

LEASE – The Leasehold Advisory Service

Minutes of the Board Meeting held on Friday 20 April 2018

Present:

Victoria Elvidge (VE), Steve Jackson (SJ), Tariq Kazi (TK), Nicola Mullany (NM)

In attendance:

Anthony Essien (Chief Executive) (AE), Tim Courtenay (TC),

Observers: None

1. Appointment of Chair for Meeting

SJ proposed that NM should chair the meeting. All agreed.

2. Purpose of Meeting

NM set out the purpose of the meeting which was to deal with matters arising out of RS's resignation.

It was noted RS had tendered his resignation on Friday 13 April to the Secretary of State. The resignation was with immediate effect. Roger Southam stated that he had resigned "to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest between RS's role as Chair of Lease and his personal business interests".

Following his resignation, RS had emailed all staff and Board members.

As a result, the Board had a conference call on the afternoon of Friday 13th which all but one member had been able to attend.

In that call, the following items were discussed:

- The appointment of an interim chair - here it was agreed that SJ should be nominated by the board to take the role
- Ensuring any key commitments attached to the role of chair were covered
- Learning lessons from the events which led up to RS's resignation - this would include looking again at policies and processes around conflicts of interest, complaints, disciplinary issues, whistleblowing, grievances etc
- Seeking to ensure learning was shared with those who would be involved with the appointment of a new chair
- The impact on staff morale of the resignation
- The need to engage positively with all stakeholders
- Following the call AE had spoken to MHCLG and been told that the Secretary of State would appoint a Chair in due course

3. Interim chair

The Board expressed its view that it was imperative that a Chair be appointed without delay to prevent avoidable uncertainty which would frustrate the gains and progress made to date with the potential erosion of staff morale.

It was noted that the Board nominated SJ to be interim Chair and that SJ was prepared to act as interim Chair but only for a time limited period of no more than 6 months.

The Board agreed that in the absence of an interim Chair being appointed by the MHCLG, SJ would cover as much of the role previously covered by RS as permissible and that other Board members would provide support where possible.

The Board agreed that in light of SJ's outstanding experience within the Housing sector (having formerly been the CEO of a Housing Association, currently a trustee of a charity providing assistance to vulnerable residents, and the current Chair of the ARC) that the Board recommend SJ's appointment to the role of Chair of LEASE.

The Board agreed that TK would become interim Chair of the ARC, with SJ remaining as a member (not Chair) of ARC.

The Board agreed that commensurate with established practice when any member of the organisation left the organisation, in addition to the removal of RS's details from the website at the time of his resignation, his access to the building had been revoked and he would receive any payments which were due to him up to his last day in office.

NM pointed out that the day rate for the Chair was higher (£235) than the day rate for a Board member (£180) and that she hoped that MHCLG would consider agreeing to LEASE applying the higher rate for SJ with effect from today.

The Board agreed.

Given the increased responsibility of Board members it was felt now was an appropriate time to update profiles on the LEASE website so that stakeholders could understand and have confidence in the background and independence of LEASE Board members.

The Board reminded itself of all the good work achieved by Lease in the last year.

In the past year, LEASE has:

- Had 1.6 million visits to the website
- Addressed 15, 000 telephone enquiries and over 7,000 written enquiries
- Held 38 outreaches/surgeries attended by over 1,000 attendees
- Submitted evidence to 7 Leasehold related consultations

The Board recognised the hard work of staff, who felt a strong commitment to helping leaseholders and Park Home owners, in these achievements.

The Board agreed that it was vital that there be a meeting with MHCLG soon to discuss the future direction of LEASE within the Government's overall housing agenda. In the meantime, LEASE should actively engage with its stakeholders. SJ and VE would lead on this.

4. Any Other Business

None

Next Board meeting date and time: 11.00am on Thursday 11th May 2018 at Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX