

APPENDIX 2

Key Issues Raised at the Meeting held between BBCHA, LHT and the Community RE the proposed BBCHA Transfer of Engagement to LHT

Below is a summary of the discussions held with the BBCHA Community at a meeting on Thursday 18th June 2015 at The Chapel, Beechwood Drive, Beechwood in respect of the proposal for BBCHA to undertake a transfer of engagement to LHT. Officers from the Council were present to capture the key issues raised. These notes are a reflection of the discussions and are set out to inform members of the key concerns and the responses in order for Cabinet to make an informed decision.

Notes From BBCHA Meeting in the Community

BBCHA asked for a Local Community Member of the Estate to chair the meeting to ensure that all parties got the opportunity to raise and discuss any concerns. Officers from the Council were present to observe the concerns raised by those present to report back to Cabinet for them to consider in any final decision made. Ward members along with a Board member were also present. A total of 16 people attend the meeting, consisting of 9 tenants of BBCHA, 6 owner occupiers and 1 tenant of another registered provider who lived on the estate.

The Lead Officer for BBCHA set out the background on austerity measures BBCHA were facing and the Government policy resulting in the environment that BBCHA now find themselves currently in. The background to the financial situation was set and the clear difficulties which BBCHA are in to secure long term investment and delivery of services for the benefit of the community. The process and options which were considered by the Board were set out and the reasons why the option to transfer to LHT was approved by the BBCHA Board to secure long term investment and security for the tenants of BBCHA and the community as a whole.

All who attended were advised of the petitions which had been received by Council and the Lead Officer addressed the concerns that had been raised through these.

Queries raised at the meeting included:-

Will the estate come under Liverpool Council as they had heard that Joe Anderson was talking on the radio and it seemed that this was a done deal?

No. Neither BBCHA nor LHT are governed by any Council and they are organisations in their own right. There are a number of other registered providers

who have the word Liverpool in their company name e.g. Liverpool Mutual Homes and South Liverpool Housing Trust which have stock in the Liverpool Area. It may be the particular radio talk was about one of these organisations.

Will we be better off? Is this the best offer with LHT?

Yes. At present there is a covenant from Barclays Bank which restricts BBCHA on what it can spend so this limits what they can spend on investment. The banks do this to protect themselves and have comfort that they will get their loans paid back. It is proposed LHT will pay this off and then the money can be released to spend on investment in homes and the surrounding area.

Why are homes being remortgaged?

The homes are not being remortgaged; they were mortgaged at the point the stock transferred from Wirral Council back in 2005 and this was to fund the stock transfer process and investment of the stock.

Are you bankrupt? Is this why you have to transfer?

BBCHA is not bankrupt. The transfer is protecting the position of the estate and company. Income is under threat; empties have increased costs have increased. BBCHA is a small organisation and can't absorb costs like larger companies can.

Why can't you tackle the vacant pubs on the estate? Are these earmarked for Housing? If you can't get the pubs off the owners will it still be viable to build?

The pubs are owned by private owners and the Council has been working with them and doing work on enforcement for fly tipping. It is intended that LHT would work with these private owners to address the unused sites and if agreement can be reached for them to sell the sites then they would be developed for new homes. As part of the proposal the whole estate would be to assess land available from the pub sites, old garage sites and other land. These would all be looked at for a range of solutions such as housing and looking at improving the landscape/greenspace on the estate.

Why do you need to build more homes?

To offer a greater choice on the estate as there are limited options for people who need to move to smaller accommodation, so it is meeting needs.

Don't we have the right to demerge from the Group?

BBCHA can demerge from the Symphony Group but the regulator won't agree to this as they will say BBCHA is already in a stable group and it would cost a significant amount of money for this to be undertaken which means less again to invest in the area and services. The choice of who potentially could be an alternative is very restricted and this is not because of LHT or BBCHA but it is set by the

regulator/Government. This process of transfer is not the same as the old stock transfer so it is not a beauty contest or a right to vote.

Will the BBCHA logo change and be on the office, who will be in charge and will there be a competition to design a new logo?

If LHT Take Over will you close the local office?

LHT would take over the stock and office and their logo would be used. LHT have given assurances that there are no plans to close down the local office, they have given firm confirmation that for the next 5 years they would not close the office. LHT could not give any firm guarantees for in 15-20 years which no one could, due to the nature of not knowing what in the future may impact on this.

Many of the Units and Shops are on peppercorn rents to support local businesses, will they stay the same or will they be on one rent/will they increase in the long term?

Is it feasible for people to meet with other areas to get comfort/reassurance ?

BBCHA confirmed that all the commercial premises/shops have been sent letters confirming that all the current rights and protection they have now in their lease will remain the same and LHT will honour this, it is part of the transfer. LHT gave reassurances that they have worked with other businesses in areas where they own buildings and have arrangements in place and if the shops are unviable then they have looked at renewing leases on not increasing rent where businesses have struggled but they are meeting a fundamental service for the community.

LHT were more than happy for anyone who was interested for people to talk to other businesses who they have worked with.

Three questions were asked that did not directly related to the proposals being discussed and have not been included in this note.