

Company Number 05564649  
A Company Limited by Guarantee  
Registered in England

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

### **BOARD MEETING**

**5 December 2007**

#### **Present**

Sid Hall, James Parkin, Lyn Ralph, Frank Protheroe, Brian Naughton, Cllr George Beck, Cllr Stuart Exelby, Cllr Paul Coddington, Cllr Pat Haith, Cllr Bill Mordue, Peter Chapman (Chair), Kate Radovanovic, Phillip Jackson, John Young, Micheal Hardy.

#### **In Attendance**

Gary Wells (DMBC), Richard Petch – partial (EC Harris).

#### **Also In Attendance**

Martin Musgrave (Chief Executive), Judith Jones (Director of Customer Services), Paul Hopkinson (Director of Property Services), Trevor Lincoln (Director of Business Planning), Linda Milan (Company Secretary), Maxine Newton (Board Support Officer), Leandra Graham-Hibling (PA), Janet Clarke (Assistant Director of Housing Management), Sue Bowie (Assistant Director of Customer Services), Dave Abbott (Assistant Director for Estate Management), Paul Lightfoot (Assistant Director for Property Services), Sharon Adam (Assistant Director for Empty Homes and Services), Jean Shaw (Assistant Director Human Resources), Dean Rothwell (Assistant Director for Financial Services), Christine Tolson (Assistant Director for Performance), Michael Vickers (Senior Project Manager), Rebecca Wilkie (Assistant Director CBL).

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|-----------|---|---------------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>Apologies and Quorum</b>   | <b>ACTION</b> |
| 1.1       | There were no apologies received for the meeting.   |               |
| 1.2       | It was noted that a quorum was present. Peter Chapman chaired the first item of business at the meeting.  |               |
| 1.3       | Introductions were given by attendee's at the meeting.  |               |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Appointment of the Chair and Vice Chairs</b>   |               |
| 2.1       | This item was Chaired by the Chief Executive who informed the meeting that one nomination paper had been received for the position of Chair of the Board, from the current Chair Peter Chapman. |               |

**The Board agreed to the re-appointment of Peter Chapman as Chair of the Board for a further year.**

Peter reminded the Board that as this was would be his third year as Chair he would not be seeking re-election to the position following the 2008 AGM.

- 2.2 Appointment of Vice Chair – one nomination paper had been received from Lyn Ralph expressing her interest in continuing the role of Vice Chair.

**The Board agreed to the re-appointment of Lyn Ralph as Vice Chair of the Board.**

- 2.3 Peter Chapman resumed the position of Chair for the rest of the meeting.
- 2.4 The Chair recommended the re-appointment of the recently selected second Vice Chair, Cllr Paul Coddington as second Vice Chair of the Board.

**The Board agreed to the re-appointment of Cllr Paul Coddington as Vice Chair of the Main Board.**

**3. Declarations of Interest by the Board**

- 3.1 For the benefit of new Board Members the Chair reminded Members that on appointment to the Board and annually thereafter they were required to complete a 'Declaration of Interest' form.

They were also required to declare any interests in agenda items that were to be discussed at Board meetings at the start of the meeting.

- 3.2 Frank Protheroe declared an interest in agenda item 9 'Tenants Compact Review' as he was part of the Compact Group.

Lyn Ralph declared an interest in agenda item 13 'Repairs & Maintenance Market Testing' as her daughter is employed by St Leger Homes as Assistant Director for Empty Homes and Services.

**4. Minutes of meeting held on 3 October 2007 and Matters Arising**

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2007 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**4.2 Matters Arising**

4.2.1 There were no matter arising raised at the meeting.

## **5. Inspection Recommendation - Progress**

5.1 The purpose of this presentation was to update the Board on progress made on areas for improvement identified during the 2007 Audit Commission inspection. Emphasis was placed on the formal recommendations from the inspection and the progress that had been made in their implementation, but also other identified issues were included. In turn the Assistant Directors delivered their presentation on the following topics:-

- Access, Customer Care & User Focus
- Improve Diversity
- Stock Investment, Capital Improvements & Asset Management
- Responsive Repairs
- Empty Property (Void) Repairs
- Gas Servicing
- Improve Income Management
- Improve Resident Involvement
- Tenancy & Estate Management
- Improve Allocations & Lettings
- Leasehold Services
- Value for Money

5.2 The Chair commented on the excellent progress that had been made and congratulated the Assistant Directors on the quality of the presentation. He said he was interested in what was considered necessary to prepare for the next level of Inspection.

The Chief Executive responded by saying that a further update would be brought back to the next Board Meeting with details of what needed to be done to work towards 3 star status. This would be a two year project and detailed planning will commence in the New Year.

**The Board noted the presentation and requested an update report to be brought back to the February 2008 Board meeting.** All AD's

## **6. Performance Management Information - (Agenda Item 7)**

6.1 Performance information for October 2007 was presented.

6.2 The Assistant Director of Financial Services gave a summary of the revenue and capital highlights.

Revenue:

1. The current forecast projected a modest surplus of 1%.
2. An additional management fee of £126k has now been received in respect of Choice Based Lettings.
3. Spend when comparing October 2007 at £17,659,483 to October 2006 at £16,434,383 is very similar.

Capital:

1. The Decency programme is now showing an under commitment of £575k. This is a result of the allocation for the non-decency flood works being reduced in 2007/08 to £950k.
2. The level of capital receipts is now being closely monitored. We are currently projecting 150 Right to Buys in the current financial year. This is expected to fall.

6.3 Members were advised that as Steadfast windows have declined to undertake Decency windows and doors work for the programme SLHD was preparing a revised programme for DMBC to consider and approve. Dialogue with the other contractors was taking place to identify their capabilities for undertaking additional commitments.

6.4 The Chair queried the reasons for low spend on Disabled Adaptations. The Chief Executive advised that this service was provided by DMBC. This will however be raised at the next liaison meeting with the Council. **PH**

6.5 The Assistant Director for Performance gave a summary of the performance issue highlights.

1. Rent arrears – percentage of rent collected had improved from 103.33% in September to 104.60% in October, above target. However, the current arrears against annual debit had increased. - Members questioned the correlation between the two figures. They were advised that concerns had been raised within the company regarding the reliability of this data and a “health check “ of the methodology was currently being undertaken. Members to be advised on the outcome. **JJ**  
Percentage of Appointments Made and Kept – performance has been below target since April 2007. Reasons included the implementation of the Working at Heights Policy and suspension of works due to the floods. This months performance has shown a slight upturn and is expected to improve with the implementation of Optitime in November.
2. Repairs Contact Centre – abandoned calls of 263 in October is similar to the September figure. High levels of sickness within the team have contributed to a higher average queue time of 31 seconds (target 25 seconds). Training of additional staff has been undertaken to help improve performance.
3. Sickness – total cost of sickness for October was £57,020.04. Consistent action is being taken to manage sickness absence.

- 6.6 Members expressed their disappointment at sickness levels and its financial impact on the company. Members requested further details of the actions currently being taken and for a report to be provided to the next meeting giving a statistical breakdown of the reasons for absence including the variations in sickness levels in different areas and roles within the business.
- 6.7 The Chief Executive advised that this is being given priority within the company. The Staff Conference had included Health & Welfare sessions and Managers had received training. Some staff appeared to have experienced difficulty in adapting to the changes in efficiency required from all staff and this was being addressed.

The Director of Business Planning added although the figures were unacceptable a lot of work was being carried out on Sickness Management. Action trigger points had been tightened and would be further reviewed. Best practice from other employees was being studied.

**The Board agreed that a report would be brought back to the Board detailing: split between managerial/non-managerial staff absences, service area, reason for absence, number of days.** TL

- 6.8 Janet Clarke, Dave Abbott, Paul Lightfoot, Sharon Adam, Jean Shaw, Dean Rothwell, Christine Tolson, Rebecca Wilkie asked permission from the Chair and left the meeting.

## **7. Chief Executive's Report – (Agenda Item 6)**

- 7.1 **Governance** – members were advised of the Governance review meeting scheduled to take place on Wednesday 12 December, following the meeting a report will be produced and taken to the February 2008 Board meeting.
- 7.2 **Draft Housing Revenue Account Allocation** – the Chief Executive advised that a draft allocation had recently been received and the impact of this was being analysed, in conjunction with DMBC final allocations would not be known until January next year.
- 7.3 **Chamber of Commerce Awards** – he informed the Board that SLHD had been short listed for four awards and he was attending the awards ceremony on 13 December at the Dome.
- 7.4 **Asset Management Strategy** – the Director of Business Planning advised that a draft Asset Management Strategy had been produced, in discussions with DMBC. The strategy identifies land

and assets for disposal or reuse and related investment requirements. The document linked to the Business Delivery Plan for SLHD and the DMBC Housing Investment Strategy.

- 7.5 **Community Partnership Fund** – Members were informed that some of our partners had suggested the development of a fund that would be used for the benefit of our customers. Discussions are being held and Board members will be informed of progress.
- 7.6 **Respect Housing Management standard** – the Chief Executive reported that SLHD had recently signed up to the standard at an event staged in the Balby Bridge area.
- 7.7 **Mini status questionnaire** – he advised the questionnaire had now been distributed seeking tenant views on the quality of services delivered.
- 7.8 **Customer Profile Questionnaires** – he informed the Board that around 50% of tenants had completed the form. As an illustration of how the information could be used he referred to 998 respondents considered themselves to be disabled but not in receipt of housing benefit. With the customer's permission this had been investigated further and had led to a number of customers receiving substantial additional weekly income and back payments. He gave examples where accounts had been credited by over £13,500.

The Board gave their thanks and appreciation for the work that had been done to make this happen.

- 7.9 Finally the Chief Executive introduced his Personal Assistant Leandra Graham-Hibling who had joined the company on 1 November.

## 8. **Capital Programmes Monitoring 2007-08 ( 1 April to 12 November 2007)**

- 8.1 The Director of Property Services introduced this report to update Board on the Capital Works being undertaken and planned for the period 1 April to 12 November 2007. He introduced the Senior Project Manager for the Decent Homes programme who presented members with a summary update on works volumes and spend to date.
- 8.2 Members commented on how useful they found the information, but asked how the figures compared to targets. They were informed that the programme was not far off of target. The company needed to spend £56m by the end of March, currently approximately £20k had been spent. They were advised that detailed spend projections were submitted by each of the

contractors and detailed monitoring processes were in place, reporting regularly to the Executive Management Team and the Council. Members were reminded that payments were not made to contractors until all works on individual dwellings were complete.

PH/PE

8.3 Members raised concerns over the work not being carried out by Steadfast being given to the remaining contractors who were already struggling with workload. Members were advised that discussions were taking place with contractors and that SLHD would not increase the work of any contractor until it was completely satisfied that this would be done to our standard and within the given deadline.

8.4 One member drew the Boards attention to page 9 of the report highlighting the small number of properties that had been completed to date at Bentley. They were advised that Kier had experienced unexpected structural issues at some properties and had to employ specialist contractors. Kier were in discussions with SLHD as to how they could catch up with the programme.

Another member asked if these difficulties should have been predicted at the time of the survey. Although it was agreed that this would have been ideal there were a number of reasons why this was not foreseen. Customers are being kept aware of any delays by letter. A Member commented that he lived in the area in question but had not received a letter. It was agreed that this would be investigated.

MV

Another member commented that the contractors were attempting to start work on properties when they did not have all of the doors and windows for the installation. He was advised this would be investigated.

MV

8.5 **The Board noted the contents of the report and it was agreed that an update report would be brought back to the Board in February 2008 that included target and budget comparisons.**

## 9. **Tenants Compact and Action Plan Review**

9.1 The Director of Customer Services presented a report on the revised Tenants Compact and Action Plan. An updated 'work in progress' draft Compact was tabled at the meeting that included photographs. Members attention was also drawn to Appendix B - Action Plan.

9.2 One member enquired whether SLHD sought permission to use photographs especially those of children. It was confirmed that this was the case and that notices had been displayed at the Tenants Conference relating to the taking and use of

photography.

9.3 **The Board approved contents of the report.**

**10. Board Members Attendance Register**

10.1 The Chair presented this report that confirmed the register of the Main Board Members attendance.

10.2 One member raised that he had NRA – ‘No Recorded Apologies’ recorded for the Finance & Performance Committee that he wasn’t aware he was a participant. It was acknowledged this was because membership was open to all Board Members automatically.

**It was agreed that the register would be amended MN accordingly.**

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

**11. Any Other Business**

11.1 Members were reminded of the Doncaster HomeChoice briefing sessions which are to be held on 13 & 17 December, each session is to last approximately 1.5 hours any one who hasn’t done so to inform the Board Support Officer to book a place.

**12. Date of Next Board Meeting**

- Wednesday 6 February 2008

**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.

**13. Repairs and Maintenance Market Testing**

13.1 The Director of Property Services presented an update on progress with the project to Market Test the Repairs and Maintenance service for the period June to December 2007.

13.2 He introduced Richard Petch, Client Liaison Officer of EC Harris, Consultants advising on this work who gave a presentation on a

review of the stores function. The overall conclusion was that SLHD “currently operates a traditional and largely in-effective stores capability”. The key findings were summarised as:-

- The TASK software package isn't suitable as a procurement and stores system.
- SLHD could gain considerable efficiency savings and improve overall service delivery if it carried out a major overhaul of the stores and procurement function.
- In it's present state the stores network will never allow SLHD to realise the full value of it's supply chain.
- Three of the four sites currently used are deemed inappropriate, with the other requiring investment and remodelling.

Three options were presented for the Board to consider:

Option 1 – Retain the stores function in-house and invest in improving current arrangements

Option 2 - Procure a total out-source to a specialist third party

Option 3 - Select a partial out-source of stores to a specialist third party

The advantages and disadvantages of each option were discussed.

Board members considered the report in detail. Some Board members expressed concerns regarding the score weighting given to each option by the inclusion of such items as attractiveness to the market rather than the advantages to the company.

It was agreed that the current locations and condition of the stores facilities led to them being unfit for purpose and that some of these difficulties could be overcome by locating the stores within one central “super” depot.

The Chief Executive confirmed that this had been a topic of discussion with the Council for a number of months but no clear way forward had been agreed. Gary Wells confirmed that DMBC had been asked for their views on SLHD moving out of the current four depots and that this was under consideration.

Board members acknowledged the references in the report to the commitment demonstrated by current stores staff.

Board members expressed a desire to see a plan to overcome the current managerial problems within the stores as soon as

possible. The Director of Property Services confirmed that some improvements had already been made and that others were being introduced. However, the limitations of the IT system and the state of the stores premises severely limited our ability to make major improvements.

- 13.3 **Gary Wells to confirm DMBC's decision on the option of moving out of the existing depot premises and relocating into a modern centralised fit for purpose facility.** GW
- 13.4 **The Board agreed that a more detailed report on all options be reported to the February 2008 Board Meeting.** PH

**For Information Only**

***Confidential Item – Not Open to the Press or Public***

**14. Approved Minutes from Area Boards and Committees**

- 14.1 The Board noted the following minutes:
- Finance & Performance Committee meeting 25 July 2007.

***Non Confidential Item***

**15. Approved Minutes from Area Boards and Committees**

- 15.1 The Board noted the following minutes:
- East, Joint & West Area Board 9 July 2007.

**16. Board Forward Plan**

- 16.1 The Board noted the Board forward plan.
- 16.2 The Chair reminded Board members that the Governance review meeting was scheduled to take place next Wednesday 12 December. Should members have anything they would like adding to please advise the Board Support Officer.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.