

**Non Confidential Minutes of the Bron Afon Community Housing Limited Board Meeting**

**Venue: 1A & B Meeting Rooms**

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

**Present**

**Board Members:** Andrew Lawrence, Stephen Brooks, Allan Giles, Richard Clark, Patrick Harkness, Mandy Eddolls, David Michael, Brian Jones

**Staff / Visitors:** Duncan Forbes (Chief Executive), Neil Edwards (Director of Resources), Keith Wrate (Interim Director of Property), Amanda Attfield (Director of Organisation Development), Ian Simpson (Director of Community Housing & Support), Amanda Oliver (Business Assurance Partner), John Taphouse (Head of Assets and Development) & Natasha Olerenshaw (Governance and Policy Assistant).

**The meeting was declared quorate at 6:12pm**

No.	Discussion / Action	Officer Responsible
	<p>The meeting commenced at 6:10pm.</p> <p><u>Introductions</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was declared non-quorate as there was no councillor Board members present. Richard Clark arrived at 6.12pm. at which point the meeting was declared quorate.</p> <p>Steve Brooks arrived at 6:25pm</p>	
01	<p><u>Apologies</u></p> <p>Apologies were received from Steve Traynor and Veronica Crick.</p>	
02	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>No changes were made.</p>	
03	<p><u>Action Points from previous meetings</u></p>	

	<p>It was reported that good progress had been made against all action points . It was agreed that Action point 2 would be discussed with item number 20 on the agenda and some agenda items would be brought forward to allow staff presenting these items to leave early.</p>	
04	<p><u>Non-confidential minutes from the previous meeting</u></p> <p>It was noted that the minutes contained spelling mistakes which needed to be corrected.</p> <p>It was also asked that the text under item 11 is removed ie 'The chair of asset management and development committee provided a rationale of the proposed changes and explained at this point in time it was important that our public face clearly indicates good governance and in time this change may no longer be necessary'</p> <p><b>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</b></p>	<b>Governance Officer</b>
05	<p><u>Non-confidential minutes of the Staffing Committee Meeting held 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016</u></p> <p><b>The minutes were endorsed by the Board Members</b></p>	<b>Governance Officer</b>
06	<p><u>Non-confidential minutes of the Audit &amp; Ethics Committee Meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> November</u></p> <p><b>The minutes were endorsed by the Board Members.</b></p>	<b>Governance Officer</b>
07	<p><u>Board Update Review</u></p> <p>The Director of Resources reported that following the last update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He was still working on finalizing the revised loan agreement; negotiations were almost complete subject to some fine tuning by the lenders There was to be a conference call the next day between the lenders where EIB needed to clarify some minor issues. He reported that there was a positive and relaxed feel from lenders about the new funding arrangements.</li> <li>• The Director of Housing and Support announced that</li> </ul>	

	<p>they had won a £5m contract in open competition to deliver supporting people services across the Borough. The Chair of the Board asked that congratulations were passed on to all involved.</p>	
08	<p><u>Management Accounts</u></p> <p>The Director of Resources presented the Management Accounts and explained that the trends identified in September were still continuing. He reported that an in-depth discussion had taken place at the Audit and Ethics Committee on the accounts. He highlighted the inclusion of an estimate for the pension adjustment that takes place at the end of each financial year as required by FRS102. The figure was not yet known so the 2015/16 figure had been included which would result in a revenue deficit of c. £1.5m as reported in point 4.2. Whilst such a deficit would not cause fundamental problems for Bron Afon it does not present well to stakeholders in particular the lenders.</p> <p><b>Board discussion</b></p> <p>The Director of Resources noted that operational expenditure was higher than budgeted and unbudgeted Right to Buy sales were a principle reason for the surplus. The Chief Executive reported that he was committed to reducing operational expenditure to ensure receipts from Right to Buy sales were not being used as a subsidy.</p> <p>He also highlighted the overspend on responsive repairs and noted that while there was currently an underspend in Related Assets this would change at year end. It was suggested that Community Housing and back office underspend could off set the overspend in responsive repairs. It was confirmed that SMT were exploring options .</p> <p>It was reported that there are no major concerns about Capital expenditure although cash flow is not happening as planned. Not having the loan agreement signed is creating delays in proceeding with the planned development programme, except at the Pontymoile site which is being cash flowed from RTB receipts until the agreement is signed</p> <p>The triennial review of pensions and changes that will apply from April 2017 were discussed. Predictions are volatile and it is difficult to identify where pension liabilities lie.</p> <p><b>Board decision</b></p>	

	<p><b>The Board was satisfied that income and expenditure are being managed appropriately and effectively.</b></p>	
15	<p><u>Works Programme 2017/18</u></p> <p>The Head of Assets and Development presented his paper.</p> <p><b>Board discussion</b></p> <p>The contingency of £900K for 17/18 was confirmed. It was also clarified that the programme had been reviewed based on the four priorities identified by Board in September 2016. These included reducing expenditure on responsive repairs. The Head of Assets noted that this should be an outcome of the planned work on roofs. He also reported that he was working on improving data quality.</p> <p>Regarding Point 4.5, Patrick Harkness questioned whether the £880k budget for adaptations should be increased in line with expected demand. The Interim Director of Property acknowledged the demand and emphasized the importance of good communication and information on properties where adaptations have been made in ensuring the budget is managed effectively.</p> <p><b>Board decision</b></p> <p><b>The Board approved the programme subject to the Budget in March.</b></p>	
9	<p><u>Performance against strategic outcomes</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive reported that progress had been made on reducing arrears and that current tenants arrears were below levels reported last year. Former tenant arrears had increased due to tenants leaving and not clearing their account.</p> <p>It was also noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• call abandonment had improved since the last report.</li> <li>• work is underway to reduce complaints.</li> <li>• gas servicing had reached 100% - the Chair praised the efforts of the team on this issue.</li> <li>• there was limited progress with absence management . The Director of Organisation Development reported that while absence is reducing slightly there are still significant issues. For example, a lot of absence is due to stress which is home</li> </ul>	

	<p>related. She reassured the Board that work is underway to address this and the HR team are reviewing how they can build emotional resilience. She also stated post operative sickness was a problem for the organisation. She again highlighted the new nurse led service that will be introduced in the New Year and reported that she has confidence that the changes Bron Afon is making will have a positive effect.</p> <p>Board asked whether staff were still having to travel long distances between jobs when undertaking repairs. The Interim Director of Property reported that jobs were being allocated according to area teams (4) so this should not be happening. However he noted that exceptions might occur if there is an emergency repair which is unpredictable. Next year it is planned to have trackers on all vehicles to monitor mileage.</p> <p><b>Board decision</b> It was agreed that the Interim Director of Property would arrange for Allan Giles to be shown how tracker maps work.</p>	<p><b>Interim Director of Property</b></p>
10	<p><u>Equality and Diversity Strategy</u></p> <p>The Director of Organisational Development presented the paper and advised that she had been appointed Chair of the Welsh Housing Equality Network.</p> <p>She mentioned the Equality and Diversity Strategy and referred to the importance of the Equality and Diversity Reference Group in supporting effective implementation of the Strategy. She highlighted that the Group intended to run “pop-up roadshows” in the New Year to promote the Strategy and would be working closely with the Mutual Futures Group and Tenant Services Forum.</p> <p>She also highlighted work with Stonewall Cymru and made reference to pressure to have a transgender policy, which is part of the Stonewall accreditation criteria.</p> <p>The Director of Organisation Development reported that Bron Afon was also working towards securing accreditation as a Dementia Friendly organization.</p> <p>The Board were reminded about the importance of completing and returning the Welsh Government annual return form on Equality and Diversity. One Board member requested that Welsh Government is asked to amend the question which asks you to state whether you are a Catholic</p>	<p><b>Director of Organisational Development</b></p> <p><b>Business Assurance Partner</b></p>

	<p>or Christian. The Business Assurance Partner agreed to provide this feedback to Welsh Government .</p> <p>The Chair was pleased with the report and asked for an annual update. The Director of Organisation Development suggested that it may be worth providing a progress update to the Board in March.</p> <p><b>Board decision</b> It was agreed that the Board would receive an update on the Strategy in March.</p>	<p><b>Director of Organisational Development</b></p>
<p>11</p>	<p><u>Review of the Hardship Fund</u></p> <p>The Director of Community Housing and Support presented the paper and invited suggestions on any changes required to the criteria for awarding funds. He also asked for comments on future reporting requirements.</p> <p><b>Board discussion</b></p> <p>Questions were raised about whether more people will qualify for the hardship fund in future. The Director of Community Housing and Support noted that more people may wish to access the fund but the fund is a finite pot of money and revising the qualifying criteria for accessing the funding could be considered.</p> <p>He reported that the early signs from use of the hardship/striking a deal fund were encouraging but it is unknown whether the behaviour change seen in the early days continues. Therefore Bron Afon is tracking some cases longitudinally, over time, to establish the longer term Return on Investment.</p> <p><b>Board decision</b></p> <p><b>The Board considered and agreed the report recommendations for them to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest any potential amendments to the scheme if appropriate;</li> <li>• Identify future reporting requirements if the scheme continues into 2017-18.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Director of Community Housing and Support</b></p>
<p>12</p>	<p><u>Housing Demand: Themes from Board Away Day</u></p>	

	<p>The Director of Community Housing and Support introduced the paper and asked whether the themes were the right ones and were the actions sufficient and appropriate.</p> <p><b>Board discussion</b></p> <p>It was suggested that the paper was really helpful and built on discussions at the Away Day. It was asked whether demand for retirement housing was decreasing and the Chief Executive commented that this is an issue with other organisations and there are problems in the north of the Borough.</p> <p>The Board commented that in relation to Point 4.1 they look forward to seeing what is recommended as a result of the comments made at the Away Day.</p> <p><b>Board decision</b></p> <p><b>The Chair thanked the Director for the paper and asked him to report back at a future Board meeting</b></p>	<p><b>Director of Community Housing and Support</b></p>
	<p><u>7.34pm Break</u> <u>7.44pm recommenced</u></p>	
13	<p><u>High Level Overview of Strategic Projects</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive presented the paper.</p> <p><b>Board discussion and decision</b></p> <p>The Board asked for information on all strategic projects to be available on a quarterly basis. Further information was also requested on whether the new Capita system was part of the reason for improved productivity.</p> <p>The Board said they found the information helpful and noted the report.</p>	<p><b>Head of Corporate Services</b></p>
14	<p><u>Accountability</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive presented the paper and highlighted how the new Community Involvement Strategy will enhance accountability. It was reported that the new Mutual Futures Group will meet in February as will the Tenant Services Forum.</p>	

	<p><b>Board discussion</b></p> <p>The Chair asked that progress against the Community Involvement Strategy be reported at Board.</p> <p><b>Board decision</b></p> <p><b>The Board noted the contents of the report for information.</b></p>	<p><b>Community Involvement Manager</b></p>
17	<p><u>Benefit cap and under 35s report:</u></p> <p>The Director of Community Housing and Support presented the paper.</p> <p>He reported that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good progress had been made working jointly with TCBC.</li> <li>• he was confident that Bron Afon is the only organisation in Wales with tried and tested pre-term surgeries for under 35's.</li> <li>• Universal Credit will come into effect in Torfaen in July 2017</li> <li>• the LHA cap has been applied to new and relet tenancies from April 2016 and will apply to existing UC claimants from 2019. He noted that even though the LHA cap has historically just applied to the private rented sector Bron Afon tenants, including pensioners, will get caught by these changes.</li> </ul> <p>and noted that these changes could significantly affect Bron Afon's income. He explained that while the LHA cap can't stop organisations increasing rents, where there is a gap between the rent and the LHA cap tenants will be unable to claim for the extra rent cost and this could threaten the business plan going forward</p> <p><b>Board decision</b></p> <p><b>It was agreed that Board would need to revisit this issue at a future meeting.</b></p>	<p><b>The Director of Community Housing and Support</b></p>
18	<p><u>Improving Productivity and Logistics in Property</u></p> <p>The Interim Director of Property presented the paper.</p> <p><b>Board Discussion</b></p>	



	<p>He noted that this ties in with the 'red flag' status for item 13 on agenda. He reported that Bron Afon's needs to have permission in advance so they are ready to lease land, enabling the project to proceed.</p> <p>He anticipated savings of £800k from the project. The Board requested a detailed breakdown of the savings. It was agreed that the Audit and Ethics Committee would consider this at its next meeting.</p> <p><b>Board decision</b></p> <p>The Board agreed to delegate to the Interim Director of Property authority to enter into a lease of land adjacent to Travis Perkins, Polo Grounds, New Inn for a period of ten years at a rental of £6,500 per annum.</p>	<p><b>Interim Director of Property</b></p>
19	<p><u>Tenant Satisfaction Survey</u></p> <p><b>Board Discussion</b></p> <p>The Chair noted that it was a clear report which highlighted progress made since 2014. The Chief Executive commented that work is underway to address issues where tenants are unhappy.</p> <p><b>Board decision</b></p> <p><b>The Board noted the report for information.</b></p>	
20	<p><u>Schedule of Meetings</u></p> <p><b>Board Discussion</b></p> <p>The Board considered and confirmed that they were confident that six Board meetings a year was sufficient as more work is now being carried out through the committees and this is proving successful. The Chair noted that the dates need to be set and abided by as Board members have other commitments and diaries get booked up months in advance. He suggested that smaller agendas might be helpful in future and if there are pressing things before meetings, emergency meetings could be held.</p> <p>Items requiring amendments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the ACS meeting added for Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February</li> </ul>	<p><b>Governance Assistant</b></p> <p><b>Business</b></p>

	<p>which was agreed in the previous week's ACS meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Board Away Day in February will be held in March. Agreed dates for the away days are Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March and Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October. The Chair stressed that the away days are very important for all board members as all contributions are valuable.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action</b> A revised schedule of meeting with new dates should be issued as soon as possible.</p>	<p><b>Assurance Partner</b></p>
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I sign to confirm that these minutes were agreed to be a true reflection of the meeting held **8<sup>th</sup> December 2017**.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Chair of the Board)**

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_