

Minutes of the Saffron Housing Trust Ltd Board Meeting

15th December 2011

Present:

Board: David Frost (DF)
Michael Harrowven (MH; Vice Chair)
Graham Minshull (GM)
Tony Palmer (TP)
Peggy Phinn (PP)
Derek Player (DP)
Linda Sinclair (LS)
Ken Warman (KGW)
Karen Wooddissee (KW; Chair)
Terry Woods (TW)

Apologies John Overton (JO)
Arley Turner (AT)

Officers: Adam Ronaldson, Chief Executive (CE)
Stephen Flowitt-Hill, Director of Housing & Finance (DHF)
John Whitelock, Director of New Business (DNB)
Stuart Tinkler, Company Secretary (CS)

Observers: Janice Cox (JC)
Denise Burgess (DB)

KW opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She noted that Saffron had not yet received any feedback from the TSA following the attendance of Barbara McLellan at the last meeting.

KW advised the meeting that a confidential item would be tabled at the end of the meeting.

967. Standing Items

Declarations of Interest

None.

Minutes of Previous Meetings

It was **RESOLVED:**

- That the minutes of the meeting on 24th November 2011 were a true record of that meeting.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

Performance Indicators

The CE introduced the performance indicators report for October. He announced that the final total for the PV programme would be 802 properties. The final costs and outputs were still being collated and would be reported at the next Board meeting. He referred to a press release in the EDP, which TP advised had also been picked up in the Diss Mercury.

Noting the performance on improvements, TW asked whether Saffron could increase the target for solid wall insulation. The CE agreed that there was room within the overall budget to do so.

968. Special Responsibility Allowances

The CE explained that the paper was being withdrawn from the current meeting because it contained a number of drafting errors e.g it did not allow for CAP to appoint up to 3 tenant board members. He read out advice he had received from Leathes Prior about the procedure to be followed to arrange a General Meeting and to vote on the Memorandum and Articles. He confirmed that Saffron would follow the advice. Postholders would not be allowed to participate in discussions about their own posts, or vote on them at any Board meeting which set allowances for those posts.

DP commented that the advice from Leathes Prior seemed to reflect latest guidance from the Charity Commission.

969. Pensions Update

AR reported that he had received a report from the actuaries which raised new questions but clearly showed that the costs of closure had risen. He advised that more time was needed to consider options, but that the current economic climate was not a good one in which to be closing a pension scheme.

970. Financial Regulations Review

The DHF introduced the report on behalf of Sally Anderson. He noted that the review was mainly an update to incorporate changes in structure but that some further tidying up was needed. DP asked for 23.5 to be reworded as it looked like the Executive could grant whatever authority level they liked to new employees

It was **RESOLVED**:

- The Financial Regulations be approved subject to;
- Tidying up of numbering and reporting lines for committees
- 23.5 be reworded to make it clear that new posts would only be added at levels comparable to existing posts and new staff would have authority appropriate to their post.

971. Rent Increase

The DHF noted that a rent increase paper had been presented to the last Board meeting and that a decision had been deferred until Autumn Budget Statement when the increase in benefit payments would be known. Fears that benefits would not be increased by CPI had proven unfounded and therefore the Executive Team were recommending the formula increase of 6.1%

It was **RESOLVED**:

- That the basic rate of rent increase for 2012/13 would be 6.1%.

972. Benchmarking

The CE introduced the paper covering the annual benchmarking exercise conducted by Housemark. He commented that any benchmarking exercise would throw up some good performances and some performances which were not so good. He thought that Saffron had more of the former than the latter and gave a “health warning” that no measures should be looked at in isolation. The other 28 Associations in the benchmarking exercise were all LSVTs based in central England, so provided a good comparison group.

In answer to a query from DP, the CE explained that cyclical maintenance costs included work on e.g. pathways as well as the more traditional painterwork on doors and windows.

The CE drew attention to section 4 which covered satisfaction levels, with Saffron in the top quartile in most areas.

973. This whole minute has been removed due to confidentiality.

974. Updates

Chair. KW reported that she had attended the CAP dinner. She also encouraged Board members to put forward suggestions for topics to be covered at the Board weekend in January

CE The CE reported that Crocus had recently completed 2 refurbishment contracts for another charity, and that he had chaired a well-attended Placeshapers development finance meeting in London.

Board Feedback

MH, and PP had also attended the CAP dinner

TW, LS and PP had attended the December meeting of Tenants Question Time

KGW, GM and TP had visited the new properties at Willbye Avenue and complimented the Crocus team on them.

MH had attended the SCF trustees dinner and thanked Saffron for its continued support

TW had visited tenants in Silfield road to discuss cladding issues and encouraged Saffron to increase its wall cladding programme

KGW had attended an estate inspection in Poringland but was disappointed that the hard work which Saffron put into improving the estate seemed to get undone by some of the residents.

DP was keen to explore future activities for Crocus.

CAP. JC reported that CAP had held a repairs and maintenance working group meeting on December 6th which had been a useful training session. CAP would also be appearing on Diss radio on the 20th December.

TSA/NHF/HCA. AR reported that Saffron had received no feedback from the TSA following the last Board meeting. He also reported a change to the HCA's grant payment regime which would result in a higher percentage of grant at the start of a project.

975. Minutes from Associated/Controlled Bodies

None since last meeting.

976. Development Pipeline

The DNB presented his report and advised the Board that the decision notice for Tacolneston had been received. The site had been rejected on grounds of loss of amenity value to surrounding properties and failure to consider alternative sites. An appeal was being considered.

The open invitation events to consult on new developments at Surlingham and Dickleburgh had been well received.

The target for completions should be met and Saffron was on target to meet obligations for HCA funding.

977. New Tenant Satisfaction levels

The DHF presented the report on behalf of Pauline Hough. It was a follow-up report to the report on tenant satisfaction with new properties presented at the last meeting and covered all new tenancies over the previous 12 months – not just new properties. The source of information was TP tracker – Saffron’s rolling monthly survey of tenants. Satisfaction levels among new tenants were high.

The CAP representatives left the meeting at this point

978. This whole minute has been removed due to confidentiality.

979. Next Meeting

Thursday 19th January 2012 – 7.00 pm
Venue – Saffron Barn

The meeting closed at 9.15pm