

## THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED

### A meeting of the Board of Riverside Cumbria was held at 4:00pm on Thursday 29 January 2015 at English Gate Plaza, Carlisle

#### Minutes

**Present** M Little (Chair), J Bainbridge, A Bishop (via VC), C Carre, D Butterworth, J Franklin, P Harkness, S Layden, R Notman, S Powell.

In attendance were P Armstrong, J Bomford, K Doran, I Heywood, S Kellock, M Mackey, P Taylor, S Taylor-Gage, A Trappe, J Trappe, D Warneford, L Gaddes (minutes).

**Apologies** G Caig, P Clitheroe, E Mallinson

#### 551 Apologies for Absence

- 551.1 Apologies for absence were received from G Caig. On behalf of the Board the Chair offered best wishes to Ged for his recovery following an operation.
- 551.2 The Chair welcomed D Warneford, Chair of Riverside North's Divisional Board. It was noted that P Clitheroe, Chair of Mersey South's Divisional Board would not be attending the meeting due to the poor weather.
- 551.3 P Armstrong, J Bomford, M Mackey, I Heywood, A Trappe and J Trappe were welcomed to observe the Divisional Board meeting. It was noted that they had been invited to attend to get a flavour of the Board meeting process as part of the recruitment to fill a number of tenant Board Member vacancies with the Divisional Board.
- 551.4 The Chair informed the Board that the GRC had approved the appointment of S Powell as a new Independent Board Member and G Caig and J Franklin as new Council Nominee Board Members of the Cumbria Divisional Board with effect from the date of 11 December 2014.
- 551.5 The Board were advised of sad news regarding the sad loss of a Divisional member of staff, Rosemary Grimaldi, on 16<sup>th</sup> January after a long battle with Cancer. On behalf of the Board the Chair asked for their condolences to be sent to Rosemary's family.

- 552      Declarations of Interest
- 552.1    No declarations of interest were received.
- 552.2    The Chair advised the observers that they have been provided with a set of unredacted papers for them to refer to during the meeting. He asked for them to keep the content in confidence and return the papers at the end of the meeting.
- 553      Minutes of the last meeting held on 20 November 2014
- 553.1    Minute 537.8 Divisional Directors Report – Delays with completion of insulation works: P Harkness requested an amendment to the minute to reflect more closely concerns and the reasons discussed for the delay with beginning the works. It was noted that the planned work had been delayed due to the need for building regulations approval in respect to the thermal aspects of the render/insulation system and the need for separate planning approval or the change in the new window and elevational appearance. L Gaddes
- 553.2    KD advised that for clarity the minute should be amended to reflect the reasons for the delay. Permitted rights planning was required for windows which took two weeks then building regulations was also required for a number of structural elements which took a further two weeks.
- The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2014 were approved and signed.
- 554      Matters Arising from the Minutes
- 554.1    Minute 537.2 Divisional Directors Report – People Planning: D Butterworth advised that the Divisional People Plan would be presented to the Board in April. D Butterworth
- 554.2    Minute 535.3 – Cumbria Gateway – Board representative from Riverside: D Butterworth advised that his role as Board member of Cumbria Gateway, as a representative of Riverside, had been confirmed.
- 554.3    Minute 541.2 – Board Scrutiny of Evictions – Query of arrears quoted for potential eviction: P Taylor confirmed that the figure quoted for the individual property was incorrect and should have read £1177.03.
- 554.4    Minute 542.4 – Planned and Cyclical Maintenance – Board report on and work within our neighbourhoods: The Board were advised that a D Butterworth

mini restructure was planned with the addition of a Neighbourhood Planner. Additional information on this new role and responsibilities will be presented to the Board in April.

- 554.5 Minute 541.1 – Board Scrutiny of Evictions – Introduction of Universal Credit: The Board were advised that the Cumbria Division currently has ten customers claiming Universal Credit it is expected that the cases will increase at some rate. A report to the Board on feedback from the introduction of Universal Credit will be produced in around six months. P Taylor
- 554.6 Minute 537.7 – Divisional Directors Report – Positive Press release on work of the Divisional Scrutiny Panel: The Board were advised that a joint press statement was planned in time for the next Board meeting.
- 554.7 Minute 542.2 – Planned and Cyclical Maintenance – Aids and Adaptations budget: The Board were advised that the underspent aids and adaptations budget will be used in other priority areas. It was noted that the demand is currently not there for this budget due to better property matching when allocating properties also the demand is reaching saturation point as 23% of Cumbria's properties have aids and adaptations already.
- 555 Divisional Directors Report
- 555.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted current issues of interest including Barras House, Gas Servicing and Repairline.
- 555.2 It was noted that an options appraisal of Barras House recommends the sensitive proposal to remodel the sheltered scheme to general needs apartments in order for it to become sustainable. Progress with the customer liaison process was discussed.
- 555.3 The Board were advised that remodelling had already taken place of the two other Riverside Cumbria sheltered schemes York Court and Freshfield Court. As a result the sheltered units have become sustainable and it is not expected that they will become general needs properties.
- 555.4 A marketing strategy to mitigate the negative press and develop a better working relationship was discussed.
- 555.5 It was noted that Riverside is bringing gas servicing in house. An interim solution is being sought with Lorne Stewart Cumbria's contractor to maintain high levels of performance. A realistic date for

this change is August 2015 to ensure proper due diligence is completed.

555.6 That Board were advised that Riverside is closer to establishing a CSC within the Cumbria Division. When introduced all repairs calls will go through to the CSC, this has some impact on local staff who have all secured alternative jobs within Cumbria. Four vacancies within the CSC have a closing date of today. Board members raised a concern regarding potential misunderstanding due to dialect and accent. The board were assured that a similar exercise has already been done in Irvine where there has been some issues however the impact is not expected to be significant.

555.7 The Board noted the content of the report.

556 Presentation: One Riverside - Local Livelihoods

556.1 The Board received a presentation on Local Livelihoods from P Taylor. He advised that the presentation was a local version of the recent Board Briefing focusing on Livelihoods.

556.2 The presentation featured progress made with supporting customers into employment and training as well as additional services to improve customer' livelihoods including affordable warmth, money advice and the intensive support project. It was noted that there were a number of local employability champions in Cumbria based across several teams.

556.3 Board members welcomed an update and commended the successes within the work done so far.

557 Marketing and Communications Review and Strategy

557.1 P Taylor took the Board through the report and highlighted the strategy leaflet which had been circulated.

557.2 Board members were assured that Riverside Cumbria will continue to be involved in specific events however there is a need to be more selective in what we choose to fund. To assist with making these decisions a benefit analysis is carried out for all events to balance cost with positive press.

557.3 The Board noted the content of the report.

558 Community Cashback Proposals for St Martins Tenants and Residents Association (SMART)

558.1 P Taylor took the Board through the report and highlighted the background, progress and risks.

558.2 S Kellock explained that if SMART can provide a service cheaper than our budget they are able to reinvest monies. In addition they can apply for external funding. It was noted that the payment given to SMART this year was a one off payment to bring the funding up to level the same as the previous year to provide landscaping. P Taylor added that Riverside is pleased with the commitment of the new committee.

558.3 The Board noted the progress being made in relation to new arrangements being set up for SMART.

558.4 The Board approved in principal Riverside formally engaging in the Community Cashback initiative.

559 Development Programme Update

559.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted progress of the current development schemes.

559.2 A public consultation meeting is going ahead for the proposed redevelopment of the Ladyseat site at Longtown. J Bainbridge offered to attend the planning meeting of the parish council to quash and potential rumours. D Butterworth agreed to pass on this offer of assistance to Julie Gray.

D  
Butterworth

559.3 It was noted that the development at Pategill, Penrith will not progress. HCA funding is to be considered at a similar scheme which is suitable to develop.

559.4 The Board noted the progress of the current development schemes.

559.5 The Board approved the pipeline programme in terms of complying with the strategic priorities of both the Division and Group.

560 Board Scrutiny Of Evictions

560.1 P Taylor took the Board through the report and highlighted that the trend was at a lower level than anticipated at this stage of year, this is expected to increase with the impact of Universal Credit. The trend is shown within the cash collection dashboard.

- 560.2 It was noted that the low level of £245.75 for arrears quoted for potential eviction was correct for the individual property.
- 560.3 Board members raised concerns about the lack of family composition details for the completed evictions. P Taylor advised that looking at the potential evictions there is a real mix of household composition. Generally evictions are for single people with less to lose. He added that the Judge will only agree to an outright order if the tenant is not making any effort to resolve the situation.
- 560.4 The Board reviewed the report and provided the authority required to proceed with eviction.
- 561 Cyclical Asset Review – Disposals / Rationalisation Update
- 561.1 K Doran took the Board through the report and highlighted that there had been slippage in progress.
- 561.2 The Board noted the progress of previously approved disposals and understood the reasons for delay.
- 562 Financial Management Accounts
- 562.1 S Kellock took the Board through the report and highlighted that current performance is on target regardless of changes to operations.
- 562.2 The Board noted the contents of the Management Accounts for the 9 months to 31 December 2014.
- 563 Performance Update – December 2014
- 563.1 S Taylor-Gage took the Board through the report and highlighted that the performance information had been separated from the financial management accounts to ease reporting on each element.
- 563.2 It was noted that some of the trend lines seem to show performance moving in the wrong direction. It was noted that some of the graphs are misleading due to an inconsistent approach. S Kellock agreed to feedback to head office to request graphs which show the information more clearly. S Kellock
- 563.3 The Board also advised that they found the A3 Divisional comparison of performance confusing due to the notations. The chair asked for this information to continue to be included in the reports as it demonstrates we are the best performing Division within Riverside. D Warneford shared that the Riverside North Board D Butterworth

had received a 10 minute training session on the performance information which had been very useful. It was agreed that this would be suitable for the Divisional Board.

563.4 The Board asked about the impact on relet times of reducing access to transfers. P Taylor advised that transfers are going ahead however this is still an insignificant number to have an impact as those who need to move will be allowed. Customers who are refused a transfer are being encouraged to use the mutual exchange scheme.

563.5 Board members noted actions planned to ensure targets are met by 31.03.15.

563.6 The Board provided feedback about separation of financial and performance reporting. It was agreed that the separate format would be used going forward.

#### 564 Cash Collection Dashboard

564.1 P Taylor took the Board through the report and highlighted the narrative for each of the graphs.

564.2 The Board raised concerns regarding the significant increase to the arrears balance between week 4 and week 39. It was noted that this increase was due to leasehold debt of £200,000. The debt is placed on the relevant accounts as soon as the work is costed but paid is not invoiced until after the work is done. It was noted that when the Leasehold service is transferred to RHO in April these arrears will not be included with rent arrears. PT added that the leasehold debt skews the figures with the £2000 debt as the Division has very few infrequent payments from our customers.

564.3 The Board noted the content of the Cash Collection Dashboard for December 2014.

#### 565 Draft Divisional Revenue Budget 2015/16

565.1 S Kellock took the Board through the report and highlighted the 1% loss of operating margin which has been excluded from the detailed revenue budget due to transferring the management of Cumbria's sheltered units to RECHG.

565.2 The Board asked what provisions had been put in place to mitigate the impact of Universal Credit on the Division's operating margin. SK referred the Board to 5.2 of the report entitled bad debt and highlighted the increase in bad debt provision, an additional 2% has

been allocated on the operating margin based on the Group assumption. Board members asked whether this amount was enough and were assured that Group are very prudent with their assumptions.

- 565.3 It was noted that the voids budget figure is also set using the Group target.
- 565.4 Board members asked why the staff welfare budget had been reduced. S Kellock advised that the lone worker service costs had moved from Careline to Head office so this amount had been removed from the budget.
- 565.5 It was noted that the Division does not have any budget allocated to recruitment as no charges are allowed. The figure quoted for 2014/15 is the amount recharged from Group for the recruitment of D Butterworth.
- 565.6 The Board asked about the reduction of the Community Investment budget. SK advised that at time of transfer the Community Investment Fund (CIF) had been created however over the years Riverside has allocated much more of other budgets into the communities such as the delivery of the Your Place service. Therefore Riverside has pulled back on giving individual small grants and focuses on larger projects, feedback received has been much better. The Board were assured that money was being invested in our communities for added value projects and for the benefit of our tenants.
- 565.7 Board members raised concerns regarding the amount spent on sub-contractors for void repairs. It was noted that sub-contractors had been used for some time staff have now been employed to carry out these roles.
- 565.8 It was noted that the external painting project budget had increased. KD advised the Board that the increase was in line with the planned programme of works for the next five years.
- 565.9 The Board in line with the Framework agreement dated 1 April 2009 agreed to put forward this draft budget to the Riverside Group to influence their compilation of the 2015/16 Group budget and business plan.
- 565.10 Subsequent Divisional amendments instructed by Group will be considered by the Board meeting to be held on March 26, 2015. It was noted that this recommendation constitutes the Boards' responsibility in influencing the 2015 Group Business Plan.



566 Items for Information

566.1 Board Members noted the following items:

- a Management Team briefings of December 2014.
- b Housing Services Committee Minutes of 27.11.14.

567 Any Other Business

567.1 On behalf of the Board the Chair congratulated K Doran on her appointment as Riverside's Head of Asset Management for the North region.

567.2 The Chair thanked the observers for attending the Board meeting.

568 Date and Time of Next Meeting

568.1 The next meeting was set for 3:00pm on Thursday 9 April 2015.