

## Northwards Housing – Resource & Governance Sub-Committee Meeting

Hexagon Tower  
Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September at 5.30pm

Chair: Martin McKeivitt

**Present:**

Ade Alao (AA)	Board Member
Eric Hobin (EH)	Board Member
Richard Lockwood (RL)	Board Member
Martin McKeivitt (MM)	Board Member
Harvey Norton (HN)	Board Member
Fionnuala Stringer (FS)	Board Member

**In Attendance:**

Steve Wood (SW)	Director of Business Services
John Burton (JB)	Principal ICT Manager

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>  It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate. In the absence of Harvey Norton at the start of the meeting, Martin McKeivitt took the Chair for the meeting.  The Chair welcomed John Burton, Principal ICT Manager to the meeting.	
2	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  There were no apologies that needed recording for the meeting.	
3	<b>Declaration of Interests / Confidential Matters / Equality &amp; Diversity Matters Arising</b>  There were no matters for noting under this item. Equality & Diversity implications were noted on particular reports.	
4	<b>Minutes of Last Meeting - 29<sup>th</sup> August 2006</b>  The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed by the Chair.	

5	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>a) Surpluses and Efficiencies Strategy</b>  Further to previous discussions at Sub-Committee, SW presented a strategy for allowing the reinvestment of surpluses and efficiencies into tenant facing services that, if agreed, would be incorporated into the financial regulations.</p> <p>It was agreed in discussion that the principle behind the strategy should not be to act as a disincentive to managers from making savings or being more efficient but should provide a mechanism for new projects that improve services to tenants to be funded and efficiency gains to be properly directed towards improvement. SW confirmed that this strategy needed to be very much part of the budget culture for the organisation.</p> <p>It was agreed in discussion that consideration should be given to 50% of savings being left with individual managers in order to ensure that there was some incentive.</p> <p>Subject to a revision in this regard, Sub-Committee approved the Surpluses and Efficiencies Strategy for incorporation in the Financial Regulations and recommended to the Board that it be approved.</p> <p><b>Recommendation to the Board: That the Board approve the revisions to the Financial Regulations to incorporate the Surpluses and Efficiencies Strategy.</b></p> <p><b>b) Weekly Cost Targets</b>  Following on from the previous meeting's discussion on finance performance, SW presented a report detailing the previous calculation of the Weekly Cost Targets and explaining a revision to these numbers.</p> <p>The recalculated targets had been prepared on the basis of the budget using the actual cost structure of the organisation and this will be how the targets in future years would be derived.</p> <p>It was noted that the overall target weekly cost figures had increased by 7% on the previous targets but SW explained how the previous figures had born no relation to Northwards' cost structure and therefore he did not see any problems in communicating this message.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the revised Weekly Cost Targets and recommended their approval to the Board.</p>	<p><b>SW</b></p> <p><b>Board</b></p>
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	<p><b>Recommendation to the Board: That the Board approve the revised Weekly Cost Targets for the Performance Management Framework.</b></p> <p><b>c) Fraud Policy</b></p> <p>SW reported on discussions that had taken place with the Council following a question that had been raised at the Board on a £5,000 reporting limit previously set out in the Fraud Policy.</p> <p>Following these discussions, it had been agreed that it would be more appropriate for a limit of £1,000 to be incorporated into the Fraud Policy but there would also be continuing discussions between Northwards and the City Council in relation to control issues and any other matters that arose that might be of concern.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the amendment to paragraph 2.4 of the Fraud Policy changing £5,000 to £1,000 and recommended the amendment to the Board for their approval.</p> <p><b>Recommendation to the Board: That the Board approve an amendment to paragraph 2.4 of the Fraud Policy changing £5,000 to £1,000.</b></p>	<p><b>Board</b></p>
	<p><b>d) Money Laundering Procedures</b></p> <p>At the previous meeting of the Board SW had been asked to consider a set of Money Laundering Procedures and these had now been prepared for incorporation into the Fraud Policy.</p> <p>SW explained the basis of the procedure and what was required of individual officers, particularly those on the cash desks.</p> <p>In considering any training requirements, it was agreed that the best model would be to incorporate any Money Laundering Procedure training within existing controls training in relation to proper procedures over obtaining identities and recording cash transactions.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the additional section to the Fraud Policy incorporating the Money Laundering Procedures and recommended the amendment to the Board for their approval.</p> <p><b>Recommendation to the Board: That the Board approve an additional section to the Fraud Policy to</b></p>	<p><b>Board</b></p>

	<b>incorporate the Money Laundering Procedures.</b>	<b>Board</b>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <p><b>a) Standards Panel Procedure</b></p> <p>SW reported that further to a revision to the Articles of Association to allow the Board to form a Standards Panel, he had been asked to draw up some brief procedures to make it clear how such a panel might be brought into existence should it ever be required.</p> <p>The procedures, which were drafted as an amendment to the Standing Orders, made it clear how the Board or members of the Board could arrange for a panel to be established to deal with a particular matter.</p> <p>After a couple of questions, Sub-Committee approved the revisions to the Standing Orders to incorporate procedures for the Standards Panel and recommended them to the Board for approval.</p> <p><b>Recommendation to the Board: That the Board approve the revisions to the Standing Orders incorporating the Standards Panel Procedure.</b></p>	<b>Board</b>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Information Communications Technology</b></p> <p><b>a) ICT Strategy Update</b></p> <p>Sub-Committee discussed an update on the ICT Strategy that had been prepared earlier in the year, which highlighted progress against a number of projects.</p> <p>In answer to questions about VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) JB explained the potential savings over five years that would principally come from free internal calls. HN asked whether other systems including mobile phones and CCTV had been considered as part of the package and JB responded that this had not been considered to date. There was also an enquiry as to whether the City Council had made any real savings on converting to VOIP but this information was not available at the present time.</p> <p>The replacement of printers and the reduction in their number was discussed by Sub-Committee and JB explained the current process with a view to trying to</p>	

reduce the amount of printing. It was clear that this was an issue that needed to be kept under review.

FS noted how pleasing it was to see progress with ICT access for Sheltered Wardens and Caretakers and JB reported that a paper was currently being prepared which would be considered by EMT and Sub-Committee in due course. This would have cost implications but also raised broader issues around career development and communication.

Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report.

**b) Comino Project Update**

JB presented a project update for the Comino Universal Housing System and its implementation which was getting close to delivery.

He explained the reduction in the number of software systems and how the new software packages were tied in with each other.

The tight timetable for going live showed the Asset Management software Pro Master being launched on 30<sup>th</sup> October, Universal Housing for all areas other than repairs together with Performance Management on 13<sup>th</sup> November and the Universal Housing Repair System going live on 4<sup>th</sup> December. He explained that there were still a number of critical tasks that needed completing if these dates were to be met but currently the project was still on schedule.

A comprehensive training programme was about to start to give every person the appropriate training. This was being done out of the office and managers had completed detailed plans to ensure that cover continued. JB noted that the extensive amount of training was bound to have some effect on service delivery.

After go live, there would be a 3 month stabilisation period during which, further work would take place on the systems to ensure that they were properly bedded in and a group of super users who had been brought out of their normal roles would be assisting the ICT team in this process. Phase 2 projects for additional functionality would follow this period but these would need to be evaluated in due course.

Sub-Committee noted how pleased they were with progress to date in working on an ICT project that was on

	<p>time and on budget. SW and JB commented that there was still a number of uncertainties and it was still too early to say whether the project had been a complete success but to date, it was coming together as well as could be expected.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the report.</p> <p><b>c) Board ICT Access</b></p> <p>Contained within the ICT Strategy circulated earlier in the year had been some questions about how much ICT support should be given to Board members. SW presented a paper outlining a variety of options that might be available and asked Sub-Committee for their views.</p> <p>It was noted that individual Board members' use of IT going forward was likely to be variable depending on the resources available to the individual and to some extent, what was on offer.</p> <p>After some discussion it was unclear whether the organisation needed to do anything specific but it might be appropriate to map out where individuals Board members were at and therefore AA suggested that a questionnaire might be prepared to enquire what enhancements individual members would like to see.</p> <p>It was agreed that the officers would take the ideas presented and the discussion away and bring back a further report in due course.</p>	<p><b>SW / JB</b></p>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Accounts</b></p> <p><b>a) Monthly Budget Report August</b></p> <p>SW presented the latest monthly budget report and highlighted a number of the key issues that had been incorporated into review of this periods accounts. Further to questions at the previous meeting, he confirmed that the Housing Value Added Services for general community and multi-storey security were both charged on a usage basis.</p> <p>An additional schedule had been circulated with the accounts detailing the repair spend. In answer to a question RL explained what was covered by the environmental work and SW explained the reason for some delays on the spend profile which was now likely to catch up with budget. HN enquired as to the profile of the</p>	

	<p>gas servicing budget and SW agreed to report back to Sub-Committee with more detail on this.</p> <p>SW explained that he was still working on the methodology for the outturn forecast which at the present time was misleading to both officers and the Sub-Committee. HN noted that the organisation needed to be very clear as to what potential surpluses might be available so decisions about spend could be made in year in order that there was no threat of any claw back by the Council.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the accounts to the end of August.</p>	<p><b>SW</b></p>
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>Monitoring</b></p> <p><b>a) Performance Management</b>  The most recent performance information on rent collection and finance had been circulated with the agenda and Sub-Committee reviewed the performance to date.</p> <p>SW explained that the fall in the rent collection percentage in August was likely to be due to the effect of holidays as well as some staffing issues that were currently being addressed within the team. He reminded Sub-Committee that October's meeting would have a focus of looking at arrears and rent recovery performance.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the report.</p> <p><b>b) Risk Management</b></p> <p>An update on the Risk Management Framework had been circulated with the agenda and Sub-Committee noted progress to date.</p> <p><b>c) Value for Money and Efficiency</b></p> <p>SW reported on progress to date against both the Value for Money Strategy and the Annual Efficiency Statement targets.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted this report.</p>	
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Fraud Register</b></p> <p>The Fraud Register was made available for review by Sub-Committee.</p>	

<b>11</b>	<p><b>Training Requirements</b></p> <p>There were no specific training issues identified as a result of the Sub-Committee meeting.</p>	
<b>12</b>	<p><b>AOUB</b></p> <p>There was no further business for the Sub-Committee to consider.</p>	
<b>13</b>	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting of the Sub-Committee would take place on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> October - 5.30pm at Hexagon Tower.</p> <p>With thanks to everyone, the Chair closed the meeting at 7.00pm.</p>	