



St. Leger Homes
OF DONCASTER

House Proud

ISSUE 3 MARCH 2006

Celebrating 25 years of Dedicated Support for Local Tenants and Residents



The Doncaster Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Association celebrated their Silver Jubilee this month with their 25th Annual General Meeting.

Mrs Lyn Ralph, Chair, welcomed representatives from Tenants' and Residents' Associations across the Borough, as well as St. Leger Homes' Chief Executive Martin Musgrave, and Directors Judith Jones, Paul Hopinkson and Trevor Lincoln.

Lyn reflected on the Federation's 25 year partnership, originally with

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council and now with St. Leger Homes, and said "after many years of learning to work together, to build trust, honesty and integrity, we realised we all wanted exactly the same thing – a better place for the people of Doncaster to live in".

Lyn toasted the future of the Federation with the predication that "The 26th AGM will be very different, the funding will have been awarded and the improvement to the houses will be well on the way to being completed". Tenants were advised "you WILL notice the difference St. Leger Homes has made".



Members of Doncaster Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations Standing Joint Committee

Translation Available

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অনুবাদের ব্যবস্থা রয়েছে।

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ترجمه دستیاب ہے

अनुवाद उपलब्ध है

Tradução Disponível

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Community News

Let's take a look at what some of your local Tenants' and Residents' Associations (TARA'S) are getting up to...

Arksey TARA

The group has worked on the consultation and planning for Arksey Park, which will include replacing play equipment.

TARA UPDATES

Cantley 1, 2 & 3 TARA

The group have had lighting erected on several of their local streets.

Hyde Park TARA

Have sponsored the Hyde Park Knights Junior Football Team to enable them to buy kits for the youngest team.

Model Village Woodlands

The group run regular programmes, including free courses in sign language and computers.

Welcome to the newly formed **Victoria Road TARA** (Bentley) and **Cantley South TARA**

Thank you for all your work

The valuable work undertaken by each TARA was acknowledged during the AGM as Lyn Ralph thanked those present for giving up their time for the benefit of their communities. She went on to say that it was their dedication which had ensured the Federation could celebrate this important milestone at a time when other Federations had experienced difficulties which had resulted in them being disbanded.

Would you welcome the opportunity to question the Chief Executive of St Leger Homes?

During the question and answer session at the AGM, Martin Musgrave said that he and the Directors of St. Leger Homes would be very pleased to receive invitations to the TARA meetings, and would attend as many as possible.

*So come on, it's up to YOU, get those
invitations rolling in!*

Doncaster in Bloom



Doncaster is Blooming Lovely...

We know that most of our tenants take pride in their homes and gardens, and we value the contribution this makes to the estates.

To acknowledge this, we will be joining Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council and the Doncaster Free Press in sponsoring the *Doncaster in Bloom* competition.

This year the competition will have 9 categories, with 2 of these specifically for our customers.

Category 1a Best Presented Garden - Council Tenancy

You can enter your garden in this category whatever type of garden it is. The judges will assess the overall quality of the plants as well as design and maintenance of the garden.

We understand that not everyone is able to maintain a garden for a variety of reasons, so we'll also have a category for best hanging basket or container.

Application forms will be widely available from 27 April. They will also be printed in the Free Press and available on request from any of our offices.

The closing date will be 16 June 2006 and judging will take place shortly afterwards.

The winner's presentations will take place in September; we'll give you further details later.

What's up for grabs?

First prize winner will get £50, second place winner £25 and third place £10. All winners will also receive a trophy. Everyone who enters will receive a certificate for every category that they enter!

Category 2a Best Hanging Basket or Container - Council Tenancy

You can enter any container of any shape or size that you've used to create an interesting display. Additional points will be awarded for originality so let your imagination run away with you.



New Initiatives

Demoted Tenancies help us tackle Anti-Social Behaviour

We're always looking for new ways of dealing with anti-social behaviour because we know that a small number of selfish individuals can make life a misery for residents on our estates.

A new law called the "Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003" introduced Demoted

Tenancies. This law gives us the option of applying to the County Court for a Demotion Order which has the effect of making a tenancy less secure. We'll only be able to obtain the Demotion Order where we've been able to prove that the tenant has behaved in an anti-social way.

Once granted, the Demotion Order lasts for a year. During this time, the tenant will have to abide by all the terms of the Tenancy Agreement or it will be relatively easy for us to repossess the property through the courts. Also, Demoted tenants have less rights than a secure tenant,

for example they do not have the right to buy or the right to exchange.

Demoted Tenancies are a good idea for two main reasons. Firstly they give anti-social tenants a serious warning, and secondly they have an opportunity to change their ways. They have only one person to blame if they end up evicted!

If you have any comments or would like further information on Demoted Tenancies please contact the St. Leger Homes' Estate Management Improvement Team, telephone 01302 737309, we will be pleased to hear from you.



New Tenants to be Shown the Way

Have you noticed people filming in the area?

We realise there's a lot of do's and don'ts when you sign up to a new tenancy, as well as a lot of paperwork.

This information is very important, but to make life a little easier, we've been looking for a better way of getting this information across.

So, we've had our cameras out filming scenes for a video we're planning to put together to make it a little easier for our *new* tenants to get to grips with what they need to know about being a *good* tenant.



Staff Focus

New Directors bring a Wealth of Experience

The appointment of our Directors completed our organisation's Senior Management structure. Each Director has specialist knowledge of housing, and their experience and knowledge will help strengthen our commitment and ability to provide you with excellent services.

Judith joins us from the from the Audit Commission where she was a Housing Inspector. Judith's focus is on working with colleagues, tenants and partners to ensure that we are able to deliver a service to all our customers that we can be proud of.

Paul began his career as an apprentice plumber and has worked for Local Authorities, Housing Associations and the private sector. Paul's previous role was as



Pictured: Trevor Lincoln, Director of Business Planning - Judith Jones, Director of Customer Services - Paul Hopkinson, Director of Property Services

Director of Operations for Birmingham Accord. Paul said that he "is looking forward to the challenge of helping St Leger Homes achieve a minimum of two stars in the forthcoming Audit Commission Inspection".

Trevor joined us directly from an ALMO in Leeds that gained 2 star status in 2004 and has experience of both operational and strategic housing. He has experienced 3 Audit Commission inspections and welcomes the opportunity to join in our commitment to providing you with quality services.

KIDS' ZONE...

Kids - do you like drawing?

If so, we'd like you to draw us a mascot. You can do your picture in pencil, pen, chalk, paint or even as a collage - it's up to you.

The following prizes are up for grabs in three age categories for under 8s, under 12s and under 16s:

2nd £25

1st £50

3rd £10

WIN
UP TO
£50

Fill in the label, stick it to the back of your picture and hand it in at any St. Leger Homes office **before 30 April 2006.**

Name Age
Address
.....
Telephone

Decent Homes Programme

A Guide to the Decent Homes Programme

We're very sorry that we can't bring you the full programme of works in this issue as we had planned. Unfortunately, the programme needs a bit more 'fine tuning' but will be ready during the summertime.

For now, we'd like to tell you about our plans for the future and address recent articles in the local press that may have left some unanswered questions in your minds.

As you already know, St. Leger Homes was formed as a result of a government instruction to local authorities to bring all their housing stock up to the Decent Homes Standard. The government has made funding available for this work – but this **funding is NOT available to local authorities.**

The Audit Commission will be taking a close look at our services during the autumn. If they judge us to be giving you a good service, we can access the £300 million we need to improve the 22,000 council houses.

**£300 million will make a difference to EVERYONE living in the area -
Increased employment opportunities and an improved environment**

But what's happening now?

We've been busy improving services and putting systems into place to make sure that these improvements continue in the future and that we can spend the money we already have wisely.

We haven't got a magic wand that will make things perfect overnight, but we have got the determination to make things better.



Mrs Mills of Conisbrough (pictured above) said

"I'd give top marks for all the work carried out, it was well worth the wait."

Work with us by letting us know what you think about the service you get from us. Is it good or bad? Is there anything you think we should be doing that would help you? - We need to know what's wrong before we can fix it.

FICTION

No repairs will get done until after the Decent Homes work is finished.

FACT

All repair work will continue as normal and if something is beyond repair, then it will be replaced – no two ways about it!

Getting 22,000 houses up to standard is going to be a massive job – we know some of you will be disappointed because your home will be in the later stages of the programme, but please bear with us, it's a massive task and we just can NOT do it all at once, we have to start and finish somewhere.

Our slogan is "Quality Homes in Quality Neighbourhoods" and that's what we're determined to have, but we need you to help us achieve this, we can't do it on our own.

You Told Us - We Did

Think it's a waste of time telling us anything?

We've made these improvements as a DIRECT result of YOUR comments and suggestions. We need to know when you think we've got it wrong if we're to give you the services you need—so please continue to let us know if you think we can do something better.

You told us that the Mutual Exchange Register wasn't very easy to use, especially if looking for flats.

We've changed the format to make it more user friendly, and we're currently working on even more improvements.

You told us you would like somewhere to go during the day when Decency work is being carried out in your home.

Wherever possible, we now provide daytime respite accommodation

You told us you wanted more information before we begin the Decent Homes work in your homes.

We've set up regular Tenant Surgeries, Question and Answer Meetings, and produced a new brochure and appeals procedure. We also hold Councillor and TARA group briefings.

You told us that you would like to know what has actually been done when we carry out work in your home.

It is now standard practice for our operatives to show you the completed work and to ensure that you are satisfied with it before leaving your home.

You told us you wanted to see the figures for 4 bedroom properties shown on the points guides we display in the local offices.

There are very few areas where 4 bedroom properties are available, however, this is now shown on all the guides.

Something to Say?

Please contact our Customer Relations Team on 01302 862320 or email Gail.Harris@stlegerhomes.co.uk

Bigger is Better

Following customer requests, we now produce over 1100 copies of each issue of House Proud in large print, and 3 copies on audio tape.

Braille and alternative languages are also available on request.

If you know someone who would benefit from receiving their copy of House Proud in either of these formats, please feel free to contact us with their details.

Customer Services

Service Standards

In the last edition of House Proud, we told you about the Service Standards we had developed. These are designed to let you know what standard of service you are entitled to expect from us.

The Standards are produced as separate leaflets and are available at all our offices, or can be sent out to you on request.

It is very important that we know what you think of the Service Standards and if they are helpful to you.

Are you willing to give us your views on the Standards?

If so, please take a minute to call Sally on 01302 862486. If you'd prefer to join a group of other tenants so you can pool your views and opinions on the changes you'd like to see, just let us know and we will make the arrangements.

Hello to our Leaseholders

We have included you in the distribution of House Proud because we want to develop the services we provide to you and we need to know your views.

Please contact the Customer Relations Team on 01302 862320 so that we can work together to plan the way forward.



If you'd like to pay your rent by Direct Debit, pick up an application form from any St. Leger Homes office, or telephone 01302 336656.

Like the idea but need more time?

Please contact us and we'll do our best to work out a plan with you.

SOLID FUEL FIRES

Please remember:

If your home is heated by solid fuel, you need to make sure that you only use the fuels that are recommended for your particular type of fire.

It's also very important that you make sure your chimney is swept regularly, at least once a year is recommended.

If you are a senior citizen living in a bungalow or senior citizens flat, leave it to us and we'll arrange for your chimney to be swept regularly.

Information from the Solid Fuel Advisory Service is contained in your Tenants' Handbook.

If you have misplaced your copy of the handbook, or would like further advice, please contact your local St. Leger Homes office or telephone 01302 737694 where staff will be happy to help you.