

## **THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED**

### **A meeting of the Board of Riverside Cumbria was held at 4:00pm on Thursday 28 January 2016 at English Gate Plaza, Carlisle**

#### Minutes

**Present** M Little (Chair), A Bishop, D Butterworth, G Caig, J Franklin, W Macfarlane and S Powell.

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

**Apologies** J Bainbridge, C Carre, P Harkness and S Layden.

#### 639 Apologies for Absence

639.1 Apologies for absence were received from J Bainbridge, C Carre, P Harkness and S Layden.

639.2 As quorum was not present at our last meeting, the Chair confirmed that absent members were emailed to seek approval to allow decisions to be ratified at an earlier time than this meeting. The email included the proviso that if no response was received by a given date approval would automatically be assumed. As a result approval was given effective from 3 December 2015.

639.3 The Chair informed the Board that the Governance and Remuneration Committee (GRC) had approved the appointment of W Macfarlane as a new Tenant Board Member of the Cumbria Divisional Board with effect from the date of 10 December 2015. On behalf of the Board the Chair congratulated Walter on his appointment and welcomed him to his first meeting as a Divisional Board member.

639.4 It was noted that the next Board commitment is the joint meeting with our Divisional Scrutiny Panel which will take place on 25 February from 4pm. A Bishop expressed her apologies for this meeting.

#### 640 Declarations of Interest

640.1 G Caig declared an interest in Agenda Item 9: Development Programme Update due to his membership as a Councillor on Carlisle City Council's Development Control Committee.

- 641 Minutes of the last meeting held on 26 November 2015
- 641.1 The decisions taken at the last meeting held on 26 November 2015, which was not quorate, were ratified and the minutes were approved for signing.
- 642 Matters Arising from the Minutes
- 642.1 Min 623.3 Divisional Directors Report - Carlisle City Council visit to Head Office: D Butterworth advised that the meeting planned for 14 December had been postponed due to the floods. The meeting will be rearranged and is likely to be during March. D Butterworth
- 642.2 Min 623.10.1 Divisional Directors Report – Governance Review: The Chair advised that progress with the governance review would be discussed under this meeting’s Divisional Directors Report.
- 642.3 Min 627.6 Divisional Risk Mitigation Plan – Divisional People Plan: D Butterworth advised that due to the imminent organisational changes it felt prudent not to bring an out of date People Plan to the Board. It is planned that once the TOM outcomes are known D Butterworth will work with Victoria Warner, our HR Business Partner, to work up a new plan. This new plan will be brought to the Board at an appropriate time.
- 642.4 Min 627.8 Divisional Risk Mitigation Plan – IT systems not fit for purpose in Cumbria: A Bishop advised that the IT system issues discussed were also affecting CSC staff in Cumbria and Irvine. She added that a two pronged attack is taking place to resolve this issues.
- 643 Divisional Directors Report
- 643.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted current issues of interest including; Attendance at Work, Refugee Crisis, Play areas in Longtown, SMART, Cumbria Floods 2015, Governance Review and Target Operating Model Update.
- 643.2 It was noted that at previous meetings it has been reported that staff attendance was improving in Cumbria. Recently there has been a downward trend which can be attributed to unavoidable absences as a result of RIDDOR reportable incidents and staff members personally being affected by the floods. Efforts will continue to push to improve performance in this area however it is not expected that the Division will be able to improve performance in this area to the target of 97% by 31 March 2016. It was noted that January’s staff attendance performance figures will not be available until after month end.

- 643.2.1 Board members asked why Property Services attendance levels are lower than the rest of the Division. D Butterworth advised that the nature of the work has a negative effect on this performance area and notably there are currently three staff members off on long term sick plus the impact of the RIDDOR reportable incidents has meant that some staff members have been unable to get back to work.
- 643.3 D Butterworth advised that in response to the refugee crisis Riverside had worked in partnership with Carlisle City Council to develop a plan to resettle a number of refugees within our stock. As soon as the floods happened these plans were scrapped and for the time being our area has been given an exception from the national resettlement programme. It is expected that the refugee crisis will remain on the government agenda for some time and Riverside will be responding to the demand on a corporate level.
- 643.4 It was noted that a positive outcome had been achieved in relation to the play areas in Longtown by working in partnership with the local parish council to retain them in that part of the city. D Butterworth added that Arthuret Parish Council will take over running of the play areas with a financial contribution [REDACTED] from Riverside. It is felt that this is a good outcome to resolve this issue.
- 643.5 D Butterworth advised Board members that SMART had decided to formally end their partnership with Riverside. Riverside have long had concerns relating to the sustainability of SMART. Although the decision to end the partnership was SMART's it is expected that Riverside will receive some negative publicity and has planned accordingly.
- 643.5.1 Riverside is working with SMART to formally end the agreement and return assets including cash in their bank account to Riverside. It was noted that SMART had been unable to secure external funding so no additional monies need to be returned as part of this process.
- 643.5.2 The money from the SMART bank account will continue to be used to deliver the grounds maintenance in this area. The flat used as an office will be returned to Riverside and reinstated to be let.
- 643.6 D Butterworth thanked all Riverside staff including the CSC for the way they responded to the floods over the weekend of 5/6 December. Firstly in staffing the Council's reception centre and secondly in supporting affected tenants to get them rehoused. It is expected that it will take around 6-8 months to repair the affected properties. Some of our tenants who have been rehoused have decided to make the move permanent and not

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return to the flooded properties. Riverside will need to assess what we will do with these properties going forward. Board members endorsed D Butterworth's comments and asked for their thanks to be passed on to staff who had been involved.

- 643.6.1 Loss adjusters and insurers have worked closely with Riverside to assess the damage to our affected properties. It was noted that to repair the damage to the 22 Riverside properties that were flooded this will cost an estimated of £1.5 Million. Corporately a very good insurance deal has been negotiated with an excess of only ██████ applying for all of the work and a minimal impact is expected on revenue loss. It was noted that some of the estimated cost refers to water penetration on some properties which have not been decanted. S Kellock is carefully monitoring and recording the flood related costs.
- 643.6.2 D Butterworth advised there were some concerns regarding the drains at Kirby Stephen which may have contributed to the flooding of our new properties in this area, it is also understood that property owners knocked down a wall releasing water towards our properties. These properties remain on flood alert. He added that some other developments were no longer proceeding as they are too costly to protect against floods.
- 643.6.3 Board member's asked who would be completing the repair work to our properties. D Butterworth advised that the insurance company has commissioned contractors to complete the insurance work. Riverside we will monitor the work and celebrate when the last property is completed.
- 643.7 The Chair provided an update on the governance review. He advised that the Campbell Tickell review had provided feedback to Riverside which suggested that the current Divisional governance structure was not working as well as it could be, they suggested a number of models for change. The Sounding Board have reviewed the models and no proposal can be formed until the TOM business model is agreed. A further meeting is planned for after the decision is made to look at the best options for improving governance within Riverside. A briefing note will be circulated to all Divisions.
- 643.7.1 D Butterworth presented the Target Operating Model Update January 2016 to the Board. The presentation focused on key components and next steps D Butterworth highlighted that the business case will be considered by our Group Board on 11 February 2016.
- 643.7.2 Board members asked when they were likely to receive information on the outcome of the Group Board meeting. D Butterworth advised that some information may be available to be shared on 25 February ahead of the joint meeting with the

Scrutiny Panel. Robin Ridgley is leading the communication stream relating to the TOM and every effort will be made to inform Board members so they get the right information at the right time. An extraordinary meeting may be required when information becomes available outside the meeting schedule.

643.8 The Board noted the content of the report.

644 Performance Update – December 2015

644.1 S Taylor-Gage took the Board through the report and highlighted that January performance, as of 26 January, showed 100% compliance for homes with a valid gas certificate and health and safety risk actions.

644.2 Board members asked what was being monitored by the positive customer experience KPI. It was confirmed that this KPI only records reasons for ending a tenancy not satisfaction during a tenancy. It is understood that the definition of this KPI will change next year to be a more meaningful indicator. A Bishop added that Riverside currently relies on the annual STAR survey to assess customer satisfaction, it is planned to introduce a real time end of service satisfaction system across Riverside.

644.3 D Butterworth advised that due to the impact of the floods there was a risk that December performance could have been a write off in terms of business as usual terms. The Management Team have focused the Divisional teams in order to balance the needs of the floods and ensuring KPI performance is achieved. On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked all staff involved in this achievement. D Butterworth

644.4 It was noted that evictions for the Division have increased. Board members asked who was responsible for tenants who are evicted. G Brough advised that those evicted have two options they can approach the local council for rehousing if they have a statutory requirement for homeless or they can source alternative accommodation themselves including hostels.

644.5 Board members asked what Irvine were doing differently to achieve 8.8 relet days. S Taylor-Gage advised that there are a lot of differences compared to Cumbria as Irvine does not use CBL, has low transfers and have a very good quality of stock.

644.6 Board members noted the actions planned to ensure targets are met by 31 March 2016.

645 Management Accounts

- 645.1 S Kellock took the Board through the report and highlighted that usually a draft budget is brought to the January Board meeting. However due to the TOM no draft is available yet and that the figures will come to the March 2016 Board meeting.
- 645.2 It was noted that the general needs services expenditure had been incorrectly reported and should show an overspend of £72000. In addition homeless payments referred to in the report should be homeloss payments.
- 645.3 Board members asked why there were delays in processing invoices for the roofing programme. S Kellock advised that as the contractor is a small business they take a long time to send in invoices which delays the budget being spent.
- 645.4 It was noted that the error in interface transfers between the Academy and finance systems was expected to be a one off issue. S Kellock advised that no update was available on the progress of pursuing damages from Lovells for the 'lost' rent due to the delay in handover.
- 645.5 Board members expressed concerns due to the underspend on the cyclical repairs budget as they have previously been reassured that the painting contract would be completed as per the programme. S Kellock advised that there had been additional contractual issues with the contractor AW Byrne. Although they are now on site and will endeavour to complete the planned works before 31 March 2016 they may not complete all of the works.
- 645.7 Issues with income for Careline were highlighted by Board members. It was noted that the challenge to make Careline viable was continuing especially as they recently lost a contract with Eden.
- 645.8 Board members asked why the necessary consents to allow the disposal of eight units at Fell View had not been obtained. S Kellock advised that a number of staff had been involved in the process and this vital piece of information was not recorded correctly. The Board were reassured that this would not happen again as there is now a dedicated staff member who is responsible for all property disposals.
- 645.9 The Board noted the contents of the Management Accounts for the nine months to 31 December 2015.

646 Regulatory Standards – Neighbourhood and Community Standard

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

646.2 Board members asked about the frequency of patch walks across our neighbourhoods. G Brough advised that there is a programme of patch walks for April through to March each year, these are formal walks with invites sent to local councillors. For areas with dense stock there will be around four patch walks whilst for those with less dense stock there may be only one a year. The 2016/17 programme will be published on the Riverside website when finalised.

646.2.1 D Butterworth advised that the expectation in future, with the roll out of agile working, is for an informal patch walk to take place 52 times a year with the relevant officer walking their whole patch each week.

646.3 Board members noted the content of the report.

647 Development Programme Update

647.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted that the pipeline development at Newbiggin is no longer progressing as no alternative site could be found, HCA funding has been lost on this occasion.

647.2 It was noted that the Raiselands Road scheme has been rejected by the Planning Committee. Riverside will formally appeal this decision. D Butterworth advised it is important to understand the reasons for refusal so steps can be taken to overcome issues in future. Due to the delays with the planning appeal process the planned programme has been delayed with a reforecast start on site date of October 2016 and expected completion of June 2017.

647.3 Carlisle City Council's demonstration project which was previously a package of four plots has been split into two lots; one is a site at Beverley Rise and the second has the three sites Riverside found to be unsustainable. Riverside have tendered for Lot 1 which is Beverley Rise.

647.4 Board members advised caution that new development sites should be checked for the risk of flooding.

- 647.5 To clarify the meaning of seemingly conflicting references, within the report, to HCA funding it was noted that from 1 April 2016 HCA grant will only be available for S106 schemes.
- 647.6 The Board noted the progress of the current development schemes.
- 647.7 The Board approved the pipeline programme in terms of complying with the strategic priorities of both the Division and Group.
- 648 Asset Management
- 648.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted the significant reduction to zero of health and safety non compliances. It is expected that 100% compliance will be reported until 31 March 2016.
- 648.2 Board members expressed concerns that the target for emergency repairs had not been achieved and asked what was categorised as emergency repairs. A Bishop advised that emergency repairs are a threat to life or limb however the target response time has now been reduced to two hours and on occasion responses may take longer than this target.
- 648.3 It was noted that a recent audit had taken place relating to first time fix performance which found a number of areas for concern regarding jobs classified as being complete at the first attempt which upon further investigation had not been completed correctly therefore should have failed. Board members asked what difference these incorrect completions would have had on the overall performance figures. D Butterworth agreed to check with Pam Birks and report back to the next meeting. D Butterworth
- 648.4 Board members asked for additional information on the proposed disposals. G Brough provided specific information on the issues with properties on Prescott Road and Brookside. D Butterworth agreed that additional information would be appended to future reports to support the decision making process. D Butterworth / K Doran
- 648.5 The Board noted the content of the report and approved the disposal of 19 Prescott Road and 234 Brookside.
- 649 Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Update
- 649.1 P Taylor took the Board through the report and highlighted the progress made since the original strategy came to Board last year.



- 649.2 Board members asked whether plans to recruit and train tenant representatives from all our neighbourhoods to a Cumbria tenant forum had begun. P Taylor advised that this had started in Longtown with the identification of local residents who want to work with us.
- 649.3 Board members asked why there was both a tenant forum and tenant panel would there be an overlap and why were both needed. P Taylor advised that while the panel look at specific projects the forum will be looking at community projects as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process. He added that the same tenants could in theory be involved with both the forum and the panel.
- 649.4 D Butterworth advised that Stella Eggleston, the Division's Neighbourhood Planner, is producing a timeline for completing all the neighbourhood plans. He added that the formation of the tenant forum has been delayed to ensure a consistent approach across the Group as part of governance review process.
- 649.5 A Bishop asked what was being done differently in recruiting to the tenant panel to increase the diversity of the group. G Brough advised that as part of the neighbourhood planning process a number of consultation events have taken place in Longtown new tenants have been involved and are now working with our Community Engagement Team to see how else they can get involved. This face to face approach has worked in Longtown and will be rolled out to other neighbourhoods to improve engagement with our tenants.
- 649.6 P Taylor added that it was planned to ask the Scrutiny Panel how to get others involved. W Macfarlane advised that the Tenant's Federation are including information about their group in tenancy sign up packs which is hoped to get more tenants involved.
- 649.7 It was highlighted that focus is also being placed on digital inclusion to improve engagement with our customers.
- 649.8 Board members raised concerns that the majority of key priorities for customers identified within the neighbourhood plan are not in our gift and are the responsibility of the local Councils and businesses. G Brough advised that to aid with these neighbourhood priorities it is planned to set up community partnership meetings which Riverside can facilitate and attend while getting someone else to lead.
- 649.9 D Butterworth advised it is planned to share our neighbourhood plans on our website so our customers can see what we are doing and what they can do to get involved.

649.10 Board members noted the progress being made on the objectives set out in the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

650 Board Scrutiny Of Evictions

650.1 G Brough took the Board through the report and highlighted that only three of the cases are claiming Universal Credit all of which had some level of arrears prior to Universal Credit.

650.2 It was noted that an outright order had been given to a family as the judge found it appropriate to do so as they are able to pay their rent and are choosing not to. They have until mid February to pay or for the judge to vary the order otherwise Riverside will proceed with the eviction.

650.3 There have been multiple court hearings that keep being adjourned for a number of the warrant suspensions resulting in high levels of arrears. Board members asked why warrants are suspended. G Brough advised that judges like to give people numerous chances to change their behaviour with eviction being the last resort.

650.4 The Board reviewed the report and provided the authority required to proceed with eviction.

651 Items for Information

651.1 Board Members noted the following items:  
a Housing Services Committee Minutes of 03.12.15.

652 Any Other Business

652.1 No further items were raised.

653 Date and Time of Next Meeting

653.1 The next meeting was set for 4:00pm on Thursday 31 March 2016.