

Company Number 05564649
A Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England

St Leger Homes of Doncaster Limited

BOARD MEETING

1 FEBRUARY 2006

Present

Mr Sidney Hall, Mr James Parkin, Mrs Lyn Ralph (Vice Chair), Mr Charles Wyatt, Councillor George Beck, Councillor Stuart Hardy, Councillor Joe Blackham (Vice Chair), Mr Peter Chapman (Chair), Mrs Kate Radovanovic, Ms Gill Taylor, Mr John Young.

In Attendance

Mr Martin Musgrave (Chief Executive), Mr Keith Miller, Ms Linda Milan, Ms Mandy Cockburn-Powell, Ms Janet Clarke, Ms Judith Jones, Mr Alan Crowder (Pinnacle), Ms Janis Dean (Housing Consultancy Partnership).

Apologies and Quorum

Councillor Paul Coddington, Councillor Margaret Ward, Brendalyn Langshaw, Mrs Val Hartley.

1.1 It was noted that a quorum was present. Mr Peter Chapman chaired the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest by Board Members

2.1 There were no declarations of interest by the Board.

3. Minutes of the meeting of 7 December 2005 and matters arising

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2005 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3.2 There were no matters arising.

4. Exception Report and approval for December Board Policies

4.1 Alan Crowder; Consultant from Pinnacle; presented the Board with an exception report on policies brought before the Board at December's meeting. The Board agreed to note the amendments.

4.2 November and December policies have been sent to the SJC for them to distribute amongst TARA's for further consultation.

5. Chief Executive Report

- 5.1 **New Appointments** – Martin Musgrave, Chief Executive (CEO) introduced and asked the board to welcome Judith Jones, new Director of Customer Services. He explained that this was part of the plan of ensuring St Leger Homes (SLH) developed a strong management team. Paul Hopkinson the new Director of Property Services is starting work on Monday 6 February and Trevor Lincoln the new Director of Business Planning starts on 1 March. The CEO also reported to the Board that today he had appointed a new Performance Monitoring Manager, but stated that it would be inappropriate to announce the successful candidate until he had spoken to the individual and received their acceptance of the position.
- 5.2 **Apologies** – The CEO sadly reported that Val Hartley had sent her apologies because she had undergone an operation and would need time to convalesce. Val had promised to keep in touch and hoped she would be well enough to join the board at their development weekend in March. The Board joined Martin in wishing her a speedy recovery and requested that a card and flowers be sent on their behalf.
- 5.3 **Accommodation** – The CEO reported that SLH move to new premises was progressing and would be reported on later in the agenda by Keith Miller.
- 5.4 **DMBC Housing Revenue Account (HRA)** – The Council are receiving less money from the HRA due to the reduction of sales of Council owned properties. The CEO explained that the less sales that take place, the less money we receive, SLH manage the HRA on behalf of the Council but the budget is in deficit by £2m. The HRA reserves have been reduced to £1.4m. The implications of this are that there may be a reduction on the management fee. SLH will be required to look carefully at service level agreements (SLA's) with the Council to recoup these costs. The CEO will be in further discussions with DMBC. The CEO stated plainly that there were two options, either cut costs accrued by the service level agreements with DMBC or cut staffing levels.
- 5.5 The Chair commented that the Government had recently made proposals regarding northern ALMO's and they would produce a budget statement by the end of the week. The CEO and the Chair both noted that the Company would need to look critically at SLA's. and the CEO promised to keep the Board informed of progress.
- 5.6 **Mock Inspection** – The CEO introduced Janis Dean from the Housing Consultancy Partnership who the Board had procured to instigate a mock inspection in preparation for September. Janis would be meeting with staff, Board members and senior management over the next few weeks.

6. Standing Orders – this item had been withdrawn from the agenda and would be tabled at the next Board meeting.

6.1 The make up of the Finance and Performance and the Audit Committees are to be determined. The role and function of these committees will be circulated to the Board and to decide membership expressions of interest will be requested for each committee. Copies of current membership of committees was circulated.

6.2 There followed a discussion on the information regarding performance and finance and the time it would take to be circulated and for the Committees to meet. The Committees would have limited powers, they would check the information in detail and recommend it to the Board only highlighting exceptions for comment. The role of the committees was to speed up the business of the Board and ensure the smooth running of the Company. It was suggested that the Board view performance and finance figures quarterly. It was noted that all reports would still be sent to the main Board for information.

7. Performance Information

7.1 **Finance Report – Management Accounts 1st Quarter** – This information had been distributed to the Board with the agenda papers. The projected underspend was approximately £1.8m.

7.2 There was some discussion on the projected outturns on responsive repairs. Capital programme works have been taken on.

7.3 There was increasing feedback reporting concerns on levels of responsive repairs. There followed a discussion on the definition of responsive repairs and Capital works and how this should be consistently applied.

7.4 The new methodology of processing voids will include re-introduced, enhanced “reality checking” mechanisms.

7.5 The projected surplus of £1.8m, assuming continuation until the end of February may help some of next year’s financial issues. There will be several one-off payments for example the move to new premises and the fact that several management posts have remained vacant until recently. The CEO reminded the Board that as SLH is Company Limited by Guarantee we cannot make a profit or we will be subject to corporation tax.

7.6 Capital Report – This information had been distributed to the Board with the agenda papers.

- 7.7 It was noted that the re-wiring programme is driven by the electrical inspection programme. The decision is taken to re-wire by a full survey of the property by electrical contractors. To ensure there is no conflict of interest, these contractors are not involved in re-wiring the property.
- 7.8 Following the introduction of the new lettable standard in void properties, capital expenditure is under control.
- 7.9 It was noted that we have not yet been invoiced by the window manufacturer.
- 7.10 Performance Report** – This information had been distributed to the Board with the agenda papers.
- 7.11 There followed a discussion on days lost through sickness. The CEO reported that he had met with Human Resource Consultants from DMBC today. There is a two month delay between days taken off through illness and reporting of these sickness levels, HR is unable to deliver a more efficient service at present.
- 7.12 A report will be tabled at this meeting concerning an incentive scheme for employees. The CEO stressed the importance of looking after our staff's welfare. It was noted that our long term sickness levels were reasonable in comparison with nationally (5.7%). These figures would be split down further into estate management and estate maintenance. Building services showed good attendance levels.
- 7.13 The CEO noted that we require good support services to deliver an effective business and if the HR service cannot deliver then we would be required to look at our service level agreement with a view to looking elsewhere for the service. They currently supply one HR officer dedicated to SLH. The CEO reported to the Board that we had employed a dedicated SLA manager who was reviewing all SLA's with a view to concluding some contracts.
- 7.14 Judith Jones agreed to provide the Area Boards with more detailed information regarding the time taken in each sector of the void process.
- 7.15 Councillor Hardy reported that a Community Hall with a flat had remained empty for some time and the CEO promised to look into this but suggested that if this was a tied property then it would be a general fund property and not under the management of SLH.
- 7.16 Repairs and maintenance listed appointments made and kept for audit purposes.
- 7.17 There are still problems with IT systems, faults and problems with one system did receive fixes by the supplier but these fixes were not implemented. The CEO reported that SLH was preparing to close

SAFFRON and just use TASK and to this end was in discussion with Computer Services.

- 7.18 Gas servicing figures – these are on target, SLH apply for injunctions to gain access to properties requiring servicing. The Chair asked what percentage of properties have valid gas certificates, this information will be included on future performance reports. 87% of services are carried out by appointment.
- 7.19 Numbers on the waiting list, approximately 1,600 - It was noted that the backlog to register applicants has now been brought up to date.
- 7.20 SLH are aware that DMBC have asked for comments regarding the proposed changes to the number of points awarded to homeless applicants. SLH have not received any communication regarding this matter.
- 7.21 Rents and rent arrears for November and December – 7.3% against the monthly debit – arrears being reduced, this is now the second month in a row and would have been especially difficult following Christmas. The rent collection staff should be congratulated.
- 7.22 Tenancy visits – new visit increased. The CEO has commissioned a DVD for new tenants, this promotes SLH with the added value that these could be played in tenants homes more than once. The suggestion is to install television sets in reception areas to play this DVD also.
- 7.23 A discussion followed regarding the measures available to combat anti-social behaviour and the resources available. The current SLA (costing £150k per annum) with DMBC will be included in the review of SLA's to be conducted by the SLA manager.
- 7.24 Complaints – the number by area had increased in December. The number of compliments reported is artificially high in one area as staff were following incorrect procedures – this has now been corrected.

8. i) Accommodation Report

- 8.1 Keith Miller presented to the board a report previously read and approved by the chair and vice chairs and brought forward for the board's information.
- 8.2 Keith Miller reported to the Board that the lease is to be signed next week for Enterprise House.
- 8.3 It was also reported that there had been a technical hitch in that when dilapidations were being done the computer infrastructure was removed and these had to be re-installed. Following further

negotiations the report will be slightly amended to include two months free rental with a following five year term to allow for this problem.

8.4 Keith Miller noted that the building was almost ready now and he anticipated an April move for SLH staff following the seating and office equipment arrangements.

8.5 Also reported were negotiations that are ongoing for the Thorne Road office. The lease is currently being worked on and the building is anticipated to be ready in June.

8.6 The Board was requested to accept this report and this was approved.

8.7 ii) Bonus for Attendance

8.8 The CEO presented this report for Board approval. He noted that instead of concentrating on sickness levels within SLH, more attention should be placed on good attendance by staff. This had been highlighted within the recent staff survey that had been presented to the Board.

8.9 The suggestion put forward in the report was that staff should be rewarded with a prize for full attendance, promoting one upmanship between staff, the effects would be beneficial. The costs of this would be £5,000 per annum. There was a suggestion that this would be taxable, if SLH paid the tax the costs would rise to just over £6,000.

8.10 Sickness levels will be measured at the start of this initiative and at the end of the year for effectiveness. It was suggested that the costs would be recouped with productivity levels.

8.11 John Young applauded the initiative but suggested that performance needs to be improved not just attendance and terms and conditions should be looked at with clear targets for improvement.

8.12 Kate Radovanovic also applauded the initiative, she noted that one Board meeting had a report for incentives to tenants and the next had a report on incentives for staff and was happy to endorse these.

8.13 The Board approved this incentive report with minor amendments to the financial section to include tax costs.

8.14 iii) Equality and Diversity

8.15 Janet Clarke presented this draft report for Board approval prior to wider consultation. This consultation was to include the SJC, TARA's

BME community, younger people and she requested that the Board approve it in principal.

- 8.16 She reported that a letter had been sent to all residents asking for their preferred method of contact. She felt it was important to make extra efforts to reach people who don't normally engage with us using a variety of methods, liaising with the ethnic minority network. She noted that it was important to take time to pursue a meaningful consultation although this will still be driven forward and delivered as the consultation progresses.
- 8.17 The Staff conference will be held at the beginning of March, Crag Rats a theatre company will be facilitating part of this. The conference will be followed by a further staff survey. It is hoped that following the Conference, staff will have developed a clear understanding of the Company's purpose and this will lead to a higher rate of returns than was achieved with the first survey.
- 8.18 The Board is requested to approve the strategy as a draft document for further consultation. The outcome of consultation and a review of progress in delivery will be presented to the Board within six months of approval of this draft strategy.
- 8.19 The Board approved the draft Equality and Diversity Strategy for consultation.**
- 8.20 iv) Kingsway Estate Demolitions**
- 8.21 This report was tabled to the Board to detail proposed demolitions of 134 units of housing stock in the Stainforth, Moorends Ward and the subsequent landscaping of the cleared areas.
- 8.22 There followed a discussion on demolition schemes. Concerns were expressed that if the estate had had intensive management these problems would not have led to the decline of the estate. The CEO would be consulting further with DMBC to look at unsustainable areas and areas in decline.
- 8.23 The Board approved this report.**
- 8.24 v) Tenants Compact Summary draft leaflet**
- 8.25 Janet Clarke reported that this compact followed on from Board approval of the draft compact. This text will fit on an A4 sheet and approval was requested to send this to our graphics department. This will then be distributed with either the rents statements or the Houseproud magazine.

8.26 There was a suggestion that there should be one of these leaflets for each quadrant with relevant information specific to that area. Janet Clarke promised that this would be investigated and area specific drafts may come to the Board in future for their approval.

8.27 The Board approved the Tenants Compact Leaflet.

8.28. vi) Repairs Centre Extended Opening Hours (for information)

8.29 This report had been approved by the board at the last meeting but was re-tabled with current figures for information only.

8.30 The Board accepted this report

8.31 vii) Demoted Tenancies

8.32 The CEO presented this report together with a front page report summary. This is another part of the toolkit of trying to work with tenants and this will cover every tenant. It has always been possible to use demoted tenancies but it has not been practice.

8.33 The CEO noted that all housing officers had to deal with anti-social behaviour. SLH would have to work with DMBC ASB team and utilize their services more efficiently.

8.34 The CEO reported that demoted tenancies was just one of a range of measures available to us and asked the Board to support this initiative.

8.45 The Board approved the use of Demoted Tenancies and this report.

9. Draft Policies for Board approval prior to consultation.

9.1 Alan Crowder from Pinnacle reported that November and December policies had gone to the SJC for further distribution and now requested he present five further policies for the Board to consider prior to consultation.

9.2 i) Vulnerable people

9.3 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the needs of vulnerable people are identified, anticipated and met in SLH areas of operation and in it's service delivery and that vulnerable people are treated equally and with respect.

9.4 ii) Mutual Exchange & Assignments

9.5 The purpose of this report is to ensure SLH has a fair transparent and consistent approach to the mutual exchange and assignment process.

9.6 iii) Data Protection

9.7 The purpose of this policy is to define confidentiality of information and ensure that Board Members and officers meet their obligations under the data protection legislation. This policy sits alongside the confidentiality policy and contains information on legislation in place and the circumstances in which this can be used.

9.8 iv) Tenancy Management

9.9 The purpose of this report is to ensure that SLH on behalf of DMBC carries out robust and effective tenancy management in relation to its responsibilities and those of tenants in the tenancy agreement.

9.10 v) Complaints and Compliments

9.11 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any customer who is not happy with the service received from SLH has an easy and accessible method for making a complaint which offers a rapid action and response. It is important to note what constitutes a complaint or a compliment and how we handle these.

9.12 The CEO noted that Data protection issues would be in the forefront as there were rules that restricted information to be passed on from SLH to DMBC. Certain restrictions to SLH offices (other than reception areas) will also apply.

9.13 Alan Crowder noted that SLH whistleblowing policy reflected that of DMBC. It was suggested if we manage staff well and are open and honest these policies would never need to be used. There followed a general discussion on data protection.

9.14 The above policies were approved by the Board and would now be sent to the SJC for further full consultation.

10. Carried Forward business

10.1 There was no business to be carried forward from the previous meeting.

11. Any other Business

11.1 **Training** – Papers were to be distributed at the end of this meeting with details of the revised training schedule for next Wednesday.

- 11.2 **Agenda Items** – A request was noted that agenda items on the CD's be numbered. The general view was that the CD's, when numbered, would be a more efficient method of agenda distribution.
- 11.3 **Silver Jubilee** – The Standing Joint Committee (SJC) will be celebrating 25 anniversary this March 14. All Board Members are cordially invited to join in with the celebrations at the Mansion House.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm