

Board Update

June 2011.

V2C's board met on Monday 13th June at the Bryncethin offices.

Estates Management Strategy

Steve Curry (Community Regeneration Manager) and *Clive Thomas* (Estates Team Leader) gave a presentation to the Board on the work carried out to date to draft an Estates Management Policy. They highlighted some of the recent successes, (Pyle Allotment Scheme, Marlas/Wildmill grounds maintenance Social Enterprise) and discussed some of the ambitions linked to how we might manage the public open space in our ownership. They set out a forward thinking proposal that would involve local communities in deciding how the open space could be managed and that would support local people into work, improve the health and well-being of residents generally, increase the opportunity for 'natural' play space for children and address the wider 'green' agenda.

The Board was very supportive of these ideas, and an Estates Management Strategy will now be prepared along these lines for the Board to consider at a future meeting.

Management of Trees

Nigel Draper (Head of neighbourhoods) introduced this report that recommended a scheme for V2C to better manage the trees that it has in its ownership, primarily within public open spaces. The Board agreed to the proposals that will see an arboriculture consultant inspect our trees on a two-yearly basis and provide a prioritised schedule of maintenance works required. The Board agreed that the overriding aim was to preserve as many trees in as healthy a condition as possible, recognising the contribution they make to both the landscape and the environment.

Rent Consultation (Welsh Government)

Alun Rawlins (Finance Director) gave a presentation to the Board on the proposed changes to how rents are set for Housing Associations and Local Authorities. He explained that the Welsh Government has issued a consultation paper with responses due back by 23rd June. The exact details of the scheme will undoubtedly change over the coming weeks and months, but currently relates to

an area's average earnings and housing market, with an adjustment for the energy efficiency of each landlord's homes.

When taking the general principles into account it seems that V2C might be 'worse off' by between £400,000 and £150,000 per year if rent increases were limited in line with the current proposals. This would obviously have an effect on our ability to deliver the same level of services and maintenance programmes that we currently do (and have planned for future years). The Welsh Government has built in 'safeguards' to ensure that associations' business plans and promises to tenants will not be undermined.

The Board discussed the rationale for the rent review and asked the Chief Executive to respond to the consultation document seeking further clarification in certain areas and suggesting that implementation be deferred from April 2012 to ensure that the implications for tenants and landlords can be properly discussed and understood.

Self Assessment Feedback

Stephen Cook (Chief Executive) gave a presentation to the Board on the feedback received from the recent survey of corporate partners and stakeholders. Overall the feedback was very positive, and the Board discussed some of the areas where improvements had been suggested: better partnership working around health, wellbeing and social care; improved communications (especially putting good news stories into the public eye); and, developing tenant influence and scrutiny further.

The Board also discussed the letter received from the Regulator that offered a view on progress to date with completing our Self Assessment. Overall progress was noted to be good and on the right track, and a meeting has been arranged with the Senior Regulation Manager to discuss how the Board's self assessment will now be used to review V2C's Strategic Plan and help inform the Welsh Government's regulatory assessment of our performance later in the year.

Board Recruitment – Succession Planning

The Board continued its preparations to have a full complement of Board Members with relevant skills in place ahead of the AGM in September. The co-option of two new Board Members (an HR professional and a Finance/Audit professional) was agreed in principle.

The Board also considered the forthcoming tenant election process and agreed that when seeking expressions of interest from tenant share members it would highlight the current shortage of skills/experience on the Board in the areas of

development, community regeneration, business management and marketing/PR.

The Council has nominated its three Board Members (with two new appointments), and the Board agreed that it would be appropriate for the existing Council Board members to serve until the AGM in September.

Board Approvals

Three items were presented to the Board for approval, and these were:

- Use of the company seal for contracts signed
- Strategic Risk Map
- Minutes of the previous meeting

The meeting lasted approximately three and a half hours and finished at 9.30pm.