

THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED

A meeting of the Board of Riverside Cumbria was held at 4:00pm on Thursday 26 November 2015 at English Gate Plaza, Carlisle

Minutes

Present M Little (Chair), A Bishop, D Butterworth, P Harkness, S Powell.

In attendance were G Brough, K Doran, S Kellock, W Macfarlane, P Taylor, S Taylor-Gage, L Gaddes (minutes).

Apologies C Carre, J Bainbridge, G Caig, J Franklin and S Layden.

619 Apologies for Absence

619.1 Apologies for absence were received from C Carre, J Bainbridge and S Layden.

619.2 Quorum: It was noted that a quorum was not present and that, as such, any decisions taken would not be valid and binding unless and until ratified by a subsequent Board meeting at which a quorum is present. The Chair suggested that to allow decisions to be ratified at an earlier time an email should be sent to the absent members detailing the decisions to be made and asking for approval. Email to include the proviso that if no response is received by a given date approval will automatically be assumed. Board members who were present agreed with the proposal. L Gaddes

619.3 The Chair recommended the appointment of Walter Macfarlane to fill the vacancy which had arisen for a Tenant Board Member. The Board agreed to recommend Walter's appointment as a new Tenant Board Member of Riverside Cumbria Divisional Board to the next Governance and Remuneration Committee (GRC). The Chair welcomed Walter to his first Board meeting.

620 Declarations of Interest

620.1 No declarations of interest were received.

621 Minutes of the last meeting held on 17 September 2015

621.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2015 were approved for signing.

622 Matters Arising from the Minutes

622.1 Min 609.7 Management Accounts – Environmental Works Budget: K Doran confirmed that works had been programmed in to ensure the environmental budget is spent by the year end.

- 623 Divisional Directors Report
- 623.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted current issues of interest including; Attendance at work, Review of Management Agreement, Think Forward and Target Operating Model, TSA Assessment, Leasehold Forum, Planning and Housing Bill 2015 and Riverside STAR Awards 2015.
- 623.2 Staff attendance at work has reduced slightly since last reported this is due to usual challenges associated with the Winter and unforeseen work issues.
- 623.3 Jason Gooding, Colin Glover and Jane Meek from the Council are visiting Riverside's Head office on 14 December 2015. The visit will include the CSC and Riverside Home Ownership. Issues will be discussed in order to progress changes to the management agreement including the lack of representation of Council nominees on our Board.
- 623.4 Board members noted the content of the October and November Think Forward updates.
- 623.5 It was noted that the joint Helpline/Careline TSA assessment had been passed with no major improvement requirements identified. The Board recognised the achievement of all involved in this positive outcome.
- 623.6 D Butterworth advised that the recent leasehold forum had been a productive and successful meeting with 60 leaseholders attending. The Division and RHO would now set out a meeting and engagement framework for the immediate.
- 623.6.1 Board members asked whether the programme of works on leasehold properties had been completed. It was confirmed that all FRA works had been completed, routine works will still need to be done but RHO will manage this process as per the new working arrangements.
- 623.7 Board members noted the National Housing Federations Member Briefing on the Planning and Housing Bill 2015
- 623.8 It was noted that in the National Riverside Star awards the Cumbria Division had four nominations, more than any other part of the business. Winners included a posthumous special spotlight award for Rosemary Grimaldi. The Board congratulated all nominees and those who received awards.
- 623.9 Board members watched the recent video update from Carol Matthews relating to the budget challenges and TOM.

- 623.9.1 The impact on Riverside of the governments Comprehensive Spending Review was discussed. It was noted that the extension of the RTB is to go ahead with only five pilot Housing Associations across the Country. Riverside is responsible for one of the pilot areas which is in the Liverpool City Region not, but in Carlisle at this time. The other key change to the proposed extension is the increase to ten years for qualifying tenancies rather than three years which could result in there being fewer eligible tenancies than previously indicated.
- 623.10 Board members noted the content of the TOM Briefing November 2015. D Butterworth asked what Board members felt was the biggest priority to address and what would be the biggest challenge to deliver. Members felt that priorities included, focusing on customers, building more homes and maintaining tenancies. Challenges included responding to rent reduction and delivering services locally. Board members advised that it was important for Riverside not lose sight that as a social housing association the priority should be to provide housing not other non core services.
- 623.10.1 It was noted that the Chair is leading a Sounding Board with Paul Hillard regarding future governance arrangements for the Group. This will incorporate Campbell Tickell's governance review findings and follow on from TOM. It has been recognised that significant improvements with governance arrangements can be made to strengthen Riverside. Further updates will be brought to Board.
- 623.10.2 Board Members were advised that the changes as part of the TOM are expected to take place over a three year switch on period. Changes must begin to happen at a pace to mitigate the rental loss which will occur over the next four years.

The Board noted the content of the report.

624 Performance Update – October 2015

- 624.1 S Taylor-Gage took the Board through the report and highlighted the good performance demonstrated especially with the improvement of the void relet time.
- 624.1.1 The improvement with void relet time is continuing in November. The Chair asked what had been done differently to achieve these positive outcomes. G Brough advised that she had asked those involved in the process what they felt had changed they cited; improved interdepartmental communications, categorising void properties as red, amber or green informed and having weekly meetings. Utilising a small incentive budget to purchase white goods or carpets for difficult to let properties has also been beneficial.

- 624.2 It was noted that the Health and Safety compliance performance would be discussed later as part of the Asset Management report.
- 624.3 Board members noted that arrears performance when looked at year on year is a significant improvement with more money being collected than in previous years.
- 624.4 Positive customer experience continues to be a challenge which has been exasperated by a higher level of evictions and abandonments than expected. Board members felt that the indicator was measuring the wrong thing as the definition is not recording the customer experience. D Butterworth advised that the indicator will be revised with figures of evictions and abandonments taken out for the 16/17 financial year.
- 624.5 S Taylor-Gage advised that as part of the data quality improvement project Riverside is aiming to collect national insurance numbers and email addresses this is being requested through a mail merge as ad hoc talking to tenants has not worked.
- 624.6 It was noted that the scorecard comparison of performance across the Group shows Cumbria as the as best performing General Needs Division. A 90% blended score is forecast.
- 624.7 Board members noted the actions planned to ensure targets are met by 31 March 2016.
- 625 Management Accounts
- 625.1 S Kellock took the Board through the report and highlighted the October 2015 budget forecast update. She added that the Division is doing well and anticipating some challenges coming from the TOM.
- 625.2 It was noted that RECHG in the report should read Riverside Care and Support.
- 625.3 Board members noted that making Careline financially viable is continuing to be challenging as some things we previously able to charge for we cannot any more. The future of Careline will be determined alongside the TOM.
- 625.4 The Board questioned why the aids and adaptations spend against the budget was so low. It was noted that 23% of Cumbria's properties are already adapted our Allocations team also carefully manage lettings and try to match the new tenants' needs with the equipment already installed rather than having the additional expense to remove equipment. In addition the need for aids and adaptations is reducing.

625.5 The Board noted the contents of the Management Accounts for the seven months to 31 October 2015.

626 Regulatory Standards – Tenancy Standard

626.1 P Taylor took the Board through the report and highlighted the requirements and standards in relation to the regulation of tenancy standard. It was noted that the updated version of the regulatory standard was incorrectly dated by the HCA as April 2012.

626.2 Board members asked what the implications were if Riverside leaves Cumbria Choice. P Taylor advised that under the current partnership between RSLs in Cumbria all abide by the same regulatory requirements and Cumbria Choice fulfils this. If things change policies will be looked at and be subject to internal and external checks.

626.3 Board members noted the content of the report.

627 Divisional Risk Mitigation Plan

627.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted the addition of a data quality risk and the reduction in risk of adverse local publicity.

627.2 Dean Butterworth advised that the Cumbria Division is being held as exemplars for how we manage safety first and H&S across the group which includes regular staff bulletins. He added that the Division is as compliant but more needs to be done to identify risk. There is no frame work for consistent reporting on H&S across the Group, D Butterworth is to make a presentation to the Leadership Group to roll out a consistent method in line with the Cumbria model.

627.3 The Board asked whether a business continuity refresher exercise had taken place recently. It was noted that the last one around 18 months ago was a desktop exercise carried out by Paul Kennedy, the Division has previously done live exercises.

627.3.1 The Division has retained some responsibility which was carried from the Council regarding emergency planning in the local area, this is a responsibility we are trying to stop doing and will be part of future discussions with Carlisle City Council.

627.4 Board members discussed the inclusion in the mitigation plan of recruitment, induction and training for new Board members. D Butterworth advised that this was linked with the Whole Board Appraisal but needed to be linked to the outcomes of the governance review. D Butterworth agreed to refresh the Divisional risk mitigation plan to include only what is within the Division's gift, to be brought to the June 2016 Board meeting.

D
Butterworth

- 627.5 The Board asked what was being done to challenge staff who are not working to their full potential. D Butterworth advised that the changes relating to the TOM process would improve the performance culture across the Group. He added that as part of the people planning project additional support is being given to managers to enable them to people manage and performance manage. The Cumbria Division has some managers who need additional support to manage.
- 627.6 It was agreed that a copy of the Divisional People Plan would be included for information in the papers for the next Board meeting. D Butterworth
- 627.7 Board members asked why redundancy costs were not included within the risks. D Butterworth advised that redundancies cost are included on the Group's Corporate risk map which will be brought back to the Board in June 2016.
- 627.8 It was noted that the speed of IT systems in Carlisle referred to systems not being fit for purpose, this has been recognised by the interim IT Director John Paul who has proposed an IT strategy incorporating widespread system changes. It is hopeful that the new strategy will address these problems although it will take time and investment to achieve.
- 627.9 Board Members discussed and approved the revised Divisional Risk Mitigation Plan.
- 627.10 A further review of the Divisional Risk framework to be brought to the June 2016 Divisional Board.
- 627.11 An updated Group Risk Map is shared with the Divisional Board in June 2016.
- S Kellock left the meeting.
- 628 Cumbria Divisional Plan 2015/16 – Mid Year Review
- 628.1 S Taylor-Gage took the Board through the report and highlighted there were no concerns with fulfilling the Divisional targets. It was noted that although the added value service may have been ambitious good things are continuing to happen to help tenants and local residents.
- 628.2 Board members were advised that development plans had changed since the Divisional Plan had been launched with the proposed Newbiggin site no longer progressing. New sites are being looked at in order to maintain the HCA funding.
- 628.3 The Board noted the progress being made to achieve our 2015/16 Corporate Plan objectives.

629 Development Programme Update

- 629.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted that planning approval had been rejected for Raiselands Road. Local councillors lobbied against Riverside in order to maintain the land as play area. An appeal against this decision is planned, in the meantime we have taken the decision to stop grounds maintenance on this site especially as it is not even used as a play area.
- 629.2 Board members noted that the Dalston Road site which is shown on the Divisional Plan as not progressing had not been mentioned in the development report. S Taylor-Gage advised that Riverside had put in a bid for this site however it has become a commercial site.
- 629.3 The Board noted the progress of the current development schemes.
- 629.4 The Board approved the pipeline programme in terms of complying with the strategic priorities of both the Division and Group.

630 Asset Management – Mid Year Review

- 630.1 K Doran took the Board through the report and highlighted that H&S compliance performance had improved and was on target for 100% by 31 March 2016.
- 630.2 K Doran advised that approval was being sought to begin the process to dispose of two bed flats at Moor Road. It was noted that the flats are difficult to let with an increasing amount of issues including being unaffordable due to the bedroom tax and being in a poor location. It was expected that something would need to be done when the improvement works were taking place, however the decision was made to insulate these flats to match the others. Board members were supportive of an approach to try a pilot with one of the flats.
- 630.3 Board members were advised that a date had been set for the fencing contract to begin. K Doran advised that no date had been set however it was not expected that the planned works would take very long to complete.
- 630.4 The Board provided positive feedback following the shift of the gas servicing to Evolve. It was noted that the TUPE of the Lorne Stewart staff was very good in relation to continuity of service. D Butterworth agreed to feedback the positive comments to Evolve. D Butterworth
- 630.5 The Board noted the content of the report and considered item 5 of the report.

- 630.6 The Board approved a market test disposal of a one bedroomed dwelling by advertising it for sale on the open market as detailed in 5.1 of this report. K Doran
- 631 Customer Feedback – Mid Year Review
- 631.1 S Taylor-Gage took the Board through the report.
- 631.2 Board members provided positive feedback on the new report format. It was felt that the report included all that was needed including the narrative to show reasons. The Board asked for the addition of a breakdown of complaints upheld by service area.
- 631.3 It was noted that the compliment table on page two of the report incorrectly referred to complaints.
- 631.4 Board members asked what had happened with the responsive repairs service to cause an increase in complaints. S Taylor-Gage advised that the definition of this performance had changed to include chasers.
- 631.5 A Bishop advised that repairs complaints are not all automatically withheld this only refers to chasers. A new system is to be introduced to separate out the chasers which is being done manually at present. In addition Board members were advised that several staff members are on performance improvement plans due to their chaser performance.
- 631.6 The Board noted the contents of the report and actions to be taken.
- 632 Marketing and Communications – Mid Year Review and Strategy
- 632.1 S Taylor-Gage took the Board through the report.
- 632.2 The Board noted the content of the report.
- S Taylor-Gage left the meeting.
- 633 Board Scrutiny Of Evictions
- 633.1 G Brough took the Board through the report and advised that the number of issues associated with Universal Credit were increasing. There is some delay with the first payment resulting in tenants becoming more in debt than before.
- 633.2 It was noted that payment arrangements are typically agreed with the tenant rather the local team tries to avoid applying for a payment to pay arrears as a 20% rate is taken from the Universal Credit payment making the amount left insufficient to live on.

- 633.3 The Board reviewed the report and provided the authority required to proceed with eviction.
- 634 Whole Board Appraisal
- 634.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted the content of the action plan produced following discussions at the away day and a separate session focussing on this topic. It was noted that the action plan includes only work in our gift as governance arrangements will be reassessed after Campbell Tickell's report is presented. This is expected to be in January.
- 634.2 It was noted that from January the Board meetings will change to have a timed agenda and each report will have a link to risk.
- 634.3 D Butterworth asked the Board whether the suggested 80% attendance was achievable. Board members were supportive of the 80% attendance target although it was acknowledged that it would be challenging especially given the current issues with non-attendance by council nominees.
- 634.4 Board members noted the content of the report.
- 634.5 Board members approved the Action Plan as detailed within Appendix B of this report.
- 634.6 Board members agreed to take ownership of the 2015 Whole Board Appraisal Plan with a review of the plan to be brought back to the Board every second meeting. Officers to support the Board to implement and achieve these actions.
- 635 2016/17 Board Timetable
- 635.1 The Chair took the Board through the report.
- 635.2 Board members suggested moving the date of the March 2016 meeting due to its close proximity to Easter. L Gaddes agreed to contact all members with suggested dates for the reschedule, the date which the majority of Board Members can attend will be chosen. L Gaddes
- 635.3 The Board queried the date of April's Board Briefing. L Gaddes agreed to check and clarify the date via email. L Gaddes
- 635.4 Board members approved the 2016/17 timetable.
- 636 Items for Information
- 636.1 Board Members noted the following items:
a Housing Services Committee Minutes of 01.10.15

b Federation Executive Committee Core Brief 29.10.15

637 Any Other Business

637.1 No further items were raised.

638 Date and Time of Next Meeting

638.1 The next meeting was set for 4:00pm on Thursday 28 January 2016.