



## **Six Town Housing Shadow Board Meeting**

**Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2004**

**Europa House, Barcroft Street, Bury**

### **Minutes of Six Town Housing Shadow Board Meeting**

#### **PRESENT:**

##### **Shadow Board Members**

Phil Weatherby  
Andy McGiffin  
Gordon Smith  
Peter Dawson  
Frank Fenton  
John Stewart  
Wilf Davison  
Brenda Headley  
John Smith (Chair)  
John Anderson  
Dave Mann  
Gill Campbell  
Dorothy Gunther

##### **Officers**

Susan Jordan (Acting Chief Housing Officer)  
Chris Gibbins (ALMO Co-ordinator)  
Vicki Haslam (ALMO Project Officer)

#### **APOLOGIES:**

Sharif Salim  
Zoë Robertson  
Tony Isherwood  
John Merrick

**1. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2004 were agreed as a true record.

**2. Matters Arising**

No matters arising

**3. Staffing Structures**

A report was put before the Shadow Board which details the proposed staffing structures for Six Town Housing. These proposals are still draft and it is acknowledged that further development may be necessary. It is intended to bring a further report back to the Board later in the year.

Chris talked through the details of the draft structures, explaining the role of any proposed posts new to the establishment, and any changes to numbers of staff currently employed in each service area. A number of questions were raised by members of the Board regarding service provision in each of the areas, about the sustainability of the structure and about costs.

There is a general recognition that some areas of the service have been under resourced previously and this new structure is designed to address that. It is proposed to take the structure to The Executive on the 8<sup>th</sup> September.

The next Shadow Board meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> September will be the final chance for any input from the Board prior to the report going to The Executive. Any major concerns should be raised with one of the officers as soon as possible.

The structure needs to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to enable the organisation to take into account diminishing stock levels.

The management fee will be renegotiated on a year on year basis. If we perform well we will be in a stronger position for future negotiations.

**Recommendation**

**Note the report**

**4. Code of Conduct**

The Board were asked to reconsider a revised version of the Code of Conduct for Shadow Board members. It was suggested that on the first page of the Code, a link should be made to the Mem and Arts to ensure that all members read both and are clear that they need to be familiar with both documents.

In section 3.5 regarding Gifts and Hospitality board members are expected to make their own decisions about what is appropriate. If not sure advice could be given by the Board Support Officer.

The question "Should declarations be made about what is accepted?" was asked. A suggestion was made that a £25 limit should be used to bring the level in line with council policy. Councillors will only declare hospitality if directly relating to their role as a Shadow Board member.

In section 2.1 it is possible that there could potentially be a slight conflict of interests for councillors and tenants. That is the reason why it has been clarified in this section.

#### **Recommendation**

**The Code of Conduct was approved with final amendments for formal adoption.**

### **5. Expenses Policy**

A draft expenses policy was brought to the Board for approval or amendment to enable formal adoption.

It was felt by Board Members that first class travel would not be appropriate. However, following discussion it was accepted that in certain very exceptional circumstances it may be necessary.

The policy if approved would become operational immediately and should be used by Shadow Board members to reclaim any expenses incurred since the Shadow Board formed.

Concerns were raised about the amount paid per mile to car users as it is lower than the amount paid in the Council policy by 0.4p per mile. However, as car users will be taxed on anything paid over and above 40p per mile it was generally accepted that this was a reasonable amount to pay.

Questions were asked about how the flat rate allowance for carers was decided upon as the rate did not seem to reflect what costs would actually be incurred.

#### **Recommendation**

**Agreed to accept the policy, and accept car mileage rate at 40p per mile. Further investigation to be undertaken regarding the carers allowance and information to be brought back to the Board. Also investigation about how to deal with claims for pay as you go mobiles.**

## **6. Project Plan**

Chris went through the current Project Plan with the Board. All changes since the last meeting have been made in blue ink and any tasks now completed are shaded in grey.

It was asked whether following confirmation that we have received at least 80% of our bid it will be possible to appoint a Chief Executive. The £21.92 million means that we can now move on with the appointment.

The Director of Personnel is currently drafting a job description and person specification and is recognised that the Board should be involved in the development of this. It was also recognised that any interview panel should be as diverse as possible.

### **Recommendation Project Plan noted**

## **7. Update on ALMO bid**

Susan advised the meeting that confirmation has now been received that Bury have been awarded a place on Round 4 of the ALMO programme. We have also been notified that we will be allocated a minimum of 80% of the bid money. A letter has been received from the ODPM requesting further information about the bid and how the money will be spent. A response has been drafted which covers all the points raised, although this is merely confirmation of information that has already been provided.

It is likely that Bury will know of its actual allocation in September subject to ODPM timescales.

## **8. ALMO Project Board**

Chris gave an update to the group about the previous ALMO Project Board meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2004. The Project Board had been given an update on the ALMO bid, and were advised of the progress of the Shadow Board.

Discussions were held around the Terms of Reference for the Shadow Board and for the Project Board.

Currently the Terms of Reference for the ALMO Project Board are to establish the Shadow Board, so these need to be amended to include the establishment of the ALMO etc.

The next Project Board meeting is to be held on 31.08.04, and the role of the Board will be considered at that meeting.

## **9. Update from Mock Inspection**

All members of the Shadow Board had been sent copies of the full presentation from Housing Quality Network detailing the results of the mock inspection undertaken in June 2004, and Susan supplemented this with a verbal update.

The “one star with promising prospects” rating is very good at this stage, and the report which is very detailed contains lots of pointers and recommendations about what work needs doing.

From an officer point of view the inspection has been very beneficial and shows that we are where we wanted to be at this stage. Although some areas showed disappointing results there are good improvement plans in place – it is just too early for these to have any impact yet. All staff have worked very hard over the last twelve months and we now have a very good solid foundation on which to build.

There are two away days for Management Team on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> August, in order to work through the information given and compare it with the existing Service Improvement Plans.

A feedback session has been arranged for the 9<sup>th</sup> September in order to disseminate this information to staff and stakeholders. All Shadow Board Members are invited to this event.

Susan Jordan and the Heads of Service will meet with the Housing Inspectors on the 10<sup>th</sup> September to work on an improvement planning process.

Following general discussion around the details of the presentation, the Shadow Board expressed appreciation and recognition of the hard work of staff to achieve the one star status at this stage.

## **10. Committee Structures**

A report was presented to the Shadow Board detailing options of how Six Town Housing will be organised and structured once up and running.

Option A – a simple limited number of committees with wide areas of responsibility

Option B – a similar set up but with the operational responsibilities split down further. Suggest Asset management be renamed Stock Investment.

The Shadow Board were asked to give an indication of which of the two options was preferred.

It was felt that Option A reflects what the customer wants and would be more efficient for officers to service.

#### **Recommendation**

**Option A preferred with review of the frequency of meetings to two monthly. Option A to be developed and brought back to the Shadow Board with information regarding protocol for nomination to groups etc.**

### **11. Stakeholder Engagement and Participation**

A report was presented to the Shadow Board which concentrates on the formal arrangements for consultation with stakeholders. The Shadow Board was asked to:

- Give an indication of the preferred approach to formal stakeholder engagement and participation
- Agree for further consultation to take place with TRACC and
- Request a report be brought back to the next Shadow Board with more details of a preferred option

Comments made by the Shadow Board were that the TRAs and umbrella groups do not always represent the best interests of tenants. It was felt that we need to employ a more innovative approach to the consultation process.

Option 2 would reduce the number of bodies and therefore reduce the amount of duplication of discussions. It would be necessary to ensure that the terms of reference of any established group were very clear.

#### **Recommendation**

**Option 2 is the preferred option. Further discussions to take place with TRACC and further options for engagement and tenant participation to be investigated.**

### **12. Branding of Six Town Housing**

It is recognised that the current logo for Six Town Housing was picked prior to the inception of the Shadow Board, and it had been commented that there was some discontent with the selection.

In recognition of this a number of logos and strap lines were put before the Board as an alternative. As Six Town Housing is not yet well established as a brand there is still an opportunity to make a change. The current logo is seen as being very similar to the Council's logo.

Following a vote Option 1 was selected, subject to checks being undertaken regarding its suitability for people with visual impairments.

Strapline 2 was selected with some amendments.



# SIX TOWN HOUSING

*Great communities,  
excellent services,  
inspiring people*

### **13. Any Other Business**

A request was made for the details of the National Federation of ALMOs website to be circulated to enable Board members to log on to the site.

A Directory of Services was distributed to Shadow Board Members for information.

Shadow Board Members were notified of a Housing Forum event to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> October – invitations will be posted to everybody prior to the event, and a display board will be used to give information about the Shadow Board and its members.

The venue for the meeting was found to be suitable, and it was agreed to use the venue for future meetings.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

Next Meeting – Wednesday 01.09.04, 5pm, Europa House