

Welcome to the Riverside Group website.

Minutes of the May 2014 meeting of the Board of the Mersey North Division of the Riverside Group Ltd.

The following notes may assist the reader in better understanding the content of each minute.

It may be confusing at first but one of the first items to be considered, will always be the minutes of the previous meeting, which need to be agreed as a true record and then any matters arising from those earlier meeting minutes will be discussed and a note of that discussion recorded accordingly.

Once the earlier meeting's minutes have been discussed and approved, the 'proper business' of the current meeting takes place.

The individual agenda items are discussed and a numbered 'minute' is given for each.

Additional notes are included below to assist the reader understand particular numbered minutes.

Minute 473 Reference is made to C7 and BB N&SB's. These acronyms refer to Community 7 and Berrybridge Neighbourhood and Scrutiny Boards.

Minute 475 'DHP' means Discretionary Housing Payments from local authority housing benefit departments.

Minute 476 The 'MOT programme' is a programme of visiting higher repair reporting properties to deliver a comprehensive repair treatment, which is intended to result in subsequent reduced repair reporting.

'Chasers' in this item is when tenants have called more than once 'chasing' the progress of a repair, which they have earlier reported.

Minute 478 Evolve was formerly an independent repairs contractor. MFS refers to Morrison Facility Services. CSC refers to Customer Service Centre.

Minute 479 MPR means monthly performance review. KPI's are key performance indicators.

Minute 483 HSC is the Riverside Housing Services Committee. The NIS is the Divisional Neighbourhood Investment Strategy document.

THE RIVERSIDE GROUP

MERSEY NORTH DIVISIONAL BOARD

A meeting of Mersey North Divisional board was held on Wednesday, 14 May 2014
at the Walton Road Office, Liverpool

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present: Mr J Curran, Mr D Evans, Ms T Gore, Ms L Hearne, Mr T McGuire, Ms S Naylor, Mr W Shortall, Mr C Stuhlfelder, Mr K Wilson, Mr G Wright, Ms L Wright (in the Chair).

In Attendance: Ms P Allan, Mr M Burnett, Mr R Hesketh

Apologies: Ms J Williams

471 Declaration of Interest relevant to agenda items

There were no declarations of interest.

472 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 12 March 2014

It was noted the record of LH being in attendance was incorrect.

Item 465: After discussion it was accepted the minute recording Board support for the Business Plan was correct and request for further discussion about its content was noted.

There was a spelling and grammar error in each of items 464 and 466.

With these amendments the minutes were agreed as a true record.

473 Agenda Item 4 – Minutes of the Board Meeting 12 March 2014 – Matters Arising

Minute 463 – Agenda Item 9: Changes to Community Engagement & Scrutiny in Mersey North Division. It was noted the re-issuing of the Divisional Scrutiny diagram would be deferred until after PL and FB had met with C7 and BB N&SB's, which would take place prior to next Board meeting.

Minute 464 – Agenda Item 10: Governance; extensions of Board Member service and call for issues requiring review. It was confirmed both Ken Wilson and Joe Curran would be required to 'stand down' from membership in September. It was noted replacement members would be sought. The Chair requested clarification regarding the board membership status of JW since her election to the residents Federation.

Minute 470 - It was noted the April Board meeting had been cancelled.

474 Agenda Item 5 – Policy Voids and Disposals Update

The Board noted it would be presented with an updated Neighbourhood Investment Strategy document at the June Board strategy day and this would include a disposal strategy, which would assist the Board to make future decisions regarding individual disposal proposals.

The attention of the Board was drawn to the increase in the number of voids designated 'unfunded', which had risen from 112 to 144. Discussion about the causes of this increase, touched upon problems with demand in some areas resulting in concentrations of longer term voids: specifically Dovecot.

Board members expressed concern about the possibility rent levels were inhibiting lettings and spoke of concerns around bedroom tax difficulties but also how flexibility in rent setting might be useful in certain places, where evidence exists of the success of private landlords securing tenants at market rents.

The Board expressed concern about the impact of sales on future business plan rental income. It was reassured to note that the Division does have a substantial new build programme, which is replacing redundant stock with new units. It was agreed that a lengthier discussion would take place at the strategy day in June.

The Board noted the report

475 Agenda Item 6 – Income Management – Legal Action

The Board congratulated the Division for raising £47K from applications to Housing Benefit for DHPs and £121K by maximising opportunities to secure refunds for 168 tenants using the 1996 loophole in legislation.

The Board endorsed the Chair's decision under delegated authority, exercised since the last meeting, to give conditional authority to evict 5 arrears cases listed in appendix A to the report.

The Board expressed concern at the rate of increase in evictions over the last 2 years and wondered if this trend was to continue going forward. In response, reference was made to the considerable reduction in the volume of cases presented to this Board meeting for conditional authority to evict, compared to previous Board papers and how this represents in some measure, the Division appropriately applying policy and procedures, where historically we may not have been as robust or even compliant.

The Board noted the report and gave conditional authority to evict for the 46 cases in appendix 2.

476 Agenda Item 7 – Complaints Update

Noting that the report was informative it was suggested it could be shorter and more succinct if some of the charts were omitted, which merely restated the information presented elsewhere. It was also suggested that where the category of 'other' contained significant numbers, it should be explained as to what it contains.

Acknowledging the welcome reduction in the proportion of complaints about repairs; down from 80 to 64% since last year, it was noted that if Evolve could ensure improved performance for repair response times and turning up when we say we will, we would see a significant further reduction in overall complaints.

The Board expressed an interest in seeing the impact of the MOT programme upon tenant satisfaction evidenced though a reduction in complaints. However it was also noted that if 'chasers' are added as complaints, as opposed to 'service failures', within the new customer feedback database, we will see a significant increase in future volume. It was accepted that however uncomfortable this is, it will describe a reality which the numbers will compel us to address. It was agreed MB will provide further information to a future Board meeting, about the likely impact of chasers upon complaints.

The Board noted the report.

477 Agenda Item 8 – Allocation of a Tenancy to a Staff Member

It was clarified that the allocation was to a staff member rather than to the relative of a staff member.

The Board noted the allocation of [REDACTED], Dovecot to a staff member.

478 Agenda Item 9 – Evolve Repairs Performance Update

The Board noted and welcomed the [REDACTED] saving made for Riverside since the acquisition of Evolve. The report was well received by the Board, which noted the improved performance in response times and appointments made and kept since the termination of the MFS contract.

Discussion touched upon the need to continue to work with Evolve to change the culture of its operatives since their TUPE from MFS, so that each customer contact presents the best of Riverside, The Board noted the engagement by Evolve of apprentices and was reassured to hear of positive feedback from CSC staff about their experience dealing with customers over Evolve compared to their predecessors.

The Board was pleased at the progress of Evolve in beginning the roll-out of the MOT programme in Mersey North.

The Board noted the report.

479 Agenda Item 10 – Executive Dashboard and MPR period ended 31 March 2014.

The Board noted the improved year-end financial position since previous forecast but regretted that the outcome operating margin was less than budgeted.

[REDACTED]

It was acknowledged that difficulties repairing and letting voids at the start of the year had caused significant cash leakage, which affected the whole year and from which, despite very improved voids and lettings performance throughout the year, it had been impossible to recover. However, the Board congratulated the Division on an otherwise excellent performance ending the year with 8 green KPIs and 7 rosettes for best performing Division.

The Board noted the report.

480 Agenda Item 11 – Cash Collection and Voids Dashboard March 2014

The Board noted the significant proportion (61%) of arrears attributable to just 4.7% of tenants owing in excess of £1K each and suggested concentrated effort on this few could generate disproportionate gains in reducing arrears.

It was further noted the Division had experience higher tenancy turnover through the whole year compared to the previous year and the Board suggested it would be useful to analyse this further to see if there are particular neighbourhoods or stock types affected. It was agreed to discuss this again on the Board strategy day in June.

The Board noted the report

481 Agenda Item 12 – Business Plan 2014-19

A lengthy discussion took place over the business plan for the next 5 years. Board members noted the small number of tenants likely to be affected by the introduction of Universal Credit in the Division during 2014, noting our understanding that only new JSA claimants would be targeted this year.

The Board was reassured to hear the plan had made allowances for the possible impact of universal credit upon rental income but wanted reassurance the Division is making additional effort to support tenants who may be adversely affected. It was noted the Division's programme of proactive customer care visits (CCV) would target those identified as vulnerable to welfare reform and housing benefit changes.

The Board referred to the significant increase in disposals via sales within the plan and agreed that discussion about this would take place on the forthcoming strategy day.

Board members registered the increase in operating margin within the plan from 38% to 43% for 2014-15 from the current to the proposed plans and pointed out that this represented a significant stretch target.

The Board noted the report.

482 Agenda Item 13 – Information Items

a) What's New Briefing - **Noted**

b) Housing Services Committee minutes – **Noted**

c) KPI Correspondence - Noted

483 Agenda Item 14 – Any Other Business

The Board noted the KPI targets for 2014-15 previously recommended by Board and subsequently approved by HSC

The Board agreed the June Board Strategy Day would take place in the Forsight Centre and agreed the agenda would include:

- The NIS
- Whole Board Appraisal
- Modernisation and the Divisional Annual Plan
- Scrutiny
- Recruitment of Board members
- Tour

484 Agenda Item 18 – Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 18 June 2014, 9.45am, at the Forsight Centre, 1 Brownlow Street, off Pembroke Place, Liverpool. L69 3GL.