



**GGHT Board
Wednesday
28 September 2011
Town Hall
Council Chamber
4.30pm**

Minutes

Attendance: Roy Smith (Chair), Sylvia Barcock, Greg Bones, Jan Kitshoff, Greig Lees, Fran Murray, Phil Pemberton, Jeff Richards, Royston Willard, Sue Smith, Sheila Woodyatt.

Peter Mercer, Peter Fitzhenry, Angela Perry, Fiona Graham, Alison Foy, David Cowley (WBC), Charlie Martin.

Apologies: Carole Hassan, Sue Jones

The Board made the following decisions:

GGHT 2011 - 97 - Single Point of Delivery for Housing

- ❖ The Board approved GGHT's involvement in principle. The initiative could deliver a range of benefits to prospective tenants but further details (i.e. costings, resources) will need to be presented to the Board before a final decision is made.

GGHT 2011 - 98 – Tenant Board Member Recruitment

The Board approved:

- ❖ The selection method for the recruitment of tenant Board Member;
- ❖ That the successful candidate be reappointed at the AGM in September 2012 for a further 2 year term.

GGHT 2011 – 99 – Pre-tenancy model/Tenancy Service

- ❖ The Board endorsed the development of the Pre-tenancy Service.

GGHT 2011 – 100 – Measuring Customer Satisfaction Across GGHT

- ❖ The Board noted the report and endorsed the approach proposed to the collation of satisfaction data.

		Action
1.	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies received from Carole Hassan and Sue Jones</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Phil Pemberton declared an interest in Agenda Item 5.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of Board Meeting held on 27 July 2011</p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ AF advised arrangements are being made for a meeting between the Chair of Scrutiny Panel and Chair of the Board. ❖ RW asked why an update on Complaints had not been provided to Board Members. AP advised that information on complaints and complements received will be included in the next Capital Investment Programme update at the November Board. ❖ RW asked whether GGHT should have a Clerk of Works to supervise contractors on site. AP advised that members of GGHT staff do attend sites to review the work carried out by contractors. Areas where problems have been reported are visited more frequently. ❖ CM agreed to arrange a meeting between RW and AP to review complaints received and discuss the supervision of contractors on site. ❖ The age range of the GGHT Board has been minuted as being between 35-45 years? <i>This is a typo and will be amended.</i> <p>The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.</p>	<p>AF</p> <p>CM</p> <p>CM</p>
4.	<p>Minutes of Finance Committee held on Tuesday 6 September 2011</p> <p>RS provided an overview of the key decisions made at the Committee including the principles that will be adopted in the production of the 2012-13 Budget.</p> <p>The Board noted the minutes.</p>	
5.	<p>Single Point of Delivery for Housing (Presentation)</p> <p>DC provided an overview of an initiative aimed at providing a better service for those seeking housing by developing a Single Point of Delivery for housing at the Gateway. WBC has written to the main Registered Providers in Warrington to seek support in terms of ideas and commitment and funding for Single Point of Delivery (SPD) housing.</p>	

DC highlighted the issues that will have an adverse impact on prospective and existing tenants. These included:

Wide range of legislative and policy changes.

Single tenants living in private rented accommodation aged 25 to 35 will see a £37 reduction in their weekly housing benefit. This reduction will have a noticeable impact single tenants living in multiple occupation properties.

2,362 households will see a reduction from £2 to £37 in housing benefit living in the private rented sector. This reduction will have a particular impact on couples with dependents living in two bed properties.

Increasing demand

In April 2002 1,835 households were on the housing register. In July 2011 this figure increased to 12,988 households.

Funding Cuts

WBC is facing a substantial reduction in funding of £52million over the next 3 years.

Fewer homes being built

A shortfall of 171-419 affordable homes, per year, has been identified.

Other problems include:

- ❖ High house prices
- ❖ Limited Mortgage availability
- ❖ Increasing rental costs
- ❖ Financial money and debt issues

Comments/Questions

- ❖ Under the Affordable Housing Programme 2011-15 114 Affordable Homes will be built per year in Warrington. Does this figure include 106s? *No. This figure includes homes that receive structured rent, affordable rent and discounted housing and does not include section 106s.*
- ❖ How will Single Point Delivery tackle the wider social issues affecting tenants? *The initiative will look to develop a wide range of options based on the skills and resources of various partners.*
- ❖ Of the 6 registered providers what proportion of properties does GGHT own? *GGHT owns approx.75% of properties.*
- ❖ Is the reduction in benefits considered a primary concern? *Yes.*
- ❖ What would be the main benefits to GGHT? *It is difficult to specify the exact benefits to GGHT at this stage. However, GGHT has the skills and experience to manage properties effectively. The initiative will also enable GGHT to support future GGHT tenants.*
- ❖ GGHT will need to develop a strong business case for involvement in the scheme, particularly as the organisation owns 75% of properties owned by Registered Providers. Have organisation other than Housing Providers been considered? *The initiative could look to*

	<p><i>enlist the support of other social organisations based at the Gateway.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Is there a risk that partners would continue to ‘cherry pick’ tenancies under the initiative? <i>GGHT could look to prevent this if it joined the initiative at an early stage.</i> ❖ It would be difficult to promote the service at a time when a range of other services are being cut. ❖ The initiative could deliver a range of benefits but further details will need to be presented to the Board before a final decision is made. <p>PF advised that GGHT should consider the long-term benefits in the service and accept that the scheme will not necessarily see a profitable return.</p> <p>PM advised that GGHT should express an interest in the initiative and agreed that further consideration needed to be given to how the service would develop in principle. PM and PF will meet to discuss details with DC and report back to the Board with details on costs.</p> <p>GGHT 2011 - 97</p> <p>The Board approved GGHT’s involvement in principle. The initiative could deliver a range of benefits for prospective tenants but further details (i.e. costings, resources) will need to be presented to the Board before a final decision is made.</p>	PM/PF
6.	<p>Tenant Board Member Recruitment</p> <p>AF presented a report that updated the Board on the process required to recruit for the vacancy of tenant Board Member. The resignation of Terry Spencer has resulted in a casual vacancy that will need to be filled until the AGM in September 2012.</p> <p>AF advised that the casual vacancy needs to be filled as soon as possible and it is anticipated that the first Board meeting for the casual Board member will be November 2011. As a result of this tight timescale and the cost of an election process it is recommend that the selection process is utilised for the vacancy.</p> <p>The Board were asked to consider the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Which method to use to recruit the casual Tenant Board Member. ❖ Consider whether the casual appointment could then be reappointed at the AGM in September 2012 for a further 2 year term or; ❖ Whether the vacancy is included in the recruitment campaign, which will be required in 2012. <p>Comments/Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Will the vacancy be advertised in News and Views and, if so, is the November deadline achievable? <i>This largely depends on the recruitment method. The Governance team are looking to develop a reserve list of tenants Board Members as part of its succession</i> 	

	<p><i>planning.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ RW advised that he will be retiring from the Board in 2012 and suggested that a replacement be selected as part of the recruitment process. <i>Applicants will be informed of the upcoming vacancy in 2012 and be offered training. However, the actual recruitment for this vacancy should be scheduled for a later date to reduce the time gap between selection and formal appointment at the AGM.</i> ❖ Could GGHT consider tenants that were not successful during the previous recruitment round? <i>GGHT will advertise the vacancy to all tenants and those interviewed during the previous recruitment will need to reapply. The recruitment policy will be reviewed and this will be considered as part of the review.</i> <p>GGHT 2011 - 98 The Board approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The selection method for the recruitment of tenant Board Member; ❖ That the successful candidate be reappointed at the AGM in September 2012 for a further 2 year term. 	AF/CM
7.	<p>Welfare Benefit Reforms Update</p> <p>PF provided an update on the main welfare benefits reforms that will impact GGHT and its customer base. The report looked at the implications for the organisation as a precursor to the Board's away day in October.</p> <p>Comments/Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What percentage of adults live in under-occupied properties? <i>The exact figures have not been published. The Housing Benefit Service is working with RSLs and Councils to help people find more suitable accommodation.</i> ❖ The Government's expects approx. 80% of Universal Credit Applicants to apply online. What support will GGHT provide tenants who do not have direct access to the internet? <i>Perhaps Local Housing Offices could be set up as access points and WBC are currently developing neighbourhood hubs.</i> ❖ Could internet support be linked to Service Point Delivery? <i>This could be explored further, the more opportunities for tenants the better.</i> ❖ Would GGHT consider removing service charges? <i>The complete removal of service charges will cause funding problems in other areas.</i> ❖ These changes will have a significant impact on the housing sector and the services available to tenants. It is difficult to determine which direction GGHT should take when there are still so many 'unknowns.' <p>PF advised that the Board Away Day will focus on the direction that GGHT could take to mitigate the proposed changes.</p> <p>The Board noted the report.</p>	

8	<p>Pre-Tenancy Model/Tenancy Service</p> <p>PF introduced a report that updated the Board on pre-tenancy work that GGHT are carrying out as part the Flat Strategy Action Plan.</p> <p>The Pre-Tenancy covers 3 practical areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure tenants are aware of budgeting responsibilities. 2. Working in partnership with Job Centre Plus and local colleges to promote the service. Work is on-going with Warrington Wolves Foundation who have agreed to provided accommodation for the pre-tenancy service. 3. Developing an incentive scheme to reward positive behaviour. <p>PF advised that there has been a drop in new tenant arrears since interim work has commenced.</p> <p>Comments/Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It is good to receive regular feedback on these developments. Pre-tenancy could perhaps explore opportunities with other agencies (e.g. the Gateway) and be incorporated within our offer to WBC with regards to Single Point Delivery. <i>The success of the initiative will need to be properly measured before this is considered further.</i> ❖ Could the service be linked in with local Children Care Schemes? Yes. ❖ Is pre-tenancy support likely to increase re-let time? <i>Yes, but this will only have a significant impact in areas of low demand.</i> ❖ Whilst re-let time will be increased there should be an increase in sustainable tenancies. ❖ Has WBC been approached for support? <i>Yes, discussions are on-going with DC.</i> ❖ What approach will GGHT take when promoting the service to tenants? <i>This is being looked into. The aims of the service are to ensure tenants are able to maintain a sustainable tenancies and reduce the risk of eviction.</i> ❖ Are wider tenant schemes in place? <i>Yes, particularly around employment. There is an opportunity to link the service in with the high demand for HGV drivers within the Warrington area. GGHT could support tenants to obtain an HGV license.</i> ❖ There is a risk that tenants will view the service as ‘interfering’ and that GGHT will have to honour its statutory obligation to house tenants who refuse the service. <i>This is a valid point. GGHT will need to give proper consideration to how the scheme is communicated to customers.</i> <p>GGHT 2011 – 99</p> <p>The Board endorsed the development of the Pre-tenancy Service.</p>	PF

		FG

<p>9.</p>	<p>Measuring Customer Satisfaction Across GGHT</p> <p>FG provided a report on the proposed approach to collation of satisfaction data and how this information will be used to provide detail analyses of services overall to ensure continuous improvement.</p> <p>An outward bound telephony plan has been developed to improve response rates, ensure GGHT are being more efficient and to reduce consultation fatigue.</p> <p>FG advised that satisfaction will be one element of customer feedback, along with complaints, compliments and qualitative feedback, tenant inspections and Scrutiny Panel feedback. This information will be analysed alongside performance to assess services in a holistic way.</p> <p>Comments/Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Having staff conduct surveys over the phone is cost effective and will enable Officers to develop an awareness of the key issues affecting tenants. ❖ Staff will be able to contact staff immediately after a repair has been completed and record the customer's initial response to the service provided. ❖ It is important to get the quality of questions right and that staff understand the feedback received and respond accordingly. <i>This is a good point and will be given further consideration.</i> ❖ How will GGHT ensure its customer contact database is kept up-to-date? <i>GGHT's telephony systems are able to capture and record numbers received from inbound calls. 80% of tenants contact GGD and staff are able to update customer accounts if necessary. This method of capturing contact numbers is permitted under Freedom of Information.</i> ❖ Gas Contractors ask tenants to sign that Gas Servicing has been completed are follow up surveys also carried out? <i>Yes, tenants are now asked to complete feedback questionnaires on the Service received.</i> <p>GGHT 2011 – 100</p> <p>The Board noted the report and endorsed the approach proposed for the collation of satisfaction data.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Peninsula House (Verbal Update)</p> <p>AP provided a verbal update on Peninsula House:</p> <p>Comments/Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What lessons have be learnt? <i>Currently in the process of developing a Business Continuity Plan and lessons learnt will be incorporated into this. Staff have been asked to document lessons learnt. In future, tighter checks will be completed before exercises are carried out.</i> 	

	<p><i>Fire exercises will be allowed to continue as these are important for the safety of tenants and members of the fire service.</i></p> <p>PM advised that GGHT were proud of the willingness of staff to deal with issues and to work out of hours to support tenants.</p> <p>The Board expressed its gratitude to the efforts of GGHT staff and asked that a note of thanks be included within the GGHT Staff Magazine.</p>	CM
11.	<p>Energy Efficiency Update</p> <p>Comments/Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Does GGHT have access to CESP funding in relation to energy efficiency works? <i>GGHT is signed up for CESP funding via Climate Energy / British Gas. Funding being received for central heating double glazing loft and cavity wall insulation and PV work.</i> ❖ Regular updates should be taken Customer Panels to ensure tenants not eligible for PV do not feel disenfranchised. <i>An update was taken to CCP on Tuesday 27 July and no issues were raised by panel Members.</i> ❖ Research is on-going as to how properties not eligible for PV can benefit from the savings generated. <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
12.	<p>A.O.B</p> <p>The Board endorsed PM's proposal that the minutes of the Board meeting held on 28 September 2011 will be approved at the Board Away Day on 21 October. There will be no other items on the Board agenda.</p>	
13.	<p>Date of Next Meeting:</p> <p>Board Away Day, Friday 21 October 2011 Board Meeting: Wednesday 30 November 2011, at 5pm in the Council Chambers.</p>	