HV suggested that under 'Group Policies' it should read risk 'management' rather than risk 'assessment'. Also, under Appendix 1 as group parent Northwards would 'provide' policies rather than 'implement' them. The Board agreed. TK to amend.</p>	TK

	<p>The Board approved the Intra-Group Agreement between Northwards and Yes.</p> <p>d Sub-Committee Membership Review</p> <p>SA and RL confirmed that they have carried out the annual Sub-Committee membership review. As there has been no change in Board membership, it was proposed that the Sub-Committee membership remains as it is.</p> <p>The Board agreed that Sub-Committee membership should remain unchanged, and that Sub-Committees will elect their Chairs at their next meetings.</p> <p>e Meeting Dates 2015</p> <p>TK presented to proposed meeting dates for 2015. TK explained that the dates have taken into account, as far as possible, Labour Group dates and public holidays.</p> <p>TK said that calendar invites would be sent out to members as soon as possible.</p> <p>The Board approved the meeting dates for 2015.</p> <p>f Board Leads Review</p> <p>TK confirmed that at the last Board meeting members had been asked to express their interest in the Board Lead roles.</p> <p>It was proposed that the Board Leads are as follows:</p> <p>Equality & Diversity: Fiona Sharkey Health & Safety: Mark Leach Value for Money: Guy Johnson Safeguarding: Sharon Thomas</p> <p>TK confirmed that all Board leads will be supported by their relevant lead officers to fulfil their roles.</p> <p>Members approved the Board Leads for each role.</p> <p>g Register of Interests – Annual Return</p> <p>TK tabled the forms and reminded members that they must complete annual declaration of interests. Members were asked to return completed forms to TK.</p> <p>h E&D Monitoring – Annual Return</p> <p>TK also reminded members that annual equality monitoring forms must be completed so Northwards can report on Board diversity.</p>	<p>TK</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>ALL</p>
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	Members were asked to return completed forms to TK.	
14	<p>INVOLVEMENT OF RESIDENTS</p> <p>a Resident Involvement Update</p> <p>MS reminded members that in July 2013 the Board had approved new resident involvement arrangements. This included a new, less formal structure for the Area Panels, and also the establishment of a performance monitoring group.</p> <p>MS confirmed that a review of the arrangements has been carried out. He said that they have had limited success and mixed reviews from members, and that participation has dropped slightly.</p> <p>MS presented the Board with a proposal to revise resident involvement arrangements. This would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an update, re-launch and rebranding of the ‘involved residents network’ • Holding a smaller number of events to focus resources and encourage maximum engagement and participation. Events would be linked to business planning, performance monitoring and budget setting • Annual Area Panel events to decide on how to spend the environmental budget <p>ST agreed that targeted events can lead to more effective engagement, and cited recent police consultation exercises as a good example.</p> <p>MS confirmed that Tenants’ View and resident forums would continue as normal.</p> <p>MS also said that it was also proposed that resident involvement link with the digital inclusion agenda and look beyond ‘traditional’ ways of engagement.</p> <p>MS said that VE had e-mailed him some comments as she was unable to make the meeting. He said VE was pleased with the proposals, and felt they would satisfy those tenants who were not comfortable with the existing arrangements.</p> <p>MS asked the Board to agree in principle with the recommendations, and said that he would bring a further Board report to seek approval for detailed arrangements to be implemented in April 2015.</p> <p>The Board approved in principle the revised resident involvement arrangements.</p>	MS
15	RESOURCES	

	<p>23 September 2014</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2014 were approved subject to Resources Sub-Committee approval.</p>	
16	<p>OPERATIONS</p> <p>17 September 2014</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2014 were approved subject to Operations Sub-Committee approval.</p>	
17	<p>AUDIT</p> <p>23 October 2014</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2014 were approved subject to Audit Sub-Committee approval.</p>	
18	<p>HORIZONS GROUP</p> <p>No meetings since last Board.</p>	
19	<p>Board Rolling Agenda</p> <p>NS requested that Tracy Langton provide a Welfare Reform update to the Board before budget setting. RL to advise Tracy.</p>	RL
20	<p>AOB</p> <p>TK informed members that Wednesday 12 November 2014 was Housing Day and Northwards was participating.</p>	
	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Tuesday 9 December 2014, Health & Safety Training, Hexagon Tower Board Room, 6pm – 8pm</p> <p>Tuesday 27 January 2015, Hexagon Tower Board Room, 6.30pm – 8.30pm</p>	
	<p>End of Meeting</p> <p>SA thanked everyone and closed the meeting at 8.45pm</p>	