

# Minutes of the Saffron Housing Trust Ltd Board Meeting

28<sup>th</sup> April 2011

## Present:

**Board:** Eloise Ellis (EE)  
David Frost (DF)  
Graham Minshull (GM)  
John Overton (JO)  
Peggy Phinn (PP)  
Derek Player (DP)  
Arley Turner (AT)  
Ken Warman (KGW)  
Terry Woods (TW)  
Karen Wooddissee (KW, Chair)

**Apologies** Board Members Michael Harrowven and Linda Sinclair and the Director of Housing and Finance Stephen Flowitt-Hill

**Officers:** Adam Ronaldson, Chief Executive (CE)  
Steve Burns, Director of Asset Management (DAM)  
John Whitelock, Director of New Business (DNB)  
Rachael Tresize, Public Relations Manager (PRM)

**Observers:** Warren Burge (WB)  
Denise Burke (DB)

KW welcomed WB and DB to the meeting as observers from CAP. She explained that the agenda had deliberately been kept short to allow full consideration of the main item on future development plans

## 869. Standing Items

### Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest relating to the agenda.

### Minutes of Previous Meetings

It was **RESOLVED:**

- That the minutes of the meeting on 24 March 2010 were a true record of that meeting.

### Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

### Performance Indicators

The CE confirmed that all review targets had been met except for indicator R12 where performance was 8.4 weeks against a target of 8 weeks. He explained that this had resulted from a decision not to replace an officer on maternity leave and he

put this into context by explaining Saffron's role in the overall provision of aids and adaptations to tenants.

He then confirmed that there were two missed targets on the indicators reported to the Board for information.

The first was the programme to improve external doors where only 439 properties had been improved against a target of 500. He outlined three reasons for this, the extremely poor weather in December, the fact that the agreed works period under the Eastern Procurement Consortium contract was the latter part of the year and poor communications between Saffron to the contractor.

In response to a question from DF the DAM confirmed that some responsibility for the poor communications rested with Saffron staff.

The second missed information target was for lifeline installations. The CE said that the reasons behind this had largely been explained during the year when it became clear that this indicator would not reach target. GM said that an additional reason was the aggressive marketing behind the competing Age UK service.

The Chair said that overall performance had been very good and asked the CE to pass on to staff the congratulations of the Board. The CE said that he would and that he would ensure that errors made would not be repeated.

## **870. Management Accounts**

The CE introduced this report confirming the anticipated excellent financial performance and drawing the Board's attention to the net surplus achieved. The CE then explained the key items in the accounts in detail and the Chair commended Saffron staff on behalf of the Board for the excellent financial results.

## **871. Minutes from Associated and Controlled Bodies**

Crocus Contractors (was SNHP Services) 25.3.11

DP confirmed that the SNHP Services Board had agreed to change their name to Crocus Contractors Ltd and that this change had now been completed. He also noted that Crocus had agreed to undertake the photo-voltaic panel project as requested by Saffron.

Information Exchange 4.4.11

PP circulated the minutes from the meeting of the Information Exchange and noted the focus on anti-social behaviour.

e<sup>2</sup> Joint Members Group 6.4.11

The CE drew the Board's attention to the very positive performance achieved by e<sup>2</sup> in meeting development targets.

EPC Board Meeting 7.4.11

The CE confirmed that the minutes would be brought to a Board meeting as soon as they were available.

## 872. Updates

### Chair

The Chair said that a well-attended Chairs network meeting had been held at Saffron Barn on 8.4.11 and that David Orr, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation attended this meeting. The meeting discussed various issues facing the sector including the tenant repair pilot. The Chair noted that more Housing Association Chairs want to join the group.

### CE

The CE confirmed that following difficulties experienced before the IE meeting on 4.4.11 he had initiated plans to replace the external lift to Saffron Barn and that this work should be complete well before winter.

He mentioned David Orr's visit to Saffron on 8.4.11 and said that he had been particularly interested in Saffron's in house development activities and further plans and in Saffron's approach to photo-voltaic panels.

Finally he confirmed that work on the review of the Asset Management Team was progressing and that he was pleased to have appointed Tim Betts as Head of Contracting Services.

### Board Members

Many members had attended the opening ceremony at Ladbrooke Close, Diss, the Information Exchange meeting on 4.4.11 and had participated in equality and diversity training.

TW said that he had met with the CE regarding the Affordable Housing Framework.

DF and DP said that they had met with the DNB regarding development activity.

DP said that he had also attended an NHF event in Cambridge looking at work programmes which had included some good presentations on financial inclusion.

AT said that she had been dealing with a problem of anti-social behaviour at Sherwell Court.

JO said that he had received complaints from residents in Poringland regarding untidy gardens in Saffron properties and parking problems.

PP said that she had chaired a closed meeting of the Information Exchange on 30.3.11 where it had been agreed to seek to make the IE less formal and to move the venue around.

### CAP

PP circulated the CAP diary for April and May and updated the Board on CAP's activities.

### **873. Crocus Contractors – Funding Facility**

After the CE had introduced this report explaining the need to formalise the decision to manage the photo-voltaic panel project through Crocus Contractors with a loan agreement and license TW asked whether it was the intention to make funding available. The CE explained that only the funding that the Board had already agreed would be made available to Crocus and that the Board's agreement would be required for any additional funding.

DF asked if any employment conditions had been included in the photo-voltaic panel contracts and the DAM said that both a local employee target and an apprentice target had been included.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the loan agreement and licence

### **874. Affordable Housing Framework 2011/15**

The DNB introduced this report working through each section in detail.

AT asked in relation to section 2.1.7 what guidance had been given regarding the proportion of void properties that might be converted to affordable rents and the DNB said that there was no specific guidance but that the indication was that a maximum of 75% might be acceptable.

GM asked whether a property that had been converted to an affordable rent could subsequently be converted back for a future tenancy. The CE said that this was theoretically possible but that it would have significant financial consequences and was therefore unlikely.

PP and AT asked what Saffron might have to do to provide advice and assistance to tenants seeking further housing following the ending of a fixed term tenancy. The DNB said that the idea of fixed term tenancies was not specifically included in the bid documentation and that there was no specific guidance on this issue within the offer documentation. He also pointed out that if fixed term tenancies were introduced most would be likely to be renewed at the end of the fixed term.

AT asked if affordable rents would impact on under-occupation and the CE said that this issue would have to be treated pragmatically in future.

TW said that he was concerned that prospective tenants would not bid for affordable rent properties as they would be too expensive. The CE agreed that this could be a risk although the DNB pointed out that Saffron had previously let properties at higher than affordable rents without any difficulties.

In response to a further question from TW the DNB explained why he felt that it was very unlikely that any grant would be paid in Norfolk. However he said that he still proposed to bid for some.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To make a bid under the Affordable Housing Framework 2011-2015 and to confirm in the bid that renegotiation would be required by Saffron if
  - Universal Credit was introduced adversely affecting Saffron's ability to collect rent
  - There were adverse implications for Saffron following Basel 3.

- There were adverse impacts on Saffron arising from funders renegotiating loan facilities following the introduction of component accounting.

### **875. Affordable Housing Framework 2011/15 – Proposed Offer**

The DNB then introduced the proposed bid document and stressed initially that this was a process of negotiation of which the bid was simply the first stage.

He then explained the bid in detail and drew the Boards specific attention to the proposal in the bid to convert general need voids to affordable rents.

The DNB then explained the development plans for Norfolk and Suffolk which were supported by the bid and pointed out that the Home Ownership for people with Long term Disabilities (HOLD) scheme proposed in Suffolk was likely to be unique and that he was therefore hopeful that this could be attractive to the Homes and Communities Agency.

KGW asked that if substantive changes were made to the bid following negotiation then the Board's approval should be sought before finalising the agreement and the CE agreed that this would be done.

In response to a question from GM the DNB confirmed that there would be no impact on mutual exchanges.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the offer to the Homes and Communities Agency for the 2011-2015 Affordable Homes Programme and for this to be the basis of negotiation with the HCA as part of the Framework Delivery Contract and that the final detail be delegated to the Chief Executive other than where substantive changes occur which will require further approval by the Board.

### **876. Next Meeting**

Thursday 26 May 2011

The meeting closed at 9.15pm