

MINUTES OF WESLO BOARD MEETING NO. 173

2 September 2009

Present:	Peter Robson	Chair
	Mike Bruce	Chief Executive
	Mike Crozier	Operations Director
	Douglas Drummond	Finance Director
	John Spraggon	Community Director
	Cllr. Frank Anderson	West Lothian Council Representative
	Janette Wallace	Tenant Director
	Alex Bow	Tenant Director
In attendance:	Susan Anderson	Estates Manager
	Kate Hedges	Executive Assistant

The Chairman opened the Board Meeting by welcoming everyone to Kaim Park Hotel and introducing Susan Anderson as the staff observer for this meeting.

	ITEM	ACTION
1	<u>APOLOGIES</u> Apologies were received from Cllr. Gerry Goldie, Margaret McIntyre, Andrew Sneddon and Eileen Stirling.	
2	<u>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING</u> The minutes of Board Meeting No. 172 were approved.	
3	<u>MORTGAGE TO RENT SCHEME AND SHORTFALL FUND</u> The Operations Director asked the Board to note the contents of the report and to approve the retention of the remaining £8,520.93 for use in future cases. In addition, the Operations Director asked the Board to approve the use of a further £5,000 for the shortfall fund should the current fund be exhausted in the next twelve months. The Operations Director undertook to report back on the progress of the MTR Scheme and the shortfall fund for excess repairs on an annual basis.	OD
	The Operations Director also outlined that the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) is now taken into consideration when assessing necessary repairs to MTR properties. The Scheme will be reviewed soon and the Operations Director undertook to keep the Board apprised of the outcome regarding this issue.	OD
	The Board noted the contents and the motion to approve the retention of the remaining funds was proposed by Alex Bow and seconded by John Spraggon.	

ITEM**ACTION****4 DRAFT HOUSING BILL (SCOTLAND) BILL: A CONSULTATION – WESLO’S RESPONSE**

A copy of Weslo’s submission had been issued in advance of the meeting and, for the record, the Chief Executive noted that the first section concerns Right to Buy legislation, the second is regarding the powers and environment of the Scottish Housing Regulator and introduces, among other measures, the concept of a tenants charter and an attempt to open a national conversation on housing.

The Chief Executive advised that significant parts of the bill were not universally welcomed in the sector but thanked the Board members for their contribution to Weslo’s submission and undertook to keep them informed of the outcome of the consultation.

CE

5 DIRECT DEBIT INCENTIVE

The Chief Executive advised the Board that the Management Team have been in discussion about introducing a scheme to encourage tenants to pay their rent by Direct Debit as this would save Housing Officer’s considerable time in pursuing arrears. Considerable savings of staff time would result from an increase in this method of payment.

The Chief Executive undertook to keep the Board of progress and invited ideas/comments on the subject.

CE

6 DIRECTORS REPORTS

6a) The Chief Executive issued his report and the following was noted:

1) During the gutter and drainpipe replacement contract, a design fault has been identified in nine properties at Hillhouse Road. This seems to have resulted in instances of wet rot. The properties are being surveyed and a plan of action is to be identified for inclusion in next year’s programme.

TM

2) The site at Ladywell was successfully handed over in the week commencing 17 August and nearly all of the properties have now been allocated. The Chief Executive added that he had visited the site and that both he and the tenants he met there were pleased with the overall design and layout of this development.

3) Weslo Initiatives Limited commenced trading on 1 September and the Chief Executive offered his thanks and congratulations to all involved for meeting the target date and undertook to advise the Scottish Housing Regulator in due course.

CE

4) The Chief Executive attended the “Mind Your Own Business” event hosted by the Chartered Institute of Housing on 29 July. Considerable focus was placed on the preparation of Business Plans and much of the content was of immediate relevance to our recently approved plan and, more importantly, our preparation for the 2010 Business Plan. In this connection, we await a response from the Scottish Housing Regulator regarding the point made, following our meeting on 21 July.

CE

ITEM**ACTION**

5) The Chief Executive and the Finance Director had an introductory meeting with Mark Webster, Head of Housing Finance, Nationwide, who is now in charge of the Social Housing Loan Book, formally held by the Dunfermline Building Society.

6 The Finance Director issued his report and the following was noted:

6b) 1) Budgetary Control Report

Each Board member had been issued with a copy of the Budgetary Control Report for period ending 31 August. This report was run in advance of the Half Year Review with original profiles still in place. A full report detailing changes to forecast outturn will be included in the next Board report. The variances of note are as follows:

- Voids and bad Debts are £42,000 over profile. This excess over profile is a result of the "one off" write-off following on from the Internal Audit review of Former Tenant Arrears. The extent of the excess over profile is gradually falling back and will be addressed with a revised profile being set at the Half Year Review.
- RTB Sales are £79,000 below profile due to a relatively slow start to the year but are now gradually catching up with sales picking up in the second quarter of 2009/10. A more detailed analysis of RTB Sales receipts will take place at the Half Year Review and with it a revised forecast outturn.
- Expenditure to date on both Planned Maintenance and Improvement works has been slower than forecast with the combined expenditure falling £378,000 behind profile. Again this will catch up as the programme moves on.
- Both expenditure and grants received for Medical Adaptations are behind profile. This too is a timing issue.
- A saving of £100,000 is shown for Loan Part 1 as a result of fixing the facility at a lower rate than forecast in the original estimate. Forecast outturn has been adjusted to show a total saving of £201,000 for the year.

No changes have been made to forecast outturn in advance of the Half Year Review with the forecast year end surplus still showing £2,517,000. This is a healthy position for the Company which we do not envisage changing much after the Half Year review is completed.

2) West Lothian Strategic Alliance

The Finance Director attended a development update meeting to review progress to date. The Finance Director attended a further meeting at which the Alliance met with West Lothian Council to discuss problems being encountered in developing the site at Charles Crescent, Bathgate. Estimates indicate the site will be expensive to develop. West Lothian Council and the Housing Investment Division will be approached to see if any funding assistance is available.

WLSA

ITEM**ACTION**

- 3) The upgrade to Sage 200 is progressing steadily.
- 4) Scott-Moncrieff will have completed an Audit needs assessment which will allow for a Programme of Internal Audit work to be presented at the next Board meeting. FD
- 5) The insurance claim at 46E Hadrian Way has a high reserve and this may impact on next year's premium. We have chosen a high excess to keep the number of claims down which, coupled with using our own workforce helps to reduce the cost of smaller claims. The Finance Director will update the Board on any further significant claim's during the course of the year. FD

6 The Operations Director issued his report and the following was noted:

- 6c) 1) The Older Persons Advice Project, run by Link, continues to progress well and has been nominated for a High Achievement in Housing in Scotland Award.

2) Office Refurbishment

This is progressing on target and Phase 1 will be complete on 11 September 09. Reception will then re-open, Finance will move back to the front office and Estates will move to rooms to the rear of the building.

- 3) Following the Staff Away Day the Staff Working Party met on 27 August and agreed which of the ideas/suggestions put forward were worth pursuing.

It was agreed that a more detailed questionnaire should be issued to staff, to ascertain how strongly they feel about the suggestions put forward and how it would be best to implement them.

- 4) The Equalities Action Plan Focus Group met on 11 August. Housing Manager, David McLaren, is compiling a draft strategy on the use of census information for the Group by the end of this year. HM

- 5) The Operations Director, Technical Manager and Estates Manager met with owners from the Bo'mains and Kinneil estates to discuss the cost of the maintenance of unadopted areas. Constructive discussions have been held and the Operations Director is confident that this issue will be resolved soon. OD

Arrears

Arrears are £98,000 in July, down from £129,000 in June. The reduction is due in part to a double Housing Benefit payment made by Falkirk Council.

Voids

These are slightly above target. Gregor Colville, Housing Support Officer, is compiling a report by 11 September to assist in identifying areas in which we may be able to improve

ITEM**ACTION**

internal procedures to reduce Void times. There continue to be circumstances beyond our control (e.g. death of a tenant) which inevitably increases the void period.

ET

Reactive Maintenance

There is currently a minor overspend.

Repair Response Times

All jobs undertaken in July were attended to on time.

Repair Satisfaction Cards

25 were returned. There were no negative comments.

Alex Bow asked if these could be completed online, The Operations Director undertook to look into the possibility, as part of a wider review of the way we measure customer satisfaction with the repairs service.

OD

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- i) The Chief Executive and Finance Director met with a developer regarding the provision of some flats in North Lanarkshire. Funding availability has been queried but as this is not a high priority area, alternative means of financing the development are being investigated.
- ii) The European Housing Ecology Network Conference is being hosted in Copenhagen in October and the Chief Executive asked the Board to approve his attendance. This was duly granted.
- iii) John Spraggon offered his congratulations on the content and presentation of the Annual Accounts. The Board concurred that it was a very professional document.

iv) The Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 10am on 14 October at our Bathgate offices, unless otherwise notified nearer the time.