

## **LEASE - The Leasehold Advisory Service**

### **Minutes of the Board Meeting held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 online via Microsoft Teams**

#### **Present:**

Martin Boyd (MB) Victoria Elvidge (VE)

#### **In attendance:**

Alex Powell (AP) (Interim CEO), Nicolette Davis (Note taker)

**Observer:** Malachy O'Grady (MO), Melanie Harris (MH), (DLUHC) Ella Norman (EN) LEASE Staff Member

#### **1.0 2023/11/1 Welcome and apologies for absence**

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies.

#### **2.0 2023/11/2 Declarations of Interests**

2.1 MB declared that he is Chair of Trustees for Leasehold Knowledge Partnership (LKP), he is also Chair of the RMC at Charter Quay, Kingston.

2.2 VE declared that she is on the Board of Westminster Community Homes, she is also a long leaseholder.

#### **3.0 2023/11/3 Confirmation of the Board meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

3.1 The Minutes of the Board meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were approved as a true and accurate copy. There were no matters arising from the last meeting.

#### **4.0 2023/11/04 An oral update from the Chair**

4.1 The Chair notified the Board that the appointments of the Non-Executive Directors (NED's) has been moved forward and it is hoped that interviews will take place next month with a view to NED's been in place by the beginning of January.

4.2 MB and AP will be meeting on Thursday to discuss amongst other things updating the Articles of Association to include words relating to residential leasehold.

4.3 MB requested from MH a copy of this year's budget and last year's management accounts; ND confirmed that the accounts software package that LEASE use is Xero. **(MH ACTION)**. MB informed the Board he an AP will be preparing budgets.

4.4 AP notified the Board that he would like to upgrade employee laptops, take a closer look at the telephone and IT support systems currently in place, and review the performance and service level agreement of the current telephone contract. In discussions with employees, concerns were raised about both IT and the telephone system.

4.5 MB notified the Board that staff had raised concerns about a lack of awareness among leaseholders of the advice offered by LEASE. MB suggested that the organisation's marketing needs to be increased and that he would brainstorm ideas for engagement with Central Government, Local government, and social landlords. He would also like to hold meetings with other leaseholder support groups to see how LEASE can engage with them more efficiently.

#### **5.0 2023/11/5 Oral Update from Accounting Officer & CEO on our approach to a new Business Plan**

5.1 AP notified the Board that he has been meeting with staff and noted that LEASE is a phenomenal organisation, the employees are a committed group of skilled professionals, who are both ambitious and committed to helping leaseholders. He recognised that the organisation has been in limbo and suggested that now is a great opportunity for the organisation to move forward as comprehensively as possible with the involvement of staff, he advised that a production of a business plan for the next financial year and 3 years onwards is the best way to get this accomplished.

The business plan will help galvanise and shape the organisation; the following 3 main areas were proposed:

1. Modernisation and transformation
2. How we provide advice
3. How we are a leader within the sector and how we both engage and advocate within the leasehold sector

AP suggested making LEASE leaders in the sector, looking at what changes or adjustments, if necessary are needed to create the look of LEASE, ensuring that the organisation has the right systems in place to best support both staff and its customers, updating performance indicators and nuances to give advisers more flexibility to advise more effectively. If we are to raise the profile of the organisation, that would generate greater demand, we would need to think about what training should be offered to employees, we would need to look at the capacity and capability of our staff. Data and anecdotal information would need to be analysed, exploring the best ways to share this information with Central Government and others in the sector.

MB suggested that LEASE should not only advise on the legal aspects, but signpost clients to other support, the solution does not always have to be legal, which can be costly.

## **6.0 2023/11/6 Review of Performance Report**

- 6.1 The Board raised concern about the customer satisfaction, and suggested that the matrix used should be reviewed, to allow clients to give feedback on the customer service aspect of LEASE but also feedback on the law.
- 6.2 It was noted that several organisations had requested the sharing of data, between organisations, such as the difficulty around the building safety fund application process. The Managing Agents Trade Body are willing to share some of their data, we need to look at what data we can share with them and Government.
- 6.3 AP notified the Board that he will be examining the user journey and making some changes. He proposed that we have a case management system in place that can look at trends that can be shared with others and Government to inform them of any issues that arise. Over the next couple of months, we will look at LEASE's data capacity.

## **7.0 2023/11/7 Any Other Business**

- 7.1 VE notified the Board that both her and Nicholas Kissen (Senior Adviser), are speaking at a conference on 22 November 2023 on building safety and social housing.
- 7.2 EN provided the following observations of the meeting:

EN explained that as a lease is a contract, she stated that the system automatically signposts people into dispute, but most of our clients do not have the money for this action, so their other options are mediation or ADR which too is expensive, without money and resources clients are unable to get redress.

There is the Property Redress Scheme which is not very effective.

EN suggested purchasers are made aware of LEASE at the inception of their purchase, so at that point they are educated about leasehold, for instance by placing a note at the bottom of the online property information form signposting purchasers to LEASE for further information.

EN commented that the customer survey asks the wrong questions. A customer who states that they were not happy with advice that they received, might have been unhappy with the law, rather than the quality of the advice.

It was agreed that the WOW awards would be reviewed, and it was suggested that a more fitting accreditation system is implemented, one that recognises the legal advice that is given and the research that is carried out.

AP reminded the Board that once we have a full board there are some formal reporting that we need to go through, such as the accounts.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 12.10.

**Next meeting date and time Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 at 11.30**