



## **Board**

**24 February 2009**

### **Items for Information**

#### **1. Introduction**

The attached are for information:

- (i) Delegated Decisions 19 January to 13 February 2009
- (ii) Committee Feedback
- (iii) Minutes :
  - Finance Committee held on 22 January 2009
  - Governance & Personnel Committee held on 2 December 2008

#### **2. Recommendation**

Board is asked to receive these items for information.

#### **Contact Officer:**

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

## Board

24 February 2009

### Delegated Decisions – Schedule of non-confidential Delegated Decisions taken between 19 January and 13 February 2009

No	Directorate/Delegated Officer	Authorised Date	Subject	Cost/Budget Provision	Ward
1.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Atkinson Ross - (YHN Head of Corporate Service)	1/20/2009	To continue to provide legal advice on the best structure for YHN / NCC development	Cost - £8,000 Code - 1YDA6/D404	All Wards
2.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Atkinson Ross - (YHN Head of Corporate Service)	1/20/2009	Appoint Martin Bayliss to assist & deliver HQN Conference - Living through the credit crunch	Cost - £885.60 Code - 1YCTG/D404	All Wards
3.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	1/29/2009	Technical appraisal of all district / group heating schemes	Code 1YFTM / D404 Initial Cost - £20,000 Remainder Cost - £30,000 Total Cost upto £50,000	All Wards
4.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	2/2/2009	Hareydene Environment Improvements - Transfer of land to owner occupiers	Total Cost = £22,900 Code 1HRA1 / D406	All Wards
5.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	2/9/2009	Installation of metal fencing and bin stores Fawdon No-Fines, Mapledene Road	Funding of the total expenditure amounting to £77,718.67 will be met from PEMS budget.	Fawdon
6.	<b>Your Homes Newcastle</b> Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	2/13/2009	Fire Detection System Allendale House and Teasdale House	Funding of the total expenditure amounting to £88,186.80 will be met from Fire Protection Continuing Programme budget.	Byker; Woolsington

## Board

24 October 2009

## Committee Feedback

### Report by Chief Executive

For Information	<b>Area Implications:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
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#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides quarterly feedback to the Board on the work of its committees, including the three Area Boards.

#### 2. Your Homes Newcastle Strategic Objectives

- 2.1 The work of the Board's committees contributes to Three star excellent services.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 The following is a summary of the work of the Board Committees since the last feedback report in October 2008:

**Area Boards** – have met twice since the last report. All of the Area Boards continue to monitor performance management, service standards and the modern home investment programme. The Outer West & North Area Board received an update on the area project fund.

The Area Board Time Limited Committee has been meeting since November and has considered reports on drivers for change; review of information provided to area boards; and a review of best practice. The Time Limited Committee has also considered the views of area board members and has looked at the mechanisms currently used across the city to gain the views of residents on housing issues, including activities led by both YHN and NCC. Gaps and areas of duplication have been highlighted, particularly in relation to the terms of reference of the area boards. At the next meetings, the Time Limited Committee will be considering a range of options for the future of area boards.

**Audit Committee** – At its 23<sup>rd</sup> October meeting the Audit Committee received internal audit reports on Corporate Governance and a follow up audit of the Furniture Service.

The Committee met on the 12<sup>th</sup> November for training facilitated by the Audit Commission to improve the performance of the Committee. At its 15<sup>th</sup> January meeting the Annual Assurance Statement and Strategic Risk Monitors were considered. The Committee also received internal audit reports on risk management, information governance and procurement. Consideration of the Audit Committee Action Plan to implement recommendations from member training was delayed until after the review of YHN Committee structures.

**Finance Committee** – Meets monthly and continues to monitor the Revenue Budget, Investment Programme finance and Performance and the Repairs and Maintenance finance and Performance. Committee has received quarterly reports on the Financial Statements, Right to Buy position, Income Monitor and Arrears management. They were also training sessions presented to committee on;

- HRA Briefing – HRA v YHN
- Budget Process / Cycle

**Governance and Personnel Committee** – meets bi monthly. Since the last report Committee has received and commented on the Corporate Equality Plan and Ethnicity Monitoring reports; has continued to receive regular updates on sickness absence; and received the internal audit report on Corporate Governance. Committee received a presentation about Single Status to help new committee members understand the principles of the project. Committee also received an update on the work of the Workforce Wellbeing Group. This Group is examining the potential impact of work, and how work is organised, on the health and wellbeing of staff.

**Property Committee** – Property Committee meets bi monthly and since the last report has monitored customer satisfaction for quarters 2 and 3 on both the Modern Homes Programme and the Repairs and Maintenance contract. They also considered and commented on the joint performance and finance report which outlined details on key outputs on the repairs and maintenance contract as well as receiving a budget update for this contract. They approved a pilot internal refurbishment contract to enable YHN to explore the benefits of delivering these works through the North East Procurement Consortium and received an update on a potential window specification change from aluminium to UPVC for multi storey blocks. In January, Committee received a report on the delivery of the 2009/10 Painting Programme and agreed to receive regular update reports on the gas servicing programme.

#### **4. Implications**

4.1 There are no implications to this report.

#### **5. Next Steps**

5.1 Committees will continue to provide feedback on their work to Board on a quarterly basis.

**Contact Officer:** Maureen Dickson, ext 28624

#### **Background Papers**

- Board , Area Board and Committee Papers

## Finance Committee

22 January 2009  
(3.00 pm – 4.50 pm)

### Present:

R Harral (In the Chair)  
G Allison  
W Bowman  
J Cuthbertson  
A Mirza  
D Slesenger

### Also Present:

S Murphy - Chair of Board

### In Attendance:

R Atkinson - Director of Finance and Resources  
K Embleton - Finance Manager – Revenue  
A Lister - Finance Manager – Business Support  
A Crute - Income Manager  
N Scott - Director of Tenancy Services  
G Ellingham - IT Manager  
J Hussain - Newcastle City Council  
J Miller - Democratic Services

## 20 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from G Knox and M O'Callaghan. It was agreed that a letter be sent to M O'Callaghan to wish her a speedy recovery.

## 21. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### Matters Arising:-

#### (a) Responsive Repairs

(Minute No. 15 refers)

N Scott advised that a report had been submitted to the January Property

Committee on the Responsive Repairs System and proposals to change the repairs categories. There would be a further report in May following a consultation process.

**(b) Heating Payments**

(Minute no. 18 refers).

It was noted that the recommendation to increase the payment in central heating had been overtaken by a subsequent decision.

**(c) Deficits**

(Minute No. 18 refers)

In response to a member's query A Lister reported the following deficits -

Concierge service - £3,816,000

Sheltered Housing - £884,000

Community Care - £245,000

Domestic Group Heating - £895,000

It was noted that the first draft of the concierge review would be reported to February Finance Committee.

The Chair commented that at some stage it would be necessary to come back to those issues.

**(d) Cashiering SLA**

(Matter arising from Audit Committee, 15 January 2009).

R Atkinson reported that following a request at Audit Committee, the previous week, that he escalated this matter, M Rudd had been appointed lead officer at Newcastle City Council in relation to the Cashiering SLA. A Crute (lead officer from YHN) was to organise a meeting with her.

**22. RENT ARREARS UPDATE**

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

N Scott introduced the report which provided an update on the level of current rent arrears and details of performance in relation to targets for this area of

activity. He reported that the position was very positive in relation to both the target for proportion of rent collected and the target for a reduction in net arrears. Traditionally there was an increase in arrears between January and March, but it was expected that this would be offset by income in the third non-collecting week. He updated the Committee on actions taken to minimise the level of arrears as detailed in the report.

In response to a member's query N Scott explained that anyone with any level of arrears where the level of debt was not decreasing was actively pursued.

It was noted that the online processing of cases for court action had reduced the time taken for this process by approximately one third.

Members discussed the issue of those tenants who paid monthly, but because of when they were paid, were always in arrears. N Scott explained that debt such as this had to be counted as a debt until it was paid. The Chair of the Board commented that it would be useful to have an indication of percentage of the overall debt burden represented by this group at any one time. A Crute explained that those paying by direct debit were currently paying a fortnight in advance, it was hoped to eventually change this to three weeks in advance which should help this situation.

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

## 23. **REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT BUDGET UPDATE**

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

N Scott drew members attention to the potential overspend of £1,182,309 within the repairs and maintenance contract budget, pointing out that capitalisation of work in void properties gave an overall forecast underspend of £292,000. This was a significant change in position from July 2008 when £330,000 overspend have been anticipated.

He drew members attention to the key issues in relation to day to day repairs and rapid response; voids; Modern Homes Programme and the YHN and City Build Working Group as detailed in the report. He referred to the impact of the decision that YHN officers had to authorise any responsive repairs over £300, which had meant that £45,000 of work had not gone ahead which would have gone ahead had this system not been in place.

He highlighted that Citybuild had submitted a claim in relation "clean and clear" for voids, this was to be considered in parallel with a claim submitted by YHN for the recovery of "overhead" payments. An update would be provided at the March meeting. Citybuild stated that there was a lack of clarity in the tender

document. YHN felt that there was no issue in relation to garden cleaning, but there was a need for clearer definitions for the cleaning element and also a need to looking at widening the scope of clearance.

In response to a members query, it was noted that the Investment Panel would report quarterly to the Management Team and then depending on the outcome of this report if necessary they would then report to property and/or Finance Committee depending on the issues involved.

N Scott outlined the work to analyse the post modern homes programme repairs on a trade by trade basis and also by speaking to tenants.

It was acknowledged that the tightening up of the replacement rules might have had an impact on modern homes programme.

In response to an issue raised by a member N Scott undertook to check whether the timescale requirement for rewiring was 25 or 30 years. He stressed however that any remedial work required as a result of the 10 year electricity check would be carried out immediately if necessary, rather than waiting for the modern homes programme work.

#### 24. **REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE – JOINT PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT NOVEMBER 2008**

Submitted: Report by Performance and Development Manager and Finance Manager (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

N Scott introduced the report which provided information on the performance and current financial position of the YHN repairs and maintenance contract for November 2008. He highlighted the following points in relation to the performance indicated:-

##### **Percentage of Jobs Raised on Emergency Status**

It was pointed out the vast majority of repairs in this category were out of hours repairs and only 18 were emergency repairs. Work was being undertaken by YHN and Citybuild to look at the scope of those jobs and whether they were genuine emergencies.

##### **Complaints Responded Within 10 Days**

It was noted that this had dropped to 50% in the West but there had only been 2 complaints and one had been responded to one day late, which had caused the drop to 50%.

## **Ratio of Expenditure to Planned Maintenance**

There had been an increase in the level of planned expenditure in the second half of the financial year and it was expected to achieve or get near to the target.

N Scott explained that the figures were monitored on a monthly basis

The Chair of the Board indicated that in future he would like a variety of Committee reports to include a forecast column of where the position was likely to be at the year end. He asked that in the new reporting year consideration be given to whether traffic lighted forecasting column could be incorporated into these reports.

N Scott emphasised that the fact that the vast majority of indicators were green was very positive; there had been a significant improvement over the last 18 months which demonstrated that Citybuild generally did a very good job. He explained for new members that this was a 5 year contract with an option to extend, it had commenced in June 2006 and during 2009/10 there would be review of that contract.

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

## 25 **YHN CAPITAL PROGRAMME MOVEMENTS**

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

A Lister introduced the report which detailed movements totalling £94,000 in the 2008/09 YHN Capital Programme following the review of the programme with project officers.

The Chair advised that at the pre-meeting it had been agreed with members that in future it be accepted that members had read the reports and issues would be taken by exception.

In response to a member's query regarding the slippage on the Byker District Heating Network Continuing Programme, A Lister explained that a Time Limited Working Group was looking at this issue. The listing of the Byker Wall had had an impact and this had not been a consideration at the outset of the process.

**RESOLVED** – That the movements detailed in the report be approved.

26. **YHN AND HRA REVENUE BUDGETS AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN UPDATE**

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

K Embleton introduced the report which set out the latest position on the projected Outturn for 2008/09, the Base budget for 2009-10 and the Medium Term Plan to 2012-13, for Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

He drew members attention to the key issues detailed in the report relating to the revised estimated YHN management fee for 2008-09 of £30,524,530. The Base estimated YHN management fee for 2009/10 was £31,489,080. The HRA was now forecast to have a net in year surplus of £68,070 cr in 2008/09 and an in year surplus for 2009-10 of £1,374,850 cr. The YHN/HRA Medium Term Plan taking into account the potential pressures was forecasting a reduced in year surplus of £1.006m in 2009-10 and an in year deficit of £1.945m in 2010-11. He also drew member's attention to the key variations as detailed in the report.

He explained that YHN officers met the City Treasurer at a Section 151 meeting every month to go through these papers in detail.

For the benefit of new members he explained that the Medium Term Plan to 2012 – 13 (Appendix 3) was a 5 year plan which estimated the future direction and what impact it had on the HRA balances. The estimates were firmed up as the detail was approved to be incorporated every month. The intention was to keep a minimum balance of £5m. Although it appeared from the document that the situation was worsening over time this was reported to Committee on a monthly basis and actions would be taken to rectify the situation if necessary.

In response to a query as to whether it was anticipated that the Newcastle City Council's City Treasurer would agree the increased Management Fee K Embleton explained that it was anticipated that he would, but he would question the reasons for the increase and seek justification from the officers.

R Atkinson drew members attention to the change in international accounting standards which meant that there now had to be a provision in the accounts for the cost of holiday pay that staff had not used. A Lister was in discussions with the external auditor to agree a process. HRA balances would go down as provision would have to be set aside for this. Members would be kept informed of progress in relation to this matter.

In response to a query regarding the number of right to buy properties the estimates were for 72 in 2009/10 and 180 thereafter plus 200 a year demolitions.

**RESOLVED – That**

- (i) the amended YHN 2008/09 revised budget for 2009/10 base budget as detailed in Appendix 1 be approved;
- (ii) the amended HRA 2008/09 revised budgets and 2009-10 base budgets as detailed in Appendix 2 be approved.
- (iii) the YHN /HRA Medium Term Plan position up to 2012-13 set out in Appendix 3 be noted;
- (iv) the latest summary of procurement efficiency savings set out in Appendix 4 be received.

**27. IT STRATEGY UPDATE**

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

G Ellingham introduced the report which provided an update on the development of a revised IT strategy for YHN. Following an independent review of YHN's ICT infrastructure provision it was proposed that Newcastle IT continue to supply these services for the medium term. He advised that the recommendation in the report was being amended to recommend a 5 year contract rather than a 3-5 year contract. He then gave a powerpoint presentation on the YHN IT Strategy 2009-14.

Members queried why it was being recommended that YHN continued to procure ICT infrastructure from ICT which had been lead to be "reasonable value for money". G Ellingham explained that it was difficult to achieve a like for like comparison. The view of the independent review was that this was the right level of costs for the type of service and they had highlighted the difficulties likely to occur if YHN decided to separate from IT Newcastle.

G Ellingham indicated he had a good working relationship with the new Head of IT and Infrastructure Manager at the City Council which had allowed him to engage at a strategic level early on. YHN was in fact was able to move more swiftly into some of the new technologies because it was a smaller organisation than the City Council.

In considering disaster recovery, it would be necessary to look at the genuinely critical systems in this respect, as the provision of fully resilient twin sites was very costly.

The Chair asked that Finance Committee be allowed to have sight of the contract documentation before it was signed to ensure that the outputs were deliverable and to ensure that it met the objectives.

In terms of financing, Management Team were to consider all the unfunded capital projects, prioritise them and then they would need to go through the appropriate approval process. It was therefore a Board decision as to if and how this work was funded.

The Chair of Board commented on the need to ensure proper balance relationship in all contracts and commented that this looked and felt like a strategy and was very commendable.

The Chair commented that YHN had its own identity which it needed to take into its contractual relationship with Newcastle City Council. G Ellingham stressed that YNN would remain in full control of its application estate. The Council would manage and maintain the equipment.

R Atkinson advised that IT Newcastle had indicated that they were happy for YHN to provide them with their short to medium term goals but they would need a period of time to respond. They had guaranteed that if they were given the correct lead in period they would staff themselves up to deliver what was required by YHN. He commented that the culture of IT Newcastle had changed into deliverables and he was very comfortable with this new arrangement.

G Ellingham explained it was not yet known when the SLA would be signed, he would advise on this at a later date. At this stage it was the principles which had been agreed.

G Ellingham highlighted to members that there was significant risk if IT Newcastle did not receive funding from the transformation fund.

**RESOLVED** – That

- (i) the report be received;
- (ii) the Committee agree in principle to the renewal of YHN's procurement of ICT infrastructure services from IT Newcastle on a 5 year contract.

## 28| **FUTURE TRAINING SESSIONS**

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

R Atkinson introduced the report which set out the training sessions held by Finance Committee since April 2004. He explained that the original intention had been to identify which training sessions should be held at which meetings. However there had recently been a finance training session for members which had been very successful with good interaction. It was, therefore, proposed that in future instead of having individual training sessions linked on to Finance Committee meetings, finance related presentations be grouped together and a special session be held every few months. These sessions would be open to all Board members.

**RESOLVED** – That

- (i) future training sessions be held at a separate session with several presentations, rather than as part of Finance Committee agenda;
- (ii) the February meeting of Finance Committee to be held at Benwell Customer Service Centre (subject to availability) with a minibus being arranged from YHN Headquarters .Consideration be given to whether this should be widened to other Board members.

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**FINANCE COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2008/2009**

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

**RESOLVED** – That the latest 2008/09 Workplan be agreed.

## **Governance and Personnel Committee**

**2 December 2008**

**(5.00 – 6.30 pm)**

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

**In Attendance:**

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

**66 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from G Knox and P J Morrissey.

**67 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 October 2008 were agreed as a correct records and signed by the Chair.

**Matters Arising**

(a) Review of Area Boards (Minute No 61 (a) refers)

It was noted that the Time Limited Committee had met on 13 November and the Officer Working Group was meeting fortnightly.

(b) Corporate Equality Plan Update (Minute No 62 refers)

Knowing our Customer Base – S Doyle reported that data collection was underway. No issues had arisen about the sexual orientation question, although some people were not happy about revealing their weekly income and NI number. She also confirmed that people had not been informed in advance about the survey.

Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government - S Doyle reported that she had met with N Shukla and colleagues, Gateshead Council. As Gateshead Council did not have the capacity to assist with peer assessment, contact had been made with Gateshead Housing Company.

Preparation for self assessment was underway. S Doyle acknowledged that there were some gaps that the Workstream were focusing on. She anticipated that by the end of December 2008 self assessment of Level 3 would be concluded and contact would then be made with Dialog regarding external assessment.

(c) Volunteer Policy (Minute No 61 (c) refers)

The amended Volunteer Policy, Appendices and Guidelines for staff and managers, had been circulated to Committee members. The Chair asked for clarification about releasing staff for volunteering and agreed that this information could be provided to him by email.

A Committee Member asked what level of support was provided for volunteering with outside groups. It was explained that the Volunteer Policy was initially for the Young Peoples Service and if successful would be rolled out across the organisation.

## **68 SINGLE STATUS**

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation (copy attached to Official Minutes, R Smith gave an overview of Single Status Job Evaluation. During the presentation, R Smith explained that jobs could be weighted if an organisation wanted to recognise particular areas of strategic importance. It was noted that that NCC placed greater weighting on caring skills and policy development/ implementation. Using the Gauge system, jobs were measured against: Knowledge and skills; Effort demand; Responsibilities; and Environmental demands.

The evaluation process was for full evaluation for benchmarked jobs; and factor comparison against benchmarked jobs. Scores were checked by Directorate Implementation Teams and then a Moderation Panel.

R Smith informed Committee that there was no agreed timescale at present for implementation of the new grading and that discussions were taking place with Trade Unions about backdating of increases.

### **Questions/Comments**

- A Committee Member enquired as to how mental and emotional demands were measured. R Smith explained that if a member of staff was subject to irate customers they would score highly.

- In response to a further point about the range of circumstances encountered in different housing offices, R Smith confirmed that the post of housing assistant was measured generically.
- The Committee Member asked how the impact of the scheme could be cost neutral. R Atkinson replied that this referred to future costs. It was difficult to say what the impact would be on YHN. The costs mentioned did not refer to backdating.
- R Atkinson confirmed that about half of YHN jobs had been through Stage 1 of the process and that Stage 2 affected higher graded staff.
- A Committee Member enquired about the distinction between care and support and a committee member explained (from personal experience) that the focus would be on what influence the member of staff would have on another person's life, for example social workers.
- A Committee Member asked whether any steps were being taken to manage staff morale. R Smith commented that this was not an issue at the moment. Jobs continued to be advertised (subject to single status). The major exercise would be to manage the process, announce the outcomes and agree the appeals process.
- In response to a question about keeping staff updated on progress, R Atkinson commented that there was no information to pass to staff at the present time. YHN was waiting the outcomes of NCC's discussions.

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

## **69 SICKNESS MANAGEMENT**

Submitted: Report by H R Manager (previously circulated, copy attached to Official Minutes), on the level of staff absence during the period 1 April -25 November 2008.

In presenting the report, R Smith advised Committee that the latest year end performance for sickness was an estimated average of 10.08 days per person. However, he cautioned that the last three months of the year were winter months when there was traditionally higher levels of absence. Average sickness performance by each Directorate was noted.

R Smith reported that Absence Surgeries continued to be held monthly and that the open invitation to managers to attend the surgeries was being replaced by a more targeted effort to make sure that current hot spots were considered.

The Absence Management Board continued to meet monthly and a review of membership had been carried out so that the membership reflected the key areas for reduction of sickness levels.

A review of the DHS absence reporting system was being undertaken and it was noted that the system would be recording return to work interviews and other measures that managers check.

A draft of the booklet Why Your Attendance Matters had been circulated to Committee Members and they were asked to feed any comments to R Smith. The booklet would be submitted to the next meeting of Absence Management Board and would be launched at sickness road shows. R Smith also commented that at these road shows there would be a stand to encourage people to stop smoking.

### **Questions/comments**

- R Smith confirmed that performance figures were produced for the accounting year from 1 April – 31 March, although the system could provide figures for a rolling year. He added that a true comparison would only be possible when the system had been running for a longer period of time.

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

## **70 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES**

Submitted: Report by H R Manager (previously circulated, copy attached to Official Minutes) on the revised Code of Conduct for Employees.

R Smith informed Committee that the current Code had been adopted in November 2006 and had been reviewed in light of experience and following Internal Audit recommendations (see agenda item 9) concerning the offer and acceptance of gifts and hospitality. Committee's views were sought on the draft Code.

### **Questions/Comments**

Appendix 7

- Committee Members discussed the appropriateness of Appendix 7, a new addition to the Code. The guidance had been produced to assist staff where organisations known for expressing racist views were active in forums where YHN worked. The guidance included provision that where a member of YHN staff was found to be a member of the British National Party (BNP) or any other discriminatory organisation, the member of staff would be dismissed.
- Committee members expressed the view that the BNP was a legitimate political party and that people had the right to join if they so wished. Anyone behaving in an inappropriate manner could be dealt with under other policies.

- S Doyle commented that membership of the BNP or other similar organisation would not be in keeping with the organisation's Equality and Diversity Policy and was not in keeping with the ethos of YHN.
- A Committee Member asked about NCC's policy on membership of the BNP or other discriminatory organisations. R Smith undertook to check this, although a Committee Member commented that NCC did not prohibit membership of the BNP.
- A Committee Member commented that there was a balance between the individual's rights and an organisation that worked with vulnerable people. YHN worked in the area of social housing and care and support to vulnerable people. This would make it difficult to employ staff who signed up to a political organisation that promoted discriminatory practice and it was better for employees/potential employees that this view was made clear.
- R Smith confirmed that if a member of staff demonstrated inappropriate discriminatory behaviour there were policies and actions that could be taken.
- Committee Members also commented that the following should be considered:
  - whether there was a difference between membership of a party or a member of staff having strong sympathies with a discriminatory political organisation;
  - how would people who signed nomination forms be dealt with;
  - what was the position regarding tenants who were members of discriminatory political organisations;

The Chair suggested that legal advice be sought about the wording and inclusion of the guidance on discriminatory political organisations.

R Smith also advised Committee that the section on Gifts and Hospitality had been amended.

**RESOLVED** – That

- (i) Legal advice be sought relating to the guidance on Discriminatory Political Organisations.
- (ii) Comments on the draft code be forwarded to R Smith by 21 December 2008.
- (iii) An update on progress with the amended Code of Conduct for

Employees be reported to the February meeting.

**71 NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 3 February 2009.

**72 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Agenda item 9.