

Company Number 05564649  
A Company Limited by Guarantee  
Registered in England

**St. Leger Homes of Doncaster Limited**  
**BOARD MEETING**

**7<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

**Present**

Sid Hall, James Parkin, Paul Coddington, Lyn Ralph, Frank Protheroe, Brian Naughton, Cllr George Beck, Cllr Bill Mordue, Cllr Stuart Exelby, Peter Chapman (Chair), Michael Hardy, Philip Jackson

**In Attendance**

Gary Wells (DMBC)

**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), Leandra Graham-Hibling (Board Support Officer), Jean Shaw (Assistant Director – Human Resources & Support Services), Paul Elliott (Assistant Director – Capital Programmes), Mahroof Hussain (Diversity Manager).

**1. Apologies and Quorum**

1.1 Apologies were received from John Young and Kate Radovanovic.

The Chair made reference to John Young who was receiving his MBE today and asked the Board to note that the award was in recognition of the range of valuable work John has undertaken for the community.

1.2 It was noted that a quorum was present.

**2. Declarations of Interest by Board Members**

2.1 Lyn Ralph declared an interest in item 15 – Repairs and Maintenance Market testing

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008 and matters arising**

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**3.2 Matters Arising**

3.2.1 The following matters were discussed:-

**From item – 3.2.1 – Decent Homes – Specification Report -**  
The Director of Property Services confirmed discussions had taken

**ACTION**

place with DMBC regarding the Decent Homes Specification Review and that a formal report would now go through DMBC's formal reporting process. He confirmed that as soon as a decision is made, he will report it back to the Board.

**From item – 4.1 – Stores / Depot**

A Member asked for an update on progress with the potential relocation of the existing depots.

The Chief Executive advised the Board that no decision had yet been made and that he would provide an update on progress to the June Board meeting after a report is submitted to the DMBC Executive Board.

**From item – 13.5 – Property Standards Review – Lettable Standards**

The Director of Property Services confirmed that the 'Surestop' device is being added to suitable properties in the voids standard.

**4. Chief Executives Report – Agenda Item 4**

**4.1 Office of Fair Trading (OFT) Investigation**

The Chief Executive provided the Board with an update on action taken to date following a statement issued by the OFT concerning uncompetitive behaviour in the construction industry.

The Chief Executive confirmed that three of the Companies named are partner contractors working on the delivery of the Decency Programme, but the investigations appear to be centred around Private Finance Initiatives for Schools.

**4.2 Tenants Conference – Unity in the Community**

The Chief Executive provided the Board with feedback from the Tenants conference, explaining that the conference had been well received by Tenants and Residents and that the Question & Answer session with Directors of St Leger Homes was very positive.

It was noted that a photograph of the Conference had appeared in the *Inside Housing* magazine.

**4.3 Financial Website**

The Chief Executive explained the new service that St Leger Homes will be providing as of 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008 as part of the Companies website package.

The Director of Customer Services explained that a test site was running and went on to explain that this will provide information which will benefit all householders and will provide links to other websites.

**4.4 Main Board Forward Plan**

The forward plan was reviewed.

4.5 **Decent Homes Year End Position 2007/08**

The Chief Executive confirmed that the 2007/8 Decency spend for St Leger Homes was £56M and confirmed that a number of press releases would be published over the coming weeks now that the period of purdah was over.

4.6 **CiH Harrogate Conference**

The Chief Executive confirmed the dates of the Chartered Institute Housing's annual conference, and explained that a letter will be sent to Board Members with the details of the conference and the arrangements that will be made for those who wished to attend.

4.7 **SLHD Vehicle Fleet**

The Chief Executive presented a visual mock up showing the planned changes to the companies' fleet of Vehicles, following consultation with employees and tenants. This included a change to Model and Colour.

**The Board approved the move that future vehicle requirements are of Ford manufacture and that the Companies standard colour is Silver and noted that it will take 4-5 years on the current replacement cycle to fully upgrade the fleet.**

5. **Equality and Diversity Statistics – Hate Crime and Customer Profile Questionnaires Presentation - Agenda Item 5**

5.1 The Director of Customer Services introduced Mahroof Hussain, the Diversity Manager who spoke to the presentation.

5.2 The Diversity Manager explained to the Board the purpose of collecting information about our customers and how the information is used to improve and monitor services. He circulated a copy of the current Questionnaire.

5.3 The Diversity Manager confirmed where areas of good work had been carried out and instances where our tenants have benefited from these questionnaires.

5.4 A Member asked whether our staff are at risk when visiting tenants with mental illnesses.

Gary Wells and the Chief Executive confirmed that St Leger Homes has access to the Dangerous Persons Database to ensure the safety of staff.

The Chief Executive went on to confirm that property services have been able to use the information continued with the profiles to provide additional services by undertaking checks when the tenant has not requested repairs for a prolonged period.

5.5 A member asked if the questionnaires are flexible and if other languages such as Polish and Russian could be added.

The Diversity Manager explained that we are being flexible with the questionnaire to adapt it in line with our tenants needs.

Members were assured that the information is held in a secure and appropriate manner.

5.6 The second part of the presentation related to Hate Crime and explained that in conjunction with key partners such as South Yorkshire Police and DMBC, a policy is soon to be adopted in line with the Doncaster Safer Partnership.

5.7 The Chair thanked the Diversity Manager for the excellent work detailed in the presentation and asked that he thanked the team involved.

## **6. Board / Development Review – Agenda Item 6**

6.1 The Director of Business Planning introduced the Company Secretary to present the report on Board Development

6.2 The Company Secretary provided Board with feedback from the review undertaken by Anthony Collins Solicitors and asked the Board to consider their suggested improvements.

6.3 The suggested improvement and recommendation of a further training programme was highlighted.

It was noted that the training programme had already been addressed with a 'moving forward' training day, which has been arranged for Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May.

It was confirmed that this training will be visually recorded for future reference.

The Company Secretary also confirmed that Members are to receive details of a programme of further in-house training.

6.4 The Director of Business Planning went on to highlight the specific recommendations arising from the report and asked members for feedback to these suggestions.

Discussions took place over suggestion number 6, *When preparing reports, Identify key questions to be considered by the Board*. The Director of Customer Services explained that this item is strongly linked with suggestion 3, *To introduce a buddying scheme* and that the two should be incorporated.

6.5 A Member asked for details of when the Business Plan is reviewed. The Director of Business Planning confirmed the annual timetable with sign off in March with a mid term review in October. Gary Wells confirmed that the time of the mid term review in October, plans will be in place to start the cycle again to ensure the final draft is again completed and signed in March by DMBC.

6.6 **Board members approved the report and the implementation of the suggestions with the exception of suggestions 6 and 9.** LM

## **7. Decent Homes Progress Report**

7.1 The Assistant Director for Capital Programmes introduced a presentation to update Board Members on the Capital works programme for 2007-8.

7.2 He went on to give a summary of the 2008-9 programme and the profile spend of the programme, confirming the overall spend over 12 months as being £54M

7.3 A Member asked when the work undertaken by Kier on Windows and Doors was expected to be completed.

The Assistant Director for Capital Programmes confirmed that we would be expecting to finish in June 2008.

7.4 The Director of Property Services explained that most of the work in 2008/9 will be within the “one hit” programme. This level of work inevitably leads to a great deal of disruption for customers and may lead to an increase in complaints although the experience gained in the last year will be employed to keep difficulties to a minimum.

7.5 The Director of Property Services explained how the teams have been allocating work to the contractors based on overall performance.

7.6 The Chair asked if SLHD had achieved as much value for money as we had expected. It was confirmed that due to the identified affordability issues the money had not achieved as much as we would have liked but that we are constantly reviewing the supply chain and specification to achieve this.

### **The board approved the report**

## **8. Performance Information – Agenda Item 8**

8.1 The Director of Business Planning introduced the final quarter and end of year performance report and detailed the indicators where we have attained / not attained our targets.

8.2 He went on to highlight the 3 main issues which had affected the voids performance. These were: emergency accommodation required during the 2007 floods; the phased advertising during the introduction of Choice Based Lettings and the letting of properties which had been void before the company’s inauguration.

8.3 Members expressed some concerns regarding the date of the information and it was agreed that the Director of Business Planning would review the feasibility of providing more up to date information

to the Board with key information as part of a summary sheet.

The Chair suggested that information is circulated on a 4 weekly basis to provide Board with the most up to date information.

8.4 The Chair commented on the good work that is being undertaken reflected in the performance of the rents indicators.

8.5 The Chair expressed concerns about the void performance.

The Director of Customer Services explained to the Board that a strategic review of sheltered housing in Doncaster is being undertaken which is closely linked to the review of the voids performance.

8.6 The Chief Executive provided the Board with an update on the actions the Executive Management Team and Senior Managers are undertaking to improve sickness performance. He went on to confirm that we had appointed a new Occupational Health provider to aid us in improving sickness absence throughout the Company.

### **The Board approved the Report**

## **9. IT Strategy and Action Plan – Agenda Item 9**

9.1 The Director of Business Planning introduced this report to update Board on the progress of the major actions included in the IT Strategy, and provide an updated action plan for the next 18 months.

9.2 A Member asked if a new system, instead of Task, would be procured for stores.

The Director of Business Planning confirmed that improvements to Task were being implemented as part of the improvement plan for the Stores / Depot service, but that longer term improvement / replacement options were linked to the current Depot options discussion with DMBC.

9.3 The Chief Executive re-confirmed that we are waiting for the Council's decisions on the future of depots and stores and explained the need for the short term measures.

9.4 The Director of Property Services confirmed that Opti-time is up and running within the depots, however it is too early to establish efficiency savings and improvements.

### **The Board Approved the Report**

## **10. HR Performance**

10.1 The Assistance Director for Human Resources and Support Services introduced this report and explained that the report was historically reported to the HR Committee on a quarterly basis. She went on to

explain that the report is to present performance monitoring information from January to March 2008.

10.2 She explained that the newly appointed Occupational Health Service is working well and Managers have already seen an improvement in the system.

10.3 A Member asked how we are monitoring sickness levels relating to those off work because of stress and questioned the need for an “external” Occupational Health provider.

The Director of Business Planning explained the positive impact and services that the new Occupational Health provider will provide to the business and explained the training that all Managers are currently undertaking to help with staff morale, coaching and performance issues. Options for delivering such services had included provision but this had been discounted.

10.4 A Member enquired about the procurement process used to appoint the new provider. The Assistant Director for Human Resources and Support Services explained the rigorous process that had been undertaken.

10.5 The Chief Executive went on to add that SLHD want to keep employees at work and explained that due to proactive management, a positive response is being gained from the workforce.

10.6 A member asked how many contact officers have been approached in relation to Bullying and Harassment since the Contact officer scheme was established. The Assistant Director for Human Resources and Support Services confirmed that 3 cases had been identified and brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

The Director of Business Planning confirmed that quarterly reviews of activity were being undertaken.

10.7 A Member asked for an update relating to Single Status. The Director of Business Planning confirmed that this issue was discussed at last JCC union meeting and it was understood that the Council would be underwriting any costs SLHD incurred.

### **The Board Approved the Report**

## **11. HR Policy Review – Agenda Item 11**

11.1 The report was reviewed and the policies listed below were approved.

- Retirement
- Employment Recognition and Long Service

## **12. Former Tenant Arrear Write Offs – Agenda Item 12**

- 12.1 The Director of Customer Services introduced this report to authorise the write off of the specified former tenant rent arrears and confirmed that in cases where these past tenants become known to us again, the accounts would be re-activated to reclaim the monies owed.

She confirmed that the team was now up to date with the backlog of dealing with these cases.

- 12.2 **The report was approved.**

**13. Any Other Business – Agenda Item 13**

- 13.1 There was no further business to report.

**14. Date of next Board meeting**

- Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 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.

**15. Repairs and Maintenance Market Testing**

- 15.1 The Director of Property Services provided update 9 on progress with the project to Market Test the Repairs and Maintenance service for the period June to December 2007.

- 15.2 Board Members considered the report in detail.

**Board Members agreed the report**

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm