



## **GREENFIELDS COMMUNITY HOUSING ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**held on Thursday 26 September 2019  
at 6.30pm at Greenfields House, Charter Way, Braintree**

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

### **1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

- 1.1 The Chair, Dale Butcher, welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and explained the housekeeping arrangements.

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Keith Carter (Co-opted Board Member), Cha Patel (proposed Board Member), Jo Savage (Co-opted Board Member) and Suzanne Wicks (Board member). The meeting was quorate for voting purposes.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous AGM held on 13 September 2018 were approved as an accurate record. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

### **4. ADDRESS BY THE CHAIR, DALE BUTCHER**

- 4.1 The Chair thanked everyone for their continuing support for Greenfields. As a Community Gateway organisation the AGM is an important opportunity for the Board to report back to its members on activities over the previous year and to acknowledge the efforts of those who strive hard to ensure Greenfields provides its residents with good services and supports our communities where we can.
- 4.2 Emma Palmer, Chief Executive, joined Greenfields in October 2018 and had brought a wealth of experience gained within the social housing sector in the East region. Emma will present the new strategic plan later in the meeting.
- 4.3 We have concluded our Good to Great Strategic Plan which saw Greenfields make great strides in providing better value for money services and in increasing the provision of affordable housing – through that period we completed 514 new homes and established a consistent annual programme of around 200 new homes per year.
- 4.4 The modern world, politically, economically and socially is extremely turbulent and the pace of change over recent years has been staggering. Elections, Brexit, new Housing Ministers and global uncertainty affect the housing and land markets. However, Greenfields has strong foundations and is well placed to take advantage of opportunities within our operating environment and meet those challenges.
- 4.5 The Board has taken steps to strengthen its governance structure and is committed to returning to the highest recognised standards at G1. A number of experienced individuals

have been recruited to strengthen the Board and the Governance and Remuneration Committee was formed to provide a clear focus on governance matters and we appointed a Senior Independent Director. We have worked collaboratively with the Regulator throughout the year to understand and address their concerns and they have visited Greenfields to meet with the Board and members of the Leadership Team to see for themselves the changes that have been implemented.

- 4.6 The Chair emphasised that resident involvement remains fundamental to Greenfields and welcomed ideas on how to attract greater tenant involvement.
- 4.7 The Chair thanked members of the Community Gateway Group (CGG) and all involved residents for their contributions and support of Greenfields. The Chair also thanked Board colleagues and in particular Helen Routledge who completed nine years as a Board Member and stood down from the Board in May 2019.

## **5. ADDRESS BY THE CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY GATEWAY GROUP (CGG), KEN DAVIES**

- 5.1 The Chair of the CGG gave a summary of the Group's activities during the year which included attending the government consultation on the social housing green paper and being involved in the consultation and helped to mould the new strategic plan.
- 5.2 CGG have been involved in the Rethinking Resident Involvement Task and Finish Group ensuring that resident involvement remains effective and relevant to all residents.
- 5.3 CGG participated in reviews of services that directly affect residents through various Task and Finish Groups including: anti-social behaviour review, fire and electrical safety policies and currently involved in the review of the aids and adaption service and Landlords consent.
- 5.4 Greenfields has continued to invest in personal development and training by developing an on-line training platform, facilitating one-to-ones with CGG members, attending and hosting TPAS events such as the one on customer service standards and various opportunities to network with other housing providers and their residents.
- 5.5 CGG have worked with the Greenfields Residents Groups to deliver rural roadshows in our more remote areas. We delivered six local community action plans and over 50 improvements across the three main areas North, South and Mid.
- 5.6 CGG were involved for the first time in feeding into the assurance and compliance work that goes into making sure Greenfields meet the regulatory and consumer standards.
- 5.7 CGG have had a busy year and been involved at all levels of Greenfields business and look forward to continuing to work with Greenfields in the future to ensure it fulfils its commitments laid out in the Strategic Plan up until 2025 and beyond.

## **6. RESOLUTIONS 1, 2, AND 3 – APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS OF THE ASSOCIATION**

- 6.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Governance) reported that during the year a Governance & Remuneration Committee was created to support the Board in upholding the highest standards of governance. The Committee developed a skills assessment of the skills required across the whole of the Board and where there are vacancies then the Committee use this to advertise for and seek the person with the most appropriate skills and experience mix to join the Board. This includes resident members who bring experience as a service user in particular as well as other areas. The Board feel strongly

about resident Board membership and continue to involve residents as members on the Board.

6.2 It was reported that Helen Routledge had retired as a Director of the Association after nine years and this had resulted in a vacancy on the Board and Audit Committee and a recruitment exercise had been undertaken.

6.3 Members of the Association were requested to vote on the appointment of Directors of the Association (83 proxy votes had been received and were included in the voting process). Members of the Association AGREED the following appointments of Directors of the Association:

**Resolution 1** – Dale Butcher

**Resolution 2** – Flip Hornby

**Resolution 3** – Cha Patel

## **7. ANNOUNCEMENT OF COMMUNITY GATEWAY GROUP (CGG) MEMBERS**

7.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Governance) explained that due to the Rethinking Resident Involvement review, no elections for new members of the CGG had taken place this year. There are three current CGG members who reach their three-year anniversary and are required to retire by rotation under the Terms of Reference: Susan Green, Cliff Livermore and Ann Woods. One member, Grahaem Ball, Leaseholder representative, reached nine years service. For continuity, the CGG have recommended re-appointment of these members and in the circumstances of Grahaem Ball an exceptional extension of one further year. The Board has supported the CGG's recommendation that these members are re-appointed and this is permitted and reported for information...

## **8. ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EMMA PALMER**

8.1 The Chief Executive announced she is approaching the end of her first year at Greenfields and thanked staff and residents for their support.

8.2 The new strategy, Building Communities Together has put our purpose 'provide homes, empower and invest in people and communities' at its core alongside our aim to improve lives.

8.3 Building Communities together is a real commitment to investment in north Essex. We will be investing £73m across the life of the strategy in existing homes. We are also planning to increase our current rate of 200 homes a year to 350 homes a year over the life of the strategy.

8.4 Greenfields is currently in discussion with Colne Housing about a potential partnership opportunity. We are two innovative and locally focussed housing associations that want to create a pioneering organisation that delivers the best services in the best way. We want to work with residents to ensure that the proposed partnership will be a success from day one.

8.5 The Chief Executive gave assurance that the potential merger would not be reducing investment in existing homes and that Greenfields will not be looking to move away from the Gateway model – the Gateway model is at the heart of our offer and why Colne selected Greenfields.

8.6 Our new Rant & Rave resident feedback facility is launched this month. It is designed to make it easier for residents to give feedback and will give Greenfields much more information on how our residents think and feel about what we do. It demonstrates the

commitment to improve what we hear from residents and our desire to use this information to improve our services and your homes.

8.7 The Chief Executive thanked all involved residents who volunteer their time and expertise.

**9. RESOLUTION 4 – PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF THE DIRECTORS’ REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019**

9.1 A summary of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 was available at the meeting. Copies of the full accounts are available on the website and upon request. The Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 demonstrated the on-going financial strength and viability of Greenfields.

9.2 **Resolution 4** – Members of the Association AGREED to adopt the Directors’ Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 and the report of the Auditors.

**10. RESOLUTIONS 5 AND 6 – APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS OF THE ASSOCIATION**

10.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Governance) explained that Beever and Struthers were appointed in 2017 and have now completed their second audit and issued an unqualified audit opinion.

10.2 **Resolution 5** – Members of the Association AGREED that Beever and Struthers be reappointed as Greenfields’ external Auditors.

10.3 **Resolution 6** – Members of the Association AGREED that the Board be authorised to set the remuneration of the Auditors.

**11. QUESTION TIME**

11.1 Members of the Association and residents raised a number of questions which were answered by members of the Board and Leadership Team. The questions are listed at the end of the Minutes.

**12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

12.1 The Executive Director (Housing & Customer Services) explained that nominations had been sought from involved residents and members of staff for Greenfields’ Charity of the Year 2020. Votes had been cast (137 in total) and Essex Air Ambulance had been selected as Greenfields’ Charity of the Year 2020.

**13. CLOSING REMARKS**

13.1 The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm.

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**ITEM 11 – QUESTION TIME**

**Q1. Why does the pension provisions seem so low in the financial statements?**  
The main pension fund is managed by Essex County Council, the total value of the fund is not included in Greenfields financial statements but we do include the provision for the contributions that are needed to meet pension commitments. This is assessed by an actuary and is around £5.5million.

**Q1a. Is the Board happy with that?**  
Yes, the Board has taken separate advice on the scheme and is comfortable that the commitment is reasonable and affordable. The scheme has been closed to new employees to limit the cost.

**Q2 Do you manage the pension scheme yourself?**  
The scheme is managed by Essex County Council. There is also a defined contribution scheme which is a requirement and this is managed by a specialist manager..

**Q3 If we merge with Colne are we going to remain a Community Gateway organisation?**  
Greenfields will retain the Gateway approach and we have made clear that this will not change.

**Q4 There is not enough parking. Can we concrete over the grass to create more parking?**  
This is an issue across all our stock. We have made improvements but recognise that we do need to look further into this matter. We are looking at the possibility of using old garage sites to increase parking.

**Comment We're fed up with cars being dumped on the estate**  
Reply: Greenfields cannot solve these problems alone and we work with the Essex County Council and Braintree District Council.

**Q4a As we're part of a Gateway, why can't residents work together in a Task and Finish Group and work with others to see what can be done?**  
We would welcome and support that.

**Q5 Next year can we have the AGM at the weekend to boost attendance?**  
We started the AGM an hour later this year to allow people to attend after work and attendance is still low. It is not clear that a weekend meeting would increase attendance – we will continue to review and consider how we hold future AGMs.

**Q6 Will staffing levels change with the Colne merger? Will there be redundancies?**  
We haven't explored this yet but greater value comes from increased capacity and not from making staff cuts. We are not looking to make savings from staffing cuts.

- Q7**            **You are stretched across the County. Do you need more staff?**  
We recognise that our number of homes is growing. We are looking at ways in which we can continue to support all of our customers' needs including our staff team structure and size.
- Q8**            **When jobs are not completed quickly, you need to communicate with us about what is happening.**  
We try to keep residents informed about appointments. You can now log on and chase your appointment. We want to improve Right First Time and will be consulting CGG on this.
- Q9**            **Another housing association is looking to build social housing in my ward. Why aren't Greenfields building there?**  
We do consider a wide range of opportunities across the district but it is a competitive bidding process and we don't always win and this leads to a mix of housing providers.
- Q10**          **The use of abbreviations is excessive eg. CGG Please be mindful of abbreviations in future**  
Agreed and noted