



# Northamptonshire Partnership Homes Limited

Company No: 09019453 Registered Address: The Guildhall, St Giles Square Northampton NN1 1DE

## Minutes and actions from the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022 Board Meeting

*Lee Room, Westbridge Depot, St James Mill Road, Northampton NN5 5JW  
And Teams.*

### Present

#### Board Members:

Andrew Woods (AHW) *Chair*, John Connolly (JC) *Vice Chair*, Andrew Kilbride (AK), Bob Purser (BP), Chris Deery (CD), Chris Webb (CAW), Clare Whitehead (CLW), Nigel Hinch (NH), Rakesh Thakarar (RT), Rebecca Peck (RP).

#### Officers:

Mike Kay (MK), Dale Robertson (DR), Gary Duckmanton (GD), Julie Petrie (JP), Olukunle Olujide (OO), Davina Sylvan (DS) *minutes*

**Apologies:** Godfrey Kanengoni (GK), Jane Carr (JCa) WNC,

Minutes and Actions		
Meeting Commenced: 18:00		
Item 1	Standing Items	Action
<b>Item 1.1: Welcome and apologies</b>		
1.1	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were noted as above.	
<b>Item 1.2: Declaration of interests</b>		
1.2	None	
<b>Item 1.3: Minutes of last meeting</b>		
1.3	It was noted regarding the Articles of Association there was no requirement to change.	

	<b>Minutes of the Board meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 were approved by the Board.</b>	
<b>Item 1.4: Matters arising</b>		
1.4	<p>Action 1: Completed This will be investigated by the Housing team</p> <p>Action 2: Completed The Articles are being redrafted by CW</p>	
<b>Item 1.5: Mission, Vision and Values</b>		
1.5	Mission, vision and values were acknowledged in the meeting. The Chair highlighted 'We improve and maintain the quality of our homes'.	
<b>Item 1.6: Happy to Help CIC Report</b>		
1.6	<p>The report from the meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December was presented. Communities Funds were on the agenda. Three bids received with two from the same organisation, Spring Charity. The first bid requested assistance for children born during lockdown. The second bid was for a small amount to support with refreshments as Spring Charity are part of the warm spaces initiative. The third bid from a Folk Dancing group requested funding for a CD player. It was noted all 3 bids were approved and there were no issues. No questions were raised.</p> <p><b>The Board received the 02/12/2022 Happy to Help CIC report.</b></p>	
<b>Item 2 For Decision</b>		
<b>Item 2.1: Customer Service Strategy</b>		
2.1	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. It was noted that an updated version of the appendices document addressing amendments will be circulated. Thanks to the Board for feedback. It was highlighted that the Customer Service Strategy involved consultation with various groups, employees, engaged tenants, a Board session and survey feedback. This information has been incorporated into the document and resulted in 3 key outcomes NPH want to achieve. Customer Service Programme Implementation plan will address what will be done to deliver the strategy.</p> <p>The Board welcome the strategy noting it is positive. The Board suggested the graphic on page 10 with the age range 18 to 101, should be amended to 0 to 101 to acknowledge the children and young people who are also customers. The Board commented that it is a really good document and strategy and queried a minor point, 5.4 on page 3 and page 22 'customers can easily access services in a way that suits them' this should be a bit more complex than it indicates. The feedback will be taken on.</p>	

	<p>The Board commented positively on the graphics and were happy to see pictures of people. The Board noted how much work has gone into the document and how obvious it is, a clear well written document that is very accessible.</p> <p>The Board echoed it is a really good document, amazed how much work has been done to get tenants benefits that they were entitled to excellent news. The Board noted 6 tenants aged over 100. Excellent document.</p> <p>The Board queried the sign off/involvement from the portfolio holder and housing team at WNC? It was clarified that the sign-off of the document is the NPH Board's responsibility it is not a document the council sign off.</p> <p>The Board asked if the executives at the council seen the document and were advised no. The involvement of the contact centre and the Assistant Director of Customer and Corporate Services were noted, and part of the review work ensured there was alignment with WNC strategy.</p> <p>It was clarified that approval and sign-off of the document is a function of the Board, it is delegated from WNC to NPH.</p> <p>The Board enquired about the intended audience and advised customers, staff and anyone supporting the delivery of the strategy, contractors, and partners. It was confirmed the strategy will be published on the NPH website. It was noted that work could be done to have information regarding the strategy included in the WNC members briefing. It was noted that NPH produce a quarterly member's briefing submitted to the council for councillors.</p> <p>The Board highlighted some typos in the document and advised personal information such as number plates, house numbers and address information could be seen. It was confirmed these will be removed.</p> <p><b>Subject to highlighted minor amendments, the Board approved the Customer Service Strategy 2022-25.</b></p>	
<p><b>Item 2.2: Contract Tender Awards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Southbridge Road</b></li> </ul>		
2.2	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. It was noted the report is seeking approval of the Board to sign under seal a contract for the development of 28 homes in Southbridge Road, by Steele and Bray.</p> <p>The Board are glad there is a project that can be moved forward on and enquired about the cost of approximately £180,000 per unit. It was clarified that is where the price is in terms of real market tender information.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken with WNC's financial team around new financial parameters and these comply with the model, aligned with current expectations of cost values today.</p>	

	<p>The Board enquired about the price is it fixed or is there a budget to go over? It was clarified that there is a contingency within our budget, but this is the contracted price, and it is expected to be held.</p> <p>The Board enquired about timescales and when properties will be ready for occupancy? It was noted the contract is for 63 weeks, with a lead in period of 9 weeks, possession of the site will be expected before the end of the year, construction starts in February 2023, ready for occupation April 2024. The Board requested clarity on a practical completion date.</p> <p>The Board noted it was excellent news for Northampton to have a local construction company on this development.</p> <p>The Board enquired about the price comparison to other contractors. It was noted the tender range was between £5.2mil to £5.8mil. 5 contractors 4 returned compliant tenders and one withdrew, a 9% variation. The Board queried energy efficiency asking has the design and build already been done by appointed architects, part of the build price. It was noted the design team via the planning process will be retained by the contractor team. The development has been sufficiently designed, there will be no variation and we will be achieving EPC level B.</p> <p><b>The Board approved the use of the common seal and two Board Members to sign a JCT Design &amp; Build Contract for the design and construction of 28no. 1 and 2 bed new apartment homes at Southbridge Road, Northampton for the sum of £5,277,721.</b></p>	
<b>Item 2.3: Modern Slavery Act: NPH Declaration</b>		
2.3	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. It was highlighted by law there is a requirement to upload the NPH Modern Slavery Act declaration to the website and on the central government’s database. It was noted very minor changes have been made for this year. The Board highlighted minor amendments.</p> <p>The Board enquired about the procedures in place if staff come across slavery or human trafficking amongst our customers? It was confirmed that there are several indicators support workers and housing officers look out for including cuckooing. There is a reporting mechanism various public bodies and signposting to organisations. All visiting staff have the capability to send an electronic concern card via their devices.</p> <p>The Board noted it is an excellent document and had no questions.</p> <p><b>The Board approved the 2023 NPH Modern Slavery Statement.</b></p>	
<b>Item 2.4: Board Remuneration Review</b>		
2.4	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. Following detailed discussion, the Board agreed to place this item on hold and bring back to the next Board meeting. The Board requested clarification is sought on information around the benefits permitted earnings level, consultation with tenants takes place</p>	



	<p>and formal confirmation from the HMRC tax advice on payments and a refresh of salary benchmarking. <i>RP left the meeting at 18:56.</i></p> <p><b>The Board noted the contents of the report and agreed this item is on hold until the next Board Meeting.</b></p>	
<b>Item 2.5: Board Performance Review Framework</b>		
2.5	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. The Board were informed very few changes had been made to the framework. It was noted that NPH are in the process of updating logos and an NBC typo will be amended. The Board asked for clarity on the term ‘the ability to scan the operating environment’ it was noted this is the Board being aware of what is happening within the housing environment, having a finger on the pulse in relation to housing.</p> <p><b>The Board approved the updated Board Performance Review Framework.</b></p>	
<b>Item 2.6: Communications Strategy</b>		
2.6	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. It was noted that the NPH communication strategy must interface with WNC’s communication strategy. It was highlighted this is a refresh the NPH communications strategy which will be revisited and rewritten to be in line with WNC’s communication strategy, once it is complete and shared.</p> <p>The Board request the vision, mission, values yellow colouring is changed to a more muted tone as it currently looks like a warning and can be construed in a different way to its intention of highlighting importance.</p> <p>Following discussion, it was clarified that communicating effectively with local authority councillors and officers is noted in the strategy.</p> <p>It was noted there are some blank pages within the strategy, and this will be addressed.</p> <p><b>The Board approved the strategy refresh in lieu of a more comprehensive update once WNC’s communications strategy has been published.</b></p>	
<b>Item 3</b>	<b>For Decision Recommended by Committee</b>	
	<b>No items</b>	
<b>Item 4</b>	<b>For Information</b>	
<b>Item 4.1: Draft Management Agreement and KPI’s</b>		
4.1	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. It was highlighted that this is one document with a key appendix, the KPI’s which will be implemented by the council in advance of a refresh of the management agreement. The management agreement has been presented to the PP&amp;D committee enabling committee chairs to have sight of the document and discussion.</p>	

	<p>It was highlighted there is a government directive that management agreements are in a set format and a formal approval process.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the existing document has been used a template 90% of the document is still the same, there has not been a great deal of change to the principals or approach. Changes have been made to the schedules which are a key part of the document.</p> <p>It was noted the Board have approved the new approval process, reporting mechanisms etc to become embedded as part of the legal contract between parties.</p> <p>The document has been created as a draft and reviewed with Jane Carr from a WNC housing perspective. It was noted the document is a legal document and WNC Legal team will take a lead role. Once the document is formalised, it will then need to go via a formal process.</p> <p>It was noted within the document itself in terms of principal and precedent there is nothing fundamentally different, a key change is a move to a 30-year agreement, providing greater longevity to recruit and retain staff.</p> <p>It was highlighted that there is a proposed change to the KPI structure, moving away from Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 targets. It was noted NPH now have a different set of KPI's targets with 22 required by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), additional legal compliance KPI's. WNC priorities have been added, and a number of KPI's NPH have reported to over the last 8 years, and it was noted are worth retaining. This results in a list of 48 KPI's including 1 KPI from WNC. Reporting frequency across the KPI's will be annually, quarterly, and monthly. Reporting to WNC will be through the Management Agreement quarterly meeting, Capital Assets Board, Place, Finance and People forums. The next stage is a detailed discussion to look at the targets and thresholds.</p> <p>Moving forward the existing KPI's are due to expire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and plans are in place for the 48 KPI's to be implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. It was noted WNC have a different timescale and the management agreement will be taken to cabinet in June 2023. It was noted that the targets will be brought to the NPH Board meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023 for sign off.</p> <p>It was noted that this is the governance KPI reporting set, this is not the set the Board would operationally want to see there will be a number of other operational figures that will need to be agreed by the Board going forward.</p> <p>The Board commented on the added value received by WNC from NPH going above and beyond the standard is it possible to separate these? The Board were advised no, as this is aimed at a different audience. WNC statutory duties such as homeless and allocations are not a target NPH can be benchmarked against.</p> <p>The Board enquired about the wording 'Complaints relative to size of landlord' and 'Anti- Social Behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord' is this standard wording? It was confirmed the wording is standard from the RSH.</p> <p>The Board highlighted the role of the WNC scrutiny panel to hold cabinet members to account for delivery against policies. It was clarified the council</p>	
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	<p>are the accountable body to the regulator to provide the assurance everything is safe and secure. Scrutiny is seeking the challenge. This mechanism is proposing for NPH as an agent of the council to demonstrate the assurance NPH are delivering and evidence that supports that delivery to the cabinet member.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the contents of the report</b>  <i>Meeting adjourned at 19:52.</i>  <i>Meeting reconvened at 20:00.</i></p>	
<b>Item 4.2 Damp, Mould and Condensation</b>		
4.2	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. It was highlighted Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) is a national issue. Questions have been posed by the Government response about the current approach and how things will be done going forward. Certain deadlines have been set with the first of which is the 19<sup>th</sup> December for WNC to submit a response.</p> <p>It was noted the scrutiny panel reviewed DMC during the summer and reported to EMT with 19 recommendations indicating NPH are in a 'good' position. A DMC task and finish group has been set up. It was noted there is no additional funding, and it is being managed within existing resources. There will be 4 review held meetings within 3 weeks.</p> <p>The Board enquired about overcrowding, are we confident that our properties are not overcrowded. It was noted there are 2 criteria statutory and social overcrowding. The WNC standard is statutory overcrowding, noting approximately 1500 - 1800 homes are socially overcrowded.</p> <p>The Board asked when we change over tenancy do, we check ventilation fans and airbricks? It was confirmed these and areas are checked alongside roof space insulation, trickle vents and UPC windows as standard.</p> <p>The Board enquired about water damage from cannabis farms in Northamptonshire homes. Inspections are undertaken and concerns cards are completed, and housing officer will investigate.</p> <p>The Board requested information on the current position on cases of DMC and current spend. The Board were advised there is a lot of data held which can be shared. It was agreed to share the submissions to the Government with the Board. It was noted the task and finish group are taking a people and property approach and working in a more proactive way. Immediately there are 180 requests for damp and mould inspections. NPH have commissioned an external surveyor to undertake the surveys to enable internal surveyors to address new enquiries. It was highlighted every request that comes through is responded to. Legal advice has been taken in relation to disrepair claims to enable urgent damp mould and condensation works to be undertaken. DMC is being treated similarly to gas safety inspections as it is a health issue.</p> <p>The task and finish group are looking into a variety of different strands including communication aspects such as the website, media and leaflets issued are being reviewed, noting some aspects are short term and others longer term.</p>	

	<p>The Board enquired about the learnings from the 180 DMC inspection cases. It was advised part of the process is once the inspections begin the surveyor will send through a comprehensive spreadsheet and the knowledge from that will be used to inform future work.</p> <p>The Board enquired about what can be done from an educational perspective for tenants regarding DMC when taking on tenancies? It was noted there is education and support for tenants in relation to how they live in the properties. The Board highlighted that there will be an increased risk for mould in flats due to drying clothes in poor weather and the cost of using a tumble dryer.</p> <p>The Board advised honesty with the councillors, as there are many who are new who are not aware of issues and their responsibilities, some education is needed. It was noted that NPH are accountable to the Board and there is a process to follow to highlight certain issues to cabinet members where it is their responsibility. There is no direct line of sight, transparency. It was recommended that the Board members who are councillors can meet with Jane Carr as WNC link to give feedback.</p> <p>The Board acknowledged that it is reassuring to see from the report and discussions that NPH are on top of the issue. Particularly referencing the impact of social overcrowding is there any possibility will be feeding that data back to WNC? It was confirmed whatever the outcome is it will be addressed, and social overcrowding issues will be fed back.</p> <p>The Board also noted it was excellent the scrutiny panel reviewed DMC and commented about the danger of not investigating issues in properties for choices such as clothing dried on radiators etc. it was noted there is a people and property approach, and this has been identified as an area to educate officers in to look at both people and property aspects.</p> <p>The Board referring to the Rochdale case raised the tenants feeling ignored and an element of race being a barrier and a lack of ownership from the organisation, it should be included within the paper as part of equality and diversity section. The Board enquired if proactively placing ventilation in homes could be considered, if we know from information from a core group of tenants that can't afford to use the heating systems? There are some solutions such as wrapping and sealing properties introducing permanent air pressure system covering the whole property, but it does come down to archetype and design of the property, a positive change to influence how the property is managed. May need to increase the number of installs.</p> <p>The Board also raised Drayton Walk and similar estates earmarked for development with existing damp issues enquiring if any specific measures are in place for those areas. It was confirmed yes.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the contents of the report and also noted that a further report will be brought to Board following completion of the work by the task and finish group.</b></p>	
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<b>Item 4.3: 2023-2024 Board and Committee Meeting Dates</b>	
4.3	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. It was noted that the Board and Committee meeting dates are presented to the Board annually. The Board requested electronic and printed copies which will be provided by the Governance team.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the forward calendar of meeting dates and noted that the governance team will send out diary appointments.</b></p>
<b>Item 4.4: Chairs Update <i>verbal</i></b>	
4.4	<p>The Chair advised that the quarterly meeting with WNC is due to take place on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022.</p> <p>The Chair noted that all Board members should have received the 360 appraisals and meetings will start in January 2023.</p> <p>The Chair advised discussions have been taking place with WNC with regard to the possibility of alternative office spaces due to the CEDOS block no longer being redeveloped. This is ongoing and the Board will be advised.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that Jane Carr will be an observer at Board meetings going forward.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the contents of the update.</b></p>
<b>Item 4.5: Chief Executives Update</b>	
4.5	<p>The report was presented and taken as read. The Board noted it was good to see 7% rent cap there is now clarity on the charge, will there be 7% on the management fee? It was advised it is subject to full council approval, the budget has been developed based on the 7% cap. It was noted this is a finance matter NPH and WNC finance teams are discussing this and building this into the proposed budget, subject to approval via the council mechanism.</p> <p>The Board raised performance indicators reviewed in the WNC corporate plan, only 4 homes being built in the council house stock, why such a low number and damage to Beaumont House by the contractor, what has the cost been to us in lost rental? It was clarified that NPH are not cited, consulted, or asked for data in terms of those cabinet papers. It was confirmed there have been more than 8 completions in the last quarter. This information may need to be challenged as it is not correct. It was noted the Asset Management and Development update reports presented at the Operations and Resources Committee meetings include information on the development process. The Board are encouraged to query with WNC why they are not engaging with NPH. It was noted that there have been indirect requests for data from WNC. Data requests must come via the right channels to ensure data is accurate. It was confirmed there are cost penalties on the contractor regarding Beaumont House. It was noted that building control certified the building.</p>



	<p>It was noted all schemes are significantly delayed by planning; The Board requested a list to escalate with WNC.</p> <p>It was agreed the Governance Team to circulate the Board Shadowing policy via email.</p> <p>The Board were advised that the hardship fund will be discussed at the quarterly NPH WNC meeting.</p> <p>The Board were advised to feedback directly to the Chief Executive on Board Shadowing experiences.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the contents of the report.</b></p>	
<b>Item 4.6: Committee Reports</b>		
4.6	<p><b>PP&amp;D Committee</b></p> <p>The report was taken as read.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the contents of the report.</b></p>	
<b>Item 4.7 Any Other Business</b>		
4.7	<p>The Board raised the availability of access to minutes following committee meetings. This will be looked into.</p> <p>The Board advised that Westbridge is now covered by the new 'government secure access Wi-Fi'.</p> <p>The Chair raised a confidential matter which was discussed in detail.</p>	
<b>Date of next meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023 at 18:00</b>		
<b>Close of meeting: 21:17</b>		

<b>Action Summary</b>		
Action 1 (item 2.1)	Minor amendments to be made to the Communications Strategy removing personal information such as number plates, house numbers and address information.	DR
Action 2 (item 2.2)	The Board requested clarity on a practical completion date.	OO
Action 3 (item 2.5)	Minor typos to be addressed in the Board Performance Review Framework.	JP
Action 4 (item 2.6)	The Board request the vision, mission, values yellow colouring is changed to a more muted tone.	HB

Action 5 (item 4.3)	The Board requested electronic and printed copies which will be provided by the Governance team.	DS
Action 6 (item 4.5)	Governance Team to circulate a word copy of the Board Shadowing policy via email.	DS