

Company Number 05564649  
A Company Limited by Guarantee  
Registered in England

## **St. Leger Homes of Doncaster Limited**

### **BOARD MEETING**

**7 MARCH 2007**

#### **Present**

Mr Peter Chapman (Chair), Councillor Joe Blackham (Vice Chair), Mrs Lyn Ralph (Vice Chair), Mr Sidney Hall, Mr James Parkin, Councillor George Beck, Councillor Paul Coddington, Councillor John Mills, Mrs Kate Radovanovic, Ms Gill Taylor, Mr Michael Hardy.

#### **In attendance**

Martin Musgrave (Chief Executive), Judith Jones, Paul Hopkinson, Trevor Lincoln, Linda Milan, Maxine Newton, Dean Rothwell (partial), Sharon Adams, Paul Lightfoot, Ramona Youhill.

#### **Also in Attendance**

Mareen Harkin (DMBC), Elaine Sams (Audit Commission), Roger Haldenby.

	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1. Apologies and Quorum</b>	
1.1 Cllr Margaret Ward, Mr John Young and Mr Charles Wyatt.	
1.2 It was noted that a quorum was present. Peter Chapman chaired the meeting.	
1.3 The Chair to the meeting introduced Elaine Sams, and Members of the Board and SLHD staff reciprocated.	
<b>2. Declarations of Interest by the Board</b>	
2.1 Jim Parkin, Sid Hall and Lyn Ralph declared an interest in item 14 by virtue of being tenants of SLHD and Tenant Board Members.	
2.2 Lyn Ralph also declared an interest in item 5 by virtue of her daughter (Ms S Adam) being the Assistant Director for Empty Homes and Services.	
2.3 The Chair, after taking advice from the company solicitors, advised the Members that he felt the company's best interests would be served if the Tenant Board Members were to be allowed to take part in the debate on item 14 but should not take part in any vote that may be taken on this item.	

**3. Minutes of meeting held on 7 February 2007 and Matters arising**

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2007 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**3.2 Matters Arising**

3.3 There were no matters arising.

**4. Chief Executive's Report**

4.1 A written report was provided to the Board.

4.2 Members were advised that the Companies Act 2006, parts of which are not yet enacted, may bring about changes to Directors responsibilities. When further clarification has been received a report will be brought to the Board.

4.3 The Considerate Contractors Association that has been set up to look at all contractors across the country has given SLHD awards for the Decent Homes projects in Mexborough (Scheme 2), Conisbrough (Scheme 3) and Thorne. At this time the level of the award is not known. The presentation of the award is due to take place on Tuesday 20th March but this coincides with the Pre Inspection Briefing and therefore it is not yet known who will represent the company. John Mills said that he is attending in another capacity and offered to act for SLHD. The Board agreed to this suggestion.

4.4 Members were informed that the final report from BMG Research has not yet been received. The Chair proposed that following on from the final analysis a proposal document be submitted to the H/R Equality & Diversity Committee. The Board agreed to this proposal.

TL

4.5 SLHD have received a positive audit report on the rent services. The auditors have expressed the opinion that outstanding improvements have taken place. The CE requested Board approval to pass on congratulations and thanks from the Board to the staff concerned. The Board agreed.

MM

4.6 **Equality & Diversity** A Member queried whether an audit would take place to ensure that the DITU Language Identification Charts were displayed prominently on walls in all offices. It was confirmed that this is included in the mystery shopping arrangements.

4.7 **The Board noted the contents of the report.**

**The Board agreed to take items 8 and 9 out of the sequence of the Agenda.**

**5. SLHD Revenue Budget 2007/08 to 2010/11 - (Agenda item 8)**

5.1 Trevor Lincoln presented this report and the purpose was to advise Board members on the proposed revenue budgets for 2007/08 and future indicative budgets to 2010/11.

5.2 Trevor confirmed to members that the management fee had been agreed with DMBC at £30.05m. He drew Members attention to Appendix A emphasising that the forecast from 2008/09 onwards was purely indicative, and was the best forecast based on current levels of operation.

5.3 **Training Budget – Appendix A** A Member drew the Boards attention to the significant increase, £430,060 in the Training budget for 2007/08. To which members where advised that this was due to 3 main factors; the commencement of a Leadership Development Programme, staff appraisals had identified significant training requirements and also specialist training i.e. Health & Safety.

**It was agreed that a further breakdown of the training budget and the Training Plan would be brought to the H/R Equality & Diversity Committee.**

TL

5.4 **Supplies & Services – Other – Appendix A** The Chair enquired as to why there was a decrease in the forecast from 2008/09. He was advised that the figure for 2007/08 included costs for consultants such as QS services etc.

5.5 **Supplies & Services – Agency Staff – Appendix A** A Member queried why SLHD were employing agency staff and not recruiting into permanent positions. The Board was informed that SLHD had tried on occasion to employee permanent staff into certain permanent positions however, the recruitment process had not been successful for various reasons i.e. skills shortages, length of contract period. 2007/8 was a peak year in Decent Homes investment works and for this reason it was felt prudent, while SLHD had to compete with others to attract the required staff to follow this route.

The Board were assured that a robust process was adopted for the recruitment of agency staff, which was the same process adopted for all permanent staff.

5.6 **The Board noted and approved the contents of the report.**

**6. Capital Budget Report 2007/08 to 2013/14 - (Agenda Item 9)**

6.1 Trevor Lincoln presented the Capital Budget report, which advised Members on the Capital Programme for 2007/08 to 2013/14 already approved by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2007 as part of the overall Capital Programme for DMBC.

6.2 Trevor confirmed that this report was slightly more comprehensive than agenda item 10, it confirmed the strategic focus of the programme with the major schemes. Additionally it included the programme budgets. A member queried the £234m ALMO funding for Decent Homes expecting the sum to be in the region of £300m, it was confirmed that DMBC also contribute to the total sum required of £302m.

6.3 **The Board noted and approved the contents of the report.**

6.4 Dean Rothwell asked permission from the Chair and left the meeting.

**7. Market Testing of Repairs & Maintenance Service CWC Report - (Agenda Item 5)**

7.1 Paul Hopkinson introduced this report that updated Board members on the progress with the project to Market Test the Repairs and Maintenance service.

7.2 Members were reminded of the updates that had been brought to their last 4 meetings and the Options Appraisal that had been discussed at the Special Board meeting in October 2006. Joint discussions have also been taking place between DMBC and SLHD. The Collaborative Working Centre (CWC) were appointed in November 2006 to consider how the market testing of these services could be undertaken.

Recommendations were now being brought to the Board for approval to improve the efficiency of the service and ensure value for money is obtained.

7.3 Mark Smalley and Mark Ellaby of CWC delivered a presentation on the final report of CWC.

In essence the presentation concluded that considerable improvements have been made in key areas of Property Services however, there are still many areas where they consider further improvement and efficiencies are possible.

Mark Ellaby informed the Board that as SLHD recognise the importance of benchmarking their costs with those achieved by similar organisations, who are all striving to improve their

performance, SLHD have agreed to take part in a pilot group organised by the Housemark organisation to consider how the best method of comparison of costs and efficiency savings.

7.4 Maureen Harkin confirmed that the DMBC Cabinet had approved the report earlier that day and welcomed the recommendations to deliver the efficiencies, which would have a beneficial impact for customers. She said that DMBC and SLHD were working jointly to progress the recommendations put forward.

7.5 One member enquired whether considerations would be given to transferring Procurement at the same time as the Stores function to which Paul Hopkinson responded that at this stage this did appear to be a logical progression and that this may include the invoice payment function.

7.6 Members enquired as to how much benchmarking data was already available and when gathering further data to what extent was it commercially confidential. CWC confirmed that they were already working with available data however the data does become outdated and that they needed to gather more relevant comprehensive data before comparisons could be made with other ALMO's.

CWC confirmed that they operated on a basis of complete confidentiality with the data not available within the public domain.

7.7 Members' attention was drawn to page 13 of the CWC Final Report that detailed the proposed action plan.

**Members raised concerns about the timescales being too long. It was agreed that an interim report be brought to the Board on a monthly basis to monitor progress.**

PH

7.8 **The Board noted and approved the report.**

## **8. Solid Fuel Appliance Servicing - (Agenda Item 6)**

8.1 The CE requested the Boards permission to withdraw the Solid Fuel Appliance Servicing report and to bring a revised report the board meeting in May.

8.2 The Board agreed to withdraw the report.

## **9. Performance Monitoring - (Agenda Item 7)**

9.1 This report presents the key performance issues for November 06, December 06 and January 07.

9.2 The Boards attention was drawn to the re-let performance in

January, which indicated a deterioration. This was due to reletting a number of properties that have been void since before the establishment of SLHD. Members were advised that if these properties were excluded from the figures the average re-let time would reduce from 51.31 days to 36.69 days and therefore the benefits of the reengineering of the whole relet process was paying the expected dividends.

The CE reiterated that the organisations priority was to provide the people of Doncaster with homes. The Board discussed the various methods of calculation of the relet information.

9.3 Gas Servicing - SLHD are continuing to improve in this area and advised members that the 74 outstanding gas services in January detailed in the report had reduced to 48.

9.4 The performance of the Repairs Contact Centre is not satisfactory. The Centre is experiencing technological difficulties with the IT programmes freezing, which significantly adds to the length of calls. The cause and solution are being investigated as a matter of priority. An experienced new Manager has been appointed to the Centre.

TL

**A detailed paper on the Repairs Contact Centre performance will be submitted to the Finance and Performance Committee.**

9.5 Board members attention was drawn to sickness levels. Following the introduction of the in-house HR resource team consultation have taken place on a new sickness management process that would be implemented from 1 May. Staff would be trained on the new process from mid April. The process will include shortened trigger points to evoke managerial actions.

SLHD were looking to introduce a range of Health & Welfare services including:-

1. Occupational Health Assessments.
2. Stress Counselling.
3. Chiropractor

9.6 **Members requested a more in-depth report on sickness levels be submitted to the HR and Equalities Committee so that they could understand the reasons for sickness, also detailing long term and short term sickness.**

TL

9.7 **The Board noted the contents of the report.**

- 10. SLHD Investment Strategy and Investment Plan**
- 10.1 The purpose of the report was to seek approval for the Decent Homes Investment Strategy from 1 April 2007 onwards.
- 10.2 Maureen Harkin confirmed to the Board that the Council's Cabinet had approved the report on 21 February 2007.
- 10.3 Trevor Lincoln confirmed that this report was a continuation of the papers with DCLOG, he said that consultation had taken place with DCLOG and DMBC.
- 10.4 The Board were informed that Romona Youhill will be leaving the company on Friday 9 March. The Chair and Members expressed their thanks for her commitment to SLHD.
- 10.5 **The Board noted and approved the contents of the report.**
- 11. Status Survey Action Plan**
- 11.1 The report provided Board members with an update on the Status Survey and resulting action plan.
- 11.2 He pointed out the key issues arising from the survey on page 2 of the report stating that the action plan identified how those issues were to be addressed. He commented that the action plan was a combination of the work already being undertaken and includes measures for improvement and better communication.
- 11.3 He advised that SLHD were reviewing how they could get staff involved in future consultation detailed in 4.7 of the report.
- 11.4 He informed members that the action plan would be a working document and therefore will change on a weekly and monthly basis.
- It was agreed that quarterly updates would be brought to the Board meetings.** TL
- 11.5 **Status Survey Action Plan – No 66/67** A member raised concerns regarding the timescales for Customer Care training and asked for them to be reduced.
- It was agreed that the timescales would be reviewed and started earlier.** TL
- 11.6 **The Board noted the contents of the report.**

**12. Contract Procedure Rules**

12.1 The purpose of the report was to advise Board members of minor revisions required to the Standing Orders (Contract Procedure Rules) currently adopted by the Company.

12.2 He pointed out to members that the report highlighted in bold the necessary changes made to the Standing Orders. He clarified that there were no specific areas that needed to be discussed and that the revision followed discussions with the Council to ensure best practices are followed.

**Once the Standing Order document had been updated the document would be circulated to all Board members.** TL

12.3 **The Board noted and approved the contents of the report.**

**13. Annual Governance Plan**

13.1 The purpose of the report was to inform Board members and they agree the actions to be taken to review areas of governance arrangements.

13.2 Trevor explained that following on from 2 Board Away Days and previous discussions a draft Governance Plan had been produced based on issues already identified. He went onto explain that the plan would evolve throughout the year.

13.3 A discussion took place on delegated powers and terms of reference at boards and committees, it was decided the item would be taken to the next Board Away Day.

**In the meantime a review of delegations and the terms of reference would be carried out.** TL

13.4 A Member suggested that after the close of future Board Meeting Members take a little time to discuss individual and collective Board Members effectiveness at the meeting. It was agreed that this would both improve effectiveness and indicate areas of training needs. It was also agreed that the Board Forward Plan would also form part of these discussions and allow Board members to request information and/or reports on particular areas of the business.

Board Members agreed to the suggestion, which is to be implemented at the next meeting.

13.5 **The Board noted and approved the contents of the report.**

**14. Election & Selection of the Tenant Board and Area Board Members**

14.1 The CE introduced this report the purpose was to present the recommendation of the Working Party for Board approval.

14.2 He confirmed that the Board was currently in the 2nd year of their 3 yearly rotational retirement process explaining that 2 Tenant Board Member retirements would be required at the AGM. He summarised the election process referring to the timetable at 4.10 of the report.

He further went onto explain that should the Board accept the recommendations in principle a report would be brought back to the Board in April after consultation with the Tenants and Residents Associations and other groups.

**14.3 4.5 Criteria for Applications – Exclusions**

Members agreed that ‘and SLHD’ should be added to the following exclusions criteria;-

- Are an employee of the Council.  
And that the wording of :

“re in serious breach of your obligations as a tenant” mirror the wording in the Code of Conduct

Members felt that the words “subject to Board approval “ should be removed from paragraph 2 of 4.6.

**14.4 The Board noted and approved the contents of the report.**

**15. Any Other Business**

15.1 The Chair raised that Mr P Gosney, Insurance Officer for DMBC had increased the level of indemnity from £2m to £5m in line with the request from the Board.

**16. Approved Minutes from Area Board and Committees**

16.1 The Board approved the minutes.

**17. Date of next Board meeting**

Wednesday 4 April 2007 at SLC.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm.