

Minutes of the Saffron Housing Trust Ltd Board Meeting

20th October 2011

Present:

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

Apologies Arley Turner (AT)
Adam Ronaldson, Chief Executive (CE)

Officers: John Whitelock, Director of New Business (DNB)
Stephen Flowitt-Hill, Director of Housing & Finance (DHF)
Stuart Tinkler, Company Secretary (CS)
Rachel Trezise, PR Manager (PRM)
Jason McCormack, Survey Manager (SM)
Paul Wilson, Mechanical and Electrical Services Manager (MESM)

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

MH welcomed all to the meeting and confirmed that item 3 on the agenda would be considered first and then introduced the CS to oversee the item.

939. Board Positions of Responsibility

The CS confirmed for the Vice Chair, Audit Committee Chair and Board Budget Holder there had been one nomination per post and therefore as unopposed MH, KGW and LS were respectively elected to the positions.

For the Chair and Audit Committee Vice Chair two nominations per post have been received and the CS then gave an overview of the election process, distributed voting forms to each Board member present and confirmed that the election for the Chair would be conducted first.

The two nominees GM and KW for the Chair position made their presentations to the Board on their candidature. Board members then cast their votes and these were counted by the CS and verified by the DHF. The CS declared KW as being elected as Chair.

The same procedure was followed for the Audit Committee Vice Chair position with TW and MH. Again the CS collected and counted the votes with the DHF verifying. The CS declared TW as being elected as the Audit Committee Vice Chair.

KW expressed her delight in being re-elected as Chair but requested that MH continue to chair this particular Board meeting. MH agreed and advised that item number 9 Affordable Rents Overview on the agenda would be considered at a following meeting.

940 Standing Items

Declarations of Interest

MH declared his role within the Saffron Community Foundation.

Minutes of Previous Meetings

15.9.2011

Item 933 – GM noted his feedback should have been recorded as “race on line” not “race for life”.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- That the minutes of the meeting on 15th September 2011 were a true record of that meeting.

16.9.2011

PP questioned why KW was recorded as an observer at the meeting. The CS explained that both KW and DP terms of service had come to an end and therefore KW was an observer at the meeting. The CS however confirmed that both DP and KW had been re-elected as Independent Board members.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- That the minutes of the meeting on 16th September 2011 were a true record of that meeting.

Matters Arising

15.9.2011

Item 926 – PP reported that the PRM had attended a CAP meeting and advised on how press enquiries should be managed.

Item 930 – KGW asked if exact information had been obtained on the potential closing costs associated with the LGPS. The DHF advised that contact had been made but at this point no firm information had been received. DP noted that other pension schemes should be considered alongside the LGPS in any review of provisions.

Performance Indicators

The DHF gave an overview of the September performance information noting in particular R16. There has been though a recent rush of approvals from the UK Power network provider so he was more confident that the target was still obtainable. Both the SM and MESM agreed that it was still possible, but highlighted some of the difficulties in starting any project that was acting as a pathfinder. DP commented his complete support for the project and praised the work that had been done to date.

The DNB advised that I29 was likely to stay behind target due to a slowdown in the rural exception sites and South Norfolk Council's review of the LCHP.

941 Development approval - Wortwell

The DNB introduced the report noting it was the first approval being sought for a general needs scheme under the new affordable rent HCA programme. To fund the scheme 12 social rented relets would need to be converted to affordable rent.

The DNB explained the importance of Crocus securing work on a competitive tender basis, but why the timing of development at Wortwell had led him to recommend it as a negotiated tender. DP supported this approach but stressed the need for Crocus to be exposed to competitive tenders.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the development at High Road Wortwell for 6 units.
- Seek a negotiated tender with Crocus Contractors.

942. Revised Budget

The DHF provided an overview of the report and highlighted the increased surplus was in principle due to

- Higher than expected income from Supporting People
- Lower interest charges due to both the PV project and Development spending occurring later than had been anticipated.
- Work costs associated with the new Saffron Barn entrance being lower than budgeted for.

TW asked if the entrance lift to reception would become internal after the alterations were complete. The DHF confirmed that this would be the case. TP requested in future budget reports the actual number of new homes could be recorded.

TW questioned the slow pace of the solid wall insulation programme and the SM explained that initial delays had related to agreeing a programme of work with the planning department. JO offered his assistance in liaising with the planning officers to iron out any difficulties. The SM confirmed he would take JO up on his offer if needed.

LS highlighted the issue of fuel poverty and questioned the number of properties yet to be done. The SM confirmed that approx. 900 properties would benefit from external insulation. DF asked what the anticipated cost would be and the SM felt the average would be £6,000. Both DP and LS questioned why a greater use of internal insulation could not be made. Both DF and the SM advised of the benefits of external insulation in terms of performance and long term maintenance of the properties.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the 2011/12 revised budget.

943. Policy Reviews

Asbestos Management Policy

The DNB introduced the paper and gave an outline of the management plan that Saffron deploys to manage its asbestos risk. DF queried the level of training provided and what level of unlicensed work was carried out in house and the DNB undertook to provide DF with details.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the Asbestos Management Policy

944. Company Membership Applications

MH explained to WB and DB that they needed to leave the room whilst their applications for company membership were considered. WB and DB left the meeting. PP confirmed she very much supported DB and WB applications.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve WB and DB Company Membership applications

WB and DB re-joined the meeting

945. Saffron report

The DNB gave the background to the report prepared by the CE. In particular he highlighted the strong surpluses that Saffron was producing and the way to date they had been used. This level of surplus though would come under increasing attention and it was important that Saffron considered this at the Board weekend in January 2012.

DP felt that the potential s106 acquisition programme could not wait until January 2012 and the DNB confirmed it was his intention to bring a report to the next Board meeting in November.

TW raised concerns about the potential rent increase in 2012 and expressed his strong opposition to a rent increase at RPI plus 0.5%. The DF felt that it was possible to link any rent increase to improvements in existing properties and the MESM noted earlier conversations with the DNB about the possibility of improving the EPC ratings of the stock.

KW was supported by the Board in general in commending the CE for this rounded and thoughtful report on Saffron.

946. Updates

Vice Chair

MH reported that he had attended the recent staff briefings in a SCF capacity and had found staff understanding of the challenges facing Saffron. Further the component accounting briefing at Havebury Housing Partnership had been most informative.

MH noted AT's absence and the Board joined in with MH in wishing AT a swift recovery.

CE

With the CE giving his apologies for the meeting, MH passed on the CE's comments that the recent restructuring in Asset Management was now complete with all posts filled and that the new structure was bedding in well.

The DNB reminded members of the upcoming event on the 17.11.2011 and encouraged everyone to attend and let the PRM know.

Board Feedback

KGW had attended the sheltered housing roadshow and wanted to pass on his pleasure at seeing such a well-run and informative event by Saffron.

TP will be attending a course for new board members which he was sure will be most useful.

PP noted the recent name change of Blenheim Park to Beaufort Park in Watton..

CAP

DB gave an update on the good progress being made by CAP working groups covering, repairs and maintenance, customer involvement, ASB, CAP calendar and development.

TSA/NHF/HCA update

MH noted the TSA will be starting its next review of Saffron and will be attending the November Board meeting.

947. Minutes from Associated/Controlled Bodies

Crocus Contractors – MH took the Board through the minutes of the meetings on the 15th and 23rd of September. TW asked whether the Crocus Board should be strengthened with greater knowledge/experience of “hands on” construction. MH said that Crocus will continue to monitor the Boards knowledge and look to strengthen as required.

EPC – No minutes available

Audit Committee – Minutes of the 14th October 2011 meeting were distributed. KGW reported the continued strong performance of Saffron and the positive internal audit reports on Contact Care, data assurance and the relationship between SCF and Saffron. The DHF introduced a short paper on proposed amendments to enable the Executive team to change the authorised signatories. KGW suggested that post titles should be used rather than staff names and with this amendment,

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To approve the Executive team as authorised positions to be able to change signatories on all Saffron accounts with Barclays Bank.

948. Management Accounts

The DHF gave an overview of the accounts.

949. Development Pipeline, Progress and 12 month satisfaction reports.

The DNB updated members on progress in development and highlighted the 12 month satisfaction survey. In future though it is planned to split the survey into two parts, the first being completed shortly after handover and the second after 12 months of occupation.

950. Next Meeting

Thursday 24th November 2011 – 7.00 pm
Venue – Saffron Barn

The meeting closed at 9.30pm