

WESTMINSTER COMMUNITY HOMES LTD BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday 3rd December 2024

Room 18.04 Westminster City Hall

Present -

Mark Davies (MD) (Chair)
 Victoria Elvidge (VE) (Board Member)
 Andy Whitley (AW) (Board Member)
 Gary Preston (GP) (Board Member)
 Boe Williams (BW) (Board Member)
 Cllr Iman Less (CIL) (Board Member)
 Thomas Harding (TH) (Board Member)
 (All Board Members are nominated by Westminster City Council)

In Attendance-

Neil Tryner (NT) (Westminster Community Homes)
 Paul Tewkesbury (PT) (Westminster Community Homes)
 Elizabeth Roberts-Mills (ERM) (Westminster City Council)
 Kim Wright (KW) (Westminster Community Homes)

Apologies-

None

No.	ITEM	ACTION
1.	Introductions, Apologies and Declarations of Interest	
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. No apologies were received. No declarations of interest were received.	
2.	Minutes & Action list for Board meetings 25th September and 13th November 2024	
	- The minutes of the meeting held on 25th September were agreed. All actions are either included within one of today's papers or are progressing. - The minutes of the meeting held on 13th November were agreed. All outstanding actions are rolled over with ERM, with the exception of the meeting which took place on 20th November between MD, NT and the Head of Finance Lyndsey Gamble. The outcome of the meeting was that WCC are committed to continue working with WCH and committed to making the improvements to service required. The meeting also confirmed that WCC is committed to ensuring the resource allocation is sufficient and ERM will be made available until May 2025, or later if closing of accounts timeline slips. - An external additional resource, discussed at an earlier meeting, will no longer be sought and we would return to resource allocation in 6 months.	

3.	Finance Update	
	ERM presented finance updates. <i>a. Management Accounts P7</i> - Financial reports from WCC have been reconciled property by property to the Master Stock list. Information used previously had Service Charge incorporated so we were double charging. - There will be a focus on arrears and PT is doing a piece of work on the figures to ensure reporting is aligned. - Board confirmed that we are closer to having the relevant assurances needed and are confident we are now making decisions based on accurate information. - Board asked for confirmation if there were any further issues we think may arise. ERM confirmed that the key area of uncertainty is the review of the balance sheet and would update the board when complete. - ERM highlighted the level of repairs expenditure as a risk and further work is required to understand volume of repairs and costs. ERM will report back in February. - Our new Director of Property and Assets, Jasbir Sohal, will be tasked with interrogating repair data and cross referencing it with customer satisfaction and experience. - ERM will undertake specific reviews on major works expenditure to see what we can capitalise on. - Board raised a question regarding the level of bad debt, ERM confirmed that this was captured as part of a Bad Debt provision. - Board requested that the current position be reflected in an Appendix to show actual costs compared to the original budget. <i>Board approved the Management Accounts P7.</i> <i>b. Cashflow</i> Information continues to be reviewed and will be produced and shared at a later date. <i>c. Lessons Learnt Tracker</i> ERM reported that all actions are either complete or are on target to be completed by date set. Board asked for 'ongoing' actions, or those not yet started to be marked amber on the spreadsheet until complete. Request made by Board to number items on tracker. ACTION 1: ERM to circulate cashflow. ACTION 2 – ERM to number items on Lessons Learnt Tracker and mark 'ongoing' and 'to be started' actions as amber.	ERM ERM

4.	2025/2026 Draft Budget	
	Board are asked to agree approach and way forward in preparing the 2025/2026 Budget and to provide a steer to ERM on the completion of the final budget assumptions to be received in February. Key areas of the draft budget highlighted were: • WCH s predicting a positive surplus next year of £212k. • All tenures except shared ownership return a surplus. • Main area of spend is repairs and service charges, which adds up to 43% of total costs. It was highlighted by board that the new Director of Assets will be able to review this area, and we anticipate reducing costs. However, until the review is complete we are proposing to retain budget assumptions on the current run rate. • Performance bonus. capped for all staff. • Pay uplift of 2% suggested. Pending approval in later CEO report. • Investment in staff training included at £6K. • WCH will budget for additional finance support of 5 days per month. • 10% increase in audit fees • WCC have refunded WCH for additional audit fees. • Insurance fees increased by 10%. • Social value. WCH support several organisations in area – will look to see how we continue to do this in future. The current budget allocation is £40k. • £1m in overheads, including a £35k increase on running costs. • 2.7% rent increases. • WCH will not acquire or dispose of any units. • GP suggested a 20/25% for audit fee rather than 10% currently allocated. Though tender will have been done by the time budget is finalised. • GP volunteered to provide support on format for the final budget. • The Board expressed a concern that the current predicted surplus of c£200k is lower than sector comparable, and that should the final prepared budget not improve following the application of the agreed inputs, then a consideration may be needed of material risks to financial viability. It was agreed that the increased data from 2 additional accounting periods will allow the executive to produce a realistic budget that provides assurance to the Board that WCH is effectively managing the risks to financial viability. ACTION 3: ERM and GP to discuss format of budget. <i>The Board approved the finalisation of the budget based on the presented assumptions and will receive the final budget 2025/2026 in February 2025.</i>	ERM/GP

5.	Health and Safety Report Update	
	PT presented the key issues within the H&S report. - PT outlined the approach adopted to see compliant or non-compliant (green and red) for WCH properties. Where the freeholder is not WCH and we are not primarily accountable, they are deemed amber. Board supported the approach. - Gas Servicing – WCH are 100% compliant. - EICRs – WCH are not fully compliant. ACTION 4: PT and ERM to reconcile numbers for EICR. - Fire – WCH 9 standalone blocks are compliant. The board has received previous updated regarding the improved position of remedial fire actions for all WCC stock. Significant resource has led to increased assurance and compliance on all outstanding works. The regulator has confirmed to WCC that the inclusion of fire door replacements within a wider program of works is acceptable. Works are due to be completed by end of March 2025. ACTION 5: PT to follow up on no access issues. ACTION 6: PT to look into legal point regarding pushing private freeholders to ensure compliance. - NHG are in the process of sharing all certs onto SharePoint. - Asbestos – WCH 100% compliant but still waiting for WCC and NHG for other properties compliance data. - Legionella – WCH 100% compliant. We are waiting on NHG to provide necessary compliance for the communal areas of their freehold block. ACTION 7: PT requested to update on NHG position each month via email to Board. - Lift servicing – WCH 100% compliant - Damp and Mold – There are six outstanding cases which have gone over time. Complexity and communication between D&M team and WCC repairs to complete a job creates inbuilt inefficiency. This will form part of the new Director of Property work plan. ACTION 8: PT to review outstanding figures reported for Damp and Mould. ACTION 9: PT to add RAG status to actions. ACTION 10: PT to change FRA EW to FREW, it should be one word. ACTION 11: PT to report length of time actions are overdue.	PT/ERM PT PT PT PT PT PT PT

6.	Key Performance Indicators P6 Update	
	PT reported on KPIs for P6. Key highlights are: - Repairs and maintenance are now reported on quarter by quarter and an increase in performance has been seen in first 2 months of Q3. - The number of Stage 1 complaints dealt with within the timescale has improved due to the expansion of the WCC complaints team and improved reporting. - Arrears have grown steadily over the first half of the year. HO's currently record arrears manually on a spreadsheet, taken from Orchard. Rent information can be a month out of date before any action is taken. Arrears are also affected by Housing Benefit and Universal Credit not being processed within timescale. - Former tenancy arrears – No action currently being undertaken by HO's, but they have agreed they will begin to start chasing from now. - Anti social behaviour/Housing management. Further detail to be provided on length of time cases are open. - Voids – Total void time to be added to next report. - VE said she would feel more comfortable about liability of things we do against things we don't have control over. Request for mitigations to be added to areas where we are not in control. ACTION 12: PT to report how we compare to our peer groups. ACTION 13: PT to add percentage of cases not completed on time in R&M table. ACTION 14: PT to add table of where we are with disrepair cases. ACTION 15: PT and ERM to check value and percentages in arrears table align with financial reporting. ACTION 16: PT to share contact with GP of person who deals with EDI surveys. ACTION 17: PT to report EDI data to Board. ACTION 18: PT to add 'hold' timings to Voids table to distinguish Total Void Time v Void Performance (taking account of decants, site offices etc)	PT PT PT PT/ERM PT PT PT
7.	Chief Executive Update Report	
	NT presented the report and highlighted the following key points: - Recruitment – New Director of Property is due to join the team on 9th December. A work plan has been developed for her. - Benchmarking of employee remuneration – Each year we benchmark employee pay through an external consultant. The benchmarking exercise	

	showed all staff are matched to the median rate. CEO and Chair to meet re CEO remuneration. 3. Additional benefits - We are not proposing to add any additional benefits to employees as the report outlines comparable benefits. 4. Cost of Living uplift – proposing a 1.7% cost of living uplift for all staff based on September CPI. Board approved 1.7% cost of living uplift for all staff. 5. Board remuneration – A benchmarking exercise was undertaken with external consultant to review Board remuneration which is slightly below median, however we hold 4-6 meetings per year rather than the 1-2 days per month normally associated with levels of board member commitment. There was some discussion about the increased workload, with original commitment of 4 meetings per year now being 4-6, ie a 50% increase in their time. Board approved Board remuneration remaining unchanged. 6. MOT Yard (581-587 Harrow Road W10) – The contract is complete and there is one pre-planning condition still to be discharged re highway levels. This was due to have been completed by October and until we have that permission we cannot demolish the site. We have now been assured this will happen in January. A draft contract has had some changes made and is currently with Devonshires for review. The Board were asked that in light of ERM's earlier data on budgets, should we proceed with contract signing. Following a lengthy discussion the Board decided they could not make a decision based on the limited information available and the changing nature of our finances. Board to receive further clarity on budget predictions and then receive the contract for consideration. ACTION 19: NT and ERM to report in February setting out increased financial information on cash flow over the period of development; including scenarios on 10% 20% increased costs. ACTION 20: NT to inform WCC and GLA that we can't go ahead at this time and that we will discuss in February. To request additional funds should costs increase. 7. Rent increase – It was suggested a rent increase for 2024-2025 be applied at Septembers CPI+% = 2.7%. Board approved a rent increase of 2.7% (assured tenancies) 8. London and Quadrant acquisition – No progress still awaiting further details. 9. Church Street – Regen activity and purchases is positive.	NT/ERM NT
8.	Annual Tenant Survey Results	
	PT presented the annual tenant survey results.	

	It was agreed the results were not good but were very much based around repairs. It was agreed we would see if the position changes once Jas is in post and discuss further at the next Board meeting. Board suggested writing to tenants to tell them what we have done to address their concerns. Undertaking the tenant survey slightly earlier was also suggested. ACTION 21: NT and PT to have discussion with WCC and HO team to get their thoughts on the results and see what actions they will take. ACTION 22: NT and PT think about what liaison required with elected members	NT/PT NT/PT
9.	Governance – Policy Report	
	PT shared policy report. Board members suggested the only policies which would sit with them for approval would be the Bad Debt Policy and Gifts & Hospitality. They would also be interested to see the WCC Repairs and Maintenance Policy. NOTED ACTION 23: Go back to Bill Gill who undertook the original review to see which ones should come back to Board and which ones don't need to.	PT
10.	Management Plan	
	Report was noted by the Board.	
11.	Forward Meeting Plan	
	Board approved The Forward Meeting Plan with the following: • A request for Management Accounts to be brought to every meeting. • A request made for virtual meetings to take place either morning or afternoon.	
12.	Date of Next Meeting	
	1000 on 18 th February (Quarterly Board), in room 18.08, 18 th Floor, Westminster City Hall	
Minutes signed off by:  WCH Chair		