

Summary of the BHA Board Meeting and Board Strategy Day June 2 2018

1. Martyn Waring welcomed the Board to Highbury View and to the joint Board meeting/Strategy Day. These days provide an important chance for the Board to step back from the day to day and to think about our priorities for the next 3-5 years.
2. Susan French, presented the **Chief Executive's report** which covered updates on:
 - a positive meeting with Karen Lucas at Islington Council, which confirmed that Morland Mews residents would have 'first dibs' on any new homes converted from garages
 - a revised handover date for Eden Grove of early September
 - a proposal to audit our rents and service charges
 - proposals for community events over the summer including the garden party at Highbury View, the fun day at Morland Mews and the trip to Southend
 - a review of health and safety
3. The Board considered the proposal to **convert garages on Morland Mews** to create 7 new homes. They noted feedback from the consultation event held on May 24 and the feedback from the questionnaires: 24 had been returned from 186 circulated. The Board debated the proposal in detail and considered the concerns of some tenants on the estate about the proposals. The Board felt that we have responded to tenants' concerns, by reducing the number of conversions from 14 to 7 and making other changes to the plans to limit any adverse impacts. The Board weighed tenants' concerns against our wider obligations to make a contribution to providing more social housing in Islington and the positive impact of providing seven new, ground floor accessible homes. On balance, the Board agreed unanimously to submit the application. The Board asked that lessons be learnt on engagement and that tenants be closely involved in planning the works should we get planning permission.
4. Following the decision made at the previous Board meeting to adopt a more proactive role **in letting homes to key workers**, the Board considered definitions of key workers. It was agreed that a list of eligible public-sector roles and organisations would be developed. The Board also agreed that, subject to approval, rents would be set at 80% of London Living Rent which would ensure that the flats remain affordable to people on low to moderate incomes.
5. The Board received an update on the **management accounts**. The Board supported the approach of supplementing our core skills through external support where necessary and noted the amount of 'catch up' we are currently doing. It asked that a report be presented to the Audit & Risk Committee on fees for external support.
6. The Board received an update on **housing and repairs performance**. The Board noted that arrears are too high and that we need to tackle them earlier. It was agreed that a review of how BHA collects rent was a priority, as well as changing our processes so that tenants are able to access up-to-date information on their rent balances.
7. The Board approved an offer for **15 new homes** at social rents under a Section 106 agreement. We have been approached by a developer keen to work with a local association and provide 15 homes at social rent.

8. The Board then held its **annual strategy day**. The main topics for debate were:
- a new approach to **supporting our older residents**: BHA has an unusually high proportion (37%) of tenants over 65 years old. While many need little or no support at present, some would welcome additional help and many more may do so in the future. The Board welcomed the review that has been carried out and the fact that a group of ‘senior tenants’ had formed a ‘sounding board’ to help us shape our approach. The Board agreed that we would develop our approach in more detail and that we would invest in this as an important part of our ‘offer’.
 - updating our approach to **resident involvement** to make sure that we are able to listen to the broad range of residents’ views. The two Tenants’ Associations are an important part of this, supplemented with other less formal approaches such as ‘armchair editors’ for the newsletter, informal groups that meet to look at specific issues (such as our support for older tenants) and estate or issue-based meetings.
 - how BHA can respond to the **‘digital agenda’** and ensure that our tenants don’t get left behind. It was agreed that our current approach of finding technological solutions that help make us more efficient and effective (such as iZettle for card payments and GasTag for managing gas safety) was the right one and that income collection was a priority for improvement in the future. The Board agreed however that, as a small neighbourhood-based HA, face-to-face and telephone contact would remain central to our service.
 - **providing more homes**: the Board confirmed that providing more homes is an important part of our role, given the Association’s underlying aims and the desperate shortage of affordable housing in Islington. The Board agreed that we would continue to invest in providing new homes, balancing this with investment in our existing homes and estates. Given the prohibitive costs of land and property in Islington, the only realistic options are to take Section 106 schemes from developers, look to see how we can create more homes from our own assets and take transfers from other housing associations in the borough. This is the approach we have been adopting in recent years.