

JOINT CONSULTATION MEETING
Between
ST LEGER HOMES of DONCASTER
And
THE STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE
Of the
DONCASTER FEDERATION of the TENANTS and RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATIONS
Held on
26th January 2006 at 2.00pm
In the
HAYWOOD ROOM

PRESENT

ST LEGER HOMES

Mr P Lightfoot	Repairs Manager East
Mrs J Clarke	Customer Services Manager
Mrs L Milan	Customer Relations & Marketing Manager
Mr T Cunningham	Community Liaison Officer
Mrs V Binks	Compact & Diversity Assistant

STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE

Mr K Millington	Acting Chair
Mrs S Wilkinson	Treasurer
Mr M Soloman	Vice Treasurer
Mr G Hardy	
Mr B Naughton	
Ms L Teasdale	
Mrs D Ashmore	
Ms L Myers	

PINNACLE

Alan Crowder	Senior Consultant
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1: APOLOGIES

Mr M Musgrave	Chief Executive – St Leger Homes of Doncaster
Mrs L Ralph	SJC Chair
Mrs M Williams	Vice Chair
Mrs M Hood	Secretary
Mr F Knapton	Assis Secreatary
Mr S Hall	SJC.
Mr K Miller	Director of Housing (interim)
Ms S Bowie	Community Liaison Manager

2: Minutes of Last Meeting

Kevin Millington opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

He explained to everyone that Lyn Ralph had suddenly been taken to Hospital with chest pains, and all present hoped that she would make a speedy recovery, passing on their best wishes.

Kevin therefore volunteered to act as Chair, and everyone present agreed.

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

3: Matters Arising

Kevin Millington suggested that the pages of the Minutes be numbered, Vivien Binks agreed to Action this.

There was a general discussion around the previous concerns voiced by Sue Wilkinson, that older tenants can get quite upset about the physical and emotional upheaval, when operatives have to go into their homes to carry out repairs and renovation. Members of the SJC to find out more specific details of any complaints

4: Chief Executives Report

Paul Lightfoot explained to the meeting that the Audit Commission will be particularly looking at Lettable Standards, and Performance on Void Properties. In order to ensure that the turnaround time on Voids is reduced to a standard 30 calendar days across all areas, there is now one team working across SLHD as a whole. In the past, some Depots had achieved a good turnaround on Voids, while others had a serious backlog. SLHD has therefore established one team to ensure that the target of 30 days turnaround is hit across all areas. Kevin Millington reminded the meeting that Martin Musgrave had spoken to the SJC about turnaround times on Voids, and had seemed to imply that some Voids inherited from DMBC were very slow, while the SLHD turnaround time was much quicker. Janet Clarke confirmed that Martin Musgrave had requested 2 sets of figures on turnaround times, one from DMBC and one from SLHD, to ensure that the Inspectors get a true picture of performance, without the negative issues of inherited problems. Paul Lightfoot advised that all Voids, whether from DMBC or SLHD, would be addressed in the same way, the team would be working on them in date order, and may need more resources in order to hit the specified targets. In order to establish consistent figures across the whole area, all resources are to be prioritised to address those Voids with longest turnaround times first, working down to the most recently acquired Voids. It is anticipated that figures on Voids will dip for 4 – 6 weeks, while the backlog is prioritised to achieve level figures across all areas.

Linda Teasdale raised the question of flats that had been left empty on Northgate, Mexborough. She enquired whether these were due for demolition, and queried why they had been left empty, when there was a Waiting List of almost 16,000 applicants. Kevin Millington raised an Action Point to investigate this further.

Brian Naughton raised the question of 4 flats above the shops at Radburn Road, Rossington, which had remained empty, and he considered to be an

eyesore. Linda Milan advised she had just received a Councillor enquiry about these flats, which do require a large amount of work. They are currently in Options Appraisal, and no decision has been made about their future.

Lin Myers raised concerns about a house on Lonsdale Avenue, Intake, which was in a very popular area, yet had remained empty for a long time. Linda Milan informed the meeting that the property had been returned in a very poor condition, that work was in progress, and the Allocation team would be notified within 4 weeks of completion.

Lin Myers enquired why a property near the Library on Shaftsbury Avenue, Intake, was continually allocated, let, then empty and boarded-up. Linda Milan did not know the particular property, but informed the meeting that SLHD do ask tenants terminating their tenancies to fill in a questionnaire enquiring their reasons for termination. The answers could be monitored, and used to highlight recurring problems, when the property is continuously being re-let.

Lin Myers enquired how many Voids would go to Options Appraisal, and what feedback was received from Stanley House. Paul Lightfoot advised that January figures were still being analysed, but he estimated that Options Appraisal may suggest that it was economically viable to spend in the region of £4,000 on each property. If the figure was much higher, say £10,000, then that property may have to go out to Tender. Sue Wilkinson suggested that many properties did seem to be left empty, and when properties were boarded up on an estate, the area would degenerate. She enquired whether there was any deliberate intention to run down particular estates, in order to then advocate demolition. Janet Clarke confirmed that SLHD has no hidden agenda, and is not interested in any unnecessary demolition, as this would affect their income and economic viability. Equally, is most important to use resources to deliver the best possible service and show Value for Money, in order to achieve the 2 Stars.

George Hardy then enquired why SLHD would state that demolition is not in their interests, and yet demolish properties on Willow and Kingsway and expressing fears that The Crescent would be next. Janet Clarke replied that there were serious design issues on the Kingsway estate, with elements such as small terraced houses, interconnecting alleyways, misused grass areas, crime and anti-social behaviour combining to make demolition the only feasible option. Sue Wilkinson suggested that when estates have poor design, crime and anti-social behaviour, it may be possible to engage experts/consultants to address the problems and attempt to find solutions, before demolition becomes the only remaining option. Diane Ashcroft queried rumours that the Tower Blocks on Balby Bridge were to be demolished. She observed that Silverwood House was a good focal point for the area, but the rest of the estate did look shabby, and needed painting. Janet Clarke agreed that the work done at Silverwood House had made a vast difference to improving the area, however the cost had been quoted as £16,000 to £20,000 per flat. Exterior works to High-Rise flats are very expensive, by the very nature of working at high levels, and there had been a need to displace and dispose of asbestos. Whilst it is acknowledged that the rest of the estate

does need improving, the cost implications are too high for this to be considered at the moment.

Brian Naughton suggested that figures for Voids highlighted a tendency to do small jobs, but put big jobs off until later, when Decency is addressed. Paul Lightfoot advised that Void properties are cleaned and repaired up to the Lettable Standard, to achieve a quick turnaround. Works that are more costly in time and money, eg new kitchens and bathrooms, have to be undertaken at a later date, under the Decency scheme.

Linda Teasdale enquired about the financial viability of operatives reportedly leaving the job to go to the Depot to collect parts. Paul Lightfoot explained that Stores will be working differently in the future, with basic stock carried on vans, to work more efficiently. Kevin Millington queried whether Stores on North Bridge could be used by members of the general public. Paul replied that while Stores is a big organisation, and do have buying power, the possibility of supplying the general public would have to be tested and analysed for viability.

Paul Lightfoot informed the meeting that SLHD is moving in the near future, with the Repair Centre relocating to Thorne Road. The IT system will be provided by TASK, and SLHD would like to consult with the SJC on the best options for a Call Centre. Arrangements will be made through Sue Bowie, for consultation on preferences for a telephone answering machine, stacking system, or additional lines for reporting repairs. Kevin Millington confirmed that the SJC would welcome the chance to become involved in these decisions.

5. Chief Executive Report

Janet Clarke advised that 3 new Directors had been appointed. These are:

Judith Jones

Trevor Lincoln

Paul Hodgkinson

Judith Jones will be joining St Leger Homes on 1st Feb 2006. The other new Directors will have a staggered arrival due to periods of notice required by their present posts.

There are also 2 Principal Officer posts advertised, one dealing with Performance, and the other with Repairs & Maintenance. The closing date is this week, and appointments will be made in the near future, but once again people will need to work out their notice

Janet confirmed that SLHD will be moving in Mid-March to a new Headquarters at Enterprise House, which will be re-named St Leger House. This will accommodate all staff from the 11th Floor at Council House, and accountancy staff from Colonnades. The move to Thorne Road will take a little longer, due to Disability issues.

Janet Clarke thanked the SJC for agreeing to go through Policies for SLHD, who intend to provide dedicated Admin support to cover the extra work

Janet explained that the Board would be receiving a report on Demoted Tenancies, which are effective, and can be implemented very quickly. Previously, families have avoided eviction with Right to buy, but demoted tenancies will allow SLHD to retain ownership of the property for long enough to evict the tenant. The SJC have been consulted about these issues, at the Racecourse and Castle Park, and this has been taken as a positive endorsement to Demoted Tenancies in principal. However, Dave Abbott will be consulting further with the SJC, and looking at issues coming out of the KLOE on Equality & Diversity, such as ASB, harassment and helping to protect tenants who are victims of other family members in their own homes. Linda Teasdale advised that DMBC did try to get all agencies involved to address a problem before it reached the Anti-Social Behaviour stage, and questioned whether SLHD would forge the same linkages, and consult other agencies where a possible Demoted Tenancy was envisaged. Janet confirmed that this would be the case, through Safer Estates Forums, and Service Level Agreements on the work of Community First, and the Anti-Social Behaviour team. There was a general discussion about Introductory Tenancies, and Janet Clarke acknowledged that although the SJC had previously opposed the idea, there was a need to consult the SJC further, in order to review previous consultations and ensure that the views expressed were representative of the current SJC. Alan Crowder admitted that, although he was unfamiliar with the previous consultations, he considered that it was important to re-consult on Introductory Tenancies, which acted as a buffer, in a similar way to a probationary period when starting a new job. He saw Introductory Tenancies and Demoted Tenancies as complimentary tools, and had become one of the most important pieces of Housing Legislation. Janet explained that the SJC had raised concerns about the universality of Introductory Tenancies, and had felt Demoted Tenancies would adequately serve the same purpose, but there would be re-consultation.

Janet Clarke advised the meeting that the Audit Commission had started their Mock Inspection. Members of staff, Board members and SJC members had been invited to Focus Groups. Other work would be undertaken in the 3rd and 4th week in February. It was the intention to give a positive but honest picture of where we think we are, in order to focus activities for the real inspection.

6. Chairs Report

Kevin Millington explained that the Chairs Report would be omitted, due to the absence of Lyn Ralph.

7. Any Other Business

Tom Cunningham presented the CLO report to the SJC
He reported meeting times and dates for Feb 2006, and also the progress of the AGM preparations.

Tom advised that some of the Associations are not meeting regularly, and are merely social groups. Therefore, the CLO team are suggesting that such TARAs think about becoming Tenants Clubs. Meeting will be held in the relevant areas to discuss all options. Community First have now taken over

the responsibility of the three Residential Parks in Doncaster, and the CLO team will no longer have involvement with these Parks

Letters have been sent to all TARAs, asking for confirmation of future meeting and AGMs, reminding the importance of ordering leaflets and posters in good time, asking for training needs, what they would like updating at their meetings, and how they would like to receive information from SLHD and the SJC. George Hardy queried why Housing Officers were attending TARA meetings, without previously being invited. Tom Cunningham advised that there are only 2 CLOs at the moment, who cannot possibly attend every TARA meeting, and therefore had asked for extra assistance to cover. Janet Clarke replied that the role of any Housing Officer attending a TARA meeting would be to take questions on board, and try to be helpful in an informal way. Sue Wilkinson suggested that a pre-printed form could be used to record customers' complaints, in the absence of an officer attending. Kevin Millington advised that the main objection was to the Officer arriving without prior notification. Janet advised that the Officers attending would have had the best intentions, and the reason for seeking future dates was to liaise between Officers and TARAs to ensure attendance operates more smoothly.

Tom explained that Funding for Community First Skips has been withdrawn from 7th January, therefore there is no finance to provide Skips for community clean-up days up to the year end of 31st March.

As a result of the information collected from the KLOEs, Service Improvement Plans have been developed. Ten ACE (Achieving Continuous Excellence) teams have been put together to implement tasks outlined in these Improvement Plans, and a request has been made for Tenant Representatives to attend each of these ACE meetings. Linda Teasdale queried whether the Tenant Reps would have to be tenants. Janet Clarke explained that each ACE team is looking for 2 Reps, one SJC and one other (eg TARA, Talkback) and as long as one of those was a tenant, the other could be a resident. Sue Wilkinson highlighted that notice is often too short, and stressed the importance of letting the SJC know about meetings, cancellations, and changes of venue, well in advance. Janet confirmed that dates had now been set in advance, and the SJC had been supplied with a 6 months programme.

Tom Cunningham advised the meeting that an appointment had been made for Diversity & Mediation Manager, Mahroof Hussain, who will be starting on 27th Feb. Applications for the posts of CLO, Diversity & Mediation Officer, and Admin are being shortlisted, and interviews will take place in the near future. Kevin Millington passed on congratulations from the SJC to Mahroof and wished him good luck in his new post.

Diane Ashmore raised concerns for tenants of Balby Bridge and Intake High Rise, who often have to use 4 or 5 heating tokens a week in cold weather, priced at £6.30 per token. As a result, she considered that people cannot afford to keep warm in Winter. She is meeting with Alec Stevenson to discuss

this further. Janet Clarke agreed that this was the correct avenue to explore, as the price for District Heating was set by DMBC.

Linda Milan enquired about the AGM meeting, and asked whether it would be appropriate to display SLHD banners, and set up a small promotional stand on the evening. Kevin Millington confirmed that the SJC considered this to be acceptable. Linda advised that SLHD was considering a re-vamp of the furniture in the Caravan, and Sue Bowie would be looking for a representative of the SJC to accompany her to a store such as B & Q, to look at lightweight stacking tables, chairs and parasols. A general discussion followed about Health & Safety issues, the small size of the caravan and the safe transportation of additional items such as tables and chairs.

Linda Teasdale questioned why the SLHD Pack is being given to new tenants, when she considered that the SJC had not been consulted about the leaflets included. Kevin Millington added that some of the documents would have gone to Talkback, but that is not a consultation body, and is just in place to check plain English. Janet Clarke explained that all the documents in the new SLHD Pack will have been checked by the SJC, but not in their glossy company form, which may mean that they look very different to the original which the SJC have checked. Many of these anomalies will be corrected in the future, as the SJC now meet every Thursday, and will address consultation on documents as part of a rolling programme.

George Hardy asked that Barnburgh be included in the list of areas in the Newsletter. Lin Myers raised concerns about one customer who was suffering from depression. This was discussed with Linda Milan outside of the meeting.

8. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

23rd February 2006, in the Haywood Room at 2pm.

Kevin closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.