ITEM 3

The Gateshead Housing Company
Working with Gateshead Council

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

22 September 2016

PRESENT:

Directors
Paul Foy (Chair)
Elizabeth Bird
Sheila Bouitieh
Robert Buckley
George Clark
Mick Davison
Pauline Dillon
Eileen Gill
Helen Hall
Tracy Harrison
Michael Hood
Peter Mole
Joachim Moussanda Mouanda
Liz Twist

Advisers
Jon Mallen-Beadle Managing Director
Neil Bouch Director of Customers and Communities
Kevin Johnson Head of Customer Services
Natalie Porthouse Head of Corporate Services
Julie McCartney Head of Neighbourhood Services
Victoria Beattie Service Director, Construction Services
Lisa Philliskirk Housing Services Manager
Stuart Gibson Governance and Risk Officer

Apologies
Joanne Carr

38 MINUTES

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 14 July 2016 were approved as a correct record.

39 MATTERS ARISING – LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE CAP

The Managing Director met with Lord Freud on 19 July 2016 along with a representative from other authorities regarding their concerns about the Local Allowance cap and the impact on high rises. It was noted that Lord Freud
refused to discuss under-35s but understood the concerns regarding high rises and agreed to investigate the problem nationally.

40 SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT

Evidence from a variety of sources suggested that modern day slavery affected almost every industry and although modern day slavery was illegal, it was a problem which existed in every country in the world.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the Act) received Royal Assent on 26 March 2015 and consolidated various offences relating to human trafficking and slavery.

The Act included a number of provisions, details of which were reported. An additional clause was added retrospectively and came into force in October 2015, which required all commercial organisations carrying out business in the UK, with a turnover of £36million or more to disclose, in an annual slavery and human trafficking statement on their website, what steps they have taken during the financial year to ensure their business and supply changes were slavery free.

Failure to produce the required statement, where applicable, could result in the Secretary of State seeking an injunction but in practice was more likely to risk being “named and shamed”.

The company did not currently have a turnover in excess of £36million but felt strongly about the issue and had therefore still chosen to issue its own statement.

Details of the first TGHC annual statement under this legislation, which represented an ongoing commitment to address the issues of Modern Slavery, were submitted.

The committee noted that the statement was aimed at a higher level rather than at individuals in their properties. However, it was linked to the action plan around what the company was doing elsewhere with other partners which addressed this.

The Board stressed that this was an area that was going to become more and more complex over time.

RESOLVED – (i) That the TGHC Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement be approved.

(ii) That the Statement be published on the TGHC Website.

41 RISK APPETITE

The Board agreed, at its meeting held on 8 July 2010, an updated Risk Management Policy. Within the Policy it outlined that the Board’s role was to determine the Company’s appetite for risk and that this should be reviewed annually.
The Company’s fifth risk appetite statement in September 2015 agreed that given the current economic climate its risk appetite should remain low. It was suggested that the sixth statement should remain the same.

The following risk appetite statement was therefore proposed: -

“The Gateshead Housing Company’s appetite for taking risk is low, however there may be occasions when its appetite may increase for example for specific projects or new ventures. Any such increase would be subject to Board approval.”

The Board agreed that it was right to have a low risk appetite but stressed that in the current climate the company was going to have to deal with more and more risky issues.

RESOLVED – That the risk appetite statement be approved and the statement be reviewed annually.

42 WITHDRAWAL OF PAYMENT COUNTER SERVICES

The Board received an update on the withdrawal of payment counter services at Birtley, Leam Lane and Blaydon Offices.

The payment counter at Birtley would close on the 30 September 2016 and the Neighbourhood Service Advisors Team would provide a customer facing service from the existing reception point.

A timetable had been developed which would see works to remove the payment counter commence on 3 October 2016. It was anticipated that the work at Birtley would be completed by the end of October 2016.

A timetable for the redesign of Leam Lane Office had been developed which would see work to remove the payment counter commence on 24 October 2016. As a consequence, the payment counter would close on 21 October 2016.

During the work, the Neighbourhood Service Advisors Team would be temporarily relocated in the foyer of the building to provide frontline customer services. It was anticipated that the work would be completed by the end of November 2016.

It was proposed that the payment counter at Blaydon would close on 28 October 2016. Following closure, there were works planned to redesign the area where the payment counter was located.

On closure of the payment counter, the Neighbourhood Services Advisors Team would provide a customer facing service from the existing reception in Blaydon working alongside the Libraries service team.

On closure of all the payment counters, there would be an annual saving of £11,000.
The Board was informed that feedback from customers had been positive. The company was working with the Council about being able to get an immediate balance when paying online and also to credit the customer’s account immediately when paying via other methods.

Concern was expressed about customers now having to travel to pay their rent. It was noted that the company was encouraging these customers to pay their rent from home via alternative methods.

It was further noted that when previous cash counters had been withdrawn, there had never been an impact on rent arrears. The Board felt that the company needed to be monitoring any changes in payment patterns of customers who were regular payers over the counter.

The Board was informed that customers would still be able to pay at the Civic Centre and the company would monitor this activity.

The point was made that these closures were another result of the pressures being put on the company by the Government.

RESOLVED – That an update on the withdrawal of payment counter services at Birtley, Leam Lane and Blaydon Offices be noted.

43 PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE STANDARDS – QUARTER 1 2016/17

The Board was informed of the quarter 1 Performance Indicator and Service Standard results for 2016/17.

There were currently 30 Key Performance Indicators that were reported to Board on a quarterly basis. At quarter 1: -

- 13 indicators were traffic lighted green, which showed that the annual targets for these indicators had been achieved. This was an increase from nine at the same period last year.
- Two indicators were traffic lighted amber, which showed that the target set had not been met but performance had increased on the previous year. This was an increase from the same period last year when no indicators were traffic lighted amber.
- Five indicators were traffic lighted red, which showed that the target set had not been met and performance had decreased compared to the previous year. This was an increase from two indicators at the same period last year.
- Ten indicators were not yet measurable or were set with a baseline target.

The performance results therefore indicated that at quarter 1, performance relating to 15 out of the 20 measureable Performance Indicators could be traffic lighted as on target or improving, which related to 75% of the indicators. This was a decrease in performance achieved in the same period last year, when 82% of indicators were on target or improving.
There were currently 14 Service Standards that were reported to Board on a quarterly basis. At quarter 1:

- Five indicators were traffic lighted green, which showed that the annual targets for these indicators had been achieved. This was an increase from two at the same period last year.
- One indicator was traffic lighted amber, which showed that the target set had not been met but performance had increased on the previous year. This was a decrease from two at the same period last year.
- Four indicators were traffic lighted red, which showed that the target set had not been met and performance had decreased compared to the previous year. This was an increase from two at the same period last year.
- Four indicators were not yet measurable or were set with a baseline target.

The performance results therefore indicated that at quarter 1, performance relating to six out of the ten measurable Service Standards could be traffic lighted as on target or improving, which related to 60% of the indicators. This was a decrease on performance in the same period last year when 67% of indicators were on target or improving.

Assets, Development and Investment Committee expressed a concern that the results for satisfaction with the annual gas service and tenants satisfied with improvements made to their home were disproportionate and did not reflect overall performance because although they were both red traffic lighted, there were only three and one tenant respectively who had expressed dissatisfaction. The committee asked if actual numbers as well as percentages could be reported to provide some additional context. The report had now been amended to reflect actual numbers as well as percentages and this would continue to be shown in future reports.

All other queries raised were resolved as part of the committee discussions, with any additional information provided to the relevant committee where requested.

RESOLVED – That the quarter 1 2016/17 Performance Indicator and Service Standard summary results be noted.

44 MINUTES OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting of Resources Committee held on 6 September 2016 were submitted.

Concern was expressed that the minutes did not accurately reflect the concerns that the committee raised at the meeting.

Concern had been expressed that no invoices had been received from Construction Services on the repairs and relet works they had completed. The committee had been advised that the company had met with Construction Services and received accurate projections for monitoring spend which would be reflected in the second quarter report. The committee had also received an assurance that there would not be the same issues in 2017/18 when the repair
and maintenance contract was delivered by Construction Services through Northgate.

Concern had been expressed that the overall budgets and management fee for housing services was yet to be finalised. The Managing Director had informed the committee that he expected to sign this off by the end of this month.

Concern had also been expressed about the HR Team currently being unable to produce an automated absence summary report due to issues with iTrent. The committee had been advised that the Council also had the same issue with iTrent. The company was working with iTrent to address the issue as soon as possible.

There had been a previous decision by the Board not to collect information around sexuality or religion for Board members. The committee made a recommendation to the Board that this information should be collected.

RESOLVED – (i) That the minutes be noted, subject to the concerns raised at the meeting being accurately reflected in the minutes.

(ii) That the company collect information around sexuality and religion for Board members.

45 MINUTES OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting of Customers and Communities Committee held on 8 September 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be noted.

46 MINUTES OF ASSETS, DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting of Assets, Development and Investment Committee held on 14 September 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be noted.

47 MINUTES OF KEELMAN HOMES HELD ON 14 JULY 2016

The minutes of Keelman Homes held on 14 July 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be noted.

48 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following items were posted on the TGHC website:

- Petitions update
- Outstanding Issues
• Forward Plan

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

49 FEEDBACK FROM OUTSIDE BODIES AND EVENTS

The following feedback from outside bodies and events was reported: -

• Mick Davison reported that the Credit Union had agreed a partnership with the Council to provide loans for tenants for furniture.

RESOLVED – That the feedback from outside bodies and events be noted.

50 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, 24 November 2016 at 10am in the Blaydon Room, Gateshead Civic Centre.

51 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining business in accordance with the indicated categories of the company’s Access to Information Rules.