

ROCHDALE BOROUGHWIDE HOUSING LIMITED
SPECIAL MEMBERS MEETING
MINUTES OF THE MEETING 16 FEBRUARY 2023



PRESENT (contributions to formal agenda): Y Arrowsmith (Interim Chief Executive), L Gold (Deputy Chair of the Board), P Worthington (Representative Body Chair), S Wigley (Secretary)

APOLOGIES: Apologies from Members have been recorded.

The Secretary convened the meeting at 18.03.

Ref	Item/Discussion
Feb-0	S Wigley, Secretary welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
Feb-0.1	S Wigley advised that questions which had been submitted in advance of the meeting have been sent to relevant teams and logged for the Q&A session. Any apologies which have been received have been recorded.
Feb-0.2	S Wigley reminded attendees that it was important to ensure their names are displayed correctly as this was important in terms of verifying the votes.
Feb-1	ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
Feb-1.1	L Gold, Deputy Board Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and made some brief introductions.
Feb-1.2	L Gold advised that the S Wigley as the Secretary would take Members through some general housekeeping and the resolution.
Feb-1.3	S Wigley advised that online votes had been recorded and would be combined with the meeting votes which would be taken as a Poll. He requested attendees not to vote if they had already voted and Non-Members who were in attendance, were also not entitled to vote.
Feb-1.4	Votes cast on-line and at the meeting will be counted and verified, and the resolution will be announced following the Q&A session.
Feb-2	ITEM 2 – RULE CHANGES
Feb-2.1	S Wigley stated that the changes proposed have been developed following discussions with the Regulator of Social Housing. The changes relate to increasing the number of Board Members as well as enabling the Board to quickly obtain specialist skills and knowledge by way of appointing Co-optees to the Board of Directors when and if required.
Feb-2.2	He advised that the review and proposed changes had been agreed with the Board and Representative Body and have been available on the RBH website. Two pre-meeting sessions have taken place which provided Members with an opportunity to find out more and ask any questions.
Feb-2.3	S Wigley provided an overview of the proposed changes.
Feb-2.4	M Slater stated that he understood the move towards including the Representative Body making decisions as part of the recruitment process. He commented that it was disappointing that the Representative Body continued to be part of the management of RBH and that the

structure and membership should be reviewed. L Gold advised that this would form part of the governance review.

Feb-2.5 S Wigley advised that a question which had been submitted prior to the meeting queried whether a co-optee can only be a person not employed by the Society? He confirmed that they could not be an employee, however they could be a tenant.

Resolution:

1. That the Rules of the Society be amended by the current rules being rescinded and replaced with the version available on the Society's website.

2. That, if resolution 1 above is approved by the Members of the Society at the meeting, the Secretary be authorised to:

2.1 submit the revised rules to the Financial Conduct Authority; and

2.2 agree any changes required by the Financial Conduct Authority to the submitted rules in order to achieve registration.

Members voted to approve a number of changes to the Rules. S Wigley advised that the results will be announced following the Q&A session.

Feb-3 ITEM 3 – QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Feb-3.1 Y Arrowsmith thanked Members and provided a brief introduction. She advised that during her first few weeks, she had met with lots of tenants, RBH staff, Councillors, MPs and Mayors and her focus was to help RBH get back on track following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak. The recovery plan on how RBH would achieve this was available on the RBH website.

Feb-3.2 She stated that RBH needed to refocus and put tenants at the centre of RBH. The recovery plan includes reviewing the governance structure, with damp and mould as one of the priorities.

Feb-3.3 She referred to the call out to tenants in December to report any damp and mould issues and advised that this had prompted a lot of reports which has shown that approximately 12% of RBH properties are suffering from damp and mould. A task force has been established and is working to treat those reported properties and a 100% stock condition survey would be taking place to establish what other improvement works would be needed.

Feb-3.4 Communication with tenants was also a priority as well as increasing tenants voice and providing more opportunities for tenants to have their say and to raise any local issues. She added that Housing Officers would be regularly available on site and will be holding regular local surgeries with a hope to regaining tenant and other stakeholder's trust.

Feb-3.5 A lessons learnt project was also taking place to ensure that this tragic event does not happen again, and the Board had approved the plan which included service improvements especially within the repairs service to ensure a right first-time approach. She added that training for all staff on customer excellence was being delivered to ensure the delivery of better services which should make a positive difference over the next few months.

Questions submitted (read by S Wigley, Secretary)

Feb-3.6 *What are we doing about anti-social behaviour on estates, and can the community CCTV be utilised to improve safety?*

Y Arrowsmith advised that ASB had previously been raised by tenants and this will be discussed with the Housing Officers when they are back on estates. She added that there are also Enforcement Officers who work with the local council and police.

N Khan stated that CCTV is in some areas such as the town centre flats, College Bank, Freehold and Falinge as well as some ILS schemes and placement in other areas would require consultation with residents. She advised that she would review which area the question had come from, and this would be followed up.

Feb-3.7 *With the new ventilation systems, is it possible to turn it off or cover it over as smells for example from smoking is coming in from other properties?*

- Y Arrowsmith stated that it is not advisable as the ventilation was installed to reduce the risk of damp and mould and had been designed to run as efficiently and cheaply as possible. She added that during the summer months tenants would tend to open more windows to circulate fresh air however during the winter months this was less likely.
- Feb-3.8 *Repairs have been taking a long time to complete what is being done to address this?*
Y Arrowsmith explained that timescales are assigned dependent on priority. She agreed that routine repairs can be lengthy, and this would be reviewed as part of the repair service review with a view to reducing timescales and these changes will be advised via the RBH website.
- Feb-3.9 *Is RBH looking at improvements to communications reporting and progress on repairs?*
Y Arrowsmith advised that the ability to book repair appointments through the portal would be part of the repairs improvement programme and is currently a work in progress. She added that work on communications with tenants was also part of the improvement programme to ensure tenants are kept updated instead of having to chase RBH for updates.
- Feb-3.10 *What training is being provided to staff?*
Y Arrowsmith advised there are two specific training programmes being delivered on customer service and customer excellence which commenced in February 2023 as well as on the Customer Relation Management (CRM) system which is not always utilised with different teams using different systems which has caused the issues with communications.
- Feb-3.11 *What are the future development plans in terms of property types and quality?*
Y Arrowsmith advised that housing and asset management are involved in the design and quality of new homes and ensure that these can be easily maintained in the future. She referred to Michael Gove withholding the grant and therefore new developments were currently on hold and the priority and focus was on ensuring the quality of existing properties and this will be the case for the next few years.
- Feb-3.12 *What career opportunities are being provided to local residents?*
Y Arrowsmith advised that there is an apprenticeship programme which will continue as well as lots of other roles which are available and advertised on the RBH website.
- Feb-3.13 *How does RBH engage and communicate with tenants who have disabilities?*
Y Arrowsmith stated that improving accessibility for tenants whether regarding disability or language was part of the recovery plan and we are working with tenants to develop and agree an accessibility standard. She added that information will be provided in different languages and formats including video or brail and will be written in plain English.
- Feb-3.14 *Why are fencing repairs not being completed?*
Y Arrowsmith stated that whilst fencing is not deemed as a priority, this can affect families especially with young children, and then do become a priority. N Khan advised that a programme for replacing fencing was currently being developed.
- Feb-3.15 *A Brown commented that he had paid £300 to replace his fence and had been advised by RBH that fencing was his responsibility.*
N Khan advised she would review his case and provide him with an update following the meeting.
- Feb-3.16 *Is there a timescale when the damp and mould taskforce will be disbanded, or will this be ongoing?*
Y Arrowsmith advised that once a property is inspected, this is graded in terms of priority and is also dependent on whether vulnerabilities in the household are identified. Work will then be completed in order of priority however there is a slight backlog following the initial reporting process but as the reports slow down, response times should speed up. She added that high priority is currently 10 days and low priority is 40 days, but we are endeavouring to complete these sooner. She commented that damp and mould reports will be followed up with 6, 12 and 18 month checks and therefore may not ever be finished as new reports will continue to also come in.
- Feb-3.17 *What can RBH do with regards to overcrowding?*

- Y Arrowsmith agreed that properties are currently let by Rochdale Council and RBH does not have any influence in the allocations process. She agreed that there are not enough family sized homes, and that overcrowding was an issue however RBH was looking at its current stock and what, if any, re-modelling could be done however stated that this was not solely the responsibility of RBH to provide a solution to this problem.
- Feb-3.18 S Sharp referred to the recovery plan and the in-depth review and how transparent this would be to members as this would aid regaining trust?
Y Arrowsmith agreed that it was important to identify and be honest about areas which needed to improve and advised that Hilary Milne who is an external consultant had been engaged to carry out the lessons learnt project however this would likely to be a lengthy resultant document which would be summarised and made available for members.
- Feb-3.19 E Abudakar stated that this was a good opportunity to understand what is happening and to highlight what has happened. Had an issue with mould since August and has repeatedly requested the inspection report, plan and what work is required to rectify but getting a different story every time, he follows up. N Khan advised that she should review the case and provide more information and clarity. Y Arrowsmith added that how we communicate with tenants is included as part of the improvement plan.
- Feb-3.20 M Hafeez stated that it was very useful to hear from the top and reflect what has happened. He queried whether Housing Officers would have authority regarding making decisions on repairs for example whether they need doing or not?
Y Arrowsmith confirmed that Housing Officers were seen as a key role and will have this power as they will be at the forefront to ensure things happen. She added that Housing Officers are keen to get on their patches and to getting to know tenants.
- Feb-3.21 M Hafeez added that he has a disabled son, and that better communication is needed as he is always having to ring to chase up repairs.
Y Arrowsmith acknowledged that he was not the first tenant to raise this and will form part of the recovery plan for the repairs service. N Khan added that RBH will shortly be writing to all tenants to advise them of their named Housing Officer and contact details will also be published on the RBH website to ensure that tenants are always speaking to the right person.
- Feb-3.22 H Neto advised that his neighbour smokes and the vents now mean that this can be smelt in the corridor and hall. Y Arrowsmith advised that whilst smoking is not deemed as illegal, RBH will be looking at communal areas and this will be followed up by the Neighbourhood Team.
- Feb-3.23 M Voigt stated that she had reported numerous times that a previous tenant had left belongings in the attic of her property, and she had not heard back about it being removed. N Khan confirmed she would review this and provide a response following the meeting.
- Feb-3.24 S Sharp queried what the Housing Officer ratio to properties was as there had been a turnover of four housing officers in her area in the past 6 years.
Y Arrowsmith advised that we will aim to ensure continuity of housing officers however people do leave RBH for different reasons. N Khan confirmed that RBH has twenty Housing Officers which equates to 600 properties per patch. She added that this was a starting point and will be reviewed however this was average for housing associations of RBHs size. L Gold confirmed that this was the normal ratio across the sector, but it was important to have the right systems and processes in place, for this to work.
- Feb-3.25 Y Arrowsmith thanked everyone for their time and the questions and pointed out if anyone had any further questions, these could be directed to the Governance Team and a response will be provided.
- Feb-3.26 L Gold introduced S Wigley to validate the earlier vote.

Feb-2

Validation of Resolution 1 Rule Changes: The Secretary confirmed that the resolution was CARRIED with the following votes: For 112, Against 4 and Abstentions 4. The Secretary advised that Rule changes required a 66.6% vote in favour and therefore confirmed that this had been met and the RESOLUTION HAS BEEN CARRIED.

CLOSING SUMMARY

L Gold commented that RBH will look to do more of these events in the future and encouraged Members to continue to engage with RBH. He requested Members to complete the feedback poll at the end of the meeting to help us improve future events.

L Gold thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting closed at 19.03.

Signed..... (Deputy Chair of the Board)

As a true and correct record of the Special Members Meeting held on 16 February 2023