

THE RIVERSIDE GROUP LIMITED

A meeting of the Board of Riverside Cumbria was held at 3:00pm on Thursday 9 April 2015 at English Gate Plaza, Carlisle

Minutes (unconfirmed)

Present M Little (Chair), A Bishop, C Carre, D Butterworth, P Harkness, S Layden, E Mallinson, R Notman, S Powell.

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

Apologies G Caig, J Bainbridge, J Franklin.

567 Apologies for Absence

567.1 Apologies for absence were received from G Caig, J Franklin and J Bainbridge.

567.2 The Chair welcomed Gillian Brough, the Division's Neighbourhood Manager. He added that this was a new role which is also part of our Divisional Management Team.

567.3 The Chair advised Board members that sadly this was R Notman's last meeting as she was retiring as a Tenant Board Member of the Cumbria Divisional Board following nine years of service. On behalf of the Board he thanked Rita for her commitment to the role and for her contribution to the Board since she became a member in 2006.

567.4 It was noted that individual Board member appraisals were due to take place by the end of this month. L Gaddes will be in touch to arrange appointments. L Gaddes

568 Declarations of Interest

568.1 No declarations of interest were received.

569 Minutes of the last meeting held on 29 January 2015

569.1 Minute 565.1 Draft Divisional Revenue Budget 2015/16: It was noted that although the minute was accurate in referring to a number of key points being discussed it was felt that a record of the issues raised would add value to the record of the discussion. L Gaddes

569.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2015 were approved for signing subject the above amendment.

- 570 Matters Arising from the Minutes
- 570.1 Minute 554.6 Matters Arising from the Minutes - Positive press release on the work of the Divisional Scrutiny Panel: Board members asked for an update on the production of the press release. D Butterworth advised that following the approval of the Neighbourhood Planner post it had been agreed to produce a joint statement covering the two subject areas. However there have been some delays in recruitment, the article is planned for when the new post holder is in post which is expected to be shortly. It was noted that Ian Heywood, Chair of the Scrutiny Panel was aware of these plans.
- 570.2 Minute 559.2 Development Programme Update – Redevelopment of the Ladyseat site in Longtown: DB confirmed that he had shared J Bainbridge’s offer of support with the planning process with Julie Gray. He added that the parish council meeting had taken place with permission granted for the proposed redevelopment.
- 570.3 The Board asked for an update on the recruitment process following the attendance of a number of observers at January’s Board meeting. The Chair advised that interview dates had been set and it was hoped that the Board would be advised of the new appointments at the next Board meeting.
- 571 Divisional Directors Report
- 571.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted current issues of interest including Regulatory Framework, gas servicing, individual Board member appraisals and getting the best from our people.
- 571.2 D Butterworth circulated copies of the most recent press release issues by Carlisle Tenants’ and Residents’ Federation.
- 571.2.1 E Mallinson declared an interest as husband is a candidate for council elections in Longtown.
- 571.2.2 D Butterworth explained the background to this press release. He advised he had met with Colin Glover and Jane Meek from the City Council to discuss the complaints process and ongoing partnership issues. Colin Glover had explained this to John Barker and this press statement was the outcome. It was noted that in the run up to the elections it is expected there will be more press releases of this nature.
- 571.2.3 D Butterworth asked Board members to provide copies to Riverside of anything which they receive to enable evidence to be tracked in order to get legal advice. If this or other articles appear in the process Riverside will respond. It was noted that John Barker is not

an elected member or Riverside tenant and Riverside do not recognise the Federation.

- 571.3 The Board discussed the Regulatory Framework briefing note included as Appendix A of the report, it was agreed that a more detailed briefing session would be useful to allow members to explore and understand the regulatory framework in greater detail. It was agreed that this briefing would take place ahead of the next Board meeting. D Butterworth agreed to circulate a link to the Board so they could read the full Regulatory Framework document. D Butterworth
- 571.4 It was noted that Riverside is insourcing the gas servicing contract, issues with transferring staff were noted. Board members were assured that there would be no gap in service between Lorne Stewart and Evolve as the contract has been extended to cover this. 100% compliance during the year is expected without a performance dip during the transfer.
- 571.5 Board members noted the requirements of the Board appraisal process.
- 571.6 D Butterworth advised that Riverside has been placed in the 'one to watch' category for the last few Best Companies Surveys this means there is a long way to go as the categories are 1, 2 and 3 stars this is an area of focus for the Group especially as Irvine has already achieved 3 stars. The Board asked who set the questions, it was confirmed that the questions are set as part of a national survey.
- 571.6.1 A local people planning group has been formed and has met to consider a wide range of issues. D Butterworth highlighted slide 4 of Appendix B showing positive movement for Riverside Cumbria between 2013 and 2014. It was noted that a significant increase of 0.18 is needed to achieve the 5.2 for the 1 star category. The same two areas which need to be addressed are repeated across the organisation. D Butterworth added that the work with the people planning group would soon be concluded and an action plan would be created.
- 571.6.2 It was noted that a local target was to be introduced to increase staff attendance from 95% to 97%. The Board supported addressing this issue in order to meet performance targets. Report to include trend information and a breakdown of long term sick and short term sickness.
- 571.6.3 Board members noted the changes for the Division with P Birks and K Doran moving to be directly line managed by the Central Asset Management Teams, the transfer of leasehold management to Riverside Home Ownership, the creation of a Divisional Leadership Team and changes to the Divisional Management Team attendees.

Board members expressed concern regarding the impact of the changes on staff. They were reassured that staff were aware of the proposed changes. D Butterworth advised that the restructure is focused on skills and competencies for specific roles, staff will be supported to develop new skills to enable them to succeed. He added that organisational changes will be added to the Divisional risk. It is planned that all changes will be made by April 2016.

571.6.4 As some staff are doing more work to cover for others it was noted that the cost to the organisation is not as much as the quarter of a Million pounds quoted in the report. Additional costs apply if staff need to be employed to provide cover.

571.6.5 The Board requested an update to be made at each Board meeting on staff attendance and organisational change.

D
Butterworth

571.7 The Board noted the content of the report.

572 Presentation: Successful Tenancies

572.1 The Board received a presentation on Successful Tenancies from D Butterworth. He highlighted various approaches of targeting resources for more successful and sustainability tenancies.

572.2 As part of the ongoing consultation process D Butterworth asked for Board members' views on several aspects of the process including; outline service proposals, options for tenancy management approaches and a vision for the Income Collection service.

572.3 The Board agreed that the content of 2.2 of the report set out clearly a definition for a sustainable tenancy. Members were supportive of the proposed Tenancy Lifecycle.

572.4 Board members considered the pros and cons of fixed term tenancies, concerns were raised about sustainability issues. The Board supported the introduction of fixed term tenancies in high demand areas and for introducing a probationary element to assist with managing troublesome tenancies.

572.5 The Board considered whether Riverside should consider introducing tiered service levels based on customer behaviours. The Board were not supportive as it was felt that the same service should be provided to all customers. Not having the same service just makes problems worse or effects neighbourhoods. Good customers are rewarded with a well maintained property from good landlord, the focus should not be on rewarding it needs to be on sanctioning poor tenants.

572.6 Board members considered whether Riverside should consider changing the tenancy agreement to make engagement in support conditional. The Board were supportive of the concept, Riverside

would need to ensure that there is support in place e.g. mental health through joint working. Concerns were raised regarding who would make the judgement regarding recognising support needed and how non-compliance issues would be dealt with.

- 572.7 D Butterworth thanked the Board members for their feedback and advised that a report will be made to HSDs by June. Further information on the process will be reported at future Board meetings.
- 573 Cumbria Divisional Corporate Plan Review 2014/15 and Draft Proposals for 2015/16
- 573.1 S Taylor-Gage took the Board through the report and highlighted the draft proposals for 2015/16. She asked the Board to review the proposals and advised if they felt anything had been missed.
- 573.2 It was noted that the only red activity in the plan had occurred as there was no staffing resources to plan or to deliver as a result of the Asset Management restructure. It was noted that recruitment to the local structure is taking place now and the outstanding action will be addressed.
- 573.3 The Board asked whether the Asset Management Team will remain in Cumbria. S Taylor-Gage advised that the team will be managed via the central team with responsibility remaining locally for our customers.
- 573.4 Board members asked whether the roll out of tablets and their effectiveness had been evaluated. It was noted that the roll out to Housing Management was not at that stage yet. G Brough added that the Income Collection Team were finding the tablets useful for instance to set up Direct Debits with customers during visits. D Butterworth advised that bespoke programmes for the Housing Management Team are to be purchased to enable them to use and improve the service and iron out problems this will happen by April 2016.
- 573.5 The Board noted the achievements during 2014/15 and commented on proposed priorities for 2015/16.
- 574 Digital Inclusion Strategy
- 574.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted the Divisional information shown in Appendix 1. The Board raised some concerns over the figures used which indicated that 72% of customers aged over 65 were not online. Board members were advised that this figure is based on a range of questions from the Star survey including several aspects on using the internet including the use of social media and buying things online. The Board

acknowledged that although someone may have access to the internet they would not use it for this type of application.

- 574.2 A Board member highlighted that the free Wi-Fi mentioned in the wider environment part of the report is usually not a very good connection so you are not able to do anything. Given that mobile computing that has now overtaken PC use this is not helpful.
- 574.3 D Butterworth advised that Digital Inclusion was one of the four key Corporate issues for Riverside to address, regular reports are expected to come to the Board.
- 574.4 The Board noted the content of the report.

575 Development Programme Update

- 575.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted progress of the current development schemes.
- 575.2 The Board asked whether there was demand for the proposed three bed properties. D Butterworth confirmed that there was high demand for three and four bed properties this was demonstrated through the development appraisal process looking at demand in these areas. P Taylor added that Divisional liaison meetings take place on regular basis to enable the Division to feed in to this.
- 575.3 D Butterworth advised he would check the approval process for the Development Programme as he had already approved the developments which he understood would go ahead without Board approval. D Butterworth
- 575.4 The Board were assured that systems were in place to pick up on safety issues including gas at handover and during the defects period.
- 575.5 The Board noted the progress of the current development schemes.
- 575.6 The Board approved the pipeline programme in terms of complying with the strategic priorities of both the Division and Group.
- 576 Board Scrutiny Of Evictions
- 576.1 P Taylor took the Board through the report and highlighted that the cases were a mix of areas and property types and family composition. It was noted that not all of these cases will lead to eviction. There has been a slight increase in numbers overall, year on year the number of evictions is a bit less than it was.
- 576.2 Board members asked for more detail on those cases which do progress to eviction. Board members asked whether outright orders referred to eviction or if Riverside were just taking back properties P Taylor / G Brough

that had been abandoned. It was agreed that additional information on these aspects of the evictions process would be brought to the next Board meeting.

- 576.3 The Board were surprised at the number of cases where customers are struggling when they are working and not receiving housing benefit. It was noted that some of these cases could be receiving Universal Credit which would not show. It was requested that the spreadsheet be amended to show the effect of Universal Credit as the current format only records housing benefit rewarded. It was noted that as the format is a Group template feedback would be given to ask for the change to show Universal Credit. P Taylor / G Brough
- 576.4 Members asked whether customers were paying their rent directly to Riverside. It was noted that the Income Collection Team are taking active steps to set up direct payments, this is not being taken up as much as expected. The Universal Credit process requires action to set up payment arrangements for the two aspects housing element and request payment for arrears.
- 576.5 The Board reviewed the report and provided the authority required to proceed with eviction.
- 577 Stock Investment and Cyclical Maintenance 2015/16
- 577.1 D Butterworth took the Board through the report and highlighted detailed information which is now available to be communicated with customers.
- 577.2 The Board asked whether there will be the same level of investment in our properties going forward. D Butterworth advised that a similar amount of money will be invested in line with the five year programme there will now be more control and more information available to customers. S Kellock added that Asset Management use a programme of works to allocate budget work in Cumbria equates to 19.7% this year as opposed to 24% last year. The Board were assured that although our section is less this year this Cumbria Division is getting a fair share.
- 577.3 The Board noted the content of the report.
- 578 Financial Management Accounts
- 578.1 S Kellock took the Board through the report.
- 578.2 The Board asked why a lot of money was being spent on public realm works. S Kellock explained that public realm work was not being done by Councils across the country so Riverside had made additional funding available to enable money to be spent to improve these areas. D Butterworth advised that the additional funding was

a one, if Riverside is able to outperform with receiving Universal Credit payments more money may be made available.

- 587.3 The Board expressed concerns regarding the effect on the forecast underspend of costs relating to depreciation and asked what we were not spending money. SK advised that there was underspend with some elements such as Aids and Adaptations this enables money to be spent elsewhere if this is not possible budgets will be overspent. It was noted that work is not being missed work programmes are being slowed down to ensure funding is available.
- 578.4 Board members asked for an update on progress with Careline. S Kellock advised that it was expected that the Careline part of the business would break even in the current year. Work is currently taking place with the support of Helpline to bid to provide Telecare community alarms, a contract that was previously lost. Additional business is continuing to be pursued. D Butterworth added that further discussions are to take place with A Bishop and J Wood to look at strategy regarding Careline and Helpline.
- 578.5 S Kellock advised that following property disposals Riverside have an agreement to give 50% of the value to the Council, if we reinvest this money for the provision of social housing within the Carlisle area then we do not have to give it back. It was noted that if Riverside uses these restricted reserves a report to the Board will be made.
- 578.6 The Board noted the contents of the Management Accounts for the 11 months to 28 February 2015.
- 579 Divisional Revenue Budget and Business Plan 2015/16
- 579.1 S Kellock took the Board through the report and highlighted that necessary changes had been made to the budget and business plan which were detailed in the report.
- 579.2 In line with the Group Framework agreement the Board approved the Revenue Budget and summary Business Plan. It was noted that the approval was subject to any subsequent amendments as defined by Group. Any amendments will be agreed by the Treasurer and / or Chair and reported to the next Board Meeting.
- 579.3 The Board noted the Riverside Group (Group) central budgets being applied for the delivery of Riverside Cumbria based activities / projects.
- 579.4 It was noted that the recommendation constitutes the Boards' responsibility in influencing the Group Business Plan to be approved in April 2015.

580 Performance Update – February 2015

580.1 S Taylor-Gage took the Board through the report and added an update on the year end figures. Nine performance areas have been confirmed with only arrears left to be reported on. The feeling is confidence that the Division will achieve a blended score of 95% as forecast.

580.2 It was noted that the top 10 KPIs for 2014/15 will be formally reported to the June Board meeting. The report will include information on the impact on relet days (amber performance) of pushing the letting of long term voids to achieve the % stock void performance. The Board congratulated staff for the achievement in turning round the % stock void performance to reach the target. The Board asked that their thanks be passed to staff for achieving this performance demonstrating a continued level of improvement.

D
Butterworth

580.3 D Butterworth advised that the target at the beginning of year was for Cumbria to be the best general needs performing Division he confirmed that it looked as though this target would be met. The chair asked what the target would be for 2015/16, DB explained that a further improvement would be aimed for.

580.4 P Taylor took the Board through the Cash Collection Dashboard report and highlighted the narrative for each of the graphs.

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

S Layden and E Mallinson left the meeting.

581 Items for Information

581.1 Board Members noted the following items:
a Management Team briefings of February, March and April 2015.
b Housing Services Committee Minutes of 05.02.15.
c Group Board Headlines February 2015.

582 Any Other Business

582.1 The Chair closed the meeting by making a presentation to R Notman and thanking her for her contribution including her attendance at events and her role in setting up the local Credit Union.

583 Date and Time of Next Meeting

583.1 The next meeting was set for 4:00pm on Thursday 18 June 2015.