

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING OF  
MID-WALES HOUSING ASSOCIATION HELD AT TY CANOL HOUSE,  
NEWTOWN ON WEDNESDAY, 21st SEPTEMBER 2016**

- Present:** Mr. David Evans (Chair - part), Mr. Richard Martin, Ms. Liz Jenkins, Mr. Peter Bayliss, Mrs. Jill Ladbrook, Mr. Vic Brown, Mrs. Morag Bailey and Mrs. Jill Ladbrook.
- Observer:** Cllr. Francesca Jump (Powys County Council – part)
- Officers:** Mr. Shane Perkins (Chief Executive), Mr. Charles Brotherton (Director of Finance and Company Secretary), Mrs. Sian Howells (Director of New Business), Mr. Aidan Ackerman (Director of Customer Services) and Mrs. Janet Price (Governance Officer – minute taker).

In the absence of the Chair, who was unavoidably detained elsewhere, and the absence of the Deputy Chair, the Company Secretary opened the meeting by indicating that the Chair had asked Mr. Richard Martin to Chair the Board of Management meeting for the duration of his absence. Mr. Martin thanked him and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

| <b>1. APOLOGIES</b>  | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| Apologies were received from Mr. Peter Swanson (Deputy Chair), Mr. Ray Dowling, Mr. Nick Hoskins and Mr. Dafydd Pugh-Jones (Interim Director of Care & Repair in Powys). |               |
| <b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>   |               |
| There were no declarations of interest.  |               |
| <b>3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING HELD ON 13TH JULY 2016</b>  |               |
| Mrs. Morag Bailey proposed and Ms. Liz Jenkins seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2016 be approved as a true record.                             |               |
| <b>4. MATTERS ARISING</b>  |               |
| No questions were raised in advance of or at the meeting.  |               |
| <b>5. WELFARE BENEFIT REFORM STRATEGY</b>  |               |

The Director of Customer Services introduced the paper, indicating changes to the strategy. The Westminster Government has introduced a ruling which takes place with effect from April 2018 whereby single people under the age of 35 will no longer be entitled to housing benefit for a self contained flat but will receive the shared housing allowance rate. This will be a reduction of £21.50 per person per week in Montgomeryshire.

To date, the proposed long-term solutions focus on the provision of suitable housing or houses of multiple occupancy, both of these would not materialise for some time.

The risk to the Association, he explained, is whether accommodation should be offered to tenants who, it is anticipated, will face a shortfall in their benefits resulting in their tenancies becoming unsustainable. A Member commented that it is not helpful to applicants to be granted an unsustainable tenancy and suggested that all applicants for housing should undergo a formal risk assessment to ascertain ability to pay. Members noted that this legislation will mean that the majority of single-persons' accommodation will be allocated to those who are in employment and who can afford the rent.

Single parents with a child will not be affected, other than those whose children do not normally live with them.

A Member questioned whether it was possible for an applicant to have the safeguard of a guarantor but it was felt unlikely they would have such support; once an applicant is 18, the tenancy becomes a legal agreement between the Association and the tenant, who becomes liable. All applicants must be asked, and be able to demonstrate, whether they will be able to afford their tenancy.

A Member felt that the Allocations process should include the undertaking of a risk assessment on all allocations to check ability to pay rent and their rental history. This will avoid any possible claim of discrimination against one particular group. She stated that she would have liked the paper to have included information on other ways of providing accommodation to under 35s.

Members noted that the reduction in the total benefits paid per claimant, later this year, will also impact a number of tenants.

It was noted that the Strategy did not need to focus on specific age groups and therefore does not need to be returned to Board on each occasion.

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| <p>After further discussion, Ms. Liz Jenkins proposed and Mr. Vic Brown seconded that the following are agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The requirement for all tenants to demonstrate an ability to pay the rent, especially for those who are single and aged under 35, before a tenancy is offered, taking into account the legislative impact;</li> <li>b) That tenants on a Starter Tenancy should have a clear rent account before the tenancy becomes an Assured Tenancy; and</li> <li>c) That Mid-Wales Housing develops a sustainable tenancy risk assessment process for <b>all</b> tenants.</li> </ul> <p>All Members were in agreement.</p>   | <p><b>DoCS</b></p> |
| <p><b>6. ALLOCATIONS POLICY</b></p> <p>The Director of Customer Services introduced the report, apologising that the document did not clearly state what the policy actually is! He explained that it is to allocate properties on the basis of housing need and create sustainable communities.</p> <p>A Member felt that because the policy statement was not included, and that the Association was bound by Ceredigion and Powys County Councils, in relation to the Common Housing Register (CHR), that she was being asked to agree to a 'blank piece of paper'. She suggested that the policy should include several key principles in an underlying statement.</p> <p>Another Member commented that she felt the policy did not have an element of control to ensure the Association is able to retain its ability to allocate as it wishes. The Chief Executive suggested that the policy statement could be: "MWHHA aims to allocate housing to those in housing need and in accordance with the priorities of Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council and we will only allocate a property where the offer of a tenancy is sustainable". A Member suggested that the statement should also refer to the Association's Local Lettings Policy.</p> <p>The observer commented that the Association must have had considerable input into the creation of the CHR to which the Chief Executive responded that the Association is still entitled to interrogate and select from the housing list those they wish to house.</p> <p><b><i>Mr. David Evans (Chair) joined the meeting at this point.</i></b></p> <p>The Director of Customer Services was asked to improve the policy, based on the comments above and re-present it to the Board at the next</p> |                    |

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| <p>appropriate meeting.</p> <p><b><i>Mr. Richard Martin (Acting Chair) welcomed Mr. Evans to the meeting and stepped down. Mr. Evans thanked him for his stewardship of the meeting to this point.</i></b></p>  | <p><b>DoCS</b></p> |
| <p><b>7. LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY – MONTPELLIER COURT</b></p> <p>The Director of Customer Services introduced the paper, saying that it had been requested by residents of Montpellier Court and had been discussed by the Tenants’ and Residents’ Forum (TaRF).</p> <p>The policy is proposed as a means of reducing anti-social behaviour at the scheme and will involve the Police when offers of accommodation are made. This is to avoid housing people who are current /likely offenders. However, a Member commented that the Police’s abstention in approving an applicant may cause the Association to reject that applicant, which he felt could be discriminatory, though the Director of Customer Services explained that only applicants for Montpellier Court will be subject to this vetting procedure.</p> <p>Ms. Liz Jenkins proposed and Mr. Vic Brown seconded that the introduction of a Local Lettings Policy for five years for Montpellier Court, Llandrindod Wells, is approved. There were six votes in favour and one abstention and therefore the proposal was carried.</p> <p><b><i>Cllr. Francesca Jump left the meeting at this point.</i></b></p> |                    |
| <p><b>8. UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY</b></p> <p>The following sentences within the Policy are to be amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The last sentence of the last bullet point in section 5.1 is to be amended to read: “The Community Housing Team Leader will seek the guidance of the Director of Customer Services <i>or another Director in his absence</i> if an appeal against a decision under this policy is made”.</li> <li>• The title of the policy in section 7.1 is to be amended to state “Unacceptable Behaviour Policy”, replacing “Unreasonable Behaviour Policy”.</li> <li>• The signatures of team members should also be included in relation to the EIA.</li> </ul> <p>The Director explained that the Policy had been considered by the Equality Review Group who had requested that the Policy name included the words “vexatious and persistent”. Members broadly felt</p>   | <p><b>DoCS</b></p> |

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| <p>that the meaning of the title was unclear and suggested that it be called “Vexatious and Persistent Unacceptable Behaviour Policy”.</p> <p>Another Member felt that it lacked an underlying policy statement, and suggested: “Our policy is to endeavour to provide a robust complaints procedure for tenants, but should this process be abused in a vexatious or persistent manner, we will take action to curtail the resources and its impact on the Association”. This is to be included within the document.</p> <p>Mr. Richard Martin proposed and Ms. Liz Jenkins seconded that taking into account the above amendments, the Policy be approved.</p>   | <p><b>DoCS</b></p> |
| <p><b>9. REQUEST TO SUSPEND RIGHT TO BUY AND RIGHT TO ACQUIRE IN POWYS</b></p> <p>The Director of Customer Services introduced the report and explained that the request to suspend the Right to Acquire (RTA) and Right to Buy (RTB) applies to tenancies in Welshpool and Newtown only, as all other tenancies are deemed to be within the “rural areas exceptions” and hence currently already excluded.</p> <p>At this point, Mrs. Morag Bailey declared an interest as a tenant living in Welshpool . However, she indicated that she was in agreement with the proposal.</p> <p>The major impact of the suspension is in relation to Powys County Council’s homes and it was felt that PCC will consider the Association’s approval to be a gesture of goodwill and support for its strategic decision. Only approximately 20 Association tenants will be affected.</p> <p>A Member suggested that tenants could be pre-warned so they may take advantage of the offer before it is suspended; it was agreed that the Association’s tenants should be informed via letter advising them to act immediately, if they wish to avail themselves of the offer. The implementation date will be determined by the Welsh Government.</p> <p>Mr. Peter Bayliss proposed and Mr. Richard Martin seconded that the proposal of Powys County Council to suspend the Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire (as it applies to MWA tenants) in Powys is approved.</p> | <p><b>DoCS</b></p> |
| <p><b>10. IN-HOUSE VOIDS TEAM</b></p> <p>The Chair wished to record his thanks to Mr. Carl Leah (Finance Team Leader) and Mr. Steve Palmer (Maintenance Team Leader) for their work on this project.</p> <p>The Director of Customer Services explained that the purpose of the</p>  |                    |

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| <p>project was to improve the quality of the Association's void properties though it has also provided a significant financial saving.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question, the Chief Executive confirmed that the salary levels of the Maintenance Operative and Maintenance Apprentice had been evaluated appropriately.</p> <p>A Tenant Board Member stated that he had personally witnessed the quality of the work undertaken which he felt to be 'first class'.</p> <p>Mrs. Morag Bailey proposed and Mr. Vic Brown seconded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The performance of the in-house maintenance voids team over the 10 months' pilot project period is noted;</li> <li>b) The posts of the Maintenance Operative (voids) and the Maintenance Apprentice be made permanent on current terms; and</li> <li>c) The budgets for voids, based on the pilot project, be formalised, and any ongoing saving be transferred into a maintenance contingency budget to cover the risk of needing to use contractors if the maintenance operative is off sick.</li> </ul> | <b>HRM</b> |
| <p><b>11. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE &amp; RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4TH AUGUST 2016</b></p> <p>A typographical error was noted in recommendation 3.3 where the second figure should state £30,000 and not £300,000.</p> <p>Members were advised that the former Director of Care &amp; Repair in Powys has settled her claim against the Association and received a formal settlement.</p> <p>Members considered the recommendations and after a short discussion, Mr. Richard Martin proposed and Mrs. Morag Bailey seconded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Group Risk Management Policy and Strategy be approved;</li> <li>b) The inclusion of the Agency's risks on the Risk Map within Covalent, be approved;</li> <li>c) The forecast deficit of £96,000 for Care &amp; Repair in Powys is noted, which is £30,000 higher than budget;</li> <li>d) The forecast reserves for Care &amp; Repair in Powys are £138,000 at 31st March 2017 in comparison with a forecast minimum reserves level of £126,000 are noted.</li> </ul>                                |            |

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| <p><b>12. QUARTER 1 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b></p> <p>The Director of Finance introduced the report, explaining that a more up-to-date picture of the indicators is available via Covalent “on line”.</p> <p>A Member asked about the “CRP Service Requests from Core Clients” indicator and said that it had been previously agreed that the data should indicate work carried out and not just requests received. Another Member agreed with her recollection, adding that it should also record the service requests in relation to advice given. The Chief Executive acknowledged this distinction.</p> <p>Dr. Olivia Morris proposed and Mrs. Morag Bailey seconded that the Quarter 1 Key Performance Indicators be approved.</p> | <p><b>DoCRP/<br/>PIO</b></p> |
| <p><b>13. USE OF SEAL</b></p> <p>The Seal Register was circulated at the meeting. Mrs. Morag Bailey proposed and Mr. Richard Martin seconded that the Use of Seal be ratified. All Members were in agreement.</p>   |                              |

Agenda items 14-21 are recorded under the Confidential Minutes of the Board of Management Meeting of Mid-Wales Housing Association held on 21st September 2016.