



## **Board**

**23 June 2009**

### **Items for Information**

#### **1. Introduction**

The attached are for information:

- (i) Delegated Decisions 15 May to 15 June 2009
- (ii) Petitions Monitoring
- (iii) Minutes :
  - Governance & Personnel Committee 7 April 2009
  - Finance Committee 23 April 2009
  - Finance Committee 21 May 2009

#### **2. Recommendation**

Board is asked to receive these items for information.

#### **Contact Officer:**

Maureen Dickson, Company Administrator and Board Support Officer, ext 28624



## Board 23 June 2009

### Delegated Decisions – Schedule of non-confidential Delegated Decisions taken between 15 May and 15 June 2009

No	Directorate/Delegated Officer	Authorised Date	Subject	Cost/Budget Provision	Ward
1.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Neil - Head of Housing Management	5/15/2009	Provide consultancy services for the Concierge Review	Cost £44,000 Code 1YLCR / D404	All Wards
2.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	5/29/2009	Refurbishment of 5 Hartburn Walk.	The funding for this scheme is coming from the YHN Investment Programme.	Kenton
3.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Neil - Head of Housing Management	6/1/2009	Phase 2 of assistance in development of Palatine Beds.	Cost - £21,500 + £4,700 expenses - £26,200 Code - 1YHTS / D404	All Wards
4.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	6/1/2009	Flood defence installations to rear of Wharrier Street bungalows	Funding of the total expenditure amounting to £12,282 will be met from the Housing Investment Programme.	Walker
5.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Atkinson Ross - (YHN Head of Corporate Service)	6/1/2009	Replacement conference tables for the Byker & Cruddas (Board) rooms.	Code 1YCSA / D111 Cost £5,486	All Wards
6.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	6/3/2009	Continuing consultancy work that Roger Brayshaw has previously done for Leasehold	Cost - £500 Code - 1YFLS / D404	All Wards
7.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Atkinson Ross - (YHN Head of Corporate Service)	6/11/2009	Additional expenses incurred as part of the review of ICT Infrastructure & related services	Cost £761.11 Code 1YC04 / D404	All Wards
8.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Atkinson Ross - (YHN Head of Corporate Service)	6/11/2009	Ecological Survey & Assessment of Drysdale Crescent, Brunswick.	Cost £3,277.57 Code 1YHN3 / D404	All Wards



## Board

23 June 2009

### Petitions Monitoring

<b>Petitioners:</b>	<b>Residents of North Kenton</b>		
<b>Received:</b>	6 May 2009	<b>Response:</b>	9 June 2009
<b>Issues:</b>	As reported last month, this petition related to a request for a succession of tenancy of a high demand property. Following investigation by the Principal Housing Manager the tenants have been advised that a second non statutory succession can take place.		
<b>Petitioners:</b>	<b>Residents in the area of Nelson Terrace, Coxlodge</b>		
<b>Received:</b>	20 May 2009	<b>Response:</b>	
<b>Issues:</b>	This petition is in connection with the non occupancy of a three bedroom property in a popular area of the city. Legal advice has been sought and it is unlikely that any action is possible against the tenant for non occupancy. The Head of Housing Management is reviewing the evidence in relation to this case.		



## **Governance and Personnel Committee**

**7 April 2009**

**(5.00 – 6.40 pm)**

**Present:** W Drury (Chair), G Keating, G Knox, R Renton, N Shukla, L Stephenson.

### **In Attendance:**

J P Lee - Chief Executive  
R Atkinson - Director of Finance & Resources & Company Secretary  
R Smith - H R Manager  
S Doyle - Diversity Manager  
M Dickson - Company Administrator and Board Support Officer  
N Dodgeon - Housing, Anti Social Behaviour & Enforcement Team (HASBET)

### **88 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from J McLaughlin.

### **89 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 February 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **Matters Arising**

(a) Volunteer Policy (Minute No 75 (a) refers)

R Smith confirmed that the wording about releasing staff for volunteering had been clarified.

(b) Ethnicity Monitoring and YHN Customer Profile – ARCH reporting (Minute No 78 refers)

At the last meeting members had asked for information about the reporting and investigation of incidents that had been referred from ARCH. A briefing paper explaining the process that took place once an incident was reported through ARCH was tabled. J P Lee said there was an issue about reporting and logging of incidents and how they were dealt with because currently there was no

electronic interface between ARCH and Northgate and staff were required to update two separate IT systems with the same information.

The briefing paper provided information about the number of cases referred from ARCH to YHN. It was noted that in 46% of reported incidents of hate crime, the perpetrator was not identified. This made the logging of hate crime on YHN's Northgate IT system and responding to an incident more difficult.

### Questions/comments

- N Dodgeon confirmed that there were national guidelines in place for recording and investigating hate crime and it was obligatory to conform to these. For example, if a person made a complaint and felt they had been victimised, the incident would be investigated as a racist incident.
- A Committee Member asked whether victims who asked for additional information was recorded and whether homophobic incidents were recorded.

N Dodgeon said that there was no recording of victims who asked for additional information. Homophobic incidents were monitored by ARCH and information passed onto Housing Service Managers.

- It was suggested that victims could be offered a visit to help make the service more personal. J P Lee commented that some victims might not be YHN tenants although the perpetrator could be. N Dodgeon commented that ARCH did not ask if victims wanted a visit but asked if they wanted information passed onto other agencies. In some cases, victims did not always provide a telephone number.
- It was suggested that ARCH could be asking more in terms of contact detail.
- Committee members asked for more information about other forms of hate crimes, and information about outcomes of investigations.

In concluding the discussion, it was agreed that a demonstration of the ARCH system be arranged for the next committee meeting and more information on other forms of hate crime together with geographical information be provided for committee.

#### (c) Sickness Absence (Minute No 79 refers)

R Smith reported that during the last 90 days, out of 110 managers, 36 had not logged onto the DHS system. Online return to work interviews had been introduced and this should improve the situation.

#### (d) Workforce Wellbeing (Minute No 80 refers)

R Smith confirmed that data about carry forward of annual leave was currently being collated

## **90 SICKNESS ABSENCE**

Submitted: Report by H R Manager (previously circulated, copy attached to Official Minutes) on the outturn for the year to 31 March 2009.

It was noted that there had been an improvement in the absence statistics over recent years and although the rate of reduction had slowed there was still an incremental progression towards the target of 10.2 days per person.

### **Questions/Comments**

- A committee member asked what initiatives were being considered to reduce long term sickness. R Smith said that the introduction of an external Employee Assistance programme enabling staff to access trained counsellors on a 24 hour basis 365 days a year was being considered.
- A committee member asked whether the organisation was satisfied with the DHS system. R Atkinson said that part of the service was unsatisfactory, mainly relating to concierge and CCAS because of the shift patterns. DHS had been given a deadline to put a satisfactory system in place.
- R Smith confirmed that sickness over 2 weeks was classified as long term sickness.
- A committee member asked whether information was available to show that staff had taken up the advice service offered by DHS. R Smith said that no statistics had been received from DHS. R Atkinson was aware that some staff had used the advice line to seek information about childhood ailments. It was suggested that this advice line could be further promoted to staff.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be received.

## **91 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY UPDATE**

Submitted: Report by Diversity Manager (previously circulated, copy attached to Official Minutes) updating Committee on progress and key actions relating to equality and diversity within Your Homes Newcastle with particular reference to developing community cohesion and achieving Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard.

### **Questions/Comments**

## Community Cohesion

- A Committee Member asked whether a workstream had been set up to deliver this piece of work. He was concerned that young people and neighbourhoods had been identified as areas for general awareness rather than areas that were relevant to the business. Community cohesion was a large area of work and required capacity and timescales to make sure that the organisation met the target. He sought more detail about how this area of work would be taken forward.

S Doyle commented that an action/project plan would be included in the Corporate Equality Plan. Community cohesion would be built into the organisation's policies and practices.

J P Lee added that the organisation was focusing on its strengths in the area of young people and neighbourhoods as a starting point to pull together work that the organisation was doing in those areas. This would create a platform to understand what the organisation was doing to encourage people to live in harmony at a local level. Any gaps that were identified would determine what capacity was needed. J P Lee stressed the importance of outcomes and how they were measured.

At the next meeting, committee would be presented with more information about the work that had been carried out, what gaps had been identified and an action plan for outcomes.

## Local Government Standard

- J P Lee clarified that at the next meeting Committee would be presented with a gap analysis between the existing Level 3 and Level 2 of the new standard and an Action Plan to reach Level 2. This area of work would be externally evaluated. The long term plan would be to identify what the organisation needed to do to achieve the new Level 3 standard.
- J P Lee asked members for suggestions for their views on how to evaluate outcomes for tenants, in terms of having an equal impact. This led to a discussion about the meaning and definition of words.
- A committee member suggested that outcomes should demonstrate a tangible difference and the organisation needed to concentrate on outcomes that could be evaluated.
- A committee member commented that where information about people's language was known, why was information not given in that language. J P Lee said that language requirements were assessed annually and this showed that requirements changed over the year.
- A committee member commented on the ability to increase demographics within the workforce and whether the application process could be less rigid and recruitment aimed at the widest pool of people.

- As a way forward, J P Lee suggested consulting with local universities to talk about developing short, medium and long term outcomes and to feedback on these discussions at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be received and the above comments noted.

**92 NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 2 June 2009.

**93 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** – That the press and public be excluded from the during consideration of Agenda items 6, 7 and 8.

(At this point S Doyle and R Smith left the meeting).

## Finance Committee

23 April 2009  
(3.00 pm – 3.50 pm)

### Present:

R Harral  
(In the Chair)  
G Allison  
W Bowman  
J Cuthbertson  
M O'Callaghan

### In Attendance:

R Atkinson - Director of Finance and Resources  
A Lister - Finance Manager – Financial Business Support  
A Crute - Income Manager  
C Nicholson - Finance Manager – Corporate and Payments  
G Ellingham - IT Manager  
J Miller - Democratic Services

#### 51. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from A Mirza.

#### 52. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

**RESOLVED** – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the confidential minutes of the previous meeting.

#### C/53. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### OPEN SESSION

#### 54. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2009 were approved as a correct record, subject to the word “hand” being replaced with the word “hard” in the final paragraph of minute 45 (c) and were signed by the Chair.

**Matters Arising:-**

(a) **Cashing SLA**

(Minute no. 44 (c) refers).

A Crute reported that this matter had now been resolved and it was agreed that it could be taken off the action list.

(b) **Review of HRA Reserves**

(Minute no. 48 refers).

This had been agreed at Board.

55. **ACTION PLAN REVIEW**

Submitted: Finance Committee Action List (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

Officers updated as follows:-

(a) **Concierge Review Interim Report**

R Atkinson to follow up with H Garbutt/M Burn as to whether a diagnostic process chart of the issues to be considered in the review had been produced. If a chart was available it would be circulated to members of the Committee.

56. **RENT INCREASE AMENDMENT**

Submitted: Report by the Finance Manager – Financial Business Support (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

A Lister introduced the report which summarised the offers from DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government) which would allow YHN to reduce the rent increase for 2009/10 from 6.31% to 3.1%.

Officers outlined the complex processes involved in dealing with the rent increase amendments. They stressed the need to ensure that the time was taken to get the process right. Meetings were to be held with Housing Benefit to discuss how best to deal with the change for those in receipt of housing benefit.

It was hoped to credit rent accounts rather than to credit refunds.

Members referred to the need to keep tenants informed. R Atkinson stated that a press release would be issued once further details were known. It was acknowledged there had already been some information in the local press.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be received.

57. **VENDOR NEUTRAL MANAGED SERVICE – AGENCY STAFF**

Submitted: Report by the Finance Manager – Procurement and Payments (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

**RESOLVED** – That the adoption of Comensura as the provider of a vendor neutral managed service in relation to temporary agency staff and the associated revised policy and procedures as approved by wider management team on 1 April 2009 be noted.

58. **IT STRATEGY**

Submitted: Report by the Director of Finance and Resources (tabled and copy attached to Official Minutes).

G Ellingham introduced the report which provided an update on the implementation of the IT strategy for YHN which was presented to Finance Committee in January 2009. He outlined details of the ICT strategy; the SLA review including development and negotiation; the ICT investment proposal and the annual planning and review cycle as detailed in the report.

The first full text version of the IT strategy document should be available in October 2009. The Chair was keen to ensure that the Committee received written documentation with timescales and milestones.

R Atkinson outlined the illustration of reductions exercise that had been undertaken. Directorates had been asked to illustrate how they would achieve reductions of 1%, 3%, or 5%. A number of potential efficiency savings had been identified via this exercise and the decision had been taken to implement the “easy” ones straight away. The main aim of the process had been to change the mindset of the organisation to acknowledge the current economic climate.

The wider management team had identified which of the illustrations could be put in place now and the savings achieved. These would then be used for any future growth bids.

G Ellingham explained that the productivity product aimed to cover or even save costs. Part of the growth bid was a temporary increase in resourcing. However, overall the resource budget should not grow and was likely to shrink.

In the past, ICT development had been undertaken on a piecemeal basis. The intention now was to package all the projects together and prioritise projects within that package.

G Ellingham stated that a further update on progress on the IT strategy would be brought to Committee in September 2009. It was suggested it would be helpful to invite representatives of IT Newcastle to attend that meeting. The final SLA would be signed off in March 2010. The Chair reiterated that the Committee would wish to see that SLA before it was signed.

A member raised a concern regarding problems experienced by tenants using multiple choice telephone services in general and the need to consider the needs of tenants in any of these type of services operated by YHN.

**RESOLVED – That**

- (i) the report be received;
- (ii) an update report be submitted to the September 2009 meeting on the IT strategy, IT Newcastle to be invited to attend that meeting.

**59. FINANCE COMMITTEE REVIEW**

Following the AGM in September 2009 , as part of the changes to the Committee structure, Finance Committee would be replaced by Finance and Resources Committee. The new Committee would take on HR and IT as well as finance functions.

Members discussed how the Finance Committee could contribute to the process of Committee changeover in order to avoid duplication, share knowledge and improve processes.

The following issues/suggestions were raised in debate:-

- Consideration to be given to the production of finance and resources handbook to bring together various strands of work to be covered by the new Committee.
- A series of training sessions be organised once membership of Finance and Resources Committee was known.
- The need for clear documentation to explain the different responsibilities of the various Committees.
- The Committee would need to have further discussion on its future decision making powers looking at where it felt it should be able to have delegated powers to make decisions and where decisions (by exception) were

forwarded to Board.

- The political groups at Newcastle City Council to be provided with attendance figures for their members on YHN Committees.

**RESOLVED** – That there be further discussion of these matters at a future meeting of Finance Committee.

## 60. **FINANCE COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

Submitted: Report by the Director of Finance and Resources (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

**RESOLVED** – That the 2009/10 Work Plan which may be subject to changes resulting from any Committee/reporting cycling amendments be noted.

## Finance Committee

21 May 2009  
(3.00 pm – 4.00 pm)

### Present:

J Cuthbertson

(In the Chair)

B Bowman

M O'Callaghan

A Mirza

### In Attendance:

R Atkinson	- Director of Finance and Resources
A Lister	- Finance Manager – Financial Business Support
K Embleton	- Finance Manager –Revenue Team
C Nicholson	- Finance Manager – Corporate and Payments
J Raffo	- Principal Housing Manager
J Miller	- Democratic Services

### 61 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from G Allison, R Harral and G Knox.

### 62 VICE CHAIR'S COMMENTS

The Vice Chair ,on behalf of the Committee ,wished the Chair well and hoped that he had a speedy recovery.

### 63 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

**RESOLVED** – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following report:-

### 65 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 66 ACTION PLAN REVIEW

Submitted: Finance Committee Action List (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

Officers updated as follows:-

(a) **Deficits**

The net position on each service charge would be reported as part of the outturn.

(b) **Action Plan for Concierge Review**

A Lister circulated copies of the action plan for the Concierge Review. It was noted that there would be a delay in reporting on the review due to the level of consultation needed. Members stressed the need for this report to cover the financial aspects of the review. Tenant members feedback concerns from tenants regarding the review and stressed the need to explain to tenants what the centralised concierge service would mean.

Members recognised that the issue of tenants concerns and operational aspects of the review were more appropriate for discussion at either Board or Property Committee. This Committee would need to consider the financial impact of the different options.

R Atkinson undertook to liaise with the consultation team on the need to consider how Board members would be involved in the process.

67 **REVENUE MONITORING REPORT AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

R Atkinson explained that it had been intended to table this report but this had not been possible as there was still further work to do. The report would now be submitted to the June meeting. He advised, however, that the position looked healthy with a surplus.

**RESOLVED** – That this report be submitted to the June meeting.

It was agreed to start the June meeting at 2.30 pm (with a 2.00 pm pre meeting for members) rather than 3.00 pm because of the amount of business to be undertaken.

68 **CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME – MOVEMENT REPORT**

Submitted: Report by Finance Manager – Financial Business (previously circulated and copies attached to Official Minutes).

A Lister introduced the report which detailed movements totalling (£112K), for 2008/09 YHN Capital Programme following the 2008/09 Capital Outturn drawing members' attention to the key movements detailed in the report, in particular the

Adaptations Programme movement of £1,215K since the last reported figure.

In response to members' queries he explained that Disabled Adaptations and New Mills Estate movements were technical adjustments due to the correct procedures not having been used and expenditure being mis-coded. Members requested that the officers involved be informed that Finance Committee members had expressed concern that these issues should not reoccur.

**RESOLVED** – That the movements in the Investment Programme outlined in the report be approved.

69 **CORPORATE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY UPDATE AND PROGRESS REPORT**

Submitted: Report by Finance Manager, Procurement and Payment (previously circulated and copies attached to Official Minutes).

C Nicholson introduced the report which provided an update on the Corporate Procurement Statutory Action Plan, together with a general procurement progress summary.

**RESOLVED** – That

- (i) the report be received;
- (ii) future Procurement Update Reports to include traffic lights to allow members to focus on areas of concern; and
- (iii) in future all reports to Finance Committee to be in no less than size 12 font.

70 **WORK PLAN**

Submitted: Report by Director of Finance and Resources (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

In response to a member's query re the Furniture Service Partnership with Wakefield Housing Company, R Atkinson explained that there was a proposal to obtain a warehouse in Wakefield to service the M62 corridor area. Deliveries of furniture would go direct from the manufacturers to Wakefield.

The following items were added to the June agenda:

- Pest control
- Corporate Procurement Strategy

The Concierge Service Review Update was deferred until September unless there was something specific to report earlier.

**RESOLVED** – That the Action Plan be agreed subject to the above amendments.

71 **CORPORATE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY**

Submitted: Report by Director of Finance and Resources (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

**RESOLVED** – That the report be withdrawn and a new report be submitted to the June meeting.