

### Agenda Item 3

## THE RIVERSIDE GROUP

### MERSEY NORTH DIVISIONAL BOARD

A meeting of the Mersey North Divisional Board was held on Wednesday, 21 January 2015 at the Walton Road Office, Liverpool

### CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present: Mr D Evans, Ms L Hearne, Mr A Hewitt (Observing), Mr T McGuire, Ms S Naylor, Ms S Roberts (Observing), Mr W Shortall, Mr C Stuhlfelder, Ms J Williams, Mr G Wright, Ms L Wright (Chair).

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

Apologies: Ms T Gore.

532 Agenda Item 2 - Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

533 Agenda Item 3 - Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 19 November 2014

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

534 Agenda Item 4 - Matters arising from the minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 November 2014

Minutes 515 – Minute 502 – Complaints Update

MB informed Board that information re service failures would be contained within a comprehensive year-end report on Complaints.

Minute 518 – Agenda Item 7 – Policy Voids and Disposals Update

PL informed Board the Snowberry Rd 'low demand' show-house is available for Board members to visit. It was agreed this should take place on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

Minute 530 – Agenda Item 19 – Any Other Business

The Board expressed dismay that the venue used for the Board Christmas meal had not been disability compliant. It was agreed the venue would not be

used again and that any venue chosen in future would provide guaranteed appropriate access and circulation arrangements. TMC to ensure these facilities exist for 25 February Board meal in celebration of the retirement of Ken Wilson and Joe Curran and the termination of the Berrybridge Board.

535 Agenda Item 5 – Income Management Legal Action

The Board was informed that 61 existing court orders were due to expire this year. Of these 21 are ex-stock transfers with tenancies to which ground 8 cannot be applied. A further 10 have arrears below 8 weeks equivalent but 30 will be issued with Ground 8 notices if their existing >8 weeks arrears still apply at the day of expiry.

Given the seriousness of the arrears situation, Board recognised the need to use G8 when it was clear that other methods were not working. Board was assured that income management staff endeavour to avoid legal action and only apply to court after all other options are exhausted and the tenant will not or cannot make rental payments. Acknowledging the difficulties the Division faces trying to secure evictions, where so far this year, 77 or 59% of applications for warrants to evict, had been declined, most more than once, by Liverpool courts, the Board expressed its support for the use of Ground 8 in future applications.

The Board welcomed the planned visit by senior Divisional management to 'best in Group' Divisions to see if we can learn from their approach

After confirming appropriate action had been taken, the **Board approved the conditional authority to evict for all 52 cases in appendix 1.**

The Board noted the information about 36 tenants in receipt of universal credit in appendix 4.

**The Board approved the conditional evictions at appendix 1.**

536 Agenda Item 6 – Policy Voids & Disposals Update

The Board was impressed to note the success the Division has had, securing additional funding from Group to tackle long-term voids. A discussion took place around the challenge facing the Division achieving a complete spend of £2,035,676 additional funds by year end. It was noted that £250k of this is for additional MOTs and £656K is for projects other than voids.

The Board was concerned to be informed that even though the Division was projecting to spend £1,079,676 upon voids, over and above its annual budget; as much as £361K of the gross of additional funding might not be spent and would as a consequence be lost, since it cannot be rolled over into the next financial year.

The Board was informed the issues obstructing a full spend included contractor (Evolve) capacity, the quality of completed works if the contractor overcommitted and OJEU procurement restrictions. The Board challenged these reasons and required that the ADPS explore the possibility of using other contractors if Evolve is unable to commit to the complete programme of projects and to verify the issues around OJEU restrictions

**The Board noted the report.**

537 Agenda Item 7 – Summary of Health & Safety outstanding actions

The Board received an apology for the failure to deliver the promise made at the November Board meeting, that 881 high risk actions would be removed within 7 weeks. The Board noted the assurance offered, that following some staffing issues, which had delayed remedial actions, a regime of inspections and works was now underway to remove all high risk issues from communal areas within a new target of 31 March 2015.

The Board expressed concern that particular risk applies to the more vulnerable residents of supported or sheltered housing schemes and required that these be addressed most urgently.

The Board made very clear its disappointment with what it regarded as poor performance, [REDACTED] and required that a timetable of targeted risk removals be produced for the next Board, which would be monitored for compliance at each subsequent Board meeting.

**The Board noted the report and requested an update of performance be produced for its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2015.**

538 Agenda Item 8 – Impact of Service Failures upon Complaints

The Board was concerned about the 1008 repair service failures (chasers) recorded in the complaints database. It recalled concern it had expressed prior to the new complaints system being introduced, that the inclusion of 'chasers' would significantly inflate the overall volume of recorded complaints from just 88 repair related complaints immediately prior to the change.

Acknowledging that 430 of the 1008 had been dealt with by the CSC when the repair complaint was first raised, the Board was still concerned at the high volume of complaints which are progressing to stages 1 and 2 of the complaints procedure. The Board wanted to understand why so many service failures were occurring and requested detail about the issues within these complaints and how this volume of repair related service failures compared with other Divisions or with peer organisations.

It was agreed the concerns expressed by the Board will be addressed within a comprehensive annual review of complaints to be presented to the March Board meeting.

**The Board noted the report.**

539 Agenda Item 9 – MOT Remodel Update

The Board was presented with information which showed how current outturn numbers from the year to date MOT programme, compared with the assumptions which were used prior to commencing with the MOT pilot. It was heartening to see the volume of post MOT repairs was actually less than earlier assumptions and the greater control and indeed reduction of all responsive repairs that was occurring, but unfortunate that the actual average price of MOT works was higher than we had hoped to achieve. It was noted however, that even with that, the overall challenge of reducing repair volume and gross costs was being achieved.

It was also appreciated that additional benefits are anticipated from reduced turnover, cheaper void repairs and cross-referencing valuable tenancy or property information between asset and housing management.

The Board congratulated the team for driving through the MOT work to its current stage of being rolled-out across the Group.

**The Presentation was noted.**

540 Agenda Item 10 – Allocation of a Tenancy to a close relative of a staff member

The allocation of [REDACTED] was supported.

**The Board noted the report**

541 Agenda Item 11 – Asset Management Review - Implications for Local Team

The Board received a presentation, which described the current position regarding recommendations from the Group wide review of Asset Management, some of which have already been implemented and others now being rolled out.

The Board noted the new staffing and asset operational arrangements within the currently Speke based central team and the proposals for local teams now being rolled out.

A discussion took place within which Board members expressed concern at the risk to locally sensitive services, by combining the management of asset

services across the two Merseyside Divisions. It was noted that local tenant forums had registered these same concerns.

The Board congratulated Mark Burnett on securing the position of Head of Repairs and Maintenance and requested assurance that appropriate transitional management arrangements will be put in place, to ensure continuity of service as we move to new operational arrangements in the Division.

**The Board noted the presentation.**

542 Agenda item 12 – Executive Dashboard and Cash Collection Period ended December 2014

**I&E**

The Board noted the full year forecast operational margin of £17,634k which was £1,115k favourable to budget but noted the beneficial impact of a significant favourable depreciation charge set to our accounts by Group Finance.

It was clarified that this Depreciation charge was effectively an adjustment due to a misclassification of assets at the time the budget was set. Net of this, Mersey North delivered an operational margin (£375k (2.3%) adverse), which while not ideal shows operational performance significantly improved on previous years.

**KPI's**

Having already discussed health and safety issues earlier in the meeting, the Board reiterated its concern that this performance indicator must improve significantly by year end and its' concern at the persistent high level of rent arrears in the Division.

**The Board noted the report.**

543 Agenda Item 13 – Information Items

a) HSC Minutes 27 November 2014

**Noted**

b) My Home Finance Project Update

**The Board wished to record its pleasure at the success of this initiative.**

c) MOT Summary

**Noted**

544 Agenda Item 14 – Any Other Business

a) Annual Assured Rent Increase 2015.

The Board considered a paper on the 2015 assured tenancy rent increase, which was handed out due to it being issued by Group after Board papers had been posted. The Chair requested any opinions or feedback be sent direct to her or to the Director by email.

**The Board noted the paper.**

b) Use of the 25 February reserved date for Board meeting.

It was agreed to use the date of 25 February, previously 'pencilled in' for a Board meeting, to visit the Snowberry Road low-demand show-house and then to attend an early evening meal to celebrate the recent retirement of Ken Wilson and Joe Curran and to recognise the contribution of the Berrybridge Board over the 12 years until it ceased operating in 2014.

545 Agenda Item 15 - Date and Time of Next Meeting

**Wednesday 25 February 2015 at 5pm Walton Road.**

**Wednesday 18 March 2015 at 5pm Walton Road.**