

		Report to: Northwards Housing Board 8 th May 2007		Item No: <h1>7c</h1>	
Title:		Board Away Day			
Date:		25 th April 2007			
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Confidential:		No			
For: (Please tick action required)		NOTING	DISCUSSION	APPROVAL ✓	
PURPOSE OF REPORT					
The purpose of the report is to propose to the Board that an Away Day is arranged for Board Members in June when the future strategy and direction of Northwards can be considered and debated. This is a joint proposal to the Board from the Chair and Chief Executive.					
RECOMMENDATION					
The Board is asked to:					
a) confirm whether an Away Day in June is supported and if so, when the event would best be held to encourage the maximum participation of Board Members;					
b) suggest items for discussion at the Away Day;					
c) consider whether Board Members support the idea of quarterly sessions looking ahead to future issues or opportunities.					
IMPLICATIONS					
Equality & Diversity:		Sound Equality & Diversity practice is essential for good governance.			
Financial:		This will form part of the discussion			
Staffing:		This will form part of the discussion			
Decency Target:		This will form part of the discussion			
Governance:		Time for proper reflection and discussion will assist good governance			
Risk Assessment:		This will form part of discussion			

Equality & Diversity Implications (Please tick where relevant):

BME	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic Violence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol/Drug Mis-users	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consultation/Consideration:

	Yes, No or N/A:	Name:	Date:
Sub-Committee:	N/A		
Area Panel:	N/A		
Task Groups:	N/A		
Ward Councillors:	N/A		

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to propose to the Board that an Away Day is arranged for Board Members in June when the future strategy and direction of Northwards can be considered and debated. This is a joint proposal to the Board from the Chair and Chief Executive.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Board has inevitably focussed over the first 18 months of Northwards' existence in establishing the company, achieving a successful Inspection result and communicating with tenants and customers who we are and what we can offer to them. It is now appropriate for the Board, with the advice and support of Executive Management Team, to consider the strategic direction of Northwards up to and beyond the end of the current 5 year Management Agreement with the Council.

2.2 At the Board in March the discussion on the Business and Delivery Plan commendably prompted Board Members to ask about the future viability of Northwards given the declining stock in management and the pressures upon the Council's Housing Revenue Account because of reductions in management and maintenance allowances paid by Government. It was agreed at the Board that there should be an opportunity for the Board to have some dedicated time to discuss future strategic direction and longer term financial planning.

2.3 The Chair and Chief Executive therefore judge that the time is right for an Away Day. This report sets out the suggested arrangements for the Away Day and for informal discussion four times a year upon emerging pressures and opportunities.

3.0 Proposed Away Day

3.1 There are a couple of alternatives in terms of timing of the Away Day and Board Members are asked to express a preference for the options:

- i) One whole day during the working week;

ii) All day Saturday;

iii) Friday evening (with dinner and overnight stop) and Saturday morning.

3.2 It is suggested that we book a local hotel for the event and Board Members are invited to suggest suitable venues.

3.3 The day may be more successful by using an external facilitator. This has been found to be beneficial for Board Member Training. Given their knowledge of Northwards from assisting with Inspection and their work upon Board Members' appraisals, it is proposed to use Enlighten in the role of facilitator.

3.4 The detailed programme for the Away Day has yet to be developed and indeed, Board Members' comments are sought on the topics for discussion, but could include:

- * Undertaking a Strength Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis;
- * Consideration of Risks;
- * Consideration of opportunities for business diversification;
- * Future financial planning;
- * Cross cutting (rather than individual) issues arising from Board Member appraisals- key development areas;
- * intended outcomes from Board Member appraisals in 2007 (report to May Board);
- * Succession planning for Board Members and senior managers;
- * Forward planning of Board agenda.

3.5 This is not an exhaustive list and Board Member Members' comments and additional ideas are welcomed.

4.0 Quarterly Discussion Sessions

4.1 The Chair has suggested that, instead of Board Member training in one of the months when the Board does not meet, once a quarter Board Members meet to look ahead to issues or opportunities arising over next 3 months and beyond. Whilst Executive Management Team would suggest topics for discussion, Board Members could also ask for items to be discussed.

4.2 The intention is to make these sessions informal with brief action notes. Formal decisions would be made at future Board Meetings once the issue had been properly researched and a paper produced.

4.3 If Board Members felt it appropriate, part or all of these sessions could take place without officers being present.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 The Board is asked to:

- a) confirm whether an Away Day in June is supported and if so, when the event would best be held to encourage the maximum participation of Board Members;
- b) suggest items for discussion at the Away Day;
- c) consider whether Board Members support the idea of quarterly sessions looking ahead to future issues or opportunities.