



Minutes of the Board Meeting held on Tuesday 8th June 2010 at 4pm at Link House, 2c New Mart Road, Edinburgh.

Present:	Mr R Robertson (Chairman)	In attendance:	Mr N Hall
	Mr E Banks		Mrs B Higgins
	Mr A Colston		Mrs H Bayne
	Mr T Clark		Mrs M Middleton
	Ms A Currie		Mr C Culross
	Mr D Esslemont		Ms J Wilson (Minutes)
	Mr P Foreman		Mrs K Evans
	Mr J O'Neill		Mr N McDonald (Connaught)
	Mr R Shorter		Mr M Paton (Connaught)
	Mr R Stirrat		

BUSINESS

Mr Robertson introduced and welcomed Mr Neil McDonald and Mr Mark Paton of Connaught who were attending the meeting to give the Board an update regarding the repairs service they provide to Link.

Mr McDonald provided an overview of the progress with the repairs contract since the East and West region contracts had commenced. He explained that whilst good progress had been made with regard to repair completion times, the way in which Link interpreted the application of the Schedule of Rates (SOR) for repairs was causing Connaught to lose money on the contract.

A discussion took place during which the Connaught staff agreed that they would undertake further work to substantiate its position and demonstrate how the application of the Schedule of Rates was causing Connaught difficulties.

The Board thanked the Connaught staff for their attendance and noted that the matter would be discussed further at the end of the scheduled Board meeting business.

MR McDONALD AND MR PATON LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT

Action

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Hinton and Mr Macneill.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11th MAY 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th May 2010 were approved.

Moved: Mr Banks
Seconded: Mr Shorter

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11th MAY 2010

4.1 Millarston Drive, Paisley

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4.2 Edinburgh Dispersed Stock Review

The Board noted that a letter had been received from the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) outlining its response to the re-investment strategy for the 30 dispersed properties in Edinburgh. The Board noted that although the SHR had no objection to the proposal it had stated that it could not give an in-principle approval. THE SHR advised that disposal consents could not be on a projected basis and they would only be considered in the normal statutory manner.

The Board further noted that Mr Culross had met the City of Edinburgh had supported Link's initiative with regard to disposal and re-investment strategy. The Council had requested opportunity to consider if it could purchase some of the properties for homelessness provisioning.

Mr Culross advised that he would advise the SHR that Link sought a re-consideration of the Regulator's position with regard to its strategy. **CC**

4.3 Quarterly Loan Covenant Compliance

The Board noted that the Management accounts for the quarter to March 31st 2010 had been submitted to Link Lenders.

4.4 New Housing and Financial System

The Board noted that the inclusion of Capita in the systems proving days had been welcomed by staff as it enabled a broader comparison involving three systems.

The Board further noted that the final result of the scoring is still being accumulated and site visits will be taking place during June which will enable a final selection to be made during July 2010.

4.5 Any Other Matters Arising

4.5.1 Group Structure

Mrs Bayne tabled a paper regarding the timings of the structure discussions.

The Board noted that there were three options in the paper due to the possible cancellation of the July and August board meetings. The Board considered all three options and concluded that as the July and August meetings would be quorate, Option 1 was the preferred timescale.

It was noted by Board Members that there would require to be at least one meeting

of the Convenors Group held during this time to advance the structure discussions.

The Board approved Option 1 as the preferred timescale and agreed to arrange a date as soon as possible for the next Convenors Group meeting to take place.

CS

5. APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND STATISTICAL RETURN (APSR)

The Board considered the previously circulated report and ratified the decision of Mr Colston and Mr Robertson to approve the APSR submitted on 28th May 2010.

6. SECTION 66 DISPOSAL CONSENT

The Board considered the previously circulated report and approved the disposal of the six properties listed below, all subject to the Scottish Housing Regulator providing assurance that that future Consent applications to dispose of vacant properties covered by the Strategy would be approved and the City of Edinburgh Council had confirmed its position with regard the potential acquisition of some of the properties for homelessness provisioning :

- ***7/5 (5a) South Sloan Street, EH6 8SS***
- ***13 (TF4) Balfour Street, EH6 5DG***
- ***1/1 Bothwell House, Easter Road, EH7 5YL***
- ***21 Hyvot Bank, Avenue, EH17 8NH***
- ***2a L Dean Path, EH4 3BA***
- ***Flat 7, 8 Royal Circus, EH3 6SR***

CC

The Board further approved the application for Section 66 Consent for the disposals to the Scottish Housing Regulator and that the applications would be signed by any Board Member.

7. STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH PARAGON HOUSING

The Board considered the previously circulated report and approved the draft Strategic Alliance Agreement with Paragon Housing Association.

BH

8. APPOINTMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS TO SUBSIDIARY BOARDS

The Board considered and approved the appointment of Colin McGilvray, a Tenant from Catrine to the Board of Link Housing Association and Paul McFadden and Linda Brown, both Service Users from Fife to the Board of LinkLiving Ltd. JW

9. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Board approved the applications for membership from:

*Ms Heather McAwley, a Tenant from Tillicoultry
Ms Jan Burns, a Tenant from Maddiston
Mr Paul Derek Willson, a Tenant from Edinburgh.*

The Board noted that all of these applicants were keen to be further involved with Link and although membership did not necessarily afford them this, it would be a good opportunity to discuss with them their possible involvement with Tenant Participation groups. MBM

10. RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Mr Foreman updated the Board on discussions that the Risk Management Committee (RMC) had at the meeting held immediately prior to the Board meeting.

Lanark Road West Edinburgh

The project was to build 32 flats and Link had been approached by Viewpoint Housing Association to take over the project as it was withdrawing from development activity. The project had been tendered and HAG allowances agreed. The RMC had instructed the completion of the due diligence process and it was expected that in around 4 weeks time a decision to take over the project would be required.

The Board approved Link taking on the project at Lanark Road West subject to a satisfactory due diligence outcome and delegated authority to the RMC to oversee the process.

Lochside Crescent Redding

The additional costs which had arisen in March 2008 (related to peat being discovered in one area of the site) had been accepted as a HAG qualifying cost and additional HAG of £47,555 has been paid by the Scottish Government to Link.

Kirkwood Street Rutherglen

The comprehensive tenement improvement project was expected to be 50% funded by the Scottish Government. The funding would not be available until 2012/13 but in order to proceed the project to a formal grant offer, a tender would be required. The RMC had accepted the recommendation from Officials that the design team should be instructed to proceed to tender stage. This involved fees and costs of £223,501, a proportion of which could be at risk if the grant funding was not made available and the project had to be re-modelled.

The Board approved the proposal to proceed to tender stage and incur fees and costs of £223,501.

Falkirk Road Bonnybridge

This project was subject to a requirement of Falkirk Council that development of the site required contributions to be made to the Education department and Off Site Play Equipment totalling £99,600. Currently such costs are not qualifying costs for HAG. Although the RMC was not satisfied that this should be the case (as the site price had been reduced accordingly) the RMC considered that as Link was not ready to develop the site that its purchase should proceed and representations would continue to be made to the Council and the Scottish Government.

The Board approved the acquisition of the site at Falkirk Road Bonnybridge in the sum of £650,000.

Landbank Fund

The RMC continue to monitor the fund within the total amount previously approved by the Board.

Risk Registers

These had been considered and approved by the RMC.

11. STATE OF THE NATION

Item deferred until after Items for note.

12. SELF ASSESSMENT

The Board considered the previously circulated report.

It was noted that the Advice Teams, which are part of Linkwide, had been omitted from the final report.

It was further noted that although there had been no major issues identified in the report, some of the comments reproduced may have been from a minority of staff and without context and therefore may not be fully representative of the wider staff view.

It was acknowledged that it would have been helpful if there had been more historical information and comparisons included.

13. REGULATION PLAN

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated report.

It was noted that based on the list of other RSL engagement plans that the RSLs formed as a result of stock transfers were all listed as "High Engagement" and RSLs with a development programme and/or appeared to have difficulties meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard tended to be listed as "Medium Engagement" In all cases it was unclear what the category of 'seeking further information' the Scottish Housing Regulator referred to.

14. STRATEGY ACTION PLANS

14.1 Corporate Procurement

The Board considered and discussed the previously circulated action plan review, noting that good progress had been made with regard to the action points.

14.2 Energy

The Board considered the previously circulated action plan review and noted that 15% of the action points were not started because the Energy Strategy had a 3 year time frame and the strategy was established 6 months ago.

The Board queried what was meant by different rates for energy efficient cars. Mrs Bayne confirmed that this applied to staff who qualify for a car allowance and agreed to clarify the comments in the "Progress" column. **HB**

14.3 Affordable Warmth

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated action plan review.

15. HOUSING (SCOTLAND) BILL

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report which summarised the Housing (Scotland) Bill and the written submission made by Link in response to the Scottish Government consultation questions.

16. ENERGY ACTIVITIES

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

17. ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

Mr Robertson commented that it was clear from the report that good savings have been made throughout the year across a number of procurement activities and thanked all those involved for all their hard work.

MR REIDFORD AND MRS EVANS LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT.

18. EXECUTION OF LEGAL DOCUMENTS

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

19. FINANCE REPORT

The Board considered and noted the previously circulated report.

20. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS FORMS

The Board noted that the annual Declaration of Interests form had to be completed and Mr Robertson asked all Board Members to complete and return the forms to Ms Wilson at the earliest opportunity.

11. STATE OF THE NATION

Mr Sanderson gave a presentation entitled State of the Nation. He advised the Board on the current environment in housing in Scotland and covered the publication by the Scottish Government entitled "Fresh Thinking, New Ideas" He confirmed that a copy of the presentation was available on the Link Group extranet.

MR SANDERSON LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

21.1 Leave of Absence

Mr Hall advised that owing to work pressures Mr Hinton had been unable to attend the Board meeting and due to this being likely to continue, at least in the short term, requested that the Board consider granting a leave of absence to Mr Hinton.

The Board approved the request for a leave of absence for Mr Hinton for a period of three months.

21.2 Delegated Authority – Cleaning Tender

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21.3 Horizon – Short Term Bridging

Mr Hall advised the Board that at the April 2010 meeting he had brought to the Board's attention the possibility of Horizon requiring short term bridging finance to finance a major project as HAG for it would not be paid in this current financial year. The Board noted that this would be likely to be from August 2010 until April 2011 and would be a closed bridging carried out through an intercompany lending facility. The main issue would be to ensure that Horizon had a binding HAG offer and acceptance.

JNH

The Board approved the proposal in principle and requested that a report be provided to the July Board meeting for further approval.

21.4 Craigmyle Road Grangemouth Opening Ceremony

Mr Robertson advised that the opening ceremony would take place on July 7th 2010 and the Scottish Housing Minister, Mr Alex Neil, would be the guest of honour. The opportunity would also be taken to launch Link's strategic alliance with Paragon and to recognise the National Accreditation award for Link's Advice Team.

21.5 Connaught Proposals

The Board discussed the issues arising from the presentation given by Connaught at the start of the meeting and further considered the report provided by the Director of Housing and Technical Services.

The Board acknowledged that although Link would wish to maintain continuity of service from Connaught an increase in the rates paid to Connaught would be in breach of European procurement legislation. It would be appropriate however to request that Connaught provide evidence of where the contract conditions were being unfairly applied or where toxic SORs existed.

The Board agreed that the next step in the process would be for Link Housing staff to meet with Connaught and review Connaught's evidence and proposed solutions for resolution of the difficulties and report back further to the July meeting.

22. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 13th July 2010 at 4:00pm in the Sievewright Suite, 2c New Mart Road, Edinburgh.

The Meeting closed at 18:50 p.m.