

Minutes of the Saffron Housing Trust Ltd Board Meeting

24th March 2011

Present:

Board: Eloise Ellis (EE)
Michael Harrowven (MH; Vice-Chair)
Graham Minshull (GM)
Peggy Phinn (PP)
Derek Player (DP)
Linda Sinclair (LS)
Arley Turner (AT)
Ken Warman (KGW)
Terry Woods (TW)

Apologies David Frost (DF)
John Overton (JO)
Karen Wooddissee (KW)

Officers: Adam Ronaldson, Chief Executive (CE)
Steve Burns, Director of Asset Management (DAM)
John Whitelock, Director of New Business (DNB)
Stephen Flowitt-Hill, Director of Housing and Finance (DHF)
Rachael Tresize, Public Relations Manager (PRM)
Pauline Hough, Assistant Director (Housing Management) (ADHM)
Stuart Tinkler, Human Resources Manager (HRM)

Observers: Colin Gould (CG)
Sally Moore (SM)

MH opened and chaired the meeting as KW was unavailable. He welcomed CG and SM to the meeting as observers from CAP. There were apologies from DF, KW and JO.

855. Standing Items

Declarations of Interest

All Board Members declared an interest in agenda item 9 regarding Board Member Remuneration.

Minutes of Previous Meetings

It was **RESOLVED:**

- That the minutes of the meeting on 17 February 2010 were a true record of that meeting.

Matters Arising

Minute 838. AT asked for an update on Home Options and the CE explained that meetings were taking place although progress towards a resolution of Saffron's issues would be slow.

Minute 851. AT asked if the regulatory judgement had been received from the TSA and the CE said that nothing had been received as yet despite the inspection visit taking place in November 2010. He said that he would approach the TSA to enquire about this.

Minute 852. AT asked for an update on the current situation regarding the electricity supply to the development at Denton and the DNB explained that all legal work was now complete and the UK Power were planning to complete the installation by the end of May 2011.

Performance Indicators

The CE introduced the performance indicators report and noted that two indicators were red. The DAM explained that the first of these was due to a shortfall in the target to install exterior doors which had arisen due to a failure within Saffron to communicate effectively with the contractor. Steps had already been taken to ensure no repeat of this situation. The second issue concerned the time to complete aids and adaptations estimates. The DAM explained that when the member of staff responsible for this area had commenced maternity leave in December 2011 a positive decision had been taken to reduce the staffing available to process aids and adaptations. The reduction in staffing had led directly to the failure of this indicator. The DAM explained that this consequence should have been foreseen earlier and the target adjusted appropriately. In response to a question from CG the DAM said that the overall level of service was being maintained albeit the processing of claims was taking longer.

857. Minutes from Associated and Controlled Bodies (1)

Audit Committee meeting 18.3.11

KGW said that Audit Committee had considered the draft budget in some detail and were recommending it to the Board for approval.

He also noted that the Committee had considered a detailed report on photo-voltaic panels assessing the financial and risk issues involved and that the Committee supported the proposed installation of panels.

Finally he noted that the internal audit reports received had been very positive.

858. Budget 2011/12

The DHF introduced this report confirming that the budget projection was for a surplus of _____ which would comfortably achieve the anticipated covenant level to be agreed with our funders. He noted that Supporting People funding was to be reduced by 50% from October 2011 and said that he would bring a further paper to the Board looking at the implications of this. DP said that he felt that Norfolk County Council had acted reasonably fairly and sensibly to manage the planned Supporting People funding reductions.

EE asked about the funding of the pension scheme and whether Saffron would look at alternative schemes in future. The DHF said that Saffron would need to look at

different schemes and that he would be bringing a paper on this to a future Board meeting.

GM asked whether the changes introduced in the national budget would change the amount of tenants seeking to purchase their property through the Right To Buy scheme and the DHF said that he did not know whether there would be any change but that Saffron's budget planned for 3 Right To Buy's in 2011/12.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the budget for 2011/12

The Board then discussed the implications for the budget of the photo-voltaic panels project. The DAM confirmed that the project was to fit panels to 1,000 properties at a cost of _____ and with an anticipated minimum return via the Feed In Tariff of over £16 million over 25 years. The Board noted that the future grant income could be used to address future priorities through the budget process.

PP asked if it was planned to provide panels to older properties rather than newer ones as the older properties were less energy efficient. The DAM said that all properties would be considered equally to maximise the grant income created.

The DHF explained that it would be beneficial to Saffron to run the project through SNHP Services Ltd.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the photo-voltaic panel project
- To note that the project will be run through SNHP Services Ltd

859. Policy Reviews

Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

The ADHM introduced this policy review explaining that the stress in the policy had been changed to one of supporting partnership approaches rather than seeing Saffron as the lead agency and noting the focus on mediation as a resolution option. She noted that CAP had been consulted. EE commended the ADHM on the draft.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the revised Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

Customer Involvement and Consultation Strategy

The ADHM explained the recent history in the review of this policy and noted that CAP had been consulted in the review which was largely a factual update. She said that in view of anticipated forthcoming changes she planned to review this policy again during the year.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the revised Customer Involvement and Consultation Strategy

Access To Housing Policy

The ADHM explained that reference to the existing local lettings plans had been added to this policy.

AT asked about the removal of the reference to tenancy conditions in section 3.2 and the ADHM confirmed that this meant that the tenants had to comply with tenancy conditions, rather than this being guaranteed by the guarantor.

GM asked about the situation regarding bed space in an allocation for a live in carer. The ADHM explained that the eligibility criteria in the Policy came from Home Options and were not managed by Saffron. However she noted that the criteria were usually used by Home Options as a guideline and that individual circumstances were taken into account.

DP advised that the name "Social Services" should be changed to "Norfolk Adult Services" and the ADHM undertook to amend this.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the revised Access To Housing Policy

860. Under-occupation

The DHF introduced this item explaining that the report raised a number of questions and that he was proposing the formation of a Working Group of Board Members, CAP members and staff to look at the issues in more detail before reporting back to the Board.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To set up a Working Group to consider the issues raised.
- The Working Group to comprise AT, EE and DF from the Board as well as two members of CAP and two members of staff.
- The Working Group to report back to a future meeting of the Board.

The DHF undertook to arrange an initial meeting of the Working Group.

DP noted that publicity surrounding this issue would need to be carefully managed.

861. Board Indicators 2011/12

The CE introduced the proposed indicators for 2012 explaining the changes he was proposing.

DP said that the Board would benefit from more information on the net subsidy for development and the CE said that he would bring this information to the Board.

KGW asked how indicator I23 on tenant's satisfaction was monitored and the DHF confirmed that a revolving sample of tenants was chosen and independently monitored through TP Tracker.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the proposed indicators.

862. Asset Management – Improvements

The DHF introduced this report explaining the background of the Board Development Weekend. He confirmed that he was proposing that any promises that had already been made to a tenant were met.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To undertake consultation with CAP and the IE on the proposal for 10% reductions in the improvements budgets and receive a further report once this was complete.

863. Consultation Plan – Board Member Remuneration

The DHF explained the background to the report and the options and consequent timescale implications.

GM raised a concern regarding the impact of pay on existing South Norfolk Council Councillors of the Local Government Act Section 80. The Board noted that this was an issue for South Norfolk Council and its Councillors to resolve.

TW said that he was concerned about the timing of looking at this with potential benefit cuts being discussed.

AT said that she was concerned at the impact on tenant's views of Saffron and PP suggested that the CE explain the issues with CAP to get an overview of tenant's views before raising the issue with all tenants.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- That the CE attends a meeting with CAP to explain the issues.
- Subject to the outcome of this, that a letter to be sent to all tenants asking for their views.

The DHF pointed out that the Board's decisions would impact the time table for this process and the CE said that a revised timetable would be circulated.

864. SNHP Services Ltd – Name Change

There was produced to the meeting a written resolution of SNHP Services Ltd, being a subsidiary of Saffron, resolving as a special resolution that the name of the company be changed to Crocus Contractors Ltd.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- That the proposed special resolution is approved and that any Director of Saffron be authorised to sign the special resolution and return it to SNHP Services Ltd.

865. HCA Affordable Rent Framework

The DNB explained that this was a brief update with a fuller report, seeking the Board's agreement to a bid to the HCA, following at the next meeting.

DP raised concerns regarding future housing benefit arrangements.

KGW asked for a definition of the £500 spend publication proposal and the DNB said that this would be limited to development related expenditure but that he had no additional information at this time.

TW said that he was concerned that decanted tenants could be charged affordable rents when they went back into their properties which did not seem fair.

866. Updates

MH had attended a very positive estate walkabout in Pulham Market.

KGW had attended e² training which was very useful.

AT had been told at a meeting that the Sherwell Court development was part of a national pilot.

CAP

PP circulated a briefing on CAP's activities and said that CAP commended the development at Bergh Apton.

857. Minutes from Associated and Controlled Bodies (2)

Remuneration Committee 22.2.11

The CE explained the background to his review of the Asset Management service and DP confirmed that the Remuneration Committee agreed that responsibility for this type of review rested with the CE.

TW said that he felt that the Board should have been informed before staff and that he did not feel that the Remuneration Committee was properly constituted.

Information Exchange 7.3.11

Noted

858. Next Meeting

Thursday 28 April 2011

The meeting closed at 10.15pm