

**MINUTES OF THE BRENT HOUSING PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING  
HELD ON THURSDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2009**

**Present:**

**Board Members**

**Kathy Ellison - Chair**

Karin Jaeger – Vice Chair

Brian Litchfield	TRA
Shaidah Ramzan	TRA
David Unwin	TRA
Dennis Woolcock	TRA
Alec Castle	Councillor
Sami Hashmi	Councillor
Janice Long	Councillor
James O’Sullivan	Councillor
Colin Moone	Independent
David Offenbach	Independent

**Officers**

Helen Evans (HE) (Managing Director), Linda Footer (LF) (Company Secretary), Gary Chase (GC) (Director of Finance), Gerry Doherty (GD) Director of Technical Services, Sandra Royer (SR) (Director of Housing Management), Jennie Rosenthal (JR) Service Development Manager, Ash Vyas (AV) In House Solicitor and Jim Cranfield (Clerk).

**21 Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies were received from Joyce Baldy-Gray, Annette Collins and Chirag Pandya.

**22 Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

**23 Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

**Resolved**

That the minutes of the Board meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2008 be agreed as a correct record.

**24 Arising**

**Minute 7 – North Circular Road Presentation** – it was noted that Andy Donald and Councillor Dietre would attend the April Board meeting to provide an update on the plans for the North Circular Road.

**Minute 8 – Expenses Policy** - LF advised that the guidance issued by Inland Revenue was sufficient for the administration of the current Members expenses policy.

**Minute 9 – Credit Union** – HE confirmed that the Council had been advised of BHP’s interest in sponsoring a credit union. It appeared that the Council were pursuing the possibility of establishing a link with the Camden Credit Union which would not cover the whole of Brent. However discussions would continue to ascertain whether an arrangement along the lines discussed at the November Board meeting could be made.

**Minute 10 – Short Notice Inspections** – HE confirmed that the Audit Commission had been advised that BHP was willing to participate in the pilot short notice inspections programme. If BHP was chosen, the inspection could be undertaken in May or June and appropriate preparations were being made. It was agreed that all Board Members should receive a copy of the completed self assessment questionnaire which had been submitted to the Commission.

**Minute 15 – Administrative Matters** – DU thanked the officers for activating the loop system.

## **25 Communal Gardens Policy**

Ash Vyas presented this report which sought approval to the introduction of a policy to deal with the maintenance of communal gardens for leaseholders and tenants.

The call for such a policy had arisen from a stage three complaint investigation which had revealed, in particular, the need for clarity in the way in which disputes over the maintenance of communal gardens should be dealt with.

Members noted that the position was complex owing to the variety of communal arrangements which existed and that maintenance practices differed substantially depending on the size of the garden and the type of tenure or leases involved.

Accordingly a generic policy was proposed which would give BHP the final say as to how a communal garden should be maintained and enable costs to be recovered where appropriate.

The views expressed by the Scrutiny Panel were noted. In particular the Panel had felt that the policy was not clear enough and should state that BHP should only get involved if agreement between residents was not reached.

**Resolved:**

That the following policy for the maintenance of communal gardens for leaseholders and tenants be agreed:

Brent Housing Partnership will ensure that tenants and leasehold owners maintain communal garden areas in accordance with their respective Tenancy Agreements and Leases. In the event that tenants and leaseholders with communal gardens cannot make arrangements to maintain their garden, or fail to complete the work, Brent Housing Partnership will decide, after consultation with tenants and leaseholders, who shall be responsible for specific actions. If the situation is not rectified, Brent Housing Partnership may make arrangements for a contractor to complete the necessary work and tenants and leasehold owners will be recharged accordingly.

**26 Amendments to Contract Standing Orders**

**Jennie Rosenthal** presented this report which identified a number of changes required to Standing Orders Contracts to provide greater clarification and to incorporate previous decisions made in 2003 but not formally included within the Standing orders documentation.

**JR** confirmed that the amendments were administrative in nature and that no matters of policy were involved.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Panel felt that the managing Director should continue to have responsibility to extend an existing contract. The amendment delegated the decision whether or not to extend a contract to the relevant service manager and reflected current practice. **JR** explained the reasoning for this and it was agreed that a full explanation should also be provided to the Scrutiny Panel.

**In Discussion**

**DU** asked whether BHP used Construction Line, the government's approved list of contractors. **JR** explained that this was not used as BHP's procurements were tailored specifically to the nature of individual contracts and the information sought, which included financial checks, was more detailed and specific to BHP's needs than the generic based Construction Line list.

**Resolved**

That the amendment to Contract Standing Orders 3(b), 3(c), 6,12, 30 and 31, highlighted as tracked changes in Appendix 1 of the report submitted, be approved.

## **27 Procurement Plan**

Jenny Rosenthal presented this report which sought approval to the annual Procurement Plan.

The procurement plan provided details of the procurements carried out in 2008 including information on the nature of the contracts, the key processes and timelines involved, the names of successful contractors and where appropriate the contract value.

The plan also showed the procurement anticipated in 2009 together with details of procurement undertaken for other organisations and other on-going work within the Procurement Unit.

### **Resolved:**

- 1 That the Procurement Plan be approved and
- 2 That the plan should continue to be submitted to the Board on an annual basis.

## **28 The Retirement and Election of Tenant Board Members**

The periodic retirement and election of Tenant Board Members is governed by BHP's Articles of Association and Linda Footer reported upon the following position:

- The three longest serving Tenant Board Members, Joyce Baldy-Grey, Karin Jaeger and Dennis Woolcock shall retire at the 2009 Annual General Meeting, having completed six years service.
- All three members may apply for re-election and take part in the 2009 ballot.
- A balance of Tenant members between the north & south of the borough is desirable, and since the retiring members are drawn from the north and south of the borough, advertising for the tenant members will be borough wide.
- The Articles require that not less than one and not more than two Tenant Board Members shall be leaseholders. Since the two existing leasehold members were not due to retire, the 2009 election process would be confined to tenants.

- Any new candidates would need to be interviewed as to their suitability as assessed against the Board Members Job Description and an interview panel would need to be appointed.
- Advertising costs were estimated to be £500 and the ballot process if conducted by the Electoral Reform Society would cost approximately £9,000.

### **In Discussion**

**DO** asked whether any cost savings could be made on the ballot process. **HE** advised that other options could be considered including the possibility of using the Council's Electoral Service. However there was considerable merit in using an outside organisation which could demonstrate both expertise and independence.

On balance Members felt that the engagement of an independent specialist was worthwhile and that the expenditure, which occurred only once every three years, was not unreasonable.

The Scrutiny Panel had commented that BHP's constitutional rules needed to be applied and raised no objection to the content of the report.

### **Resolved:**

- a) That Joyce Baldy-Gray, Karin Jaeger and Dennis Woolcock retire at the next AGM being the longest serving Tenant members, in accordance with Article 15(2)
- b) That Kathy Ellison, Shaidah Ramzan, Colin Moone and Sami Hashmi be appointed to form an interview panel to judge the suitability of applicants outlined in paragraph 1.8 of the officers' report, in the event that there are new candidates applying for posts following borough-wide advertising.

## **29 Directors Report**

**HE** reported orally upon news and developments affecting BHP, including:

- Kensington & Chelsea TMO had now advertised to fill the vacant post of Managing Director. **HE** therefore expected to discontinue the arrangement whereby she had provided part time cover for that post and to return to work full time for BHP in the near future.

The Chair expressed appreciation for the considerable effort which Helen had made to assist BHP's neighbour in this way and on behalf of the Board welcomed the news that Helen would soon resume working exclusively for BHP.

- **South Kilburn – HE** referred to the expected developments affecting the South Kilburn area and which could present a number of opportunities and challenges for BHP. **HE** suggested that the issues were such as to warrant a special meeting or away day, and Members **agreed** that this should include a tour of the area.
- **Local Authority Procurement Network** – the benefit to BHP of continued membership of this organisation was being considered and the issue was likely to be submitted to the Service Delivery sub committee for decision.
- **National Federation of ALMOs** – Kathy Ellison, Karin Jaeger, and Alec Castle were appointed to attend the conference to be held in York on 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009.

### **30 Board Decisions**

The Board noted this report which detailed the current position on outstanding matters from Board decisions

#### **Arising**

**Shared Services with K&CTTMO** – the shared service arrangements in respect of Health & Safety, Human Resources and Communications were due to be reviewed. It was noted that this would need to take account of the recent appointment by BHP of a Head of Human Resources and steps being taken by both organisations to appoint senior communications officers.

### **31 Sub Committee Reports**

The minutes of the sub committee meetings detailed below were presented by the Chairs with key points and matters of particular interest drawn to the attention of the Board.

#### **Resolved**

To note and ratify the minutes of the following sub committees:

Service Delivery – 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009

Finance & Audit – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2009

### **32 BHP Delivery Plan**

**HE** advised that a special Board meeting would be required by 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009 to consider and agree the Delivery Plan.

It was agreed that Linda Footer would notify Members of the date for the meeting in due course.

**33 Private and Confidential Business**

**Resolved**

That the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business.

**34 Peter Morton t/a Peter Morton Associates**

The above was engaged by Brent Housing Partnership to undertake consultancy work on the Decent Homes Contracts.

**GC** tabled a report, for information, detailing the circumstances which had led to Brent Trading Standards undertaking prosecution proceedings against Peter Morton.

The position was noted.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm having completed its business.

Chair .....

Date .....