

Northwards Housing – Resources Sub-Committee Meeting

**Hexagon Tower
Tuesday 28th April 2009 at 5:30pm**

Chair: Martin McKeivitt

Present:

Martin McKeivitt	(MM)	Board Member
Fatima Adamjee	(FA)	Board Member
Mark Hackett	(MH)	Board Member

In Attendance:

Steve Wood	(SW)	Director of Business Services
Alison Foster	(AF)	Head of Finance
Lisa McBurnie	(LMcB)	Head of HR
Toby Wilson	(TW)	Grant Thornton UK LLP
Neil Garnham	(NG)	Grant Thornton UK LLP

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.</p>	
2	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Sue Ratchford.</p> <p>The Chair raised the issue of attendance at the meetings and it was agreed that this might need some discussion with the Board. SW confirmed that he had identified a co-optee for the Sub-Committee.</p>	MM
3	<p>Declaration of Interests / Confidential Matters / Equality & Diversity Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no matters for noting under this item. Report 8 was confidential.</p> <p>Equality and Diversity implications were noted on particular reports.</p>	
4	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting</p> <p>The minutes from the meeting held on 24th February were approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
5	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes.</p>	
6	<p>Accounts 2008-09</p> <p>a) Audit Approach Memorandum</p> <p>TW introduced Grant Thornton as External Auditors to</p>	

	<p>Northwards and the Audit Approach Memorandum. The purpose of the document was to share the outline strategy and approach. The final audit is planned for the week commencing 18th May 2009.</p> <p>NG took Sub-Committee through the detail of the report. A critical area for review on the audit would be Repairs and Maintenance expenditure and discussions with officers over invoicing issues during the year. This would be the subject of testing and discussion on the final audit to ensure that all expenditure and liabilities are correctly captured.</p> <p>Other key issues include FRS17: Retirement Benefits and the legal compensation provision. Given the changes in the stock market position it is thought likely that there will be an increased pension deficit for the current year.</p> <p>The Auditors would report back to Sub-Committee on 23rd June with their Key Issues Memorandum.</p> <p>The fee had been reduced year-on-year by £600 to £16,900 which reflected the passing on of efficiencies that had been gained through previous processes and the relationship.</p> <p>Sub-Committee thanked the Auditors for their attendance and the Memorandum, the contents of which were noted.</p> <p>b) Accounting Policies</p> <p>SW presented the accounting policies of Northwards as previously set out in the accounts for consideration by Sub-Committee.</p> <p>There were no particular changes proposed although obviously as part of the accounts preparation, the text would be reviewed with the auditors in the light of the figures.</p> <p>A formal policy would require drafting in the next financial period for fixed assets after the procurement and investment in the new computer network which was being brought into use in June 2009.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the accounting policies as set out in the report as appropriate for the business.</p>	
7	<p>Monthly Accounts – March 2009</p> <p>AF introduced the period 12 accounts as at the end of March noting some of the key variances on lines as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract fee; • Eastlands Homes income; • Resource Pool bids; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tax on void properties; • Capital programme expenditure. <p>MH asked about value in Service Level Agreements. It is now clearer that the invoice position is more accurate but AF confirmed that the team would be continually monitoring this area. It was particularly pleasing that we were getting on top of the costs of empty properties.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the monthly accounts. Further information in relation to the out-turn position and additional commentary would come with the statutory accounts.</p> <p>The Auditors left the meeting at this point.</p>	
8	<p>Establishment Changes (Confidential)</p> <p>This item was confidential as it contained sensitive staffing information until approved.</p>	
9	<p>HR Policies</p> <p>a) Maternity Pay</p> <p>After reviewing the Maternity Policy last year, LMcb explained that their had been a realisation that in one area within Northwards there was a difference in policy between those people who had come across from the Council and those who had been recruited directly.</p> <p>Therefore Sub-Committee was being asked to agree to harmonise the conditions of pay in relation to the enhanced payments over and above Statutory Maternity Pay.</p> <p>MM asked about the additional costs and it was felt that this was not a major issue for the budget and would be mitigated in part by proper reviews of cover for people who would be on leave.</p> <p>There was a query over paragraph 4.3 of the report in relation to the recovery of enhanced payments if people leave within a particular period and the officers agreed to clarify this.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the proposal to harmonise the organisation's maternity pay entitlement package.</p>	LMcb
10	<p>HR Performance</p> <p>a) Organisational Health Indicators</p> <p>LMcb presented both the performance against the organisational health indicators for 2008-09 and some proposals for new indicators and targets, some of which are stretching and challenging.</p>	

	<p>FA asked about how the indicators fitted together and where these had been developed from. LMcb explained that there was an HR Strategy being developed that sat behind the figures. The indicators would be loaded onto Covalent shortly.</p> <p>MH raised the issue of disability definitions and the Northwards tenants figure of 40% probably included a proportion of people with some form of mental illness.</p> <p>In response to a question on retention levels the officers agreed to check the performance on new starter retention (6 to 12 months) for 2008-09.</p> <p>Sub-Committee approved the new indicators and the proposed targets.</p> <p>b) Absence Performance</p> <p>SW outlined the year's performance on absence which showed days lost as 12.1 days against a target of 9.5. The report contained a lot of detailed analysis by team and directorate.</p> <p>LMcb explained the proposals to use the three new procedures to drive down long-term absence with a target for turning around cases within 40 days (on average). This was a key part of setting the absence performance target for 2009-10 at 8.4 days.</p> <p>Sub-Committee discussed what the data was saying and the challenges for the organisation in addressing long-term absence, particularly stress. MM asked about well-being training and information that could be provided on stress. LMcb explained some of the plans for improving in this area.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the performance and approved the indicators' targets for 2009-10.</p> <p>c) Labour Turnover Performance</p> <p>LMcb presented a report setting out the current and previous year's performance on labour turnover which demonstrated an extremely stable workforce. This was extremely pleasing and was a key part in some of Northwards' success although it also presented challenges in relation to promotion and development.</p> <p>LMcb explained that she was looking in the future to give some more qualitative information about changes in the workforce in future reports to give some context to the figures. Sub-Committee agreed that this would be helpful.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the labour turnover figures.</p>	<p>LMcb</p> <p>LMcb</p>
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11	<p>Inspection Action Plan</p> <p>SW presented the Inspection Action Plan as it related to the Sub-Committee's remit and outlined the key tasks that were due for completion.</p> <p>MM asked if the report could show the tracking of movements on the progress bars and SW agreed to have a look at this for future reports.</p> <p>MH said that he would welcome the inclusion of Value for Money implications on Board reports.</p> <p>Sub-Committee noted the Action Plan.</p>	SW
12	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Rent Collection</p> <p>AF advised Sub-Committee that the rent collection performance for the year 2008-09 had been 99.1% against the target of 98.5%. Sub-Committee asked for their congratulations to be passed onto the team.</p>	
13	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be on Tuesday 23rd June at 5:30pm at Hexagon Tower.</p> <p>With thanks to everyone, the Chair closed the meeting at 6.30pm.</p>	