

**Northwards Housing - ALMO Board Meeting**

**Hexagon Tower**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at 10.00 am**

**Chair: Ade Alao**

**Present:**

Ade Alao (AA)	Board Member
Richard Lockwood (RCL)	Board Member
Sue Ratchford (SR)	Board Member
Joan FitzGerald (JF)	Board Member
Anna Trotman (AT)	Board Member
June Hitchen (JH)	Board Member
Martin McKeivitt	Board Member
Michelle Blakeley	Board Member

**In Attendance:**

Robin Lawler (RL)	Chief Executive
Larry Patrick (LP)	Director of Property Services (part)
Steve Wood (SW)	Director of Business Services
Diane Roberts	Governance Support Officer (Minutes)

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>  Quorum confirmed.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Apologies given by: Fionnuala Stringer Eric Hobin Harvey Norton	
<b>3</b>	<b>Declaration of Interests/Confidential Matters</b>  No declarations of interest. Item 4 is a confidential item  Equality and Diversity update deferred to next Board Meeting	
<b>4</b>	<b>Selection of Preferred Bidder for Framework Contract Procurement (Joint Venture Company)- Confidential</b>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
5	<p><b>Business Plan</b></p> <p>SW explained that in future years the Business Planning exercise will be more inclusive. Area Panels, Focus Groups and Staff views will be sought in a more extensive way. The Plan is similar to the Delivery Plan. In future years, the two documents may be combined. The Plan will influence where the organisation is going :- Finance, Human Resources, Resources etc.</p> <p>The SWOT and PEST analysis has been produced with the help of Barry Preedy. The final document will be presented in the form of headings and text.</p> <p>SW requested the Board consider the paper and comment on anything missed, inaccuracies, or any fundamental flaws. SW is looking for all ideas and these will be reflected in the final Plan.</p> <p><b>SWOT Analysis</b></p> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>AT suggested RESPECT Agenda needs a specific reference.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position in local <u>housing market</u> – AA raised demand post 5 years – SW confirmed this needed to be linked to local demographics. AA commented that there is strong demand with waiting lists in all areas</li> <li>• <u>Customer service levels</u> – AA believes we are ahead of the game.</li> <li>• <u>Range of services</u> – AA a longer term business plan may show a wider range of services or a different focus</li> <li>• MB described the value of the <u>Neighbourhood Warden Service</u>. AT believes that this service may be valuable across all areas. MB asked if <u>Housing Market Renewal Areas</u> can attract other funding. SW explained this is also a threat as funding could discontinue. AA commented that the Home Office are looking at funding for Community Support Officers. SW confirmed that the Neighbourhood Warden Service is not in the Business Plan after April 2007. This is an area requiring urgent review. JH asked about future funds. SW responded that the Housing Market Renewal Fund may fund this activity. If the funding discontinues, the Wardens would go back to Council employment.</li> </ul> <p>JF requested clarification of warden duties and if side streets were covered. JH confirmed that the role is the eyes and ears of the organisation, reporting ASB, and garden tool loan scheme.</p> <p>JF has concerns that Wardens on estates can give the impression that it is a troubled estate.</p> <p>RCL explained he had met Ian Gillett who explained the Wardens role.</p>	

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	<p>RL reported that this was a topic for the next Staff Briefing's and that the Board were welcome to attend.</p> <p><u>Capacity to diversify</u> – AA requests that links to other areas be described. SW confirmed this will be included in the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Management Team Capacity</u> – AA stated the the Board should monitor this.</li> <li>• <u>Information Systems</u> – AA is impressed with the inspection website. SW can give details how to access. John Burton is taking a report on IT Strategy to Sub-Committees and Board.</li> <li>• <u>Staff skills and competencies</u> – AA is keen to build on this. SW confirmed this will be in Human Resources section of the Plan.</li> <li>• <u>Delivery of Decent Homes</u> – AA commented that often it is harder to spend funds rather than source funds. Northwards has a good track record and robust plans to deliver. RCL commented that this will take some time. MB registered concern about delays in current schemes. AA explained this is due to Council funding where decision-making unavoidably takes time and this process should be quicker where Northwards have control of the decision. AA recognises the frustration this can cause. RL requested that MB report any problems so staff can deal with issues. JF reported that two letters of apology have been sent out regarding postponed starts which have been well received.</li> </ul> <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Changes in legislation/status of ALMO's</u> – AA said that there are strong feelings regarding ALMOS' futures, but is also a threat. Will depend on views. Board must keep a watchful eye on the developments. SW drew attention to current changes in the ODPM.</li> <li>• <u>Increased involvement in regeneration</u> – AT raised the issue of displacement expanding. JH noted that up to 200 Northwards properties may be required for PFI displacement – possibly increasing to three to four hundred. RL commented this is needed to be balanced with local priority and will be over a period of time. JH commented that Miles Platting PFI is due to start soon. She also has concerns that Northwards can not refuse lets, and this may lead to issues in new locations. AA has experience of regeneration and there are ways to manage issues.</li> <li>• <u>Technological changes</u> – noted by Board</li> <li>• <u>Partnering arrangements</u> – Board noted key partnership with the Council. The Board should ensure Northwards</li> </ul>	

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	<p>meets its own aims and objectives and focuses on its' priorities. RCL noted that partnerships will always change. RL reported that he and MS will attend North Manchester Public Agencies Forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Gains by effective procurement</u> – AA gave examples of joint working with RSL's, PFI's. JH requested that we review land, including land we maintain and consult on what is the most appropriate use of this land. RL reported this had been raised at Area Panels. AA noted that we need a good strategy to use savings effectively.</li> <li>• <u>Renegotiation/review of SLA's</u> – AA is aware that a piece of work is currently in progress. Northwards must ensure it is content with the services provided and the cost.</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Relative/absolute rent levels</u> – RL raised if Government change rules this will have an impact. SW confirmed this would affect the HRA. AT reported that Council rents have been frozen/reduced for the next 2/3 years. RL explained this is based on current situation and rent convergence rules for 2012, but this may be affected by any Governmental changes. AA confirmed that rent convergence will take a number of years. SW will meet Hillary Vaughan to check facts prior to completing the Plan.</li> <li>• <u>Cost base</u> – AA understands that costs will difficult to establish in the first year of operation. RL reported benchmarking is being undertaken and that SW will have a base to work from in the first 5 or 6 months.</li> <li>• <u>Relationship Management</u> – Board noted careful management is required.</li> <li>• <u>Financial Strengths</u> – Board noted financial strength. SW reported he is developing financial modelling and sensitivities. This will include changes in RTB sales.</li> <li>• <u>Mix of Board Members</u> – AA noted that strength of the Board must be maintained.</li> </ul> <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Changes in funding regime</u> - AA commented that we need to plan for worst case scenario.</li> <li>• <u>Regulatory changes and re-inspection</u> – noted by Board</li> <li>• <u>Increased maintenance costs</u> – AA need to plan how we respond to changes</li> <li>• <u>Pressure on local authority to transfer stock</u>- Board noted that Northwards needs to look to the future and beyond Decent Homes.</li> <li>• <u>Right to buy sales</u> – Board noted SW working on models.</li> <li>• <u>Loss of experienced staff</u> – RL reported that workforce</li> </ul>	

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	<p>planning and succession plan is in progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Changes in interest/inflation rates</u> – AA noted sensitive to changes. SW reported RTB is area affected.</li> <li>• <u>After Decent Homes achieved</u> –noted by Board</li> </ul> <p><b>PEST Analysis</b></p> <p>SW reported that, other than unemployment, poverty and deprivation, most items are covered through the SWOT analysis. RL noted that the Respect agenda is included in this analysis.</p> <p>AA thinks a review across the organisation would be useful. RL explained this Plan is a building block and reflects the structure. A draft will be presented to June Board meeting. MM requested further information regarding partnerships. AA noted this is an on-going process and will develop. MB raised Social, Cultural and Educational and MANCAT as a local employer. RL reported he, LMcb and LP had met MANCAT on 5<sup>th</sup> May.</p>	
6	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>a) <b>NFA Conference</b></p> <p>AA thanked the Members who attended and hoped that this had been a useful experience.</p> <p>JF reported that some of the sessions were a re-hash of things already done. But found Deborah McLaughlin’s session very informative. The social interaction of sharing experience was valuable.</p> <p>JH was concerned about negativity from some ALMOS towards Councils. Northwards have a good relationship with Manchester and we must be careful not to get caught in this trap of negativity. AA is clear that Northwards must state clearly that this is not our experience</p> <p>JH does not see Northwards going down a negative route regarding the Council partnership.</p> <p>RL agreed that he wanted a positive relationship with the Council and the organisation. Simon Rogers from Kirklees had presented their partnership in a positive way.</p> <p>MB liked the workshop format of the event.</p> <p>RCL confirmed that some of the Conference was a re-hash.</p> <p>AA enjoyed the workshops and offered to circulate papers</p> <p>b) <b>Joint Area Panel Event – Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March</b></p> <p>AA drew this event to Board Members’ attention. Whilst recognising the time commitment if a few members of the Board could attend this would be ideal. RL gave his apologies. AA confirmed his attendance.</p>	

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	<p><b>c) Board Appraisals</b> Appraisals will be completed by Monday. A report will be sent to Human Resources and Equality Sub-Committee meeting on 23 May 2006 and to the Board's June meeting.</p> <p><b>d) Tenant Board Member Meetings</b> AA advised that RL is meeting Tenant Board Members once a month. The purpose of these meetings is to give support regarding challenges in the local areas and as forum to raise issues and be briefed on local issues. AT responded this is very necessary.</p>	
7	<p><b>Date and Time of Next Board Meeting</b></p> <p>Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at 6.30- Cheetham Hill Road Local Office Noted that there is a training session at 5.00pm to 6.00pm on Resident Involvement</p> <p>Meeting ended at 11.20</p>	