

Northwards Housing – Resource & Audit Sub-Committee Meeting

Hexagon Tower
Tuesday 24th July 2007 at 5.30pm

Chair: Harvey Norton

Present: Ade Alao (AA) Board Member
Martin Mckevitt (MM) Board Member
Harvey Norton (HN) Board Member

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

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	Welcome and Introductions The meeting was not quorate. It was agreed to proceed, discuss items on the agenda without making any decisions.	
2	Apologies for Absence Apologies had been received from Rachel Christie and Richard Lockwood.	
3	Declaration of Interests / Confidential Matters / Equality & Diversity Matters Arising There were no matters for noting under this item. Equality & Diversity implications were noted on particular reports.	
4	Minutes of last meeting 26th June 2007 No corrections were noted that would alter the minutes. Approval of the minutes and their signing was delayed to the next meeting.	
5	Matters Arising a) Auditors Further to the last meeting SW explained that the resignation of Robson Rhodes as auditors had been noted by the Board and that Grant Thornton had been appointed to fill the vacancy. b) Annual Efficiency Statement SW presented a revised Annual Efficiency Statement to Sub-Committee that now took on board comments at the last meeting about reflecting non-cashable efficiencies. Sub-Committee noted	

	<p>this. The Statement would come back to Sub-Committee for approval at the next meeting.</p>	
6	<p>ICT</p> <p>a) ICT Strategy</p> <p>JB outlined the main areas of progress since the approval of the ICT Strategy in 2006 and further areas of development.</p> <p>No major changes to the Strategy were being proposed. Additional projects in the year included work on the HR system, the facility to look up the Improvement Programme on the website, remote access to Lotus Notes, the Kiosks for local offices and ICT access for Sheltered Wardens and Caretakers.</p> <p>Contracts with CTU at the Council were currently being reviewed. HN asked whether the Council SLA was clear in what it was providing Northwards. JB responded that elements like the network and telephony were very good and stable, but that were concerns over some of the support services. Some of these could be done in house and this was part of the negotiation of the SLA with the council. It was agreed that these aspirations and discussions should be reflected in the Strategy.</p> <p>A small part of the agreement was the mobile phone contract and this was being soft market tested.</p> <p>JB explained that a Key culture development was discussion about flexible working which would include estate working as well as working from home.</p> <p>HN asked about the plans for kiosks and JB explained that it was currently intended to put one in each local office. The ability to make them Multilanguage would be looked at and AA asked that the default to small font size be changed.</p> <p>AA asked about the approached to new systems and initiatives since an integrated approach would be much more preferable than lots of third party software. JB confirmed that this was part of the intended Strategy to ensure this would happen.</p> <p>HN asked for a project map or gantt chart to be produced that would track progress against the Strategy through the year and JB agreed to take this away to implement.</p> <p>b) Civica Update</p> <p>JB provided a detailed update for Sub-Committee on the Civica project reflecting back to the timetable that had overran and the difficulties that had been encountered. Some of these had been the result of working with others and some had been the result of non-delivery of parts of the system.</p>	<p>JB</p> <p>JB</p> <p>JB</p>

Stabilisation of Civica was now running through to the end of August and tests were in place to see whether this had been achieved. The Governance Group was now well established, chaired by Northwards and was monitoring progress and developments.

AA asked whether there was now light at the end of the tunnel. JB confirmed that the outstanding issues were now much reduced and the system seemed now to be stable and was getting better.

JB outlined work that had taken place in sharing practice and issues with Kirklees Housing, Golden Gates Housing, Parkway Green and the Council. This had resulted in a number of pieces of learning and may result in time in a shared programme of working.

JB explained that there were still three areas of concern where attention was currently focused. Development on the Promaster System had been slow and this was being investigated. Development work on the Allocations module was now being tested.

The third issue was that of reporting and the difficulties in getting performance information from the system. HN asked about progress on the Data Warehouse solution that had been approved at the last Sub-Committee meeting and JB explained that a project team had now been set up, a project plan had been agreed and the design of the first module had started. The target completion date of January 2008 had not changed.

SW explained discussions with the Council about Northwards' approach which were to allay fears about knock on implications rather than seeking their approval. It was imperative that the project was delivered for Re-Inspection and for Performance Measurement as a whole.

After a couple of other questions around the contract with Civica and cost, Sub-Committee noted the update.

c) IT Provision for Area Panels and Tenant Groups

AA explained the background to the discussions which had been raised at the Board the previous week and which seemed in part to relate back to discussions that had taken place very early on in the life of the organisation.

Some options had been set out in the report to Sub-Committee about IT provision but HN asked whether other options were available. In particular it would be useful to know what other organisations were doing.

JB confirmed that the only current policy was to handover old

	<p>equipment and that there was no reason why this should not continue. It was known that some tenant groups claimed their broadband line cost as grant.</p> <p>After discussion, Sub-Committee were not keen on the principle of giving individuals PC's and printers since it would be difficult to justify value for money linked to personal use.</p> <p>In addition there was a major concern of diverting support away from critical projects like Civica and the Data Warehouse and the cost of additional staff could not be justified.</p> <p>However, the Board had asked for consultation with the Area Panels at their August meetings and a report back to the Board in September.</p> <p>It was agreed that the officers would prepare a paper for the Area Panels asking for details of what the take up might be and what PC's would be used for so the value for money case could be proved and so provision could be proved to be beneficial to both Northwards and Area Panel Members. Sub-Committee were minded to offer PC's to the Chairs of Area Panel.</p> <p>It was agreed that it be recommended to the Board that the current policy for provision of equipment to Tenant Groups be continued.</p>	SW
7	<p>Fraud Register</p> <p>SW reported that there were no Fraud issues entered in the register since the last meeting. Based on previous experiences a series of unannounced inspections of petty cash were now underway.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the report.</p>	
8	<p>Any Other Urgent Business</p> <p>a) Management Accounts 30th June 2007</p> <p>The accounts for the first three months had been tabled at the meeting for Sub-Committee to take away.</p> <p>HN asked about the figure included in the repairs spend and SW confirmed that commitments figures had been used as information was still difficult to obtain. This was, however, now improving.</p> <p>SW explained that the cost and the funding for the work on the Stock Condition survey was distorting the results but generally things were better than budget.</p>	

9	Date of Next Meeting The next meeting will be on Tuesday 25 th September 2007 at 5.30pm at Hexagon Tower.	
	With thanks to everyone, the Chair closed the meeting at 6.50pm.	