

THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED

A meeting of the Board of Riverside Cumbria was held at 4:00pm on Thursday 17 September 2015 at English Gate Plaza, Carlisle

Minutes

Present M Little (Chair), J Bainbridge, A Bishop, D Butterworth, C Carre, G Caig, J Franklin, P Harkness, S Powell.

In attendance were G Brough, K Doran, S Eggleston*, K Glaister*, K Harkness (observer), W Macfarlane (observer), S Kellock, P Taylor, L Gaddes (minutes). (*part of the meeting)

Apologies S Layden.

602 Apologies for Absence

602.1 Apologies for absence were received from S Layden.

602.2 The Chair welcomed to the meeting Keith Harkness, Chair of our Divisional Scrutiny Panel and Walter Macfarlane, Board observer on the Riverside Group Board and member of Riverside's Tenants & Residents Federation.

602.3 On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked P Taylor and Emma Davidson for the void inspection tour which had taken place earlier this afternoon. It was noted that the visit was in follow up to the recent discussion with the Divisional Scrutiny Panel who had raised issues with the quality of the lettable standard. The Board agreed that they felt the properties viewed today were of a reasonable standard.

602.4 The Chair highlighted that he was disappointed by the low level of attendance of Board Members at the recent joint meeting with the Scrutiny Panel. He added that he expected each Board member to play a full role in Board activities and that the joint meeting with the Scrutiny Panel was a core meeting.

602.5 It was noted that following discussions at the away day the format of the meeting agendas had been changed to mirror the format of the Corporate Plan and shape our business more effectively.

602.6 The Chair reminded Board members of the arrangements for the upcoming Board Briefing and Board Members Conference.

603 Declarations of Interest

603.1 No declarations of interest were received.

- 604 Minutes of the last meeting held on 18 June 2015
- 604.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2015 were approved for signing.
- 605 Matters Arising from the Minutes
- 605.1 Minute 587.1 Matters Arising from the Minutes - Positive press release on the work of the Divisional Scrutiny Panel: D Butterworth advised that following some criticism from third party forces it was felt that it was not appropriate. Instead the Scrutiny Panel is setting up their own blog to counter some of the negative comments, Annamarie Desmond-Storey is supporting them with this process. K Harkness added that the first blog has been written.
- 605.2 Minute 587.3 Matters Arising from the Minutes – Request for amendment to spreadsheet to include Universal Credit information: P Taylor advised he had followed up with the Income Collection Project Board in regards to amending the report spreadsheet to include a column showing the amount of Universal Credit. He added that the decision had been made to adhere to the corporate format for the time being with amendments to be made in the future, in line with the One Riverside approach, as the number of Universal Credit cases increase.
- 605.3 Minute 588.4 Divisional Directors Report – Extension of RTB: Board members suggested a rewording of the paragraph. L Gaddes to amend. L Gaddes
- 605.4 Minute 589.1.5 End of Year Review 2014/15 – Customer Feedback Impact of repairs chasers of performance: Board members suggested a rewording of the paragraph. L Gaddes to amend. L Gaddes
- 606 Divisional Directors Report
- 606.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted current issues of interest including attendance at work, a review of management agreement and Think Forward.
- 606.2 D Butterworth advised that plans were in place to improve attendance levels with 97.2% already achieved against a target of 97%. He added that it is hoped that improvements continue. It was noted that sickness levels for the DLO are increasing rather than decreasing which still poses a challenge to the overall Divisional performance in this area.
- 606.3 It was noted that D Butterworth and Carol Matthews had recently met with representatives from Carlisle City Council (CCC) including their Chief Executive Jason Gooding. The current historic management agreement is based on the needs at the point of transfer and there has always been resistance from CCC to change

the content. Following a productive meeting discussions have begun to review the management agreement looking at what the two parties can do jointly to benefit the people of Cumbria. As part of this process CCC has made a request to visit head office to see Corporate Riverside and better understand the services we provide. D Butterworth agreed to bring back regular progress updates to the Divisional Board.

606.4 Copies of a communique from Board members from the Group Board Strategy Event 9/10 September 2015 was circulated along with a Think Forward Update dated September 2015. Board members viewed a short video from Carol Matthews which provided an update on the Think Forward programme and explained the decision to expand the programme to a group wide target operating model (TOM).

606.4.1 The Chair provided the Board with a verbal update from the Group Board Strategy event. He highlighted that the discussion had focused on how Riverside can move forward and tackle the challenge of the ██████ loss expect in year one due to the 1% rent reduction and extension of RTB.

606.4.2 The Group Board were presented with a series of efficiencies suggested by Riverside's Leadership Team to mitigate this. It has been agreed to put some of these efficiencies in place to assist with the 30 year business planning process. The theme of business effectiveness is to be applied across the Group and the TOM is a critical part of this process.

606.4.3 A decision has been made that Riverside is not going to stop building new homes which is quite refreshing to hear.

606.5 The Board noted the content of the report.

607 Employment and Training Update

607.1 K Glaister took the Board through the report and highlighted the excellent work done by the local team in almost achieving the annual target with half of the year remaining.

607.2 Board members were advised of plans to make the contact with tenants at an earlier stage to allow the support to be more proactive rather than reactive following problems with arrears or ASB.

607.3 The Board congratulated the Employment & Training Team on the results already achieved.

607.4 Board members asked about the sustainability of jobs secured through the initiatives. K Glaister advised that there are a variety of jobs some are temporary with some people returning for additional

support at a later date when short term contracts are coming to an end. As part of the support regular contact is kept with those moving into employment and training with three and six month progress reports.

607.4.1 The Board expressed it would be interesting to look at case studies in 12 months' time, D Butterworth agreed can bring this info back to a later meeting. D Butterworth

607.5 It was noted that recruitment to apprenticeships is progressing well with the procurement process from new contracts now including a commitment to apprentices. K Glaister advised she has a meeting set up with AW Burn who has recently won the contract for painting in Cumbria.

607.6 It was noted that Riverside Cumbria is in the process of recruiting a digital apprentice

607.7 The Board noted the content of the report and agreed to continue supporting the Employment and Training Team to deliver their outcomes.

K Glaister left the meeting.

608 Performance Update – August 2015

608.1 P Taylor took the Board through the report and highlighted the August performance figures and the relevant performance improvement plans.

608.2 It was noted that on the original report the local targets quoted on the MPR had been reported incorrectly for some of the performance areas, for clarity a revised version was circulated.

608.3 Copies of the void action plan were circulated. It was noted that as a result of better working relations between internal departments plus the introduction of better working practices a number of long term voids have been let. This has skewed the voids performance by improving the % stock void while having a negative effect by increasing the overall relet period.

608.3.1 Board members asked whether relet period performance would achieve below target results by 31.03.16. K Doran advised that changes and improvements were happening very quickly with Asset Management and Housing Management staff working very closely to achieve target, she added that already a much better position has been achieved. D Butterworth noted that it would still be a challenge to hit the annual relet days target but that this still remained the Division's number one priority for improvement.

608.4 The Board raised concerns regarding the performance against Health & Safety risk actions. D Butterworth advised that there are system issues which when resolved is expected to push up performance by an average of 10%. K Doran added that there has been a change to the way the system works this year, all properties have been added as a risk to the system, action must be taken to upload evidence to prove there is no risk present for each property.

608.4.1 The Asset Management Team has produced a compliance action plan to address all of the Health & Safety risk actions. Within the process there is a time delay to upload information and wait for it to be cleared from the system. Due to the volume of the work involved the role has ended up being reactive when a proactive approach would be much more effective. It was suggested that underspend on salaries be used to get additional resources to assist with the data quality issues and the volume of work.

608.5 Board members expressed that the explanations of why performance figures are not correct did not fill the Board with confidence. It is difficult to manage risk responsibly as a Board Member when the message is that the performance figures are incorrect. D Butterworth acknowledged that the Division should stop using the figures as an excuse and instead say what mitigating actions are to be put in place to get back to green performance. D Butterworth agreed to bring back a substantive report to the next Board meeting detailing the actions needed to achieve the target of 100% for Health & Safety risk actions performance.

K Doran

608.6 The Board suggested that the annual arrears trend appears to have a reliance on the rent free weeks to improve performance. Some Divisions do not have the rent free weeks and charge rent over the 52 weeks making them reliant on making incremental improvements. S Kellock clarified that the same rent is charged across the Divisions just we charge over less weeks. D Butterworth added that the Group is considering the benefits of both 48 week and 52 week rental charging approaches. S Kellock added that some of our new developments are already charged rent on 52 weeks.

608.7 Board members queried the impact of relaxing rules regarding tenants having pets as it is likely to cause ASB issues. PT advised that various discussions had taken place regarding this topic so he understood where the concerns were coming from. He added that ASB due to pets does not tend to be a major problem in Cumbria however the benefits can be seen such as support and company for the elderly. It was noted that letting refusals occur when pets have not been allowed, using discretion in some cases may result in Riverside not losing tenants to the private sector who commonly have more relaxed rules relating to pets.

608.8 The Board expressed that the first time fix performance area should be clarified further to ask the correct question of customers. Board members asked whether the target was achievable given the system issues detailed in the performance improvement plan. K Doran advised that although system issues are causing additional challenges proactive work practices are being implemented to ensure jobs are recorded and closed down correctly on the system. It is expected that positive results will begin to be seen during September.

608.9 Board members were pleased that some performance targets were already being achieved.

608.10 Board members noted the actions planned to ensure targets are met by 31.03.16.

609 Management Accounts

609.1 S Kellock took the Board through the report and highlighted that a full reforecast had taken place with submissions received from all budget holders by 14th August.

609.2 It was noted that there is currently an underspend with the salaries and vehicles expenses budget. This is in part due to the sharing of costs of the Asset Management review salary costs with Riverside North, resulting in an underspend here and an overspend in the North. The Board were advised that Asset Management savings are ring fenced for use by the Asset Management Team.

609.2.1 Other savings have been made by vacant posts not being filled and by working more effectively.

609.3 Overspend on the repairs and maintenance budget has increased from £97,000 to £200,000 this is being managed with a new system and controls put in place to stop this amount increasing. It was noted that originally there was much more in this budget previous budget cuts saw this amount streamlined. MOTs will have an impact on this budget how much is not yet known.

609.4 S Kellock advised that banked savings within the budgets are being moved holistically to cover overspends elsewhere.

609.5 It was noted that there has been improvements with % stock void performance due to low turnover of properties during the summer months and clearing out a lot of long term voids. The later of these has a negative effect on relet days performance and on void spend to achieve lettable standard.

609.6 Board members asked what the reasons were for the delay in handover of properties at Raffles. S Kellock advised she was not aware of the detail but understood that a claim had been put in to

recover the money from Lovells excuses had been given and dismissed with the claim progressing.

- 609.7 The Board queried underspend on the environmental works budget and questioned the timing of external works during the colder months. K Doran advised that anything outside the curtilage of the property was defined as environmental works with some of the planned work including bulb planting which typically takes place during the winter months. She added that planning was in place and agreed to report back to the Board on spend. K Doran
- 609.8 The Board noted the contents of the Management Accounts
- 610 Regulatory Standards – Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standards
- 610.1 P Taylor took the Board through the report and highlighted the requirements and standards in relation to the regulation of tenant involvement.
- 610.2 Board members shared that they felt that targets for customer engagement were very ambitious given that currently there is only one tenant Board member on our Divisional Board. P Taylor agreed that although the target is ambitious creative opportunities for increasing engagements will be looked at to achieve the target. It was noted that increased engagement does not need to be formal it can be within neighbourhoods and be about what they wish. Deborah Earl and S Eggleston are working together to see how this can be done.
- 610.3 W Macfarlane shared that Riverside’s Tenants & Residents Federation has skills and plans to engage with customers nationally especially to encourage younger people to get involved.
- 610.4 Board members noted the content of the report.
- 611 Presentation: Neighbourhood Planning
- 611.1 S Eggleston made a presentation to the Board entitled Introduction to Neighbourhood Planner. She highlighted the aim to pull together all the information we have from various sources into one place.
- 611.2 It was noted that to increase customer satisfaction customers will be asked to be involved in the process of producing the Neighbourhood Plans in order for them to influence what is included.
- 611.3 It was agreed that the Scrutiny Panel reports and supporting information on customer satisfaction and voids would be shared with S Eggleston as they contain a lot of comments from our customers. P Taylor

611.4 Board members were advised that if issues outside of Riverside's remit were raised while talking to customers these enquiries would be signposted to the relevant service provider or local councillor. D Butterworth advised that it has been recognised that efforts need to be made to improve relations between Riverside and local councillors and other stakeholders.

611.5 It was noted that the outcome of the TOM will determine the work patches within Cumbria.

S Eggleston left the meeting.

612 Development Programme Update

612.1 DB took the Board through the report.

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

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

613 Asset Management Update

613.1 K Doran took the Board through the report and highlighted areas pertinent to the Asset Management Team including; performance against targets, progress with works programme, team restructure, stock rationalisation and disposals and introduction of property MOTs.

613.2 K Doran requested additional approval from Board members to refresh the previous decision to dispose of 23 Raffles Avenue. It was noted that as HCA regulations have changed the previous minute is now out of date.

613.3 Board members asked that in future details of any disposals, planned to be tabled at a Board meeting, be emailed out to members so they can consider the proposal to reduce delays in disposals. K Doran

613.4 The Board noted the contents of the report and approved the disposals as detailed in items 5.4, 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8 of the report. K Doran

613.5 Board members approved the additional disposal of 23 Raffles Avenue. K Doran

614 2015 Stars Customer Satisfaction Survey

614.1 S Kellock took the Board through the report and highlighted that through the survey significant feedback had been received. She added that this year customer address details have been available

which has enabled us to contact each individual and resolve any issues raised.

- 614.2 The Board expressed concerns with the satisfaction levels which have reduced from last year. D Butterworth advised that it is clear that there is a customer perception that Riverside could do things better, across a range of services, and the introduction of the Neighbourhood Planner role is a key step in starting to address these issues.
- 614.3 Board members questioned whether Riverside is measuring the right performance areas when the Division is meeting most of the performance targets while the customers are unhappy with the service they are receiving. D Butterworth advised that the HSDs will have this discussion as part of the TOM process to see what KPIs need to be adopted for the new way of working. It was also queried whether the right questions are being asked. It was agreed that service specific engagement was needed.
- 614.4 It was noted that the drop in customer satisfaction with ASB could not be attributed to any direct action taken, steps are being taken to be more transparent with the process and manage people's expectations.
- 614.5 The Board suggested that services provided which are helping people should be publicised.
- 614.6 The Board noted the content of the report.

615 Board Scrutiny Of Evictions

- 615.1 G Brough took the Board through the report and highlighted that only one case included a Universal Credit claim.
- 615.2 Board members were advised that as agreed at the last meeting a case study of a challenging case had been included with the report. To help Board members better understand the court process and the impact on arrears levels. G Brough advised that the tenant featured in the case study is staying with Riverside and starting to make payments.
- 615.3 Board members were advised that of the three outright orders included in the report only one had already left the property and two were still there at the time of eviction.
- 615.4 DB advised that an action he had taken from today's meeting with other Housing Associations in Cumbria was to approach court managers in Carlisle to address the impact of court adjournments on the sector.

- 615.5 The Board reviewed the report and provided the authority required to proceed with eviction.
- 615.6 Board members noted the details of the case study of recovery action being taken on a rent arrears case.
- 616 Items for Information
- 616.1 Board Members noted the following items:
- a Management Team briefings of August and September 2015.
 - b Housing Services Committee Minutes of 02.07.15 and 16.07.15
 - c Housing Services Committee Meeting Dates 2016/17
- 617 Any Other Business
- 617.1 No further items were raised.
- 618 Date and Time of Next Meeting
- 618.1 The next meeting was set for 4:00pm on Thursday 26 November 2015.