

## **LEASE – The Leasehold Advisory Service and Lease Conferences Limited**

### **Minutes of Board Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at 11am at LEASE**

#### **Present:**

Deep Sagar (Chair) (DS), Steve Jackson (SJ), John May (JM), Nicola Mullany (NM)

#### **In attendance:**

Anthony Essien (Chief Executive) (AE), Shabnam Ali-Khan (SAK), Audrey Minton (AM), Vikki Hawkins (note-taker)

#### **Observer:**

Paula Hassall (DCLG) (PH)

#### **2014/9/1. Apologies for absences and declarations of conflicts of interest**

Apologies were received from Flora Orukpe, Justin Caffrey and Geneviève Mariner. NM declared that she is likely to become member of the audit committee of the Housing Ombudsman. The chair welcomed PH and VH in particular.

#### **2014/9/2. Chair's comments**

The chair's written report was noted. The following were discussed:

- (1) Board memberships: PH confirmed that she expected that the LEASE chair would be part of the selection panel for the board member vacancy, given standard procedure. (*Post-meeting note: DCLG have confirmed that new guidance to them on public appointments says that "outgoing chairs" cannot be part of such a panel. Since board members cannot be part of a panel selecting board members LEASE will not have any representation.*)
- (4) Legal and regulatory changes to leasehold by DCLG: It was agreed that a new release would be issued publicising LEASE's suggestions to government which have been accepted. (*Action: AE*)
- (5) Challenges: *The board notes that the budget is challenging this year and close monitoring will be essential to ensure LEASE achieves a balanced budget.*

#### **2014/9/3. Minutes of the Board meeting of 12 June 2014**

Minutes were approved subject to a change of wording related to 2014/6/2 on minutes' publication.

#### **2014/9/4. Action points and matters arising to last meeting**

Specific actions were agreed as follows in addition to the progress update:

2014/6/6: Cash-flows to be added to accounts for monthly transmission to board members. (*Action: AM*)

2014/6/7: Training of both board members and staff is to be mentored by NM. (*Action: AE*)

2014/2/1: Implementation date following consultation over change to staff performance appraisal system and performance related pay is mid-October. (*Action: AE*)

#### **2014/9/5. Performance reports: four divisions**

AE and SAK presented these reports. It was noted that the total number of enquiries by phone were down compared to same period last year by around 2,500 – in part due to fewer staff in post.

New online guides in the pipeline include a "lease health check" and sample lease clauses to help customers help themselves. The intention is to provide both prospective and existing leaseholders with a clear explanation of what a typical lease includes, what the key clauses mean in practice and how to find help. The board congratulated management on the park homes team's achievements.

The board emphasised the need for all written enquiries to be answered within the target response time. The Board requested that compliments' numbers be updated. (*Action: AE*)

#### **2014/9/6. (a) Financial reports: four divisions**

AM presented the reports. It was stated that a specific grant had been received from DCLG for the office move. The board agreed that reports in the future would explain variances against budget (or last year) and that given the increase in activity, that Lease Conferences remits the management

charge due to LEASE more frequently than in the past, ie, quarterly, rather than at year end. *Action: AM*)

A proposal to provide advice services to an external organisation on a commercial basis has been received. The board agreed that such proposals would be considered only on the basis of building a new 'division' like Wales and park homes which have been such that LEASE's services or income are not affected negatively at all.

**(b) Financial forecast for 2014-15 including revenue raising and cost cutting plans**

AM provided an oral update. Managing and maintaining service levels with present staff numbers was noted as an important strategy in order to achieve target revenues. It was agreed that putting cash on deposit would be explored in order to achieve higher interest rates. *(Action: AM)*

**2014/9/7. CE's report including projects update, triennial review update and professional conferences**

The CE's report was noted. The chair congratulated him on the level of external contact. It was agreed that a response to the CMA consultation would be finalised by email correspondence. *(Action: AE)*. The triennial reviewers would be invited to the upcoming stakeholder forum so that they could meet board members and other attendees. *(Action: AE)*

**2014/9/8. Any other business**

The following were discussed:

- (i) Park homes' tribunal decisions need to be easier to find on the internet service. *(Action: AE)*
- (ii) Welsh translation of introductory guide to be commissioned in September *(Action: AE)*
- (iii) 9 October 2014 will be scheduled as follows: 9:30am-12:30pm: Board strategy workshop, 12:30-1:30pm: lunch, 2-4pm: Stakeholder forum. The CE was authorised to use his authority to reimburse travel expenses judiciously. SJ's suggestions for the strategy workshop were discussed. It was agreed that the agenda would be: (i) Strategic issues updates including the triennial review and (ii) Commercial opportunities and plans to increase revenue. *(Action: DS, AE)*
- (iv) Staff pension: AM informed the board that staff were being consulted on shifting their pension contributions to a new scheme which should be beneficial. There is no cost to the company. The board agreed that it would receive a short note by email with the main changes proposed before implementation so that it can fulfil its duty of care towards staff. *(Action: AM)*

**2014/9/9: Training session:** Nicholas Kissen led this session on the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber).

Next Board meeting: 11am Thursday 20 November 2014 at LEASE.