BITMO Board Strategy Away Day

Notes

Saturday 30th August 2025 10am – 4pm

Oulton Hall, Rothwell, Leeds

Attendees: Harry Austin\*, Jean Burton\*, Trevor Brown\*, John Oddy\*, Emma Walkley\*, Kate Youngs\*\*, Sherie Sweeney\*\*, Stephen Brockley\*\*, Paul Truswell\*, Wayne Dixon\*, Angela Shaw\*\*, John Newbould\*\*, Deborah Kelly^, Peter Olver^, Curtis Jenner^, Peter Sutton^, Lesley Fothergill^, Tracey McGarry^.

Guest: Blase Lambert

\* Board member, \*\* Potential Board member, ^ staff

1. Scene Setting

Last year the board renewed its mission and objectives to create a safer stronger greener Belle Isle where people want to live and focus on investing in peoples homes, support people to live well, and build tenant control. We have been working on developing plans around this in the months since this change. The away day provides the opportunity to further reflect on where we are as an organisation and where we are heading.

An away day provides the time and opportunity for the Board to consider strategic aims and provide guidance to the management team on their priorities for the coming years.

We are in a relatively good financial position, but there is an existential threat in terms of the management fee LCC pay. . LCC want to reduce our management fee, and we will defend our position on this. We believe that LCC are not paying sufficient because they do not cover:

* 100% of finance and audit costs, HR costs (including payroll and underwriting)
* Costs of major repairs or incidental expenses arising from insurable property events such as fires (monies coming from existing LCC capital scheme budgets or from BITMO revenue)

We usually generate a small surplus, and plan to continue to do so. We have £2m cash in reserves. We discussed the importance of reducing the excess amount held in reserves, over and above reserve policy requirements, by spending on projects of benefit to the community.

1. MMA

Blase Lambert form the Confederation of Cooperative Housing delivered an informative presentation on the responsibilities and freedoms of the Modular Management Agreement. For those Board members who are familiar with the MMA it was useful to be reminded that the MMA is a contract, that can be varied, and that the TMO has choices in the responsibilities it takes on and the freedoms it chooses. For those members and guests who were not familiar with the MMA, it was a very important introduction to BITMO’s guiding framework.

Key issues that emerged through discussion included:

* Should we expect that the full rental income for the stock we managed is paid to BITMO, with us reimbursing LCC for costs they meet? This would be a fundamental change in the relationship with LCC, but was within the scope of the MMA. One option is to ask for interest on the theoretical average rental income that may be held.
* Are there some maintenance responsibilities that we want to pass back to Leeds because the risks are too great or the arrangements not working well? For example fire safety and periodic electrical inspections? Damp and Mould? Reductions in workload and liabilities need to be balanced against potential reductions in income.
* Are there some freedoms we want to establish such as varying the tenancy agreement? Being responsible for court action in relation to ALL tenancy breaches, including commissioning and using legal services ourselves?
* Do we want to continue to have two nominees from LCC with full voting rights on the Board?

We are establishing an MMA working group to move forward on discussion around the MMA with LCC.

1. Succession Planning

Board had requested a discussion about succession planning in BITMO. The situation is that the majority of the Management Team have expressed that they are likely to leave in the next five years, and valuable knowledge skills and experience will be lost. Continuity of skills knowledge and experience are important to the ongoing success of the organisation. Any significant change in personnel at a senior level has ramifications across and throughout the organisation, as people adapt to the change created, and new leaders introduce new ideas, ways of working and priorities.

Succession is also important in terms of the Board. Continuity is important, established commitment and attendance are important, so too are fresh ideas. We are working hard to interest people in becoming Board members and equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need to lead the organisation into the future.

We are working hard to develop our staff, to give them exposure to more than their “day jobs”, establish cross team initiatives such as Local Pride, ASB action days, and the Senior Officers Group that works on ways of working issues across the organisation. We are also working hard to provide training and qualification routes to individuals who want to progress their careers.

1. What do the Board want to spend more money on?

We discussed options for what the Board want to see more of, with the understanding that more of something means spending more money, and that money would come from reserves. In the table below we have added this to the ideas BITMO staff had.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Cyclical gutter clearing programme  Tree survey and asset map  Fencing  Public art project  Accelerating thermal efficiency programmes  Option appraisal re air and ground source heat pumps.  Tool library | Enhanced plastering standard  Enhanced void standard  Internal deco of communal areas  Parking survey  Enhanced grounds maintenance service  Increased caretaking team  Environmental improvements (bins, benches,etc) | Garage sites  Communal gardens  Enhanced ASB service  Accelerated roofing programme  Food growing  Food preparation  Dog poo bins  Into work skills |

1. Next steps

We will work up responses to the ideas captured in the table above and present this to the Finance Committee and the Board following the AGM.