

**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  
**27<sup>th</sup> JULY 2006 at 2.00pm**  
In the  
**BOARD ROOM, FLOOR TWO, ST LEGER COURT**

**PRESENT**

**ST LEGER HOMES**

Mr M Musgrave	Chief Executive – St Leger Homes of Doncaster
Mrs J Clarke	Customer Services Manager
Mr T Cunningham	Community Liaison Officer
Mr P Hodges	Admin and Tech Support (minutes)

**STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE**

Mrs L Ralph	SJC Chair
Mrs M Williams	Vice Chair
Mrs S Wilkinson	Treasurer
Mrs D Ashmore	Secretary
Mr F Knapton	Assis Secretary
Mr S Hall	SJC Member
Mr G Hardy	SJC Member
Mr B Naughton	SJC Member
Ms L Teasdale	SJC Member
Mr A Kerr	SJC Member
Mr C Leonard	SJC Member
Mr M Solomon	SJC Member

**1: WELCOME**

Lyn Ralph opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

**2: APOLOGIES**

Ms L Myers	SJC Member
Mr E Plastow	SJC Member
Mr P Hopkinson	Director of Property Services
Mrs J Jones	Director of Customer Services

### **3: MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

Frank said that he was glad that the term empty homes was now being used rather than voids.

George said that he had experienced problems with Community First as they had cut him off during a telephone call. George said he had reported this to one of the supervisors.

Janet said the property on Ridge Balk Lane, Woodlands had been empty due to a possible homelessness issue but that the tenancy should be terminated that week.

Linda asked for an update on the properties on Byron Road, Mexborough that have not received any decency works. Martin said he would look into this and get back to Linda.

Martin said that at the last Board meeting a procedure had been agreed concerning tenants that did not want all decency works carrying out and that a copy of the procedure would be circulated to all members.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

The matter of the date on which rent arrears accrued was discussed.

Martin reminded all present that if rent is due on a Monday and it is not paid on a Monday then the tenant is in arrears but it is most likely that it will not be chased until the following week.

It was also said that if people pay their rent mid-month by Direct Debit then their account may be two weeks pre-paid and two weeks in arrears. Also Direct Debits are based on 52 weeks but that rent is based on 48 weeks and therefore this affected the overall level of arrears, particularly during rent-free weeks.

Martin added that the most important thing was that rent was paid and that in order to qualify for the draw tenants needed a clear rent account.

Frank asked if people who owed arrears would find themselves on the Central Debtors List. Martin repeated that SLHD would not include them on the Central Database, but if they had a court judgement against them for rent arrears, the Central Debtors Agencies would become aware, as it would be public information.

Andy asked that if he decided to pay his rent through Direct Debit on the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month would he be able to pay what was owed up until the start date so that he would not be down as being two weeks in arrears each month. Janet said it was possible that rent could be paid up until the Direct Debit starting.

Diane asked Lyn for an update on the situation with the new Federation Support Officer. Lyn said that the new Officer started on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2006 and was called Nazaqat Hussain

Linda said that the Pathfinder Team were coming to visit the Windhill TARA on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2006 and asked Martin if he would like to attend to see what tenants and pathfinder are saying to one another. Martin said he would make arrangements to attend the meeting.

Linda added that she had attended a Pathfinder meeting with Frank where a consultation was performed on the Windhill site. Linda added that there were 300 properties on the Windhill estate and 51% of residents were reported to be in favour of mass demolition. Sue said that it was important that we found out whether the 51% was representative of the persons who live on the estate or of the number of households, as there is a huge difference.

Frank said he wanted to offer his appreciation to Martin for taking active consultation with St Leger Homes and Pathfinder. Martin said that tenants affected by estate improvements would be visited by Pathfinder and St Leger Homes.

Diane asked whether anyone could give an update on Thomson Road/ Dixon Avenue, Edlington. Lyn Ralph said that this was also a Pathfinder.

Brian asked why decency works were being moved to some estates before they were being completed in others. Martin said that this was so people could be kept in work as contractors were carried out phased withdrawals from areas. Brian said that many tenants on his estate had told him that they thought St Leger Homes were not coming back to finish the decency works they had started. Martin said that all decency works had to be completed in order for the contractors to get paid. Martin added that the only tasks that were not being completed at the moment were the environmental works as they were going to be carried out at a later date.

## **5. DIRECTORS REPORT**

Martin said that he recently attended a Countdown presentation and had been informed about a savings card that could be given to tenants to give them discount at various stores and on certain activities. The card is priced at around £4.

Mobile loop technology is to be purchased so it can be used at meetings for the benefit of attendees who have hearing difficulties. All TARA's could have this facility if they needed it for any particular meetings.

Martin said that he had concerns about the state of some of the area offices and depots and that a review was to be carried out on all St Leger Homes buildings. The Conisbrough Office had received an improvement notice.

Martin said that all tasks on the Service Improvement Plan needed to be completed by September so that any areas for improvement could be identified. It was said that a report would be sent to the Board to let them know what progress had been made with the plan so far.

Martin added that he had been on estate visits to Intake and Rossington recently and was surprised by the state of some of the areas. Martin said that he felt the ground maintenance needed improving.

Sue said that the estate, which she lived in, was in a very nice condition but that some housing areas were in a much poorer state.

The issue of property vandalism and burglary was raised. Lyn Ralph informed all present that when a window is smashed, a new window should be fitted the following day if it is single glazed but added that it takes a little longer for a double glazed cassette. This prevents boarded up windows and causing estates to look like sink estates. Martin said that in such instances both Sheffield and Rotherham Police have hired an officer who will come out and visit the crime location rather than just give a crime number. Martin also said that if someone has damaged a window then they should pay for it.

On the subject of empty properties Martin said that he felt this had been dealt with quite badly. It was added that properties used to be empty for 90 days before they were being let but that now this has been reduced to 46 days.

Martin said that the main aim at the moment is to get people back living in houses that are of a good standard.

## **6. CLO REPORT**

Tom Cunningham presented the July 2006 Community Liaison Report, as follows: -

## Community Liaison report to the SJC

July 2006

### TARAs

#### Bentley Central TARA

Unfortunately Bentley Central dissolved on 12 July 2006 due to lack of committee support following the resignation of Jean Whaley, the secretary, after the sudden bereavement of her husband. The TARA chose to donate their funds to BACuP with the proviso the money will be spent on Bentley Pavilion (Bentley Area Community Partnership).

#### Cantley South

Sadly, Cantley South TARA still are currently suspending their activities. They suspended a short while ago, mainly in frustration at a lack of progress with requests made to improve the safety and appearance of their estate. Karl Chapman has been working closely with Trevor Simpkins (Service Delivery Manager, Armthorpe Depot) to ensure the work requested is carried out and I am pleased to report that, after a few set backs, most of the work requested should be completed by the end of this week. Therefore hopefully, once this work has been completed, the TARA will see that we are working with them towards a common goal and we will be able to get Cantley South back on board as a fully functioning TARA. Thanks should also go to Mavis Williams of Wheatley park CAN who has sent letters of encouragement and support to the TARA to help keep them going. Obviously, it is vital that we do this, as an area the size of Cantley is underrepresented as it is, in terms of TARAs, so we do not want to lose this one as it has an important role to play in the future of the area. Hopefully, once people see the work that has been done, it will encourage more people to come along to their meetings and support their local TARA!

#### Craganour (Denaby)

The Craganour TARA is surveying the area to see if there is any interest in taking on the adjoining bungalow which has been a void property for several years, to extend the usage of the Community House.

#### Hyde Park TARA

The TARA, in conjunction with the Hyde Park Partnership, sponsored a football match last Thursday evening between a team from the community house's Thursday night youth group and a team made up of policemen and community wardens. The teams were taken over to the park by from the community house in the police riot vans, this, of course, has prompted a week of questions from neighbours at the community house as to 'What had

happened on Clark Avenue that needed riot vans to sort out?!' The match was a competitive game, in which neither side held anything back (a few bumps and bruises were sustained!), and the police and wardens ended up winning by the odd goal. A buffet was laid on back at the community house after the match. The point of the evening had been to raise the profile of the Thursday night youth group (which now has over 50 members and is going from strength to strength) and to promote a good relationship between the police, wardens and the people of Hyde Park. All present had a thoroughly enjoyable evening and, it's fair to say, the night fulfilled it's objectives with room to spare.

#### Mexborough Common

The TARA had their four annual Summer Gala on Saturday 22 July, which was very successful. The proceeds will be going towards the park regeneration. There were many events held including a choir from South Africa and a drumming workshop. The lovely weather managed to hold out for the day, but the heavens opened when it was time to clear away! The TARA owns a large marquee that they are willing to hire out for functions at a cost of £30. If anyone is interested, please contact the one of the Community Liaison Officers.

#### Victoria TARA

Victoria TARA, which has only been running for 9 months held a very successful Summer Fete of Saturday 8 July and raised £513. They had tombola, cakes and bottle stalls, face painting and BBQ food. Photos of the event have been passed to Gail Harris for scrutiny and possible inclusion in House Proud.

#### Windhill (Mexborough)

The Windhill TARA have now successfully formed a Committee and will be holding regular meetings again. The Committee are very keen to make a go of it so we wish them success for the future.

#### Compact

The Mobile display unit was pitched at the Everingham Road shops in Cantley on Monday 24 July to promote Compact 2006 and the importance of tenant participation in the services SLHD provides.

CLOs, Karl Chapman and Tom Cunningham and Andy Kerr SJC member manned the unit and answered a variety of questions and queries from the locals on all things about SLHD.

During the morning, 10 complaints were taken on different issues, but the main concern expressed was delay in repairs being carried out. One gentleman, however, said he thought SLHD was the bee's knees and couldn't

praise us enough since he had been a tenant of ours! This was a very welcome comment and it is good to see that some tenants ARE 100% happy with our service!

Overall, the morning was a success, with many people going away with a much clearer picture of what SLHD is about, and how they can get on board with us to help shape the future of our town. Some people also expressed an interest in joining their local TARA, which, as mentioned earlier, in an area where one TARA is struggling, can only be a good thing.

The mobile unit has been booked for two further venues –Edlington Market on the 17 August and Asda Car Park, Carcroft on the 23 August. Again, members of the Community Liaison Team, the SJC and Estate Officers will man the unit to help promote the launch of Compact 2006 and raise community awareness of SLHD.

### Training

Several TARAs have taken part in training sessions including "Understanding Equality and Diversity", "Committee Skills" and "Grant Funding".

The sessions proved very successful with excellent feedback from those participating. Two more have been set up for 9 and 15 August and a letter has been sent out to all TARAs and Tenants Clubs regarding the training sessions.

### Community House Group Meeting

The above group meeting was re-launched on 6 July 2006 at the Wheatley Shop with representation from 50% of the Community Houses!

This group will meet peripatetically to give all members an insight into other members' community buildings and activities, the next meeting will be at Denaby, Craganour bungalow hosted by Jim Tierney and his team.

Jim has invited Bill and Mavis Pearson (Graham House TARA) along to the next meeting as they are looking to create a community building in Kirk Sandall. The next agenda will include external agency support to communities, increasing social activity and local compact review as part of regeneration as well as sharing of ideas, information and good practice.

### Consultation

Three Customer Service Standard Review Group sessions have been organised by the Community Liaison team and facilitated by the Service Performance Team. These tenant participants were selected from the Menu of Involvement, which they voluntarily completed and members of the Standing Joint Committee.

Lyn Ralph said that she wanted to give her thanks to Linda Teesdale and Lynn Chamberlain for their help with the Windhill TARA.

Andy said that a flyer should be created informing people about the location of the Mobile Unit. Linda added that she had done market gala show with the Mobile Unit and had been inundated with queries. Linda added whether questions needed to relate specifically to Compacts or if they could be asked about anything. Tom confirmed that attendees could ask questions on any housing matter.

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Concerns were raised regarding a high amount of topics for consultation and, at times, a short time frame for considering documents. Martin replied that there would be a lot of topics for consultation as SLHD was making a lot of improvements to the ways in which it delivers its services and wanted to be sure that the SJC was fully involved. It was agreed that papers for each Thursday consultation session should be handed to the SJC on the Wednesday of the week before thereby giving 8 days notice. He recommended that in instances where this did not happen, the SJC could refuse to hear the agenda item.

Martin added that the new Federation Support Officer would provide the SJC with a lot of help and support.

Linda said that contractors had been working on an unoccupied property on Morton Road, Mexborough for a few days but that they had not been back for two weeks.

It was asked why the minutes from all TARA meetings were sent to the Community Liaison Officers. Janet said that it is helpful for St Leger Homes to receive a copy of the TARA minutes as it enables us to get an understanding of what is taking place in the community and can provide the inspectorate with information if it is requested. Martin said that this was a good process as it shows that information is being networked and it benefits the organisation, as we are aware of what is in the minutes.

Diane passed a petition over to Martin regarding the service of the call centre. Martin said that St Leger Homes was currently looking into relocating the call centre and also how much it would cost to have a free-phone repairs service. Tom Cunningham said that he had spoken to Paul Lightfoot and had been informed that there may be a designated free-phone line for repairs only.

Andy said he was concerned about advice given to customers regarding their points. He said he had witnessed a customer being told, "there are 12,000 people on the list." He was also concerned about points changing. There was general discussion about the reason for points changing. It was also noted that if any member of the SJC wanted to have information about a specific customer they would need a letter of consent from that customer, for

data protection purposes. The reply would then be given to the SJC member but, again for data protection reasons they could not share that information with others including other SJC members without the customers consent.

It was mentioned how many people have had their points reviewed recently as their circumstances have changed since they first went on the Housing Waiting List.

Linda asked why the number of points needed for a 3 bed roomed house in Mexborough had suddenly increased to 120 points. Martin said that this was because there were not many three bed roomed properties in this area and that the lack of certain types of homes in some estates usually determined the number of housing points needed to live there.

Martin said that the homeless situation is desperate at the moment and that giving homeless people housing points helps them get accommodation.

Mystery shopping on empty properties was said to be starting at the end of August at the latest.

#### **Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2006 at 2pm  
Haywood Room, Council House