

ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LIMITED

BOARD MEETING

2 NOVEMBER 2005

Present

Mr Sidney Hall, Mr James Parkin, Mrs Lyn Ralph, Mr Charles Wyatt, Councillor George Beck, Councillor Paul Coddington, Councillor Stuart Hardy, Councillor Mrs Margaret Ward, Mr Peter Chapman, Mrs Kate Radovanovic, Ms Gill Taylor, Mr John Young.

In attendance

Mr Keith Miller, Ms Janis Wong, Ms Linda Milan, Ms Kay Nunns, Ms Debbie France, Ms Mandy Cockburn-Powell.

1. Apologies and Quorum

Apologies were received from Martin Musgrave, Mrs Val Hartley and Councillor Joe Blackham.

- 1.1 It was noted that a quorum was present.
- 1.2 At this point it was noted that Debbie France from the Government Office was in attendance, she will be taking over from Kay Nunns who is due to go on maternity leave at the end of November.

2. Declarations of Interest by the Board.

- 2.1 James Parkin declared an interest in the Company SCD Network. It was noted that if Members were in doubt of making any declaration, they should declare the interest. This particular declaration was not felt to be relevant in the context of a Board Member for SLHD, as the contract has been awarded to DMBC, however the declaration will be noted in the register.
- 2.2 The declarations folder would be made available at all Board meetings for Members to examine at their leisure.
- 2.3 It was also noted that now we are a fully incorporated Company we have a duty to follow formal procedures for election of Members and attendance at Board meetings. Clause 33, Section 3.6 of the

Memorandum and Articles of Association clearly states that Board meetings are open to tenants and leaseholders only. They are able to attend, but are not allowed to participate in the meetings. Questions by non-Board Members must be directed through the Chair with prior notice. The Chair also informed the Board that there was no provision for any reserve board members within the rules of the organization. Therefore with immediate effect Les Rowston can no longer serve as a reserve Board member. A letter will be sent to Les to inform him of the current position and thank him for his contribution during the Shadow period.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 October

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3.1 Matters arising from the Meeting of 6 October

3.2 Response to Unions

It was reported that meetings had been held with the Unions, between the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director of Human Resources, Doncaster Council. These had proved particularly positive and it had been agreed that future meetings would be held between the parties and for the next three months, existing recognition agreements would be honoured. Following this it was hoped that new arrangements would be put in place which would be tailored to St Leger Homes. Additionally, the Unions had been consulted over the re-alignment of Senior Managers within St Leger Homes

3.3 5th independent

This has been advertised in the Doncaster News and on the website, some interest has been shown and the closing date for applications is Friday 4th November. Availability of the Panel will be ascertained and the Board will be kept informed of progress. It is anticipated that the final independent Board member will be appointed by the end of November.

(Action J Wong).

12.1 Public Access

The Board was advised that clause 33 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association state that Board meetings are not open to the public, a decision can be made at a later date to ascertain whether the Board wish to open the meetings or part of them to the public. If this was the case then certain papers would have to be coded to retain confidential items and protect privacy of individuals;

for example in the case of Voluntary Early Retirement or serious issues.

6. Vision and Values

An extended training session has been programmed for Governance Framework and Vision and Values for 14 December at 5pm.

4. Chief Executives Report (reported by Keith Miller on behalf of Martin Musgrave)

4.1 Government Office A meeting was held between the Chief Executive of SLHD, Keith Miller and representatives from Government Office. The importance of building good relations was noted and frank discussion on improving progress towards a 2 star achievement by SLHD was held. An invitation had been accepted by Neal McDonald, Head of Housing for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to meet with SLHD representatives and DMBC representatives from the Housing Strategy side on 16 December. The Chief Executive also met with the Audit Commission on a number of issues, one of which was about returning in January for a week to carry out additional support work, concentrating on performance management and void management.

4.2 Accommodation The Board received an update on progress for future accommodation for SLHD. On Enterprise House, discussions are continuing from the valuation side of the lease. It was pointed out that if we got held up on the legal side due to a speedier conclusion to the negotiations, then a license would be granted in the interim. Work is ongoing with regard to utilities & furnishings. It could well be the case that we could be in the former Enterprise House early in the New Year.

4.3 It was reported that Thorne Road premises were in surprisingly good condition but still required security lighting and potentially a new heating system and would have the capacity for approximately 50 staff. The aim is to start work as soon as is practicable for a move sometime after the new financial year following essential works. Any major works required following tenancy would be undertaken on a year by year basis bearing in mind that the lease was for ten years only.

4.4 Re-alignment of staff Currently staff are being supported throughout the realignment by Consultants Fairplace until the end of the consultation period.

5. Policies

5.1 It was noted that all the following policies were in draft form only and for discussion/approval by the Board. Separate procedures for each policy had been drafted for staff to show consistency in how they adhered to SLHD future policy and to show Best Practice. It was suggested that Board Members take two weeks to comment on these policies and that Janis would bring an exception report to the next meeting to outline any major changes from the draft and the Board would then formally approve the policies.
(Action J Wong)

5.2 Janis reported that previous policies do not necessarily take account of current legislation and best practice as they have not been reviewed in recent times. A Member queried whether there was any breach of tenancy conditions as the tenants have not been consulted on the revised policies. Consultation with tenants should take place but not necessarily before the Board adopts a policy as there is a review procedure. The Tenants Compact is due to be discussed by the Board in December detailing how we consult with our tenants and when. It was also noted that as we are managing agents to DMBC, some policies can be reviewed by us and some have to be reviewed by DMBC although we are encouraged to comment and recommend improvements and advise on best practice. The Board suggested/commented on policies as follows:-

5.3 i) Anti-Social Behaviour

Concern was raised by a Board Member about some Officers not following the set procedure in a timely manner to deal with complaints of anti social behaviour

It was noted that the ASB Team is employed by DMBC and relevant cases would be referred to the Council team to deal with. A Board Member asked whether an SLA was in place between the Council and SLHD, it was confirmed that arrangements were in place to continue to use this Council service as necessary. A query was also raised by a Member regarding cross tenure cases of anti social behaviour, measures should be in place within the policy to deal with cross tenure problems.

- Section 5.13 legal measures to work in partnership with DMBC Team. Ensure DMBC concur with SLHD policy and this is not written in isolation. That it is consistent with DMBC practice and influence this and not written in isolation. Importance of all staff adhering to the procedure for consistency of actions was noted.

- Build ASB performance indicators into performance information to include targets.
- Suggest preventative measures are built into the policy
- Suggest mediation be incorporated into the policy as best practice.

ii) Harrassment

Janis reported that this policy was primarily for tenants, SLHD staff would have separate HR policies to come to the Board at a future date.

iii) Rechargeable Repairs

Currently not everything that is rechargeable is recovered.

- Suggest we re-word 5.1.2 as this is not clear, it was felt unfair by some members that tenants were asked to pay for the example used in the policy.
- Check that this information is available to tenants – ensure staff are consistent in their use of the procedure when it is drafted.
- Gas servicing – discussion on the legality of forced entry – this policy is yet to be drafted and will be brought to the Board separately. Members asked for clarity within the policy when drafting to ensure that SLHD operated within the legislation to comply with gas safety checks.

iv) Rent Arrears

This policy is designed to incorporate best practice & consistency.

- Suggest performance monitoring of this.
- 5.4.5 – tenants should have a visit after two weeks of start of tenancy – now six weeks in the revised policy; Janis to check this – it was noted at this stage that it was important for the board not to get too involved in the operational details of policy statements. This should be left for the operational managers to consider as best practice in the procedure guides.

v) Former Tenant Arrears

- 6.1.2 check wording is correct. (Janis). It was not clear whether this meant that the debt was to be pursued or not. This clause needed better wording.

vi) Confidentiality

- Suggest performance indicators/monitoring is within this policy.

- The Board requested regular reports on number of requests by staff and the public for information under data protection and Freedom of Information Act.

vii) Whistleblowing

Noted that DMBC have recently had a comprehensive review of their policy. The procedure that aligns to this is much more comprehensive.

- Suggest that there is some sort of mechanism to go straight to board members in some cases. Concerns were expressed regarding this approach as the proper process should be to work through the various channels, depending on the nature of the incident. It was agreed that cases should only be reported to the Board direct if it was relating to the Chief Executive, or Chair.
- Ensure this policy is promoted adequately throughout the company.

viii) Domestic Violence

This policy outlined the approach taken by SLHD on dealing with domestic violence. A member asked whether this related to staff. This policy is primary around tenancy issues and domestic violence. There should be a separate policy to deal with issues of support for any member of staff experiencing personal domestic violence.

- 5.4 recognition of issues relating to access reporting, and dealing with cultural sensitivities for reporting and supporting people experiencing domestic violence.
- Suggest we include percentage of homeless applications attributed to domestic violence.

ix) Equal Opportunities

This policy has a slightly different format to the previous policies as it has been taken from DMBC Equal opportunities and Diversity policy which is recent and has been consulted on widely. A training session on this has been programmed for early March. A separate Corporate Equality and Diversity Strategy is being developed.

The Board requested that all policies should have performance targets and mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness of the policies.

6. Performance Report

This was introduced as a discussion document only as figures and some information had not been verified and some were not relevant. The framework of reporting was to be commented on by the Board.

- 6.1 Following some discussion, a number of issues were highlighted:-
- The importance of exception reporting.
 - information on gas servicing statistics
 - Budget profile and spend.
 - Sickness days figures lost per person rather than percentage
 - Consistency over voids figures,
 - Void timeframes, particularly those identified over six months and the reasons eg. Regeneration programmes etc.
 - Percentage of workmen on voids and percentage of workmen on repairs and maintenance.
 - Cumulative figures for financial columns
 - Add complaints upheld and add compliments.
 - Number of outstanding repairs
 - Where appropriate, data to be presented in graph or bar chart format.
- 6.2 It was re-iterated that this was brought to the Board as a suggested framework for reporting but it was also noted that the quality of reported information was crucial for the correct management of the Company. It was noted that this information had proved very interesting and useful to the Board. This could be used in the future to chart progress on performance with charts and graphs.
- 6.3 The Board were asked to send any further comments or suggestions in the next two weeks and they would be incorporated. It was requested that this information come to the Board on a monthly basis to start with and then the Area Boards would look after this aspect of SLHD with an establishment of relevant information to their areas. Suggest then that a quarterly report be presented to the main Board.

7. There were no items carried forward.

**8. Board dates & Training details
(Training Session on Standing Orders 4pm 9th November)**

8.1 The Board noted the draft timetable for future Board meetings and training dates. It was suggested that the inaugural meeting of the Human Resource and Equalities Board to be held on 8th November (in Chief Executive's office at Council House) also include the long listing of the Executive Director posts as Rockpools were going to be present to facilitate.

8.2 Apologies were given that future times for board meetings may have to be re-arranged from 4pm to 6pm as the lack of venues was an issue. This would be resolved when we move into our new accommodation which has it's own Boardroom.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 Travel expense forms were available and it was noted that Councillors could claim now for attending SLHD business.

9.2 Papers for the next training session on Standing Orders were available for pre-reading. (Session date Wednesday 9th November 4pm, Chief Executive's office at Council House).

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next Board Meeting of SLHD will be held on 7th December at 6pm in the Lansdowne Suite at Castle Park Rugby Club, Armthorpe.

Meeting ended 7pm