

# **ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LTD**

Company limited by guarantee registered in England  
Company Number 05564649

## **Joint Area Board**

# **REPORT**

**Date** : 10 March 2008

**Item** : 4

**Subject** : Choice Based Lettings Update

**Presented by** : Judith Jones  
Director of Customer Services

**Prepared by** : Rebecca Wilkie  
Assistant Director of Housing  
Services

**Purpose** : To update the Joint Area Board on the  
implementation of Choice Based  
Lettings.

### **Recommendation :**

It is recommended that the Joint Area Board note and discuss the contents of the report.

**1. Report Title**

- 1.1 Choice Based Lettings Update

**2. Purpose**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the Choice Based Lettings after going live on 1 November 2007.

**3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 That Finance and Performance committee note and discuss the contents report.

**4. Background**

- 4.1 Doncaster HomeChoice went live on 1 November 2007 and is now in the thirteenth bidding cycle.
- 4.2 A review covering both the Allocations Policy and the Choice Based Lettings delivery mechanism is underway and will be completed by the end of February.
- 4.3 This report provides information from the first thirteen weeks of operation.

**5. Break down**

- 5.1 We are now in our fifteenth bidding cycle and the bids received each week have steadily increased. The bidding trend is starting to follow the make up of the adverts, with a large increase in bids on week 8, where there were two pages of adverts and decreases in weeks 10 and 13 where there were few houses advertised. This is detailed in appendix a.
- 5.3 There continues to be a small but significant number of properties receiving few or no bids when they are originally advertised within their allocate banding. As a result the properties are re-advertised to applicants in all bands which is resulting in bids being made. This does however increase the void turn around time. We are meeting with the IT company at the end of February to look at how this can be addressed. A breakdown of the properties is detailed in appendix b.

## **6. Service delivery**

- 6.1 We have remained within our published service standards for new applications received (actioned within 10 working days) and amendments forms (actioned within 5 working days).
- 6.2 We no longer have a backlog of properties waiting to be advertised and are putting properties into the bidding cycle as soon as inspection sheets are received. Property Services are aiming to inspect 100% of properties that are on notice within the notice period; however there are some issues with gaining access. Therefore, we are introducing a checklist for staff to complete when tenants are giving notice which will enable us to advertise properties in advance of an inspection sheet being completed.
- 6.3 At the end of January we re-instigated the annual review process for housing applicants and to date have sent out 1267 review letters for applicants on the anniversary of registration.
- 6.4 We have also recognised that there are applicants within the gold and silver bands who are not bidding or whose circumstances could have changed. As a result we are carrying out priority reviews of all applicants in these two bands and so far have sent out almost 300 review letters.

## **7. Consultation**

- 7.1 n/a

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 Section 167(1) Housing Act 1996, as amended, requires every local housing authority to have a scheme (their “allocation scheme”) for determining priorities.

## **9 Financial Implications / Risk / Diversity**

### **Financial**

- 9.1 The risk is that the service will not provide the anticipated outcomes line with projections for the staff currently employed. The mitigation against this risk was in the detailed work to complete budget projections. Ongoing we completing an early review of the service which will include any financial impact.

### **9.2 Value for Money**

In monetary terms running the Choice Based Lettings system, is currently costing more than running the traditionally delivered allocations scheme. This is due to employing temporary staff and the initial promotion of the scheme, both of which are required to ensure that customers fully engage with the major changes to the service.

However, we have forecast that the substantive service will be provided within the existing budget but provide increased value for money as we have an improved, more transparent service for the benefit of customers.

### 9.3 **Risk**

The risk in implementation was that we would not complete effectively and as a result customers would lose confidence in the system. To mitigate this we have planned for support mechanisms and additional temporary staffing.

### 9.4 **Diversity**

The risk is that vulnerable applicants would be disadvantaged. We have mitigated against this by providing training and briefings for over 400 partner agencies and are proactively contacting applicants in priority bands if they are not bidding for properties for which they would have a priority.

## 10. **Report Author**

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## 11. **Background Papers**

11.1 Appendix a – bids per week

11.2 Appendix b – properties without bids in the original bidding cycle