

Non Confidential Minutes

**Northwards Housing - ALMO Board Meeting
Via Telephone Conference**

Tuesday 28th April 2020 at 6:30pm

Chair: Sharon Thomas

Present	Sue Abbott (SA) Sharon Thomas (ST) Michelle Carmichael (MC) Fiona Sharkey (FS) John Farrell (JF) Veronica Kirkpatrick (VK) Donna Bowler (DB) Janice Gotts (JG) Carol Southern (CS) Olu Ogunbambo (OO) Wayne Melia (WM)	Chair of the Board Vice Chair and meeting chair Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Co-optee
In Attendance	Robin Lawler (RL) Mike Stevens (MS) Andy Plant (AP) Robbie Chapman (RC) Jillian Burrows (JB) Jan Norris (JN) Kevin Lowry (KL) Yvette Newton (YN)	Chief Executive Director of Neighbourhood Service Director of Property Services Director of Business Services Head of Finance, Governance & Risk Head of HR Interim Director of Housing & Residential Growth, MCC Governance Risk & Compliance Manager (Minutes)
Observing	Hilary Gardner (HG)	Consultant, Campbell Tickell

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	Welcome and Introductions ST welcomed everyone to the meeting which was being conducted by telephone conference. The meeting was confirmed as quorate.	
2	Apologies for Absence Marina Teat	
3	Declaration of Interests / Confidential Matters / Requests to un-star information items There were no declaration on interests.	
	CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS	

<p>4</p> <p>a</p> <p>b</p> <p>c</p> <p>d</p> <p>e</p>	<p>GENERAL BUSINESS</p> <p>Board Minutes Confidential 14th January 2020 Please see confidential minutes.</p> <p>Confidential Matters Arising Please see confidential minutes.</p> <p>Audit Sub-Committee Confidential Minutes 27th February 2020 Please see confidential minutes.</p> <p>Operations Sub-Committee Confidential Minutes 4th March 2020 Please see confidential minutes.</p> <p>Board Minutes Confidential 25th March 2020 & Matters Arising Please see confidential minutes.</p>	
<p>5</p> <p>a</p>	<p>STRATEGY AND POLICY</p> <p>Northwards Management Accounts: Forecast Outturn 2019/20 Please see confidential minutes.</p>	
<p>NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS</p>		
<p>6</p> <p>a</p> <p>b</p> <p>c</p> <p>d</p> <p>e</p>	<p>GENERAL BUSINESS</p> <p>Board Minutes 14th January 2020 The Board approved the board minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2020.</p> <p>Matters Arising There were no matters arising.</p> <p>Audit Sub-Committee Minutes 27th February 2020 The Board approved the minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee meeting held on 27th February, subject to the Sub-Committee approval at their next meeting.</p> <p>Operations Sub-Committee Minutes 4th March 2020 The Board approved the minutes of the Operations Sub-Committee meeting held on 4th March, subject to the Sub-Committee approval at their next meeting.</p> <p>Board & Sub-Committee Reports Cover Sheet ST asked the Board if they had any comments on the proposed new Board and Sub-Committee reports cover sheets.</p> <p>DB commented that the minutes for the Board are circulated just prior to the next meeting and it would be helpful to have an actions log sent as soon as possible after a meeting has been held.</p> <p>The Board agreed that a separate actions log and the minutes of the meeting should be circulated to Board as soon as they are completed after a meeting.</p>	<p>YN</p>

	<p>CS commented about the Consultation/Consideration section of the cover sheets and asked where it would be stated that customers have been consulted.</p> <p>CS asked that where a report has been to a Sub-Committee before coming to Board could it be noted on the cover sheet what the decision of the Sub-Committee was i.e. Approved.</p> <p>RL commented that any Tenant Consultation would normally be included in the main body of the report, but it was a good suggestion to make reference to it on the front sheet also.</p> <p>Subject to the amendments mentioned above the Board approved the amended Board & Sub-Committee Report Cover Sheets</p>	
<p>7</p> <p>a</p>	<p>STRATEGY AND POLICY</p> <p>VFM Strategy/Action Plan Annual Update</p> <p>RC presented the report. RC explained that the report highlights and also explains the reasoning behind some of the delays, most notably the long absence and subsequent redeployment of the Procurement Officer.</p> <p>RC informed the Board that we had hoped to have appointed a Purchasing, Contracts and Procurement Officer but this has proven difficult in the current climate.</p> <p>RC confirmed to the Board that discussions have been held with existing finance staff and Heads of Service on how we can push on with the tasks and keep up the momentum.</p> <p>DB asked about the actions in red that are overdue. DB commented that there is a date in the plan of when they were due but no revised date for when they can be delivered.</p> <p>RC agreed that this was legitimate point and we can look to include a revised due date in future reports.</p> <p>JG commented that some of the due dates are far into the future and could something more intermediate be done.</p> <p>RC explained that when the action plan was first approved it was a three-year plan so there was a staggering of the actions. RC informed the Board that we have learnt since then and while producing the new Business & Delivery Plan we have shifted focus and are looking at a 1 year action plan.</p> <p>RC explained that a lot of Northwards Strategic documents, Procurement, ICT and Customer Experience which is in draft form, all need to be looked at and reviewed in the context of the new Business & Delivery Plan and its objectives.</p> <p>JG commented that it maybe useful to have key milestones in there.</p>	<p>RC</p>

	<p>RC explained that there are number of items that are further forward but the majority of the actions on the plan were for the first 18 months and we have not made the level of progress we expected.</p> <p>The Board noted the report.</p>	
<p>8</p> <p>a</p>	<p>PERFORMANCE</p> <p>Northwards Performance Quarter 4 RC presented the report.</p> <p>RC informed the Board that it is disappointing to be below target in another performance indicator and hopes the Board understands the reasoning behind the issue with regard to Gas Servicing.</p> <p>RC confirmed that we acknowledge that the Customer Service Centre (CSC) still requires improvement.</p> <p>RC highlighted the progress made with satisfaction and the 'right first time' initiative that is due to go live at the start of May. RC explained that this initiative will really draw out how the CSC is performing in regard to customers' needs and expectations as opposed to the more traditional time metrics.</p> <p>RC informed the Board that the transition of the call centre moving to home working had been seamless. RC explained to the Board that he had spoken with other Registered Providers in Manchester and this has not been the case, with some call centres having to shut down leaving customers unable to speak with staff.</p> <p>RC informed the Board that rent collection had exceeded 100% for the second year running. RC confirmed that this is a really strong performance and has not been repeated by other Registered Providers in the region.</p> <p>CS asked if these are all the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are monitored by the City Council in relation to the performance of Northwards.</p> <p>RC confirmed that the KPIs in the report are the ones that are reported to the Council and are specified in the Management Agreement. RC explained that they are also the same KPIs that the Annual Review of Significant Partnerships is based on.</p> <p>RC informed the Board that when the new Business & Delivery Plan is presented to Board for approval, they will see more comprehensive and demanding KPIs that cover the whole business.</p> <p>RC informed the Board that a discussion is needed with the Council about the KPIs we report on but at the moment we still need to continue to report on the 17 contained in the report to the Council.</p>	

CS asked if the conversation with the Council about amending some of the current performance Indicators, to something more meaningful has started.

RC informed the Board that we would welcome a discussion about the relevance of the current KPIs with the Council and further discussions about the KPI targets for 2020 which will be affected by Covid and our recovery from it.

RL informed the Board that part of the discussion around the Performance Framework at the May Board meeting will be around how Covid is likely to impact on traditional KPIs and also what impact we are having on services to tenants and the community.

CS commented that medium term KPIs may be needed if there is a substantial period of isolation and then longer term KPIs when the future is defined.

RL explained some of things we are doing now to deal with Covid can't be monitored by KPIs, but the Board needs to know what we are doing and why we are doing it.

CS commented that this needs to be expressed formally to the Council, so they are aware that the current KPIs are not an ideal way of expressing what we do.

RL agreed and informed the Board that a conversation is needed with KL on behalf of the Council.

DB commented that she doesn't get a feel for the numbers in the performance reports as it is just percentages; for example, the number of calls received would help to get underneath the performance information.

RC informed the Board that more detailed discussions on KPIs normally take place at Sub Committees. RC confirmed that when we talk about performance management going forward there has to be an understanding with staff that where performance falls below expectations the Board needs to understand why and they need to be prepared to go into a lot more detail. RC explained that the management information we have access to now lends itself to that.

RC confirmed that he wants to reassure the Board that the new Business and Delivery Plan sets out a firm challenge about our performance and the need to improve.

DB commented that the performance report suggests that we are expecting a repairs backlog once restrictions are lifted. DB commented that a plan needs to be put in place for how we will deal with that to stop performance dropping more.

AP informed the Board that we are already thinking about that and planning for when restrictions may be lifted. AP explained that he is in

discussions with Mears about extra resources that may be required and also managing the expectations of our customers.

AP confirmed that we expect a surge of calls into the CSC when isolation is over which will then transfer to Mears as outstanding repairs.

AP explained that although it is not known when restrictions will be lifted, we are making plans for it happening at some point in June.

AP informed the Board that we also need to be aware that some customers will still be reluctant and nervous about letting us into their home even when restrictions are lifted.

CS is aware that some KPIs don't have much meaning but there are some that don't seem to be reported and these are mainly around Health & Safety.

AP explained that the Home Assurance Report is circulated to Operations Sub-Committee on a monthly basis and that the report covers Gas, Electric, Fire Safety and Lifts and if the Board want to see that report then that can be arranged.

CS suggested that the Board don't need that much detail just an executive summary and she thought the Council would want that information also.

RL confirmed to the Board that the Council receives the Home Assurance Report on a monthly basis as part of a broader assurance framework.

JG commented that during 19/20 performance has tailed off and the CSC is the one that stands out where performance has dropped.

JG commented that more information is required in the report and the Board needs to understand what not hitting the target means i.e. is it by a couple of seconds or hours?

RC confirmed that in regard to abandonment rate more context can be included in the report.

RC explained that a wider piece of work has taken place which gives a greater focus to the needs of the tenant. RC confirmed that there needs to be a balance of service and time and we have no intention of getting rid of the abandonment rate metric.

JG commented that if methods of interaction are changing then you would expect the staffing structure to be more able to deal with the calls coming in but performance has dropped over the year.

RC agreed that performance needs to be improved and will come back with more information in future performance reports.

DB commented that the target for responding to Councillor/MP enquiries is 80% and the target has always been exceeded. DB asked if the target needs to be increased.

MS commented that historically it was a target that the Council asked us to adopt and was there target at the time. MS suggested that the target could be increased to 90%.

CS asked that a more detailed report be taken to Operations Sub-Committee on the CSC.

RC confirmed that the Head of Customer Experience has been presenting in detail to Operations Sub-Committee and is keen to present the new Customer Experience/Insight Strategy to full board as soon as a face to face meeting is possible.

OO informed the Board that he had called the CSC and as staff are working from home the calls are linked to mobile phones and rather than the call being dropped, he was able to leave an answerphone message requesting a call back. OO suggested that this could be a lesson learnt once the Covid situation is over,

RC agreed that this is something that could be looked at and gave the Board a brief update on the current technical capabilities of the CSC.

RC informed the Board that Northwards has been carrying out soft market testing for telephony systems, which will enable us to broaden the methods we currently interact with customers.

The Board noted the update.

b

Tenants View 'An Investigation into the Tenants Experience of Home Improvement Works at Liverton Court

ST informed the Board that the cover sheet for the report had the wrong title on.

ST asked if the Board had any questions or observations.

VK asked about the numbers of people that had declined the installation of sprinklers. VK asked if we return to them or leave it.

AP informed the Board that people are given several opportunities to agree to the installation and sometimes tenants do change their mind when they have seen neighbours have had them fitted and it is not as intrusive as they thought.

AP informed the Board that refusal rates do vary from scheme to scheme.

RL informed the Board that the sprinkler systems are being installed into the whole block so if a current tenant refuses to have them fitted in their home, if that home becomes empty a sprinkler system will be fitted before the property is re-let.

DB commented that the way Tenants View has carried out the scrutiny is like 'lessons learnt' and this should be used as a template as to what should and shouldn't be done for each project.

AP explained to Board that the management response had been completed in collaboration with Tenants View.

AP informed the Board that a wholesale review of the capital investment programme is currently taking place and this will draw out how things can be improved.

AP explained that he is keen to have lessons learnt against each project as this will instil continuous learning throughout all projects.

CS asked if the progress of actions get reported back anywhere.

AP confirmed that Tenants View will receive feedback on the progress and implementation of their recommendations.

RL informed the Board that Tenants View Scrutiny Reports get treated with the same seriousness as an audit report. Feedback will be brought back to the Board at a later date.

The Board noted the report.

HR Update Report

c JN presented the report to Board. JN explained the report sets out Northwards response to the run up and post lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

JN asked the Board for any questions on the content of the report or for anything that the Board may think is missing.

DB commented that all staff are working hard under difficult circumstances and the support you are giving to staff is important and the detail in the report is welcomed.

ST informed the Board that she had received positive responses from the community about the redeployment of staff who are out in the communities supporting various charities with food deliveries. ST asked that this be passed onto those staff involved.

SA informed to the Board that she has also received positive feedback from local residents on how good the call centre has been at answering calls and also praise for the caretakers and estates team.

DB commented that once the current situation is over it would be nice to collect all the good news stories and circulate them to Board to get a flavour of all the positive work that has taken place.

CS asked that the Board send out their thanks to all staff.

	<p>OO asked about the furloughing of staff and are we still able to make a commitment to pay all staff.</p> <p>JN informed the Board that from a legal position whilst we are in receipt of public funding, which the management fee covers, we are in a position to maintain full pay for everyone. JN explained if the position changes there would be an expectation for us to furlough staff.</p> <p>JN commented that there would be resistant from unions if we were to look to furlough staff whilst receiving public funds.</p> <p>JN informed the Board that all staff are gainfully employed apart from those people shielding and even then, they are still able to work from home in some capacity.</p> <p>DB agreed with CS previous comment of sending the Boards thanks to all staff.</p> <p>RL informed that Board that he does a weekly vlog for all staff and he will include the Boards thanks in his next one.</p> <p>JG commented that there is a double jeopardy issue that you can't receive public funding and furlough staff.</p> <p>JG informed the Board that there is an issue for areas that aren't paid from main stream funding e.g. capital works. JG explained that if capital works are stopped, we can't charge people to the capital programme and they are not covered in the management fee.</p> <p>JG informed the Board that an issue that needs to be addressed is what happens to staff whose salary is re-charged to capital schemes.</p> <p>JN explained that the legal advice on that is when funding is stopped then that is the point when we would need to furlough staff.</p> <p>JG reiterated that when capital works are stopped you can't recharge a salary to the Capital Programme and that is a conversation that Northwards will need to have with the Council.</p> <p>JG informed the Board that there is also work that needs to be done on the pension implications of furloughing staff. JG commented that a conversation with GMPF would be beneficial before any decision is made on furloughing staff as it could be quite costly.</p> <p>RC agreed to pick up that pension implications with GMPF in conjunction with JN.</p> <p>The Board noted the update.</p>	<p>RL</p> <p>RC/JN</p>
<p>9</p> <p>a</p>	<p>INFORMATION</p> <p>Use of Seal RC confirmed the seal had not been used since the last meeting.</p>	

<p>b</p> <p>c</p>	<p>The Board noted the update.</p> <p>Governance Diversity Report YN presented the report. YN explained that the report sets out the annual profile comparison of Board Members and Northwards Tenants.</p> <p>JG commented that the Board is not entirely representative of our Tenants.</p> <p>The Board noted the update.</p> <p>Annual Board Attendance YN informed the Board that the report sets out the annual attendance at Board and Sub-Committees for all Board Members. YN explained that no current Board Member has attendance below 50% for 2019/20.</p> <p>YN confirmed that attendance is also discussed in individual annual appraisals.</p> <p>The Board noted the update</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Board Work Plan/Rolling Agenda 2020</p> <p>DB commented that the May Board agenda is quite significant.</p> <p>RC confirmed that the two main items for discussion are the new Business & Delivery Plan and Recruitment of Chair.</p> <p>RC explained that the YES budget and Northwards Management a Accounts would be brought for discussion but would like to defer the Customer Experience/Insight Strategy to a meeting when the Head of Customer Experience could attend and present to the Board.</p> <p>CS asked that an update on Covid implications is brought to each Board meeting until the situation improves.</p> <p>RL agreed that is a good suggestion, and confirmed he is also sending out weekly updates to the Board which he hopes they find useful.</p> <p>RL informed the Board that the executive management team are already discussing the recovery phase and he will share some of that work with the Board before the May Board meeting.</p> <p>ST commented that the Regen Tour planned for June will probably not go ahead. It was agreed that that Regen Tour can be re-arranged later in the year.</p> <p>Subject to the amendments above the Board approved the Board Work Plan/Rolling agenda for 2020.</p>	<p>RL</p> <p>YN</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>AOB</p>	

	None.	
	Date of Next Meeting Board Business Meeting Tuesday 12 th May 2020, 6:30pm Venue: Via Video/Telephone Conference	
	End of Meeting ST thanked everyone for attending and closed the Meeting at 8:08pm.	