

Board Update

November 2010.

V2C's board met on Monday 15th November at the Bryncethin offices.

Board Training Item

Steve Curry (Community Regeneration Manager) and Marie Kiff (Customer Engagement Officer) gave the Board a presentation on the customer engagement strategy and activities currently being undertaken by V2C. They highlighted the range of involvement opportunities from the formal work of the Community Forum and its working Groups, through the Mystery Shopping Panel to the more informal and ad hoc contributions from customers via surveys etc.

The number of customers taking an active involvement in the business is on the increase (over 500 so far this year alone) but just as importantly the quality of the contributions has also significantly improved over recent years – meaning that tenants are having a much bigger influence on how the business is run.

Election of Board Chair and Vice Chair and Members of the Audit & Remuneration Committee

As this was the first meeting following the AGM in September the Board was required to fill certain posts. Roger Thomas was re-elected as Chair and Sue Rhodes as Vice Chair.

Nia Roblin was elected as Chair of the Audit & Remuneration Committee with membership being made up of Linda Trigg, Brian Williams, Steve Smith, Sue Rhodes and Roger Thomas.

Complaints Policy and Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

The current Complaints Policy was due for routine review and the opportunity had arisen to change our policy to reflect the model policy being proposed by the Public Services Ombudsman. In addition to approving this change, the Board also adopted a new policy (on the Ombudsman's recommendation) setting out how Unreasonable Behaviour by complainants and customers would be managed by the Association.

Change to Main Telephone Number

Andrew Alsept (Business Improvement Manager) presented a report on progress at integrating the customer service teams with the recommendation that V2C move from its current structure of four published, external telephone numbers to a single, more memorable one. This would enable calls to be answered more quickly by members of the Customer Service Team and help customers more easily identify which section they needed to contact.

It was agreed to pursue this option using the new 0300 'non-geographic' prefix that would allow customers to contact us using local rates or their standard mobile phone package costs. This option would require V2C to pay a proportion of the cost of each call received.

Management Accounts to September 30th 2010

Alun Rawlins (Finance Director) presented the management accounts as at the half year point: 30th September 2010. Income on the Property Revenue Account (our main trading account) was £9.9m and very close (99.5%) to the budget expectations. Costs to date were £9.4m and we had spent less (94.45%) than expected. This was mainly due to an underspend in the Planned Repairs and Improvement area (caused by the hiatus when Connaught went into receivership at the end of the summer) but we expect this work to be back on track by the end of March 2011.

The Board discussed how the number of Right to Buys had decreased over recent years (we have only sold one property so far this year) and how we need to amend the business plan to take account of the loss of this planned income.

Marketing & PR Strategy

The Board approved the draft Marketing & PR Strategy that had been developed to co-ordinate the publicity work V2C does to inform and influence people outside of the organisation. The Strategy covers five key areas: Press/Media Enquiries, Customer Communications, Local Profile, National Profile and Employer Profile. An Action Plan accompanies each of these areas and regular reports will be made on progress and reactions to our Marketing and PR activities.

Strategic Plan Update

Stephen Cook (Chief Executive) reviewed progress against the Strategic Plan with the Board. Overall progress against the nine Strategic Priorities was good at

the half year stage with only one or two minor disappointments. The Strategic Priorities and the tasks planned for this year are set out in full in the latest version of the Strategic Plan 2009-14, now available on the V2C website.

Review of External Operating Environment.

This is a regular item on the Board agenda and gives the Board a chance to consider and discuss issues that are affecting V2C or the environment in which it is operating. Discussion topics at this meeting included: Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) elections in 2011, the Westminster government Review of Housing and Welfare Benefits, the withdrawal of Social Housing Grant to build new homes for rent, the proposals by WAG to change how housing association rents are set, the impact of the recession on tenants and their families and the new Single Equalities Act that became law on 1st October 2010.

Approvals

The Board approved a number of routine items such as Sharemember Applications, Use of the Seal for large contracts/transactions and the minutes of the previous meeting.

Information Items

The Board also received two reports for information.

The first related to the performance of the in-house Housing Repairs Service, which overall showed good levels of performance. The income and expenditure for the service is within budget and overall customer satisfaction with the in-house workforce stands at 94%.

The second report updated the Board on its Treasury Management Policy: how it borrows and invests the money used to run the business. For the first six months of this financial year (April - September 2010) V2C has paid just over half a million pounds interest on the total £27m borrowed. Income received from a number of short term investments has totalled £39,000 so far this year.

The meeting lasted nearly 3 hours and finished at 8.50pm.