

Minutes of a meeting of the SHAREHOLDER MEETING on Thursday 15 November 2018

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Committee members:

Councillor Brown
Councillor Hayes
Councillor Rowley

Councillor Chapman
Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Turner

Officers:

Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive
Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer
Tim Sadler, Chair of the Board / Executive Director Sustainable City
Simon Howick, Managing Director, Trading Companies
Aled Bath, Finance Director
Lindsay Cane, Legal Services Manager / Company Secretary
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer
Stefan Robinson, Scrutiny Officer

Apologies:

Councillors: Linda Smith, Upton, Simm and Clarkson sent apologies.

14. Declarations of interest

None.

15. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Board resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 02 August 2018 as a true and accurate record.

16. Scrutiny recommendations

The Scrutiny Officer reminded the Shareholder that no specific recommendations had come from the Companies Scrutiny Panel held earlier in the week. The Panel had however endorsed the proposal for the appointment of Non-Executive Directors.

The Chair raised the question of the sequencing of the scrutiny function in relation to the companies. The practice in relation to normal Council business was for scrutiny to precede the deliberations and decisions of the Executive. In the case of the companies there may be merit in changing the order, not least because the Shareholder, unlike the Executive, would rarely be making major decisions. The Monitoring Officer advised that any changes to the scrutiny arrangements would have to be made by the Council and not the Executive.

The Chair of the Board of Directors said that some preliminary thought had been given to the matter and agreed to have further discussions with the Chair and Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

17. Managing Director's Half Year Performance Report

The companies remained on target to deliver the MTFP. The Managing Director was pleased to report the companies' strong performance for the first half year, as illustrated by Appendix 1 to his report. Particular attention was starting to be paid to customer service matters. Whilst there appears to be high satisfaction with the quality of repairs, qualitative customer service feedback points to areas for improvement, such as better communication with customers, the time taken to complete repairs and also managing customer expectations more effectively. Repair work was often broken into two phases, a preliminary visit by a surveyor, followed up by the work itself. The ambition was to combine the two wherever possible. Finding means of getting customers to identify the building difficulties they were facing with accuracy was important and some self-help advice was available.

A major change programme was underway in Building Services. A more robust qualitative view of City cleanliness was desirable and thought was being given to securing this via OxClean, the Citizen's panel or perhaps the City Ambassadors could help obtain views from visitors.

Certain properties generated disproportionate amounts of work, principally as a result of their residents and or state of the buildings. With the help of GIS mapping it was intended to identify these 'hot' properties and so take steps to ameliorate the disproportionate demand they cause.

Health and Safety was recognised as being of crucial importance and was being managed robustly. A Health & Safety Committee had recently been established and benefitted from a strong and positive relationship with the unions. There was currently a focus on the health and safety culture and a health and safety week was planned in two weeks' time.

Speaking about progress against the companies' 4 key objectives for 2018/19 the Managing Director said the much needed change programme for Building Services was progressing well. The processes surrounding repairs and maintenance could be improved, as recognised by the employees, and technology would have a significant part to play in that. There was a wish to increase the capacity for construction work and so maximise the work which could be done for the council.

Responding to the Managing Director's report the following observations were made among others.

- The overall picture at this point of the year was very positive with the companies demonstrating organisational and financial resilience
- This was particularly so in the context of the companies' first year of operation and the changes consequent upon that
- The performance indicators were "traditional" and what might be expected of an in-house organisation; thought should perhaps be given to indicators better suited to an arms' length organisation.
- The value of some indicators (eg satisfaction with line painting) was questioned
- Should void turnaround target times be tighter?

- The Managing Director said that all issues to do with indicators would be addressed by the development of a balanced scorecard.
- It was agreed that the time to celebrate the companies success more widely would be at the end of the financial year.
- The Chief Executive said while it was right to acknowledge the companies' success at this point it should be remembered that the Council had been at pains to provide an environment which would facilitate that success in the early days of operation.
- The Chair asked for thanks to be passed to all staff on behalf of the Shareholder

18. Non Executive Directors

The Executive Director of Sustainable City spoke to the previously distributed paper. The Board believed that it was timely to recommend the appointment of some Non-Executive Directors (NEDs). The accompanying paper set out the Council's view on the need to engage NEDs and a framework for their recruitment and selection.

The Shareholder resolved to agree that:

1. NEDs should be appointed;
2. The number to be appointed should be driven by an analysis of the skills needed;
3. A sub-committee of the Shareholder should take part in the recruitment and selection process;
4. The sub-committee to comprise Councillor Chapman and such other members of the Shareholder group as agreed by the Chair;
5. NEDs should receive a level of remuneration commensurate with their skill so as to ensure recruitment of candidates of the desired calibre ; and
6. The next steps in the process to be worked up by the Directors and advisers in consultation with the Chair and for it to be agreed before the next meeting of the Shareholder.

19. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 07 March at 6.00pm.

20. Matters Exempt From Publication

The Shareholder resolved that, in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 4 (2) (b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

21. Finance Director's Half Year report

This report was considered in confidential session.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.30 pm

Chair

Date: 07 March 2019

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