

**EASTLIGHT COMMUNITY HOMES
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Held on Wednesday 23rd September 2020
at 5.30pm by Zoom due to the Covid pandemic**



Present: Gold and Silver shareholders attended the meeting together with Board Members, members of the Community Gateway Group and members of staff.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

- 1.1 The Chair, Hattie Llewelyn-Davies, welcomed everyone to the first Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Eastlight Community Homes and explained the meeting was being held virtually using Zoom due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. An online voting facility was in place to encourage the participation and make the experience as interactive as possible.
- 1.2 The Chair explained the on-line voting process and noted that 146 Proxy votes had been received in advance from shareholders who were not able to attend. She also advised that the meeting was being recorded and a summary of the AGM proceedings would be made available on the Eastlight website.
- 1.3 The Chair advised that a number of questions had been raised in advance of the AGM and confirmed that these would be answered at the end of the meeting. She also confirmed that attendees could raise questions at any time using the on-line 'chat' facility.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1 There were no apologies for absence. The meeting was confirmed to be quorate.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2019 AND SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 21 MAY 2020

- 3.1 The minutes of the AGM held on 26 September 2019 and the minutes of the SGM held on 21 May 2020 were approved as an accurate record. There were no matters arising from either set of minutes.

4. ADDRESS BY THE CHAIR, HATTIE LLEWELYN-DAVIES

- 4.1 The Chair gave an overview on what the future holds for Eastlight over the next few years.

- 4.2 The Chair announced we will invest more in our existing homes and be able to develop a greater number of new homes. Resident concerns about investing in sustainability in terms of the Green Agenda and energy efficient homes came across very strongly from the resident surveys carried out during the run-up to the formation of Eastlight and this is being built into the new corporate strategy for Eastlight..
- 4.3 Eastlight is the largest Community Gateway Association in the country and will promote resident influence within the association and across the sector to ensure residents are at the heart of everything we do.
- 4.4 The work-life dynamic has changed considerably since the outbreak of COVID-19 and we are providing our staff with additional training to ensure we can continue to provide residents with the best and safest possible service. The Chair reported that Eastlight is developing its repairs offer to residents so it is more effective and will deliver to the standards set by residents as part of the consultation process.
- 4.5 The Chair advised that the Board will discuss the long term strategy at a meeting later in the week. It will be an exciting and very busy year for Eastlight. We will be trailblazing in everything we do and ensure that residents see the benefits of the merger.

5. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT VIDEO

- 5.1 Five involved residents recorded videos discussing their involvement with Eastlight over the past year. They made the following comments:
 - We want to maximise the ability of residents to hold the Board to account, shaping services and deliver community empowerment. We have allocated more money to spend on our communities and we want our residents to tell us where to spend it.
 - It's been an uplifting experience to see how resident views can shape an organisation. We have worked with other residents to scrutinise policies, branding and emerging strategies. Residents have the opportunity to raise issues that they are passionate about and make a difference. Please encourage any resident who wants to see change to get involved.
 - We have been involved in developing destination statements particularly around Customer Services and Repairs and Housing service management which has been very inspiring.

- Resident involvement at Eastlight includes making the Board aware of resident views, approving policies, sitting on interview panels and helping to select contractors and being part of the Complaints Panel.
 - The future for resident involvement will include being part of health and safety, ensuring repairs are completed right the first time, tackling social isolation, reviewing our aids and adaptations service and improving the annual rent letters to residents.
- 5.7 There will be a variety of ways that residents can get involved to influence how we make and shape our services. Some residents will want to become shareholders and vote on important decisions at general meetings, whilst others may just want to deal with issues that more directly affect them. The Chair encouraged anyone who wants to become involved to get in touch.
- 5.8 The Chair thanked Neil Coughlan, Michelle Baker, Moia Thorogood, Ken Davies and Marlene Carter for their commitment and efforts in the making of the resident video.

6. RESOLUTIONS – APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS OF THE ASSOCIATION

- 6.1 The Chair announced that the voting portal was now open for Resolutions numbered 1 to 6 and would close at the end of the Chief Executive’s address.
- 6.2 The Chair advised that the Board members were appointed following a rigorous recruitment process based on their skills, knowledge and experience and gave a brief summary of each candidate.
- 6.3 The Chair announced that the voting had closed and the votes had been counted. Shareholders of the Association AGREED the following appointments of Directors of the Association.

Resolution 1 – Hattie Llewelyn-Davies

Resolution 2 – Neil Coughlan

Resolution 3 – Alison Inman

Resolution 4 – Simon Jones

Resolution 5 – Malcolm O’Brien

Resolution 6 – Charlotte Smith

7. ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EMMA PALMER

- 7.1 The Chief Executive reported that Eastlight was successfully launched on 1 July 2020 and that the Regulator has indicated their trust in the organisation’s performance and awarded the highest rating for both governance and viability of G1/V1.

- 7.2 Work is now underway to integrate services so that all residents receive consistent and high-quality services.
- 7.3 Eastlight was created at a time that is incredibly difficult for everyone and the global pandemic continues to hold us in its grip. Eastlight's services were affected during lockdown and it was noted we have improved our call handling/call wait times and we will continue to work to do more. The bag log of repairs that we found ourselves with is reducing and the Chief Executive thanked residents for their patience. Importantly, all our statutory compliance work is up to date and ensuring resident safety.
- 7.4 The Chief Executive reported that it has been three months since the merger and we are starting to deliver on the merger promises. When former Colne homes become empty from November they will be made ready for new customers by our in-house repairs team and we are working towards getting the full repairs service across all of Eastlight's homes delivered by this team.
- 7.5 It was acknowledged that affordability and the cost of living in and running a home is very important and that the Board will meet on 24 September 2020 to start working through Eastlight's investment priorities. The Chief Executive thanked the 1,500 customers who responded to surveys to tell us what they think the Board should focus on.
- 7.6 The Chief Executive announced that our new Community Investment Director starts on 5 October 2020 and his first priorities will be to start to develop community support right across Eastlight's communities and to create the opportunities for customers to get more involved in our decision making.
- 7.7 The Chair announced that the voting portal was now open for Resolutions 7, 8 and 9 would close once the Executive Director Resources finished his address.

8. RESOLUTION 7 – PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF THE DIRECTORS' REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

- 8.1 The Executive Director for Resources/Company Secretary presented a summary of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020. The full audited financial statements have been published for the year and these are available to view on the Eastlight website. It was noted that these were published later than expected but the environment that we are currently working in and the completion of the merger meant the closure process took longer.
- 8.2 The Financial Statements demonstrated a strong financial position and foundation for the newly merged organisation. The end of the year figures were impacted by the COVID-19 virus at the beginning of lockdown which led to a number of expected sales being delayed into the current year. The level of speed on reinvestment in

existing homes was also higher in 2020. As a result, the average costs of service delivery have increased this year, mainly from reinvestment, but we continue to compare favourably with our peers.

9. RESOLUTION 8 AND 9 – APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS OF THE ASSOCIATION AND AUTHORITY TO THE BOARD TO AGREE THE AUDITOR’S FEES

- 9.1 Beever & Struthers are Eastlight’s auditors and completed the audit for this year and confirmed an unqualified (or clean opinion) on the accounts for the year. The Audit & Risk Committee and Board have reviewed the performance and are pleased to recommend their re-appointment as auditors.
- 9.2 **Resolution 8** - Shareholders of the Association AGREED that Beever & Struthers be reappointed as Eastlight’s external auditors.
- 9.3 **Resolution 9** – Shareholders of the Association AGREED that the Board be authorised to agree the auditor’s fees.

10. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SESSION

- 10.1 Residents raised a number of questions which were answered by members of the Leadership Team. The questions are listed at the end of the Minutes.

11. CLOSING REMARKS

- 11.1 The Chair closed the meeting by thanking everyone for attending Eastlight’s first AGM. The Chair also thanked the residents, Board members and staff who had worked so hard in the lead up to the creation of Eastlight whilst in the middle of a pandemic.

The meeting closed at 6.21 pm.

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ITEM 10 – QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Q1. What are Eastlight doing to keep residents safe against anti-social behaviour?

Eastlight work in partnership with local authorities to ensure that social housing is provided for those most in need. This approach runs alongside thorough assessments of an individual's requirements which enables us to understand the specific risks and any support requirements.

For residents who unfortunately experience anti-social behaviour Eastlight will work in partnership with key partners, such as the Police, to investigate and take action.

We have a two-tier risk assessment process which enables us to understand the incident and most importantly the impact it's having on the victim. We will always ensure that support for the most vulnerable is tailored to their specific needs and where possible we will find a solution. On some occasions we will offer alternative options such as mediation if the issue is not strictly anti-social behaviour.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges for addressing serious anti-social behaviour when it comes to legal enforcement due to government restrictions. However, we will continue to explore alternative measures to ensure that our customers do not have to endure anti-social behaviour at any level.

Q2. Is there a time schedule to carry out essential repairs to previously owned Colne housing properties to bring them up to the standards previously attained by Greenfields?

- and -

Q3. During the meeting it was mentioned that Eastlight Internal Repairs Service will cover all repairs. How soon will this apply to ex-Colne properties? Will we still have Fosters carrying out repairs at ex-Colne homes?

Plans to extend the in-house Repairs Team are ongoing with plans to roll out the in-house repairs service to all Eastlight customers in 2021. A specific date has not been set as we are still investigating the integration of IT systems which is necessary to deliver this.

There are plans to roll out a ‘home MOT’ service to all Eastlight customers, with a view of completing an ‘MOT’ on all Eastlight homes which have not had one previously within one year of roll out. The home MOT is a 38 core check of the home which includes checking of electrics, plumbing, carpentry and bricklaying components in one visit utilising a multiskilled team. Undertaking a preventative maintenance check enables us to consolidate multiple repairs appointments into one, saving the burden of several appointments which can be imposed on customers.

Q4 Does Eastlight endorse the illegal removal of tenants property from communal areas?

Eastlight does not endorse the theft of belongings from communal areas. Removal of belongings from a communal area will occur if they are causing a fire hazard. Removal of belongings from communal areas follows the standard process through notifications of removal and engaging with the owners if they can be identified. We will, however, enforce the Tenancy Agreement which states ‘Not to keep or store or allow household members or visitors to keep or store any items or possession in communal areas’.

We will, having given notice of our intentions to do so, follow our Tort procedure which is to remove any items kept or stored in communal areas if they are a fire safety hazard, or may cause a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or to others. We will generally store these items for 28 days before disposing of them, unless they are higher value items.

Q5. Have the Rules for Greenfields been changed for Eastlight?

The Rules adopted by Greenfields are still current and carried through to Eastlight. The only change has been to the name of the organisation when the merger took place. The Rules have been preserved and when any changes to the Rules are proposed, these will need to be considered and approved by shareholders at a general meeting.

Q6 How did the data breach occur in relation to resident information? How many residents were affected and what is Eastlight doing to make sure this does not occur again in the future?

- and -

Q7 A number of Colne Housing tenants' personal information was recently released to another Colne resident. How did this happen and how can we be sure this will not happen again?

On behalf of Eastlight, the Executive Director Resources apologised for the recent data breach that occurred and confirmed that circa 2,000 residents affected by the breach had been contacted. The data breach did not contain any sensitive personal data or bank details. Eastlight accept this should not have happened and are doing everything to make sure that it does not happen again.

A member of staff responded to a customer enquiry by emailing them a statement of their rent account and unfortunately the statement also mistakenly included account information relating to other residents. The customer who received the information contacted Eastlight immediately and has confirmed in writing that the information has been deleted.

Eastlight have commissioned an independent investigation which will identify any actions required and have notified the Information Commissioner's Office. A number of steps have already been implemented with changes made in how staff access the system and refresher training.

Q8. Are there plans for any infrastructure upgrades to estates without fibre internet connectivity?

Eastlight is committed to investing more in the community and to work with residents to ensure the improvements we undertake are what residents want. Fibre broadband is the responsibility of communications companies but we can support residents in trying to influence where this is provided.

Q9 Does the Board consider that the known financial impacts of COVID in terms of possible loss of income, may have an impact on rental increases in the next financial year, now Government capping has been removed?

Capping is still in place. There was a financial impact due to COVID which saw a delay in some sales being completed. The organisation has seen an increase in rent arrears and Eastlight is engaging with affected residents to support them. Due to lockdown restrictions we have seen a backlog in repairs and increased costs but we are meeting our commitments without the need to raise rents.

Q10. As Colne Housing is so much smaller than Greenfields how much notice will be taken of Colne residents within Eastlight?

Eastlight is one organisation and all residents will be taken notice of equally regardless of whether they were from former Greenfields or Colne.

Q11. Although we have merged into Eastlight Community Homes, how is it that I still feel like that I am very much Colne and don't see any changes as yet! How long or when can we expect to be one housing association?

It has only been three months since the merger took place and it will take a little time before residents begin to see the changes. Eastlight has appointed two new Directors who will commence in October and changes will be visible by the end of the year.

Q12. What are the percentage of properties which have council tenants?

There are no longer any Council tenants. A breakdown of our customers is as follows:

Legacy Greenfields

7827 General Needs (87.3%)
242 Shared Ownership (2.7%)
483 Leaseholders (5.4%)
409 Housing for Older People (4.6%)

Legacy Colne

2539 General Needs (74.8%)
196 Shared Ownership (5.8%)
201 Leaseholders (5.9%)
225 Over 55's (6.6%)
118 Supported (3.5%)
116 Intermediate Rents (3.4%)

Q13. How does the Board see those of us caught in COVID based delays for signoff/handover in terms of repairs?

Our new homes come with a 12-month defect liability period. During this period, the developer is responsible for putting right defects. At the end of the period we work with our customers and developer partners to ensure all defects are completed. Repairs to the property then become the responsibility of Eastlight. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the usual end of defects process could not happen. Since lockdown measures were eased, we have been working to complete the backlog of end of defects inspections. It should be noted that all urgent repairs reported during this period would be attended to, regardless of whether the home was within the defects liability period.

For those individuals who raised questions at the AGM using the on-line chat portal relating to personal issues and who provided contact details, we have responded directly to them.