

Agenda Item 3

THE RIVERSIDE GROUP

MERSEY NORTH DIVISIONAL BOARD

A meeting of the Mersey North Divisional Board was held on Wednesday, 16 July 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, Ms J Williams, Mr K Wilson, Ms L Wright (Chair)
- In Attendance: Ms P Allan, Mr F Burke, Mr M Burnett, Mr I Lightfoot, Ms L Westhead, Mr J Wood
- Apologies: Mr G Wright

485 Agenda Item 2 - Declaration of interest relevant to agenda items

There were no declarations of interest.

486 Agenda Item 3 - Accuracy of the minutes of the Board meeting held on 14 May 2014

476 – Complaints Update – should read ‘complaints about repairs down from 80% to 64% since last year’.

With this amendment the minutes were agreed as a true record.

487 Agenda Item 4 – Matters arising from the minutes of the Board Meeting 14 May 2014

Minutes 473 Agenda Item 4 – Minute 464 – Agenda Item 10: Governance; extensions of Board Member service and call for issues requiring review
Letters to be issued to KW and JC re retirement in September.

Minute 476 – Agenda Item 7 – Complaints Update

Board noted that 'chasers', which will in future be referred to as 'service failures', have reduced from 250 in May to 58 in June. Board requested a report to September meeting re impact of 'service failures' upon complaints volume.

488 Agenda Item 5 – Policy Voids & Disposals Update

The Board was presented with proposals for disposal of 22 properties.

The discussion centred on the criteria for disposals and the broader strategic implications of disposals and voids. The Board remains concerned about the high volume of disposals and the impact upon neighbourhoods and Riverside tenants, where sales occur, but was assured that disposals are consistent with the action plans described in the NIS.

The Board noted that a bid for additional funds will be put to the Group in early August to assist repair of expensive voids.

The board approved the 22 disposals in section 3.

489 Agenda Item 6 - Income Management Legal Action

The Board noted that cost of applications to court had increased from £100 to £250.

The Board noted that in Appendix 2 – Items 14-18, which referred to evictions in 2013 had been input in error and should be ignored.

The Board requested year on year comparison for legal action in future reports.

The Board noted the report and approved the evictions in Appendix 1 to the report.

490 Agenda Item 7 - The Mersey North Neighbourhood Investment Strategy 2014

The Board had discussed the NIS at its June strategy day. The Board was asked to approve an extended introduction to that document, which included particular statements about disposals, and with that new introduction; approve the NIS.

The Board expressed concern at high tenancy turnover and noted some tenants move to other social landlords perceived to have better stock. It was acknowledge that this is a temporary benefit enjoyed by post stock transfer associations recently completing major investment programmes.

The Board referred to the need to target investment in areas which may otherwise reach a 'tipping point' for terminations. It was noted the NIS should include neighbourhood plans to this effect.

The Board suggested more needs to be done to understand the reasons why tenants terminate and noted that the programme of CCV's will address this along with other information.

The Board approved the NIS.

491 Agenda Item 8 - Disposal Strategy in the context of the budgetary challenge of voids and repairs in Mersey North 2014

The Board considered a report about the challenges the Division faces making decisions about high volumes of disposals. A lengthy discussion covered concerns about:

- The moral and social responsibility of the association to neighbourhoods, where it has stock and where tenants and other occupiers could be detrimentally affected by significant disposal activity.
- The need to engage LA partners in disposals strategy.
- The need to understand why tenants are terminating tenancies and what we can do to prevent this happening. The Board noted the new programme of customer care visits (CCVs) will provide intelligence around these issues.
- The limited financial capacity of the Division in the face of ageing stock in poor condition and the need to take difficult decisions now rather than face a growing problem of aged stock condition later.
- The possibility that the Division should consider a volume of sales, which is determined by the need to lose ageing stock, rather than just determined by current year voids budget capacity.
- The possibility of recycling sales receipts to improve sustainable stock.
- The impact of disposals on future rental income and the need to compensate by building new homes.
- Being aware of how changes in demand over time could improve let-ability and reduce the need for disposals.
- The need for rigor in analysis of HFAT viability of individual sales proposals.
- The need to ensure NIS was up to date and focussed on local variations in market strength for letting or prospective impact of sales.

It was agreed all proposals for disposal would be considered against criteria included within the report at 6.1.

The Board approved the criteria at 6.1 and noted that further work was required to achieve a robust HFAT valuation of the Division's stock.

492 Agenda Item 9 - ASB Review

IL provided Board with a verbal overview of the performance and work of the ASB team over the last year.

The discussion included reference to problems with pet dogs, the need to work collaboratively with RECHG colleagues around issues of mental health and domestic violence.

The Chair congratulated Ian and his team on its excellent KPI results. It was pointed out that it had been difficult to take in such a lengthy verbal report and requested a written note be produced with key points from presentation, for issue to next meeting.

The Board noted the presentation

493 Agenda Item 10 – My Home Finance Project

The Board sought and was given reassurance the scheme did not undermine credit unions. The Board suggested that the requirement for borrowers to pay a 5% admin fee was onerous and requested clarification this fee was within the interest calculation illustration within the leaflet, as opposed to it being in addition.

The Board was informed the pilot in the Division had been successful and no tenant that has taken a loan has defaulted.

The board noted the report.

494 Agenda Item 11 – Allocation of a Tenancy to a Close Relative to a Staff Member

The Board asked why there had been 7 unsuccessful bids for the property before it was let to a relative of a staff member. Board was informed that all 7 bidders had been invited in for a pre-tenancy meeting but that none resulted in an allocation. Riverside has introduced an affordability check and this was one of the failure reasons along with non - attendance by 2 bidders.

The Board noted the report.

495 Agenda Item 12 – New Build Allocations

The Board discussed the potential impact upon the Division of letting a high volume of new-build 2 bedroom houses, which would likely result in downsizers in Dovecot vacating 3 bedroom houses, which in turn would be difficult to let. Board was assured transfers would only be allowed to those not in arrears and whose current home could be re-let as an SDL.

The Board noted the report and requested a further ‘impact report’ once the Grovehurst scheme is let.

496 Agenda Item 13 - Directors Report

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

497 Agenda Item 14 – Executive Dashboard period ended 31 May 2014

The Board considered the report and the following issues were discussed:

- Difficulties in dealing with terminations and letting properties impacting on the adverse rent and void variance.
- Adverse variance on Your Place income largely due to a delay in invoicing. LH expressed concern regarding the delay and the Board was advised

that this would be back on track over the next month seeing the adverse variance decrease through the year.

- Good performance on Bad Debts was highlighted; mitigating other issues within the I&E
- Repairs performance was discussed with reference to appendix 2 within this meeting's Agenda Item 8. The Board was assured that Mersey North is monitoring all Repairs expenditure weekly in order to remain within Budget.
- The Board expressed concern at below target H&S KPI and requested detail on this to next meeting.

The Board noted the report

498 Agenda Item 15 Information Items

Item (a) - Scrutiny & Residents Structure

To be reissued with clear legend and explanation about roles and relationships.

Item (b) - MOT Summary

Board was reassured the roll-out was progressing within target parameters, noting 4 key performance indicators:

- MOT works volume – within target
- MOT works average cost – Higher than target – remedial action underway.
- Post MOT repair volume – within target
- Post MOT repair prices. – slightly above target – under examination.

499 Date and Time of Next Meeting **Wednesday, 17th September 2014.**