

Company Number 05564649  
A Company Limited by Guarantee  
Registered in England

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

### **BOARD MEETING**

**6 February 2008**

#### **Present**

Sid Hall, James Parkin, Lyn Ralph, Frank Protheroe, Cllr Stuart Exelby, Cllr Paul Coddington, Cllr Pat Haith, Cllr Bill Mordue, Peter Chapman (Chair), Kate Radovanovic, John Young, Michael Hardy.

#### **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), Maxine Newton (Board Support Officer), Sharon Adam (Assistant Director for Empty Homes and Services), Christine Tolson (Assistant Director for Performance) Rebecca Wilkie (Assistant Director - CBL), Paul Elliot (Assistant Director of Capital Programmes), James Turner (Head of Communications).

#### **1. Apologies and Quorum**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Phillip Jackson & Brian Naughton.
- 1.2 It was noted that a quorum was present. Peter Chapman chaired the meeting.

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

- 2.1 Lyn Ralph declared an interest in agenda item 12, Repairs & Maintenance Market Testing.

The Chief Executive, Mike Hardy and John Young declared an interest in agenda item 4, the Chief Executives report - Governance by virtue of being members of Wheatley Golf Club.

#### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2007 and matters arising**

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2007 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### **ACTION**

## 3.2 Matters Arising

3.2.1 The following matters were discussed:-

**From item 6.4 - Low Spend on Disabled Adaptations** – members were advised that this spend against the capital programme is continually monitored and that a year end virement will be made at the end of the financial year.

3.2.2 **From item 6.7 – Staff Absence** – Members were advised that a copy of the Performance Monitoring Information, which will be discussed at the HR Committee next week, was available for Members. The report contains the analysis of sickness absence requested by the Board at last months meeting.

3.2.3 **From item 8.3 – Steadfast** – members were advised that windows replacement works that had originally been given to Steadfast had now been passed to Sovereign.

3.2.4 **From item 7.5 – Community Partnership Fund** – members were advised that this is being proceduralised and will be reported to a future meeting.

PH

## 4. Chief Executives Report

### 4.1 Board / Area Board Team Building

The Chief Executive advised the Board that following on from the Governance review, where it was stated that the Board and Area Boards need to work closer together, a Board and Area Board team building evening had been arranged for 9<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at Wheatley Golf Club. The evening would be an excellent opportunity for Board and Area Board Members to become acquainted and improve communications.

Cllr Stuart Exelby gave his apologies for the event in advance.

### 4.2 Changes to National Federation of ALMOs (Incorporation of the NFA)

He referred members to Appendix 3 of his report informing them that the setting up of the NFA as a separate legal entity was being investigated.

He asked members for comments and feed back so that they could be passed onto the NFA to reach them no later than Friday 14 March 2008.

Board  
Members

4.3 The CE informed the Board that the financial allocation of funds to continue the Decent Homes investment for the years 08/09 and 09/10 had been confirmed and work was taking place to be able to

confirm the programme of works which will be undertaken.

**4.4 Main Board Forward Plan 2008**

Referring to Appendix 6 he pointed out that traditionally the forward plan had been included at the end of the agenda. This item will now form part of the Chief Executives report. Members wishing to make additions to the plan should contact Maxine Newton, Board Support Officer.

The Board noted the forward plan.

- 4.5 A member referred to item 13 of the minutes of the Finance & Performance minutes held on 3 October 2007. She enquired when the system for the award of performance related pay for the Chief Executive would be finalised. She was informed that a further meeting of the Remuneration Working Party will be arranged to finalise the actions in the minutes.

TL

**5. Board Governance Proposals**

- 5.1 The Director of Business Planning presented this report that informed Board Members of the recommendations of the Working Party convened following the Board and Area Board Members discussion on 7 November 2007.

- 5.2 He outlined the key recommendations for the Board:

- The Board hold 10 Meetings per year, with the emphasis alternating between Policy & Strategy and Resources.
- To agree the revised Terms of Reference for the Area Boards
- To agree to accept the geographic boundaries that are recommended at the outcome of the Councils current review of the structure of its Neighbourhoods teams.
- That the duties and responsibilities of the Finance & Performance and HR Committees revert back to the Board.
- That these arrangements are trailed for a one year period

- 5.3 The Chief Executive emphasised that the proposals would allow closer co-operation and integration between the Area Boards and other services offered within the community. Board Members will be kept updated on progress in this matter.

- 5.4 It was confirmed that a representative of the Area Boards will be asked to report through to the Main Board. The Remuneration Party will continue to meet as required and report directly to the

Main Board.

5.5 Some Members expressed concerns that delays may occur in the identification of performance related issues. Members were assured that the Main Board would continue to receive the Finance & Performance information on a monthly cycle with the Area Boards report including items on identified concerns and remedial actions taken.

5.6 **The Chairs summarised the Boards decision to:-**

- **Agree in principle for the Area Boards to mirror the Councils new structure, where the Area Board Chairs report into the Main Board on any issues.**
- **Move to monthly Board meetings with the exception of January and August.**
- **HR and Finance & Performance Committee to be disbanded.**
- **Audit Committee and Remuneration working party to remain.**
- **Board Champions to be agreed.**

**It was agreed that this should take place from 1 April 2008 with a recommendation for an annual review.**

**It was confirmed that a new schedule of Board and Committee meeting dates would be distributed to Board Members.**

**LM/MN**

**It was also agreed that a report should be brought back to the Board considering options for the remuneration of Board Members.**

**MM**

**Kate Radovanovic was nominated by the Chair to become the HR Board Champion. This received the total support of all Board Members**

**6. Three Star Gap Analysis**

6.1 The Assistant Director for Business Performance & Improvement reminded the Members that following an earlier presentation, depicting the progress on implementing the recommendations from last years Audit Commission inspection, it had been agreed that a further presentation would be given to identify the company's present position in relation to the standards required for the awarding of a 3 star, excellent rating.

6.2 A detailed reference document was tabled for Board Members, and an invitation was made for them to submit any requests for clarification at a later date.

6.3 The presentation centred around 9 Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) defined by the Audit Commission

6.4 Members discussed the presentation and asked questions relating to the banding contained within Choice Based Letting system. It was agreed the scheme operation in Northampton would be investigated.

**JJ**

6.5 The Chief Executive reflected that although the company focus had been to achieve a 3 star rating this should be reconsidered as many of the benefits offered to 3 star ALMO's were now available to those with 2 stars. If the Council required the company to focus on the improvement required to achieve 3 stars this may constrain the amount of innovational developments that could be undertaken.

He said that it would be beneficial for the Company to get direction from the Council. The Chief Executive requested the Boards permission to consult with the Council on this issue and report back to the Board.

**MM**

**The Board agreed.**

6.6 The Assistant Director for Empty Homes and Services and Assistant Director - CBL asked permission from the Chair and left the meeting.

**7. Finance & Performance (Dec 07)**

7.1 Performance Information for December 2007 was presented.

7.2 The Director of Financial Services gave a summary of the revenue and capital report.

7.3 Although the Decent Homes is just over the 50% mark of projected spend, we are anticipating that the overall spend of the capital program will be at target by the end of the year.

7.4 The Assistant Director for Business Performance and Improvement presented the report.

Member's attention was drawn to improvements within the percentage of rent collected, the amount of current arrears, the average time to re-let a property and the continually improving performance of the Repairs Contact Centre.

7.5 Although the sickness levels in December have declined for the second consecutive month to 824.5 days, the pressure on improving management of attendance continues.

7.6 The Chair commented that the void re-let times were an area of

concern and this should be considered to be a priority.

He was assured that a recovery plan following the increased times attributable to the floods and the introduction of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) was in place and it was anticipated that this will result in future improvements.

- 7.7 The Chief Executive added that one effect of a CBL system is that on occasions some of the properties advertised do not attract any bids. Previously properties designated for persons over 60 which attracted no interest from this age group were let to persons those closest to the qualifying age. This practise has now been abandoned. As it has been recognised that there is limited demand for 1 bedroomed properties the company is working with the Royal Institute of British Architects to consider how 1 bedroomed bungalows can be converted to 2 bedroomed bungalows. The Council are currently considering the feasibility of a pilot project.
- 7.8 A Member enquired how CBL ensures information is received by vulnerable people and what assistance they receive to help them make appropriate bids. They were informed that vulnerable people could register to receive information by post, visit one of the area offices, use the free phone telephone or contact the CBL team to ask them to place bids on their behalf. A large number of staff from the Council and other agencies have been trained on CBL.
- 7.9 The Assistant Director of Business Improvement & Performance asked permission from the Chair and left the meeting.

## **8. Finance – Draft 2008/09 Budget Report**

- 8.1 The Director of Business Planning presented this report the purpose was to provide a draft budget position based on the budgetary requirements of the service and the expected management fee for SLHD for the 2008/09 financial year.
- 8.2 Referring to the appendices he advised Board Members that the budget structure had been discussed with DMBC, it was scheduled to go to Cabinet at the end of the month and then to full Council.
- 8.3 He advised that a 3% increase on the 2007/08 management fee had been agreed in principle with DMBC along with a 7.5% SLHD charge to the Housing Capital Programme. A further £85k will be credited to SLHD directly from the Housing Revenue Account for the production of Energy Performance Certificates. This is now a statutory requirement of the Council.
- 8.4 He added SLHD had agreed in some instances to accept an

increase in charge in some Service Level Agreements, and had negotiated a number of one off enhancements. Some enhancements were to be carried out from funding, others through efficiencies.

8.5 He pointed out that the summary position shown at Appendix A, adding that if there were any adjustments made by DMBC they would be reported back to the Board.

8.6 A member referred to 4.6 of the report saying he disagreed with the statement of £200k funding from the HRA account for a Depot Improvement Programme. The Chief Executive responded by saying as soon as that had been formalised the report would be altered to reflect his comment.

TL

8.7 Another member commented at 8.2 of the report that 'Value for Money' did not contain enough detail. The Director of Business Planning agreed and explained this was detailed within the quarterly updates on the achievement of value for money detailed in the forward plan.

**It was agreed that a Value For Money update report would be brought back to the March Board meeting.**

TL

8.8 It was confirmed that £130k should read £30k for Business Planning additional training on page 2 of the report.

8.9 The Chair enquired why there was a huge increase in agency staff. He was informed that this related largely to persons employed on the provision of the Decency Programme as it was beneficial to employ staff currently required when the work was at a maximum on flexible arrangements so that when the work reduced there were reduced commitments on the company.

**The Board noted and agreed the contents of the report.**

## **9. Decent Homes Progress**

9.1 The Assistant Director of Capital Programmes introduced this report to update Board on the Capital Works being undertaken and planned for the period 1 October to 31 December 2007.

9.2 He gave an overview of the current position to the end of January 2008, for works volumes and spend to date on the One Hit Programme, External Works and Windows & Doors.

9.3 He advised Board Members that in respect of works volumes the Company was on target, but the spend to date was slightly below target.

It was acknowledged that some contractors had taken time to achieve the standard of work required by the company. Members were assured that the Company was working in partnership with the contractors to deliver the program to its optimum. He confirmed that the programme was currently at the peak of delivery

9.4 A member raised concerns that there is only a 50% return rate on Customer Satisfaction Surveys. She asked for consideration to be given to extra resources being employed to improve the return rate. It was agreed that this would be considered.

PH/PE

9.5 A member raised concerns over the skills and experience of the staff employed by the contractors and suggested that Board Members visit sites and see the work that was being delivered. He informed the Board that he had personally received a number of phone calls in respect of complaints of the contractors, especially Waites. Other Members agreed with the suggestion.

9.6 The Director of Property Services explained that one contractor in particular is having issues coping with St Leger standards of quality and time. A meeting with the contractor to address these issues has now taken place. This situation was not unique to this company and it had been found that time had to be spent with each contractor to ensure that they met our standards. He welcomed the fact that Board Members wanted to get out and visit sites to review the works and offered to co-ordinate the visits.

PH/PE

9.7 The Assistant Director for Capital Programmes asked permission from the Chair and left the meeting.

## 10. Any Other Business

10.1 A member asked for circulation of the Board minutes to be distributed earlier. It was confirmed that future Board minutes would be distributed at the draft stage to Board Members.

## 11. Date of Next Board Meeting

- Wednesday 12 March 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.

**12. Repairs and Maintenance Market Testing**

12.1 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.

12.2 Following Boards comments at the last meeting he gave a presentation that updated Board Members of the outcomes of CWC and EC Harris revised report of the Stores/Procurement Function.

12.3 The Director of Property Services raised that he was to meet with representatives of the union the next day and asked Board Members if he could advise them of the recommendations at the meeting.

**The Board agreed.**

**PH**

**For Information Only**

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

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

13.1 The Board noted the following minutes:

- Finance & Performance Committee meeting 5 Sept, 3 Oct (special meeting), 14 Nov 2007.

***Non Confidential Item***

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

14.1 The Board noted the following minutes:

- East, Joint & West Area Board 12 Nov 2007.
- Health & Safety Report – Key Performance Indicators

The meeting ended at 8.47 pm.