

## MINUTES OF WESLO BOARD MEETING NO. 186

27 April 2011



Present	Cllr Frank Anderson	West Lothian Council Representative
	Alex Bow	Tenant Director
	Mike Bruce	Chief Executive
	Mike Crozier	Operations Director
	Douglas Drummond	Finance Director
	Margaret McIntyre	Community Director
	Peter Robson	Community Director (Chair)
	John Spraggon	Community Director
	Eileen Stirling	Tenant Director
	Janette Wallace	Tenant Director
In attendance:	Anne Arnott	Executive Assistant

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and introduced John Rankine, Housing Support Officer, who was staff observer.

### **ITEM**

### **ACTION**

- 1 **APOLOGIES**  
Apologies were received from Hugh Ruck and Ann Ritchie.
- 2 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**  
Cllr. Frank Anderson declared himself a non-pecuniary member of West Lothian Council and he also sits on the West Lothian Housing Partnership Committee.
- 3 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**  
The minutes of Board Meeting No. 185 were reviewed and, subject to the following amendments, were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.
  - 1 Ann Ritchie to be added to the list of those present at meeting 185.
  - 2 Page 2, item 3.1 the first sentence should read "RSL Status being withdrawn".
  - 3 Page 4, item 9, the first sentence should read "The Chief Executive advised that our company awayday...".
  - 4 Page 6, paragraph 5, the date in line 3 should read "2011-2020".

The Chair would receive an amended copy of the Minutes of Board Meeting No. 185 for signature.

EA

- 4 **MATTERS ARISING**  
The Operations Director noted that he had canvassed staff on the option of meeting one-to-one with Board Directors and that to date, no notes of interest had been received. He would raise this again at his Board Briefings and advise the Board if the situation changed.

The Chief Executive reported that he and Cllr Anderson met to discuss attendance of the latter at future Board meetings. Cllr Anderson has noted future board dates in his diary and at the present time, is free to attend, though it was understood that urgent Council business would take precedence.

**ITEM****ACTION****5** **BUSINESS PLAN**

The Chief Executive introduced the paper which had been issued in advance of the meeting.

He noted that the Plan for 2011/12 is broadly an update of last year's Plan and reflects the current economic and political environment. It was noted that the Plan had been discussed at the Tenants Participation Group meetings and no major issues were raised.

The Chief Executive highlighted the key message, that the organisation will hopefully emerge from the recession in a stronger position, albeit having had limited growth in the period. He noted however that the organisation would now have to bid for Government funding for proposed future developments at Armadale and Bathgate. Bids must be submitted to the Scottish Government by 31 May and this is in hand.

The Chief Executive invited comments from the Board.

The Chair felt that the Plan gave a good impression of what the organisation is doing at present and its plans for the future and, in his view, compared favourably with the plans of other housing organisations he had read.

After a general discussion, the Board agreed to adopt the Business Plan.

The Chief Executive would issue the completed Business Plan to the Board, Dunfermline Building Society and SHR by the end of May.

**CE****6** **AUDIT PLAN**

The Finance Director introduced the paper and the Audit Plan submitted by Baker Tilly and invited questions. He noted that this was the third year of a three year contract with Baker Tilly as Auditors and a proposal to appoint auditors for a further three years would come to the Board during this financial year

In response to a question from John Spraggon, the Finance Director explained that an element of fee costs are fixed and are not proportional to the value of the accounts or size of the business. The Finance Director noted that the AGM of Weslo Housing Management and Weslo Initiatives will both take place on 20 July and Janet Hamblin of Baker Tilly would attend both meetings giving an opportunity to explore costs in more detail.

The Board noted the contents of the Audit Plan.

**7** **ADDITIONAL STAFF REQUIREMENTS**

The Operations Director introduced the paper which invited the Board to review and agree to the creation of a further two full time establishment positions (1) Owners Liaison Officer and (2) ICT Officer.

The position of Owners Liaison Officer – Appendix A - would be on an initial 3 year fixed term basis and it is hoped would prove self-funding. Charges in the region of £191k were billed for recovery in the last year. There is a core debt of approximately £75k at various stages of recovery. It was noted that other housing organisations employ a mixture of methods to deal with this problem, some having dedicated members of staff.

The position of ICT Officer – Appendix B - has been identified as a result of the present ITC Manager having to work continually at a low level leaving him unable to attend to more strategic areas. Growth in the area of IT for the organisation has been rapid and a number of items for

**ITEM****ACTION**

implementation are being held back because of the call on his time.

It was noted that the papers in support of this item had been incorrectly copied. Full copies were handed out at the meeting. In the absence of any objections or questions by 17/05, it would be noted that the Board agreed unanimously to the creation of both posts.

**8 SERVICE DELIVERY ANALYSIS AT TERMINATION AND TENANCY SUSTAINABILITY**

The Operations Director introduced the paper. Service rating analysis figures show a slight improvement on the previous year. Appendix 1 showed the breakdown of reasons for termination. No significant patterns were identified.

An analysis of our performance on tenancy sustainability was also provided which show we compared favourably with other housing organisations. Again, no significant patterns were identified.

This report will be produced on an annual basis in order that any patterns would be identified.

**9(a) DIRECTORS REPORTS**

The Chief Executive issued his report and the following was noted:-

- 1 Item 4 (i) - West Lothian Strategic Alliance – Alliance members are looking to introduce new developments this year while being mindful that a bid has to be placed by 31 May for Scottish Government grant money.
- 2 Item 5 - Weslo Initiatives – we continue managing the mid market rented properties. The next meeting of the Weslo Initiatives Board will take place on 29 April 2011.
- 3 Item 6 – Scotland’s Best Workplace Awards. The Chairman and Chief Executive reported a very successful evening. A joint press release – Weslo, Link Housing and Hanover Scotland - was circulated and good local press coverage was received. The Chair noted this had been a good opportunity for him to meet staff in an informal setting. The Chief Executive noted that awards such as this were useful in attracting quality staff and the staff who attended had been very appreciative of the opportunity to attend.
- 4 The Chief Executive noted that the recent CiH conference which he attended had provided quite a diverse agenda. Various issues had come to the fore, not least that we are now liable for the first £1,000 of grants received for adaptations to properties. The Chief Executive’s notes from the event are available from the Executive Assistant.
- 5 The Chief Executive and Finance Director met with a variety of people over the period to discuss new developments and other housing matters.
- 6 Almost £200 was raised for the Charity of the Year, The Answer Project, during the Easter celebrations held for all staff in the Bathgate office.

**9(b) Finance Director**

The Finance Director presented his report and the following was noted:-

It was noted that no Budgetary Control Report was available at this meeting.

**ITEM****ACTION**

1 The Finance Director noted that he had delivered a presentation with a colleague from Newhaven Research, to the CiH, which was well received.

2 Elaine Batty, Finance Manager, who has been with us since Weslo's inception in 1994 retires in June. After interviews held in April, Donna Henderson had been appointed to the post of Finance Manager and would be joining us for a handover period, working Fridays until her start date on 30 May. Donna currently works for The Royal Blind Society and is familiar with the sector.

9(c) **Operations Director**

The Operations Director presented his report and the following was noted:-

1 Item 1: There are 18 Mortgage to Rent applications in progress and four cases have completed since the last Board meeting. The total number of successfully completed cases since 2003 stands at 70.

2 Item 2: Weslo will continue its involvement with the Older Person's Advice Service (previous OPAP) and the Board will receive updates throughout the year.

3 Item 3: After review, there were no material changes to the Board Handbook.

4 The Operations Director reported that he and the Executive Assistant had met with Eileen McCallum of LJM Training and Amanda Britain, Craigforth Associates to discuss Board training. Proposals have been received from both organisations and the Operations Director and Executive Assistant will discuss these. A Training Needs Analysis will also be undertaken for the Board and regardless of the outcome of this, refresher training on Schedule 7 and Governance matters will be given to the Board. The Board will receive an update on these matters at or before its next meeting in June.

MC/EA

5 Negotiations for the leasing of office property in North Bridge Street, for temporary offices for yard staff have been concluded. Entry will be during week commencing 2/05 with staff moving in over the weekend of 13/05.  
The contract for work at the Yard premises is not yet in place but work is expected to complete in November 2011.

Arrears at 31 March are £142k, down from £150k at year end but up from £129k at March 2010. This represents a good performance on arrears. The average arrear throughout the year is also used for monitoring. The figure for 2009/10 was £125k and the average up to the end of the last financial year was £128k.

The void report showed an end of year average rent loss of £247 per void compared to £292 the previous year. Voids will be less than 0.5% of rent receivable which again represents a good performance.

The Chief Executive questioned whether rechargeable repairs could be offset against void loss. The Finance Director advised this would not be possible due to accounting convention.

The Board will receive a full report later in the year, giving a breakdown of internal and external costs for reactive maintenance. Just over £80k savings have been achieved this year. The vast majority of these appears to be due to a reduction in external contractor work.

**ITEM**

**ACTION**

The repair response time analysis showed all jobs completed on time in February and one job out of 877 missed in March. This was due to an error by a tradesman incorrectly marking a line as completed.

The repair satisfaction analysis for February and March showed a 34% and 30% return respectively with no negative comments.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Executive Assistant would reinstate the subscriptions to Inside Housing Magazine for Peter Robson and John Spraggon and add Ann Ritchie to the recipient list.

EA

The Chief Executive outlined the draft Board tour agenda. This was agreed. The Executive Assistant would liaise with Board members to arrange a suitable date for the tour.

EA

The Chief Executive advised that a complaint by an owner occupier had been upheld by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Chief Executive will email all staff to remind them of their duties and responsibilities in relation to complaints and that the company's policy in this regard must be adhered to at all times. A copy of the SPSO's judgement would be circulated with the email. Board members would receive a copy of the email.

CE

The Chief Executive advised that Liz Weir, Housing Officer, was seriously ill and remained in a coma in hospital in Spain. The full nature of any recovery is not known at this time. In due course, at an appropriate time, best wishes for a speedy recovery will be sent to Liz and her family.

10

**Date of Next Meeting**

15 June, 2011, at 10.00 am at our offices in Bathgate. Please note change of date, originally 8 June.

**All to note**

Signed..... Date.....