

ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LTD

Company limited by guarantee registered in England
Company Number 05564649

Joint Area Board Meeting

REPORT

Date : 14 January 2008

Item : 6

Subject : Choice Based Lettings

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.

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**To the Chair and Members of the
JOINT AREA BOARD**

**Agenda Item No. 6
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1. Report Title

1.1 Choice Based Lettings Implementation.

2. Purpose

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

3. Recommendation

3.1 That the Joint Area Board note and discuss the contents of the report.

4. Background

4.1 Doncaster HomeChoice went live on 1 November 2007 and is now in the seventh 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 six weeks of operation.

5. Break down

5.1 We are now in our seventh bidding cycle and the bids received each week have been steadily increasing as detailed in appendix a

5.2 We are receiving a steady stream of phone calls and e-mails, however the volume of these contacts has dropped and are no longer queries about a lack of understanding about the system but are mainly about how applicants can get into a higher band. These are very similar to the pre CBL contacts where applicants wanted to know how they could get more points.

5.3 A table showing our performance in answering telephone enquiries is provided at appendix b.

5.4 We continue to contact all applicants in the Platinum band who are eligible for a property in a bidding cycle but have not placed a bid.
We are also in the process of collating information about applicants in the remaining priority bands who are not actively bidding for properties .

5.5 Each week, there have been properties without bids. This information is

beginning to give us a much clearer indication of housing demand and supply than we previously had available to us and will form an important element of the review.

6. Service delivery

6.1 We are now within our published service standards for new applications received (actioned within 10 working days) and amendments forms (actioned within 5 working days).

6.2 As highlighted in the November report, when we went live on the 1 November 2007, there was a backlog of properties not allocated from the old system. An Action Plan was put in place for the backlog to clear within 5 weekly bidding cycles.

However, we still have a backlog due to the number of properties receiving zero bids.

The vast majority of these properties are 1 bedroom properties designated for residents over the age of 60, however a number of houses have also not received bids within their first bidding cycle.

Properties where no bids are received within their first bidding cycle are re-advertised to all bands.

We have now revised the action plan and are reporting this into EMT weekly.

6.3 We are doing further targeted marketing in January looking at applicants in the priority bands who are not bidding, applicants who have told us they have a mobile telephone but who are not bidding by SMS and applicants who are at the top of the bronze band but are not placing bids.

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 in line with projections for the staff currently employed. The mitigation against this risk was in the detailed work to complete budget projections. Ongoing we are 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 – telephone activity