

The Board of St. Leger Homes and all staff would like to wish you a very **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

Working Together To Bring Prosperity



Pictured from left to right: Lynn Chamberlain, Gail Harris, Martin Musgrave, Tom Cunningham, Debbie Millington, Linda Teasdale, Tony Guymer, Sue Wilkinson, Sue Bowie and Ellie Kershaw

A group of our tenants, local residents and staff have been successful in gaining the Chartered Institute of Housing's National Certificate in Tenant Participation and Neighbourhood Renewal.

The group have all juggled their family and work commitments to attend Northern College in Barnsley over a number of weekends in the last year.

Everyone agreed that it was hard work giving up the weekends, but the sacrifices will be worthwhile as this

will help them to work together to ensure the company provide services which really meets the customers' needs.

Martin Musgrave, the Chief Executive of St. Leger Homes, who attended the presentation ceremony, said "I am proud to lead an organisation where customers and providers can form such positive relationships".

Dave Willis and Siggie Parratt-Halbert were also successful in achieving the certificate but were unable to attend the ceremony.

Meet our Board of Directors



Val Hartley
Tenant Representative



Kate Radovanovic
Independent



Stuart Hardy
Council Nominee



Charlie Wyatt
Tenant Representative



Gill Taylor
Independent



Paul Coddington
Council Nominee



Lyn Ralph
Tenant Representative
Vice Chair



Peter Chapman
Independent
Chair



Joe Blackham
Council Nominee
Vice Chair



Sid Hall
Tenant Representative



John Young
Independent



George Beck
Council Nominee



Jim Parkin
Tenant Representative



**Brendalyn
Langshaw**
Independent



Margaret Ward
Council Nominee

The Board is responsible for setting the strategic direction of our company and for monitoring how we're performing towards our targets. They're also currently reviewing our policies and procedures to ensure they reflect the aims and objectives of our organisation.

Sub-Committees

In addition to the Main Board, we also have 3 sub-committees to deal with specific areas of operations. These are the Human Resources, Equality and Diversity, the Finance and Performance and the Audit sub committees. The membership of these committees is exclusive to the Board of Directors, however, this is extended to include relevant specialists wherever required.

Area Boards

We've also got 2 Area Boards – one for the East of the Borough and one for the West. Each of the Boards will have delegated responsibility for their own areas, and have to report to the Main Board of Directors on a regular basis.

These Area Boards will help to ensure that local level information is fed into the decision making process. We'll feature more information on each of the Boards in a future issue of House Proud.

Board Meetings

The next Board meeting is on 1 March 2006. Agendas are available from your local St. Leger Homes Office. If you have a question that you would like to put to the Board, these should be addressed to the Chair and submitted in writing to:

Mandy Cockburn-Powell,
PO Box 117, Floor 11,
The Council House, College Rd
Doncaster DN1 3SZ

No later than 13 February 2006.

A New Year Message from the Chair of the Board

Interview with Peter Chapman, Chair of the Board

Professionally - Peter held the post of Director of Housing and Development with a Local Authority for some years, and has worked as a Consultant specialising in Compulsive Competitive Tendering. In recent years, he held the post of Chief Executive within a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Housing Association, and was Director of a Housing Association which operated very much the same as an Arms Length Management Organisation. Peter has recently taken up the post of ALMO Project Manager for a large London Borough.

Personally - Peter has a keen interest in the design of new housing, which stems from his training as an architect. Other interests include modern jazz and crime novels, particularly those by James Ellroy. Peter confesses to having a liking for good food and wine, and to being a good

Chef - providing there's not many people and everyone wants the same!

New Year Message – “The Board and staff are working hard to improve services. The first task was to put in place a management structure that was capable of delivering the services, and in this we have been fortunate in being able to appoint an experienced Chief Executive and Directors.

The Audit Commission will be looking at all we do and will indicate the areas for improvement prior to a formal inspection later this year.

We value good customers, and hope that the launch of the Tenant Reward Scheme goes some way to showing this. It is also our hope that much of what we do over the next few years will positively contribute towards the quality of life for our tenants”.

Peter Chapman

Service Standards

We have developed a comprehensive set of service standards which clearly lay out what you can expect in 11 different service areas. The standards were developed following consultation with customers, and cover the areas you told us were most important to you. All our leaflets have the Talkback seal of approval.

- **Access and Customer Care**
- **Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery**
- **Tenancy and Estate Management**
- **Delivering Decent Homes**
- **Applying for a House**
- **Empty Property Management**
- **Responsive Repairs and Maintenance**
- **Antisocial Behaviour and Neighbour Disputes**
- **Leaseholder Services**
- **Involving Tenants and Residents**
- **Equality and Diversity**



Copies of these Customer Service Standards are available from all the local St. Leger Offices or by contacting the Customer Relations Team.

New Initiatives

Payback time for Good Customers!

We've set up a tenants' reward scheme to show our customers how much we value their loyalty and promptness in paying their rent.

Peter Chapman, Chairman of the Board of St. Leger Homes said "We value good customers and ones that help us to help them. By being up to date and having a clear rent account means we spend less time having to chase overdue rent".

Customers who keep a clear rent account during February and March this year will be entered into one of four prize draws for £250 of High Street vouchers. Four winners will be chosen at random, one from each area quadrant. Winners will be notified by letter and invited to attend an inaugural awards ceremony. The results of each draw will be available at all our area offices and published in future issues of 'House Proud'.

Further draws will be made on a quarterly basis throughout the year for those customers who keep their accounts clear during those periods and we'll have an additional Grand Draw in early December, this time with a prize of £1,000, for those who have been clear for the whole year.

Rules are available at your local St. Leger Homes' Office.

We're On The Move

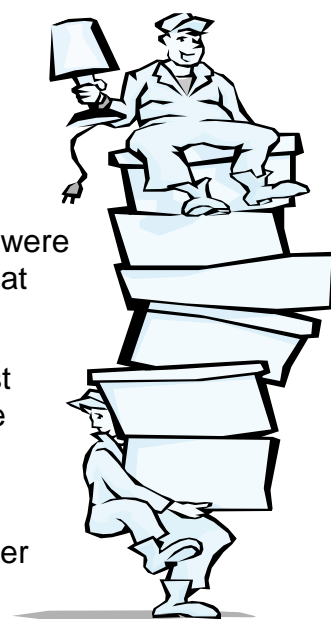
As part of our commitment to improve services and provide value for money, we've been looking for alternative accommodation for our head office.

We needed premises that meet our many requirements, but finding premises large enough was very difficult. However, a number of areas were considered and we looked long and hard at all the costs and benefits that each site would provide.

After taking everything into consideration, the site currently looking most favourable is the building formerly known as Enterprise House on White Rose Way.

One of the major cost benefits of this move is that we'll have our own training and boardroom facilities instead of having to hire them from other sources as we do at the moment.

We'll keep you informed on any developments, and make sure that you have any new contact details.



Stop Press!

Large Increase in Applicants Wanting to Join You as a Council Tenant

At St. Leger Homes we undertake a number of functions on behalf of Doncaster Council; one of these is to register applications for Council homes on the Housing Register.

The last few years have seen big changes in the housing market in Doncaster, as the cost of buying a home has increased substantially. Good private rented accommodation is also difficult to find.

In 2005 we saw an increase of around 2,000 in the number of applications on the Register, which now has a total of almost 16,000 applications.

Unfortunately, as the number of properties available for re-letting has reduced, we are unable to satisfy everyone's wish to be housed in a Council property, but we are working with the Council's Housing Advisory team to help our applicants explore all available alternative options.



Equality Policy

We've adopted an Equality Policy - in a nutshell it says that:

"St. Leger Homes of Doncaster believes in positive action to ensure that customers and employees are treated fairly, in accordance with their needs and that they do not experience discrimination or disadvantage."

The policy applies to discrimination against people on any unjustifiable grounds.

It specifically covers access to housing services, monitoring delivery of all our services, harassment, compliments, comments and complaints. It also covers employment.

It allocates responsibilities for making sure the policy is delivered, monitored and reported.

We are now working on a Diversity Strategy and

an Action Plan. Doncaster is enriched by its diverse communities and we're committed to promoting, reflecting and serving diverse communities.

We will soon be carrying out further consultation on the policy and strategy.

Some of the consultation will be through Tenants and Residents Associations (including the SJC), but we would also like the views of other people, particularly the under represented such as younger people, Black and Minority Ethnic customers and customers with a disability. You could be involved in various ways – a meeting, a questionnaire, a telephone survey, we would look at whatever suited you. If you would like to help us, please contact Viv Binks on 01302 862566 or email vivien.binks@stlegerhomes.co.uk

Bulletin Board

Volunteers Needed!



Talkback is a panel that meet to review the contents of our brochures and leaflets to make sure that they meet the 'plain English' guidelines.

All our literature goes through the Talkback Panel before it's printed.

If you would be interested in joining the panel, please contact:

Sue Bowie on 01302 737498

or email

sue.bowie@stlegerhomes.co.uk

Useful Contacts

Head Office St. Leger Homes of Doncaster Limited
PO Box 117, Floor 11
The Council House
College Road
Doncaster DN1 3SZ

Repairs Contact Centre 01302 737694

Customer Services 01302 862320

Community Liaison
Team 01302 737491/862321/862513

Diversity & Mediation
Team 01302 862566/862502

Insurance Investigations
Officer 01302 862567

Housing Application
Enquiries 01302 736640/737673

Decent Homes Standard
Enquiries 01302 736345

Doncaster Federation of Tenants
& Residents Associations 01302 737490

GAS SAFETY

Carbon monoxide emissions – from poorly installed or badly maintained gas appliances and flues – cause the deaths of around 30 people each year and the hospitalisation of hundreds more.

All tenants have a FREE gas safety check and service every 12 months - make sure you have yours!

It is part of your tenancy agreement to allow us in to complete this important safety check.

If your gas appliance has not been serviced within the last twelve months please inform the Gas Section on 01302 736885.

We need to gain access to do this work and may be able to offer a small number of out of normal working hours appointments if required.



Important

The gas flame should burn blue – if it is burning orange, this may be a build up of carbon monoxide.

Have your appliance checked immediately.

STAFF FOCUS - Regular Feature

Document Management Team

Based in Council House, the team are the hub of our administrative operations.

One of the newest functions of the team, is overseeing the Central Library that we've developed. This ensures that all our leaflets, posters, booklets, and all the standard letters and forms that we're using are always reviewed and updated on a regular basis, so that we can be sure we're giving you accurate and relevant information.

In an average week, the team will deal with around 1,400 incoming mail items, and around 1,000 outgoing items. They also dispatch your rent statements, newsletters and mail shots. Some information we send out, also goes to people on the waiting lists, in these cases, the team may have to get as many as **40,000** items out.

They also handle your landlord reference requests and Right to Buy searches. Copies of all letters sent and received are kept, and this means the team will scan as many as 7,000 documents and index up to 5,000 documents each week.



The team handles quite a lot of our word processing too, particularly where there's a high volume of letters to go out. In addition, the team will deal with any complaint or compliment letters received at our head office, and ensure they are recorded on our central system and forwarded to the right person or department.

They also look after staff at the head office by ordering our office equipment and supplies, dealing with petty cash, ordering fobs and passes and hold the central accident information register for the whole company.

In line with operations throughout our organisation, the performance of the team is regularly monitored, and they have very high targets that they have to achieve. Although the volume of work is monitored, their targets are actually around accuracy, with the team aiming for, and achieving a 98% accuracy rate.

Are you a member of a Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) in your area?

Did you know that 2006 is the Doncaster Federation of Tenants and Residents Association's Annual General Meeting Silver Jubilee? That's 25 years of supporting tenants and residents on our estates, and now working with St. Leger Homes of Doncaster towards a better future for us all.

Each TARA can send 3 voting representatives. If you want to attend the meeting to be held on 14 March 2006 at the Mansion House, or would like further details, please contact the Haywood Room before 14 February 2006.

Telephone 01302 737490

Fax 01302 341620

E-mail admin@doncaster-fed.org.uk

Customer Services

How are we performing?

The government set us targets called Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's), and these can be used to see how we're performing against other authorities in the area. BV66 is about the % of rent collected – this is how we performed against other areas:

Barnsley	98.6%
Doncaster	98.0%
Rotherham	97.7%
Sheffield	97.3%
Wakefield	96.6%

(Source ODPM, Local Government Performance 03/04)

We've also seen a significant improvement in the amount of former tenant arrears that we recover. In fact, from April to November last year, we had almost **doubled** the figure.

Rent Payments - IMPORTANT NOTE

If you pay your rent by cheque, please continue to make your cheques payable to **Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council**.

Cheques should only be made payable to St. Leger Homes if you are requesting a rent related service, for example, you want a rent statement to support your Right to Buy application.

Please help us to give you a better service

Did you fill in and send back the questionnaire which we sent out with our last newsletter? It asked you which were the best ways to contact you.

If you have not yet had the chance to send back the questionnaire, we would still very much like to have it back. If you did not fill it in because you have no particular contact needs at the moment we would still like to receive a completed form so that we know that you have not been overlooked. If you have lost the questionnaire we would be very happy to send you another one (with a pre-paid reply envelope) – please contact Viv Binks on 01302 862566 or email vivien.binks@stlegerhomes.co.uk

To those who did return the form – a huge thank you.

We are still working our way through the forms at the moment – so please bear with us – we will work our way through every single form. We will also give some general feedback in a future newsletter.

Have Your Say About RENT

We would welcome any comments you have about rent. For example, how do you prefer to pay your rent? Have we provided you with a suitable method of paying? Please contact us:

Telephone: 01302 862320

Email: gail.harris@stlegerhomes.co.uk

Letter: Customer Relations Team,
Floor 11, The Council House,
College Road, DONCASTER DN1 3SZ

Does anyone have difficulty reading this?

If you would like this newsletter in either:

- Large Print
- Braille
- Audio
- Alternative Language

Please contact the Customer Relations Team on 01302 862320