

Company Number 05564649
A Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England

St. Leger Homes of Doncaster Limited

BOARD MEETING

3 October 2007

Present

Sidney Hall, Lyn Ralph (Vice Chair), Rodger Haldenby (co-optee), Betty Clayton (co-optee), Cllr George Beck, Cllr Pat Haith, John Young, Michael Hardy, James Parkin.

In attendance

Martin Musgrave (Chief Executive), Paul Hopkinson (Director of Property Services), Trevor Lincoln (Director of Business Planning), Linda Milan (Company Secretary), Rebecca Wilkie (Asst Director of Customer Services), James Turner (Head of Communications), Jane Davies (Business Planning & Efficiency Manager), Maxine Newton (Board Support Officer).

Also in Attendance

Garry Wells (DMBC)

Members of the Public

Mr David Farrell, Mr Turner.

	ACTION
1. Apologies and Quorum	
1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Stuart Exelby, Cllr Paul Coddington, Cllr Bill Mordue, Kate Radovanovic, Peter Chapman, Gill Taylor and Judith Jones.	
1.2 It was noted that a quorum was present. Lyn Ralph chaired the meeting.	
2. Declarations of Interest by the Board	
2.1 Rodger Haldenby declared he may have an interest in item 12.	
3. Minutes of meeting held on 1 August 2007 and Matters Arising	
3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2007 were agreed as a true and accurate record.	
3.2 Matters Arising	
3.2.1 There were no matters arising.	
3.2.2 The Chair raised that she had received a request to bring agenda	

item 9 Value for Money Strategy forward on the agenda prior to the Chief Executives report and asked the Boards permission.

The Board agreed.

4. Value for Money Strategy (VFM) – Agenda Item 9

4.1 The Business Planning and Efficiency Manager presented this report that gave the Board an overview of the revised Value for Money Strategy and allowed the opportunity for feedback and approval.

4.2 A Member enquired why SLHD were publishing an Asset Management Strategy. It was explained that although this was a Council responsibility the plan related to the actions required by SLHD.

4.3 A Member asked if further savings were expected to be achieved on the Service Level Agreements. The Board were informed that although this was possible these would not be to the same magnitude as last year. This year the benefits were more likely to be non-cashable gains, such as improvements to services.

4.4 Members enquired whether SLHD was eligible to qualify to participate in 'Undertake appraisal of new build opportunities' with 2 star status. Board were advised that in the last 2/3 weeks the rules had changed and in future 2 star providers would be able to submit expressions of interest.

4.5 The Board approved the report and the revised strategy.

4.6 The Business Planning and Efficiency Manager asked permission from the Chair and left the meeting.

5. Chief Executive's Report – Agenda Item 4

5.1 **James Turner Introduction** - The Chief Executive introduced James Turner, the newly appointed Head of Communications to the Board. One of James' tasks was to increase the communication channels to staff, tenants and stakeholders and to provide a communication strategy. The Chief Executive stated that improvements have already been made and a number of items have appeared in the press.

5.2 **CBL** - The Chief Executive then went onto explain that DMBC Cabinet had approved the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) paper and recommendations that morning.

He introduced the Assistant Director of Customer Services to the Board who delivered a presentation on CBL and its progress.

- 5.3 **MN to email copy of the CBL presentation to Board members.** MN
- 5.4 Following the presentation the Chief Executive emphasised to the Board that CBL will not improve the housing supply and demand situation in Doncaster. It was merely another way of managing allocations of its housing stock. He asked members to prepare for an amount of bad publicity relating to applicants who are hoping that the system will lead to an early offer of accommodation.
- The Audit Commission had criticised SLHD for not having implemented CBL earlier.
- 5.5 **A Member asked if SLHD could contact Naz Hussain to arrange for the presentation to be delivered to the SJC.** RW
- 5.6 The Interim Director of Housing for DMBC added that issues may arise where people wish to view the property internally prior to making their expression of interest and the company was looking into the possibility of publishing virtual tours of the property on the web site.
- 5.7 Members raised concerns that allocations of property would not be based on need but rather on IT expertise referring to the demonstration of the website. They were assured that the company would ensure that people would be given every opportunity to understand and use the processes in place for CBL.
- The system will be reappraised in February 2008 when any operational difficulties will be identified and corrective actions recommended.
- It was agreed that a copy of the presentation be circulated to all Board members.** MN
- 5.8 **Staff Conference** – The Chief Executive thanked those Board members that had already attended the staff conference. Members that had attended expressed that they had enjoyed the day and felt it had been very productive and valuable.
- 5.9 **Corgi Certification** – The Chief Executive informed the Board that SLHD had been awarded a Corgi Certification. There are approximately 55,000 registered installers of Corgi but only 84 companies have achieved the Certification standard. He commented that the gas section have made a great deal of progress and are to be congratulated.
- 5.10 **NFA update** – referring to the additional NFA report he advised that he attended regular meetings of the NFA which were proving more beneficial than he had first anticipated as the focus of the meetings appears to have become more balanced and relevant to

ALMO's who are progressing towards the "Decent Homes" targets.

- 5.11 **Cllr Ros Jones** – The Chief Executive then went onto advise that he had received an email from Cllr Ros Jones explaining that from 1 October she will no longer be a Council representative of the West Area Board.

LM/MN

6. Progress on Decent Homes work – Agenda Item 5

- 6.1 The Director of Property Services presented this report that updated Board members of the current Capital Works Programme.

- 6.2 He highlighted the Decent Homes programme was fast moving and therefore the report was already two weeks out of date. To demonstrate the size of the current programme he compared the hand over rate of 40 completions per week in the previous financial year to the current rate of almost 450 completions per week.

- 6.3 Members' comments were invited on the style of the report as updates will be given at all future Board meetings. Members were also invited to contact the Director if they wished to ask any questions on the reports prior to the meetings.

It was agreed that an additional column would be added to the table in the body of future reports detailing 'Spend to Date'.

- 6.4 A Member asked how the company factored in the risk of bad weather conditions or strikes adversely affecting the achievement of target. They were advised that an internal report was reviewed weekly to monitor progress and expenditure was reviewed weekly to ensure early identification and rectification of problem areas.

The Chief Executive added that it was critical that SLHD delivered the programme to give the government confidence in its capabilities. Members were informed that in respect of windows and doors priority was being given to the elderly so works was not being carried out over the winter months, and as the majority of this work is being completed in half a day inconvenience is kept to a minimum.

- 6.5 A member asked if the environmental works programme had yet been approved. The Board were informed that this was currently under consideration by the Council following recommendations made by SLHD. Board Members will be updated on progress. Gary Wells added that he expected the programme to be approved by the end of the week.

PH/PE

- 6.6 Members enquired about the duration of the partnering contacts for the Decent Homes programme. They were advised that framework contracts had been put in place that gave no guarantee to the contractor for future years work. This also provided flexibility to vary the amount of work given to the partners if the quality of their works is poor or when funding is increased or decreased.
- 6.7 **The Board noted the contents of the report.**
- 6.8 James Turner asked permission from the Chair and left the meeting.
7. **Repairs & Maintenance Market Testing – Agenda Item 6**
- 7.1 The Director of Property Services presented this report that updated the Board on progress with the project to Market Test the Repairs and Maintenance service.
- 7.2 **Stores Report** - referring to Chart 1 in the body of the report he advised members that the 1st draft report from CWC had been received and was currently under review. Once the initial draft has been checked we will discuss the findings with DMBC. The final report will be brought back to the December Board meeting. The report includes options to deliver the stores function in a number of ways detailing advantages and disadvantages of each option:-
- a) In-house
 - b) External
 - c) Partnership in-house store/Part in-house/part external (using specialists)
- 7.3 A Member highlighted that when using an external company's it was not always possible to guarantee availability of stock unless this was written into the agreement. Conversely SLHD could not also afford to purchase stock to allow it to sit on shelves for a prolonged period.
- 7.4 **Transport** – Board Members were informed that the Council had agreed a plan to implement the recommendations discussed at the Boards last meeting. The Council had also recognised this as good practice and were going to widen implementation to all of their vehicles.
- 7.5 **TASK System** – he advised that a report was being submitted to the Executive Management Team (EMT) next week with options to either stay with the current arrangement whereby SLHD obtained services via DMBC, or to procure the system direct from Consilium or source a new system. EMT will review the options

and provide recommendations and an overall IT Strategy to the Board at its meeting in December.

It was agreed that the TASK report being submitted to EMT next week should be distributed to Board members.

TL/MN

7.6 **CWC Review** – Board members were advised that following some concerns a re-evaluation of CWC will take place towards the end of phase 1 of the project.

8. Finance & Performance Information – Agenda Item 7

8.1 The Director of Business Planning presented this report that gave the major variations in the revenue and capital accounts as at 31 August 2007.

8.2 He advised that along with DMBC the company was optimistic that the Government would meet the additional costs incurred as a result of the floods.

8.3 Board members were asked to note that the figures included recommendations approved by the Cabinet that morning for the costs of implementing CBL.

8.4 **Appendix A – Revenue Summary - ‘Furniture’** – A Member asked the company to consider recycling furniture where possible.

It was agreed that it is best practice to do this whenever possible.

8.5 **VIP Telephone System** - Board members were advised that if the company continue to experience problems with the Council’s telephone system at the Repairs contact centre we may have to review its use as we cannot allow it to compromise our customer service. A review of this was to be completed in December.

8.6 **Anti Social Behaviour/Breaches of Tenancy Conditions** – The Director of Business Planning apologised for being unable to provide an update for this area and it was agreed that this would be sent on to Board Members.

TL

8.7 **Arrears** – although the change of rent free weeks had affected the figures Members were assured that every effort is being made to chase arrears accrued during that period.

8.8 **Sickness** - members were advised that a sickness report was to be submitted to the next HR committee. Analysis had indicated that the deterioration in the sickness statistics was due to an increase in long-term sickness. The Occupational Health Service provider was achieving some success with evidence of staff returning to work quicker and providing aids and adaptations for

staff at work. It was agreed that the absence rate remains an area of concern.

8.9 The Board noted and approved the report.

9. Status Survey Action Plan – Agenda Item 8

9.1 The Director of Business Planning presented this report the purpose was to report on progress against actions contained within the Status Survey Action Plan.

9.2 He expressed concern and disappointment at the lack of progress made on the actions contained within the plan however steps had been taken to ensure its future progression.

9.3 The general level of customer satisfaction results obtained from localised services questionnaires indicated very good satisfaction rates.

Experience has shown that the questions contained in the survey need to allow us to drill down to identifiable causes of dissatisfaction.

9.4 The Chief Executive concluded by saying the company had been a little over ambitious with deadlines on the action plan, a report would be brought back to the next F&P Committee with the action plan detailing reviewed realistic target dates for all actions.

TL

9.5 The board noted the contents of the report.

10. Accommodation Progress update – Agenda Item 10

10.1 The Director of Business Planning gave an update to the Board on the current position of accommodation.

10.2 A tabled document summarised the potential relocation of housing offices at Conisbrough and Thorne. This included the possible added advantage of working in premises with Neighbourhood teams.

10.3 He also informed Board members that SLHD were working closely with the Council on the potential relocation of the four existing depots, which are considered to be unfit, to one large depot, with a completion deadline of January 2008 for a full options paper.

11. Election of Chair of the Board – Agenda Item 11

11.1 The Company Secretary presented this report that informed Board members of the actions required to comply with the company's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

- 11.2 Members attention was drawn to the timetable on page 4 of the report explaining that the procedure to follow was attached at Appendix A and the nomination paper was attached at Appendix B.
- 11.3 Appendix B – Nomination paper – it was noted that the date should read 24 November 2007 and not 23 November 2007.
- 11.4 A Member asked if the existing Chair and Vice Chair were still eligible to nominate themselves as they were in their second year of office. This was confirmed (standing orders 2.6.4(b)).
- 11.5 **The Board noted the contents of the report.**

12. Any Other Business – Agenda Item 13

- 12.1 The Chair informed the Board that she and another Board member had been involved in the recruitment process of a Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Co-opted Member to the Board. After careful consideration they recommended that Mrs Asma Hassan is invited to accept this position and be asked to attend the next Board meeting, the Chair sought Board members approval.

LM/MN

The Board agreed.

- 12.2 The Interim Director of Housing for DMBC, advised that the Council would be carrying out a restructure of its Housing Department over the next several months. He said it was important that SLHD had an input to identifying key strategic housing issues in order for an appropriate structure to be developed.

MM

It was agreed that the Chief Executive would speak with G Wells and feed back to the Board.

- 12.3 **Solid Fuel Policy** - following on from a recent training session 'Companies Act 2006: New Duties for Directors' one member raised concerns over the Solid Fuel Policy that has not yet been approved by the Council. They emphasised their concerns over the company's liability and their duty as Directors. The Interim Director of Housing DMBC noted the Boards concern saying that it was progressing through the system and assured the Board it was due to be discussed at the Cabinet meeting on 7 November.

- 12.4 **AGM 7 November 2007** – it was agreed that the meeting would not start until mid afternoon due to Council members diary commitments. Further details to follow.

LM/MN

- 12.5 At this point members of the public were asked to leave the meeting and were escorted from the room.

- 12.5 **Co-opted Board Members** – the Chair informed members that a North West Board Member had been elected, this meant that Betty Clayton was attending her last Board meeting. She was thanked by the Board for her valuable contributions. It was also confirmed that the North East Board Member position was still vacant therefore Rodger Haldenby would remain with the Board until the time that this position was filled.

13. Date of Next Board Meeting

- 13.1 Wednesday 7 November 2007.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, on the grounds that exempt information as amended defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule A to the Act is likely to be disclosed.

14. Digital TV Procurement – Agenda Item 12

- 14.1 The Director of Business Planning presented this report that informed the Board of the outcome of the procurement process relating to the appointment of Contractors for the delivery of the Digital Television Infrastructure to Tenants in Communal properties.

- 14.2 The Board approved Option 3 set out in the report regarding the mixed package of installations to be available and agreed that DAS be the appointed installation contractor, working within the Northern Housing Consortium framework agreement.

- 14.3 **The Board noted and approved the report.**

For Information Only

Confidential Item – Not Open to the Press or Public

15. The Board noted and approved the following minutes:
- Minutes of the Finance & Performance Committee held on 30 May 2007

Non Confidential Item

16. The Board noted approved the following minutes:
- Minutes of the West Area, Joint Area & East Area Board meetings held on 11 June 2007.

17. **Board Forward Plan** – members noted the plan.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm