

Open minutes of Tower Hamlets Homes Board Meeting
 Thursday 23rd September 2021 **6.10pm – 7.15pm**
 Harford Centre, Harford Street, E1 4FG

Board Directors Present:

- Ann Lucas (AL & Chair) - Chair, Independent Board Director
- Claire Tuffin (CT & Vice Chair) - Resident Board Director
- Andrew Bond (AB) - Independent Board Director
- Safia Jama (SJam) - Independent Board Director
- Simon Hart (SH) - Resident Board Director
- Mahbub Anam (MA) - Resident Board Director
- Asma Islam (AI) - Cllr Board Director
- Sabina Akhtar (SA) - Cllr Board Director

Co – Optees Present:

- Iain Lawson (IL) - Co-Optee to Finance & Audit Committee
- Pam Haluwa (PH) - Co-Optee to Gov.& Remuneration Committee

Officers Present:

- Susmita Sen (SS) - Chief Executive
- Neil Isaac (NI) - Director of Finance
- Will Manning (WM) - Director of Asset Management
- Gulam Hussain - Head of Regulatory Assurance
- Wendy Wuraola - Head of Finance
- Chris Smith - Head of Resources
- Tony Lewis - Strategic Advisor
- Richard Hards - Head of Leasehold Services
- Hilton Armand - Customer Access Strategic Advisor
- Jean Philadelphia - Executive Support Team Leader

In Attendance:

- Karen Swift (KS) - LBTH Divisional Director of Housing & Regeneration
- John Kiwanuka (JK) - LBTH ALMO Client Manager

Apologies:

- Tarik Khan (TK) - Cllr Board Director
- Val Whitehead (VW) - Cllr Board Director
- Yasin Ahmed (YA) - Co-Optee to the Finance & Governance Committee
- Nikesh Shah (NS) - Independent Board Director
- Paul Davey (PD) - Director of Business Transformation
- Ann Otesanya (AO) - Director of Neighbourhoods

1.	Welcome	
1.1.	AL welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies for the above were noted.	
2.	Declaration of Interest	
2.1.	CT, IL, and SH declared their interest as leaseholders of Tower Hamlets Homes.	
3.	Questions from Members of the Public	
3.1.	None received.	
4.	Minutes of the Open Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 20 May 2021	
4.1.	<i>The THH Board AGREED minutes of meeting held on 29 July 2021 were an accurate record.</i>	

5.	HDN Accreditation	
5.1.	Tony Lewis introduced the report detailing the positive performance on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and positive performance over such a long period of time.	
5.2.	In 2015, THH were awarded accreditation and five distinctions for areas of good practice. In 2021 THH were again awarded accreditation but this time with 11 distinctions for areas of good practice. Housing Diversity Network, said THH demonstrated strong and compelling evidence for our firm commitment to EDI, noted that THH recognised EDI as part of delivering 'Create Great and HDN also noted our strong engagement, clear route maps and golden thread and about strengthening and deepening our approach since the last assessment. THH are the first organisation to do the accreditation in a different way which resulted in lots of staff involvement, an opportunity to do a deep dive and learn the process for evaluation.	
5.3.	The distinctions span all four areas of the assessment which showed THH has a balanced approach. Distinction area number two 'visible leadership and culture' was an area HDN recommended THH strengthened in 2015 and is now distinction area. HDN reported that the pandemic has been the biggest change in EDI in recent times and it had unduly affected some groups and communities and they were really impressed with the THH response and agility in shifting our focus and moving resource is so it's pleasing to see the pandemic response and support to public health as a distinction area.	
5.4.	The actions will become part of the People Strategy along with actions from Investors in People and actions from the Councils BME Inequality Commission Report. Board and staff can be congratulated for what is an industry leading assessment.	
5.5.	Karen Swift recognised the report and approach as an industry leading achievement and confirmed the Client would be showcasing this at a future Council meeting and to be included in the council's equality good practice report.	
5.6.	<i>The THH Board NOTED the HDN Accreditation Report.</i>	
6.	Presentation on Customer Access and new Town Hall	
6.1.	GH, HA and CS presented this item to the Board. The presentation provided Board with information on the new Town Hall and the effects of Digital Strategy, Customer Access Strategy and Operating model to reflect the opportunities and challenges arising from the move to the new Town Hall.	
6.2.	Completion and handover of the building expected Spring next year and all Council staff anticipated relocating from Mulberry Place late next year.	
6.3.	Council is looking to allocate desks on a 4:10 ratio (i.e., 4 desks per 10 staff) to include THH staff, but some staff will require a permanent desk space and others occasional space. Council/THH working on floor plans for each floor.	
6.4.	Leases at City Reach, Harford and Rushmead are due to end during 2022/23, but there is a break in clause in place for City Reach and Harford.	
6.5.	Rushmead currently operating on an appointment only basis for face-to-face meetings. Lease until October 2022, but that site is on the Council's development list.	
6.6.	HA said we will be reviewing our Digital Strategy, Customer Access Strategy and Operating Model to reflect the opportunities and challenges arising from the move to the new town hall. THH will continue to develop its online self-service offer (MyTHH, repairs online, parking portal, e-forms etc), identify ways to support and develop the hybrid working model (to achieve the optimum balance between home working,	

	office working and site-based work) and develop further tools to support agile working.	
6.7	Board and Customer Experience Task Force to receive regular progress updates going forward.	
6.8	AB asked about the ratio of desks and costs. CS said this was an approximate figure as a whole and THH was expecting to receive space for approximately 170 desks.	
6.9	IL said that he did not wish to see us being overcharged which would then be passed on to tenants and leaseholders.	
6.10	SS said there was a need to rethink and review the customer access strategy.	
6.11	MA thought we should be looking at physical fixed locations.	
6.12	SH asked if we are moving to digital services by default, who will pay for the required IT investment.	
6.13	IL asked do we know how confident the Council are as to when the Town Hall will be ready. KS responded that LBTH are talking to colleagues at THH where there might be capacity to make some savings.	
6.14	AB asked about assumptions and costs. NI said no discussions had taken place about costs and fit out costs. CS not sure whether THH would be given the space as furnished or unfurnished and the Council's Project Management team had been invited to City Reach to look at the layout and furniture in the office.	
6.15	CT said do we have self service platforms in place in these locations and wondered how much residents would want those or how useful they would be.	
6.16	Action: GH to present the presentation on Customer Access and the new Town Hall to the Residents' Panel and upcoming TRA roadshows. <i>The THH Board NOTED the presentation on Customer Access and new Town Hall.</i>	GH
7.	CEO Report	
7.1	SS presented this item to the Board, asked that the contents of the report be noted and highlighted areas within the report.	
7.2	Thames Water - Directors will recall that there has been a long running legal issue with a few local authorities regarding their agreements with Thames Water to collect Water rates on their behalf. The final court judgement went against the local authorities and even though tenants have paid LBTH the same amount as they would have paid Thames Water direct the Council has to refund some of the commission it received from Thames Water since 2001.	
7.3	THH and Council colleagues have agreed the methodology that will be used to calculate the refunds, which is consistent with the court judgement and will result in average refunds for current tenants of around £1,000 which will be credited to rent accounts over the next few months, with tenants able to receive a refund should their account be in credit as a result. Once the current tenant refunds have been processed, we will be able to look at refunds for the former tenants, but there will be 6-year limitation on these debts.	
7.4	We will put publicity on the THH and LBTH website within three weeks' time as well as Open Door to tell tenants that they do not need to do anything at this stage as it will happen automatically.	

7.5	<p>Procurement – 4 repairs contracts are due to start as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General build – 1st July 2022 • Gas Servicing of Domestic Boilers – 1st April 2022 • Communal boilers & systems & electrical maintenance – 1st February 2022 • Fire safety equipment maintenance – 1st February 2022 	
7.6	Work to recover post pandemic repairs backlog continues. Mears are undertaking improvements to communications and additional sub-contract and labour resources are being sourced.	
7.7	AL said that mobilisation of the new contract was reliant on IT changes being carried out by LBTH and that we need to ensure the minute there are any delays we need to escalate.	
7.8	<p>In the process of recruiting so that Hillary can return to her substantive post.</p> <p>PH asked why leaseholders receives S20 notices if they do not have lifts in their blocks. SS said it might be worthwhile putting something on the THH website and give the HSC a script should they receive any queries regarding S20 notices.</p> <p><i>The THH Board NOTED the CEO report.</i></p>	
	KS, JK, HA, TL and SJam left the meeting at 7.15pm	

Actions Log: Open Board Meeting
23rd September 2021 6.10pm – 7.15pm

Item	Action	Who	Due	Status
6.16	GH to present the presentation on Customer Access and the new Town Hall to the Residents' Panel and upcoming TRA roadshows	GH		

Chair

Date