MINUTES OF THE BRENT HOUSING PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2011

Present:

Board Members

Kathy Ellison - **Chair**	Independent
Karin Jaeger	TRA
Brian Litchfield	TRA
Dennis Woolcock	TRA
Benjamin Ogunro	Councillor
Bobby Thomas	Councillor
Annette Collins	Independent
Colin Moone	Independent
David Offenbach	Independent

Officers

Linda Footer (LF) Company Secretary, Ian Warner (IW) Interim Director of Finance, David Bishopp (DB) Rent Accounting & Performance Manager, Nigel Moore (NM) Operations Manager BHP New Homes and Jim Cranfield (Clerk).

16 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Joyce Baldy-Gray, Lesley Long, Shaida Ramzan and Gerry Doherty

17 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

18 Minutes of Board Meetings

Resolved

That the minutes of the Board meeting held on 29th September and the special meetings held on 29th September and 24th October 2011 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the following:

29th September ordinary meeting – attendance list to delete “David Ogunro” and insert “Benjamin Ogunro”

24th October – the inclusion of Bobby Thomas in the attendance list.

19 Matters Arising

Minute 105 – Big Lottery Fund – Financial Confidence Bid

Linda Footer reported that this lottery funding bid for a project to help people to become more financially confident in taking control of their finances and to help prevent debt and arrears had not received lottery funding.

Minute 10 Chief Executives Report – Multi Agency protection Arrangements
The Board had previously received information on the work of MAPPA which manages the risks imposed by certain offenders. **LF** reported that one such offender had recently sought access to BHP offices but existing security precautions had prevented any serious breach of security. However **LF** indicated that lessons could be drawn from the incident and that a review of security would be undertaken.

STAR survey of tenant satisfaction – **LF** confirmed that this item would be included on a future Board agenda
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Minute 14 – Fire Safety Update – LF reported upon the detail, so far as they were known, of four recent fires in BHP managed property.

One incident related to a faulty electrical circuit breaker and **LF** advised that action was being taken and nearing completion, to replace these in other BHP property.

Asset Management Strategy – **LF** reported that the Chief Executive wished to set up a Member Working group to consider BHPs Asset Management Strategy. The Council was expected to take decisions in January on the long term AMS and the working group would need to meet shortly after this.

It was agreed that membership should comprise Kathy Ellison, Annette Collins, Brian Litchfield and David Unwin.

20 Performance Report

This report provided information on BHP's performance for the 2nd Quarter 2011/12.

Detailed information was provided on the performance indicators which had not met the performance target for the last quarter, together with a summary sheet detailing the performance achieved by each main service area

A more detailed report which had been considered by the Service Delivery sub committee was also submitted for information.

Performance was summarised and colour coded to show performance below target (red) performance within a 5% tolerance below the target (amber) and performance exceeding target (green), together with activity for which no target had been set (mauve).

Comparisons were made with performance achieved last year.

The broad direction (up or down) of each BHP performance indicator was also shown.

The summary position showed that out of the 76 main indicators, 23 met or exceeded target, 3 indicators did not meet target and 9 were within the 5% tolerance**.** The remaining indicators were either not available for the quarter period or had no target set**.**

DB drew attention to the salient points, highlighting in particular the three areas shown as below target and the action being taken to rectify performance. These related to the percentage of repairs finished on first visit (89% against a target of 95%), the ready to let time (24 days against the target of 20) and the percentage of Members enquiries responded to within 10 days (93% against a target of 100%).

In Discussion

KE asked for future reports to use a larger font – particularly in the comments column.

BT suggested and it was **agreed** that future reports should include some benchmarking information to show BHP's performance against other similar organisations. It was noted that the time period for this information might not precisely match the quarter periods used by BHP.

AC suggested and it was **agreed** that the direction of travel column should state which quarter it related to.

AC noted that no target was provided for Health & Safety, the number of repairs completed and the number of vacant properties.

DB advised that the H&S information provided was basically a record of incidents. **LF** said that BHP had obtained the British Standard 5 Star rating in respect of its Health & Safety procedures and practices and consideration was now being given as to whether membership of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) would be beneficial.

Consideration could also then be given as to whether any further target setting was appropriate.

BO noted the rise in empty homes and **DB** explained that this was due to regeneration work in South Kilburn. The properties would however be made available for short life tenancies wherever possible.

LF confirmed that the detailed Performance Report would continue to be submitted to the Service Delivery sub committee.

The report was noted.

21 House Contents Insurance Contract - Waiver of Standing Orders

LF presented this report which sought approval to waive standing orders with regard to a low value contract for the provision of Tenants Contents Insurance.

The current insurance scheme, which enabled tenants to take out house contents insurance at a favourable rate, expired in April 2012

LF explained that the insurance arrangement did not constitute a contract since BHP merely transferred money paid by the tenants to the insurer. As such the arrangement was classed as a concession and did not come under EU rules.

Due to the specialised nature of the contract a normal tendering process was not thought to be appropriate. Officers favoured an approach which would involve determining which insurance companies were used by other ALMOs and then inviting quotes from those considered to provide a good service

In Discussion

BL referred to the fact that whilst windows were covered by insurance, the window glass wasn't. **LF** advised that provided a crime reference number was provided by the tenant, the cost of glass broken as a result of criminal activity would be reclaimed.

CM asked whether the process would involve BHP favouring one company over another and **LF** confirmed that there would be a competitive quotation process.

DU asked whether leaseholders paid a service charge on top of the premium. **LF** would look at this and advise if any policy change was appropriate.

Resolved

To agree:

That there are good operational and financial reasons why this contract should not be formally tendered, but that a competitive quotation exercise be undertaken to ensure that BHP obtains best value for itself and its tenants.

22 Disconnection of Heating and Hot Water at GNH

The provision of heating and hot water at Granville New Homes is provided by a communal gas fired boiler and BHP seeks to recover the cost of the gas supplied through a billing system based on actual consumption by individual homes.

The Service Delivery sub committee had received a report on the difficulties experienced in recovering the costs and had considered options for recovering bad debt where initial action failed to achieve a repayment arrangement or where persistent non payment occurred.

The sub committee concluded that the disconnection option was appropriate for social rented homes where casework had been undertaken in accordance with the agreed initial recovery steps, personal contact had been made and a repayment agreement had not been made or maintained.

In Discussion

In noting that the arrears had accumulated over a period of time**, CM** asked that steps be taken to ensure that there was an effective escalation route to ensure that matters involving unexpected financial implications were reported to the Finance & Audit sub committee in a timely manner.

BT suggested that it would also be helpful to ensure that at least one member of each of BHPs other sub committees were also members of the Finance Sub Committee

NM confirmed that Ener-g Switch 2, who administered the debt collection arrangements, had advised that without the disconnection option, the utility debts could be expected to escalate further.

NM also advised that although a possibility for the future, the current low volume of energy supplied by the utility companies via a communal boiler system, ruled out the prospect of direct billing to tenants by the companies concerned.

Resolved

To ratify the decision of the Service Delivery sub committee to approve the disconnection of heat and hot water as a sanction of last resort for persistent non-payment.

23 Treatment of Confidential Information

Linda Footer presented this report which identified the need for BHP to review its approach to the publication of Board minutes in the light of the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000

Matters to be addressed included the need to ensure that sensitive personal data is not disclosed in the publishing of minutes whilst also ensuring that the principles of the Freedom of Information legislation were not compromised.

Other matters to consider included whether minutes should be presented in a new format to more clearly distinguish between the business considered in open session and that dealt with in private session, the need for a Publication scheme, and for someone to undertake the duties of a "Qualified Person" to decide whether certain information should be exempted form public disclosure.

In Discussion

DO recognised the need to ensure that BHPs approach to the disclosure of information complied with legislative requirements but expressed the hope that the Board would continue to apply the principle of an open policy on the publication of board minutes where possible.

BT suggested that the issues equally applied to the Council and as such would benefit from joint discussions.

Resolved:

To agree

i) To a review of how Part 1 and Part 11 minute systems operate in practice in other organisations and to receive a report back to the Board for a decision on whether to adopt such a scheme;
ii) That BHP will determine a "Qualified Person" as described in Section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act and notify the Board accordingly as to how this person will carry out their duties in relation to the treatment of exempt information and
iii) To receive a report at the next Board meeting on a publication scheme in accordance with the requirements under the Freedom of Information Act

25 Outstanding Actions from Board Decisions

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

Arising

Value for Money – the Chair asked for a timescale for the completion of this item to be provided

Risk Management – succession strategy – it was **agreed** that this item should be time scaled for completion by July 2012

LF advised that matters completed would be deleted form the list

The report was noted.

26 Sub Committee Reports

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

Service Delivery Sub Committee – 25th October July 2011
Finance & Audit Sub Committee – 31st October 2011
Community Development Fund Panel – 29th September 2011

Arising

Finance & Audit Sub Committee - Settled Homes Initiative – **IW** provided a further update on the acquisitions programme confirming that 56 street properties had now been acquired together with 25 dwellings in development at the Chapter Road site, towards the revised acquisition target of 115 units by March 2012.

Discussions, on a more positive note, continued with LB Barnet concerning the properties already purchased in that borough.

Although very challenging, the revised acquisition programme was on target.

Resolved

To note and ratify the minutes of the above sub committee and panel meetings

27 Private & Confidential

The public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

28 Update on Risk Management

The Board's agreed approach to risk management provides for higher level scrutiny at Board Level and more detailed scrutiny at sub committees.

The top ten risks scrutinised by the Board are categorised as Strategic, Operational or Financial. Officers report to each Board meeting highlighting:

a) Any material changes to risk
b) Any material risks that have occurred, the mitigating actions taken and the effect upon the business
c) Any material issues raised by sub committees

IW submitted the latest updated report and commented upon the salient points, including any developments which had affected the status of the top ten risks.

IW referred to the progress of work consequent upon the Navigant Review concerning BHPs relationship with the council and the new Management Agreement. Members noted that a special Board meeting would be convened in January to consider a restructure of BHP.

Resolved

To note the content of the report and the arrangements to mitigate risk

29 Schedule of Contracts

The schedule identified contracts which would be awarded under delegated powers unless called in by the Board.

Three contracts, one for fire risk assessments, one for lift maintenance and one for Domestic and Communal Heating were due to be awarded

Members agreed to call in the contract for Domestic and Communal Heating

LF agreed to look into whether the Lift Maintenance contract could be extended to include the new civic centre

30 Sub Committee Reports.

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

Remuneration Panel – 29th September 2011
Personnel and Remuneration Sub Committee 5th October 2011

Resolved

To note and ratify the minutes of the above sub committee and panel meetings

On behalf of Members, **DO** thanked Kathy for all her hard work and the manner in which she had Chaired the meetings of the Board throughout 2011

The Chair wished everyone a very happy Christmas and New Year

The meeting closed at 8.20pm having completed its business.

Chair …… Date ……..