



**Doncaster Federation of Tenant's and Resident's Associations
30th Annual General Meeting
10th March, 2011**

Present

Andy Kerr	Chair (Standing Joint Committee – Doncaster Federation of Tenant's and Resident's Associations)
Mavis Williams	Secretary (Standing Joint Committee – Doncaster Federation of Tenant's and Resident's Associations)
Ernie Plastow	Treasurer (Standing Joint Committee – Doncaster Federation of Tenant's and Resident's Associations)
Julie Crook	Corporate Services Director (St. Leger Homes of Doncaster)
Cllr. Ken Knight	Civic Mayor of Doncaster
Cllr Moira Hood	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Deborah Hutchinson	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr David Nevett	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr. Patrick Wilson	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
M Alderson	Rotherfed
T Rorice	Rotherfed
Steve Ruffle	Rotherfed
Vivien Binks	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Sue Bowie	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Janet Clarke	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Lindsay Clarke	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Tom Cunningham	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Lynne Harrison	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Michaela Heaps	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Julie Jablonski	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Meryl Liddell	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Paul Lightfoot	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Heather Saunders	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Stuart Southgate	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
Janet Walker	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster
John Young MBE	St. Leger Homes of Doncaster

Sharon Adam
Mandy Brookes
Ian Ralph

TARA Representatives

CALM TARA (Armthorpe)
Clifton Court Residents Association (Thorne)
Coronation Area TARA (Warmsworth)
Craganour and Denaby Welcome TARA (Denaby)
Doncaster BME Settlers TARA (Borough wide)
Edlington Royal TARA
Ennerdale TARA (Wheatley)
Hexthorpe TARA
Highfields TARA
Intake Central TARA
Intake High Rise TARA
Latin Gardens & Emley Drive Area TARA (Scawsby)
Middlegate TARA (Scawthorpe)
Model Village TARA (Woodlands)
Poets Corner TARA (Mexborough)
Polton Close TARA (Stainforth)
Radburn Estate TARA (Rossington)
Redmond Community TARA (Carcroft)
Rossington Central TARA
The Homestead TARA (Bentley)
The Oval TARA (Conisbrough)
Tickhill TARA
Toll Bar TARA
Town End TARA
Wadworth TARA
Westbourne & Mallard TARA (Balby)
Wheatley Park Comm. Act. Net TARA
Woodfield TARA (Balby)
Woodlands New Estate TARA

Apologies

Susan Jordan	Chief Executive – St. Leger Homes
Judith Jones	Customer Services Director – St. Leger Homes
Mick Werrit	Property Services Director – St Leger Homes
Mayor Peter Davies	
Cllr. Elsie Butler	
Cllr. Andrew Bosmons	
Cllr. Eva Hughes	
Cllr. Sandra Holland	
Cllr. Sue Phillips	
Cllr. David Holland	
Kirk Sandall TARA	
North Common TARA	

Welcome and Introductions

Andy welcomed all to the 30th Annual General meeting of the Doncaster Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations.

Health & Safety

All members were advised on the location of toilet facilities and fire exit routes and assembly point.

Minutes and Matters Arising.

There were no amendments made to the minutes that were taken at last years Annual General Meeting.

The minutes were proposed as a true and accurate record by Keith Jobson (Middlegate TARA) this was seconded by Bernadette James (Homestead TARA). The minutes were then unanimously accepted by all members of the meeting.

Election of Standing Joint Committee Members

Each of the candidates for election were introduced to the members of the meeting and TARA delegates were requested to complete all three pink ballot papers contained in their AGM packs.

The election then took place and TARA members selected new members to sit on the Standing Joint Committee.

Marie Lane (Doncaster BME Settlers TARA) raised a question with regards to a photo being needed on the application forms to become a member of the SJC, however, these were not used on the forms this evening. – The photos were to be used for those successful to have identity badges made.

Election Results:

Tenant Members:

Margaret Cook	3 years
Moira Greaves	3 years
Keith Jobson	3 years
Andy Kerr	3 years

Margaret Hickson	2 years
Liz Lambert	2 years
Anne Pawson	2 years

Godwin Mudzimu	1 year
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Resident Members:

Marion Baxter	3 years
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Ernie Plastow	2 years
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Marie Lane

1 year

Constitutional Amendments

Andy Kerr explained that there had been some changes made to the Standing Joint Committee constitution; these had been clearly highlighted on the handout members had been given. He then ran through all of the proposed changes

A question was raised with regards to 6.12. This would need to be re-numbered as 6.11. Meryl Liddell (Community Engagement Manager) confirmed that once the changes on the constitution were accepted, this change would happen.

Michael Wallace (Town End TARA) raised an issue with regards to an amendment that had been agreed at last years Annual General Meeting. The comment was with regards to 12.7 which allowed any alterations to the constitution made at the AGM to take immediate effect. Mr Wallace commented that this may have been agreed and voted on, but he is under the impression that it may have some legal implications.

The Chair asked a member of the meeting to propose the acceptance of the amendments to the constitution. Keith Jobson (Middlegate TARA) proposed the amendments be accepted and this was seconded by Tim Bartlett (Redmond TARA). All members with the exception of three agreed the amendments.

Annual Report

Andy Kerr referred the members of the meeting to the Annual Report which could be found in their pack and asked the members to accept it. All members except one agreed.

Treasurers Report

Ernie Plastow addressed the members of the meeting and commented that over the last twelve months financial issues are becoming increasingly tough, and this is no different for the Doncaster Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations.

He reported that the Resource centre had seen an increase in room bookings from both St. Leger Homes and external agencies. He thanked Keith Jobson and all of the volunteers who had given their time to man both the centre and provide catering for bookings.

Ernie followed by announcing the opening and closing balances of the federation.

Opening balance was £70.74 and the Closing Balance of £581.20.

Members were advised that there was a more detailed summary contained in their packs.

Questions were raised by the members of the meeting.

- How is the deficit of £9000 funded?

Andy Kerr confirmed that the majority of funding that had been received in 2010 had been from Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council. However, as of June 2010 no further grant has been given. He went on to say that the majority of outgoings were paid as out of pocket expenses to the members of the Standing Joint Committee. These payments were to cover both travel and sustenance.

- Michael Moses (Town End TARA) – Who audited the accounts?

Andy Kerr advised the members of the meeting that they had been audited by St. Leger Homes of Doncaster.

Mr Moses commented that the information presented to the members was not a set of audited accounts and therefore could not be accepted.

Andy Kerr promised that he would get a set of accounts to Mr Moses as soon as possible.

- Marie Lane (Doncaster BME Settlers TARA) asked for clarification with regards to the annual and training grants that are currently paid by St. Leger Homes.

Meryl Liddell (Community Engagement Manager) confirmed that from April 1, 2011 all TARAs on accreditation will receive an annual grant of £50 and each member of the committee attending a training course will earn £5 for the TARA.

St. Leger Homes – Director Question Time

Members of the meeting were invited to put their questions to Julie Crook – Director of Corporate Services.

- With the high increase in rent, how are you going to collect rent and rent arrears, when there are already 2.5 million unemployed?

Julie acknowledged that the rent increase appears high, but the calculation was based on a formula set by government. Julie went on to confirm that the increase is in line with other neighbouring authorities. And added that St. Leger Homes provide early intervention and offer debt advice to those who may be struggling to pay their rent.

- How do you tackle rent arrears of former tenants?

St. Leger Homes carry out checks and chase up rent arrears from their tenants. If the former tenants move out of the area, these arrears are not written off but will remain against their name. Therefore, if they return to Doncaster they will need to pay these arrears before being re-housed in one of our properties. People with arrears will not be offered a further 'council' house unless they are referred by Homeless.

- Frank Knapton (Poets Corner TARA) Is St. Leger Homes of Doncaster a member of the Central National Credit Referral Centre?

Julie advised the members of the meeting that St. Leger Homes was not a member

- Is St. Leger Homes still under attack from Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC) to improve its' facilities?

Julie commented that DMBC are St. Leger Homes' strategic partners. St. Leger Homes has now achieved its' Customer Service Excellence Accreditation and the coveted three star Audit Commission inspection result.

St. Leger Homes is continually looking at ways to deliver an increased value for money service and are working together with DMBC to improve services.

Cllr. Patrick Wilson (Portfolio holder for Housing) advised the members of the meeting that there is a cabinet meeting scheduled for 23 March, 2011. At this meeting he is going to present information and request that the management agreement be extended to three years.

- Ernie Plastow (Model Village TARA). Will regenerating private housing be a backward step for St. Leger Homes, and will it impede the building of new social housing?

Julie advised the members that the funding for the regeneration of private rented housing is not funded through the Housing revenue Account (HRA) which is the pot of funding that covers the work of St. Leger Homes. With regards to building new social housing in the borough there has been no decisions made at this point.

- What will happen to the attached properties when the warden system comes to an end and in what time scale?

Andy Kerr informed the members of the meeting that if there was an internal door connecting the two, this will be blocked. He went on to comment that those who currently had a service tenancy will be offered a secure tenancy. With regards to the timescale this is as yet an unknown factor, and each property will be changed depending on their priority.

- What is happening to the Communal Halls across the borough?
Meryl Liddell (Community Engagement Manager) confirmed to the members of the meeting that a working party were currently looking into the usage of the 54 Communal Halls and it is hoped that work will be carried out on those with highest priority in the new financial year.

- Who makes the final decision about which Communal Hall will close?
Meryl Liddell advised the members of the meeting that this has not yet been decided. However, Communal Halls will not be closed before consultation.

- Marie Lane (Doncaster BME Settlers TARA) Why is funding for the Doncaster Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, as by doing this you are virtually closing down the organisation?

Cllr. Patrick Wilson advised the members of the meeting that it was not his decision to cut the grant and that the decision had been made by the previous portfolio holder and the full council. He explained that in order for the grant re-instatement to be discussed he would need a report from the Federation explaining how the money will be spent.

Keith Jobson (Middlegate TARA) commented that 10 weeks ago he had sent copies of a report to both Cllr. Patrick Wilson and Mayor Peter Davies

which detailed what the Federation had done in the last twelve months. The report commented that there had been 84 SJC meetings, numerous lunches for training meetings. A full report is available should it be requested.

Carol Sellars (The Oval TARA – Conisbrough) stated that Cllr. Wilson's comments were unjust and the work of the Doncaster Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations and individual TARAs carry out work under extreme conditions. Brian Naughton (Wheatley CAN TARA) added that the grant had never been increased to reflect the moving to the Tenants and Residents Resource centre and increased opening hours. Cllr. Patrick Wilson agreed to speak to members of the Federation following the meeting.

- Tim Bartlett (Redmond TARA) What can St. Leger Homes of Doncaster do about the recent spate of burglaries at Communal Halls?

Unfortunately Julie was unable to answer this question. However, she commented that she was sure that property services would be aware of the situation.

- David Evans (Ennerdale TARA – Wheatley Hills)

As the pull cord system in Communal Halls will be discontinued at the end of March, there will be no system for the users. How will an alarm be raised?

Mr. Evans commented that he had contacted numerous officers with regards to the issue, but as yet, nobody had been able to provide an answer.

Andy Kerr (Chair of Doncaster federation of Tenants and Residents Associations) asked Mr Evans if he had contacted the Federation with regards to the issue. As he had not he was advised to contact the Federation as soon as possible.

- Marie Lane (Doncaster BME Settlers TARA) All of the TARAs have recently received a letter from St. Leger Homes of Doncaster asking how valuable the Community Engagement team were, does this mean that there may be redundancies?

Julie Crook confirmed to the members of the meeting that no decisions have been made as yet. There will be change within the staff teams but this has not yet been finalised.

Any Other Business

A member of the meeting commented that he was in receipt of a letter from the council confirming the rent increase of 7.49%. The letter clearly stated that the Federation was comfortable with the rise.

Andy Kerr categorically stated that the Federation were not happy with the increase, however, they did understand that it was a directive from Government and therefore it had to be followed. He went on to advise the members that a letter has already been sent to the author of the council letter, and it will be on his desk in the very near future.

John Young MBE (Chair of the Board – St Leger Homes) advised the members of the meeting that there are a number of changes ahead that we

are not happy with, but the company cannot stand still. There will be staffing casualties and a reduction in services which we will not be happy about but this will have to be done because of the current economic climate. He explained to the members of the meeting that over the next 3-4 years St. Leger Homes will have their budget cut by around £11 million.

Representation – Keith Jobson (Middlegate TARA)

Keith advised the members of the meeting that he had fully intended to address the members of the meeting with regards to representation. However at this point he was not in receipt of the full information that he required. He went on to remind the members of the meeting that this year was the 30th (Pearl) Anniversary of the Doncaster Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations. It would be a shame at this point to throw away all of the hard work that had been put in over the years. If the Federation is lost it would be the loss of the independent voice for all tenants and Residents.

Marie Lane (Doncaster BME Settlers TARA). Why is the grant to the TARAs being reduced to £50?

Meryl Liddell (Community Engagement Manager) advised the members that cuts had been made due to St. Leger Homes budget cuts. The money is to be used by the TARAs for stationery and printing costs.

Marie Lane commented that it appeared that all correspondence to the TARA now came via email and as such the printing costs and running costs to the TARA were becoming exorbitant.

SJC Awards

Good Neighbour Award – Diane Mordue

Best Achieving TARA – Redmond Community TARA (Carcroft)

Most Innovative TARA – Edlington Royal

Lyn Ralph Award – Heather Saunders – Community Engagement Team

Andy Kerr thanked all of the TARAs for all of the hard work they had put in through the year and commented that without them Doncaster would be a poorer place.

Closing Speech

Thirty years ago a group of people decided to meet and set up the Doncaster Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations. Over the years there have been a 152 volunteers involved with the Standing Joint Committee as you saw from the PowerPoint earlier.

For a long time they consulted with Doncaster Council. In 2005 St. Leger Homes of Doncaster was set up as an Arms Length Management Organisation in order for the Council to draw down money from the government to deliver the decency programme.

This added to the workload of the SJC with everything that needed to be agreed that would affect the programme. As the Federation was the first port of call due to us having not only Tenant and Resident representatives, but also Leaseholder, Private Landlord and Housing Association members we found the work load a challenge but one that we met head on. It was not long before the council also transferred the repairs section to the ALMO and once again this resulted in more work.

The Federation have come a long way from the early days and I think that we have been up to the challenge... We have a very good working relationship with St. Leger Homes of Doncaster and look forward to progressing in the future.

Unfortunately we have had our grant withdrawn from DMBC but we are trying our best to get this re-instated as well as looking at the possibility of securing external funding.

The members of the SJC are committed to their roles and work tirelessly to represent not only Tenants but all people within Doncaster. Someone out there described us as 'only a bunch of amateurs', I have news for them these so called amateurs are people who have key skills which they use – for the benefit of other people like you!

It has been a privilege to be the Chair of the Federation for the last 12 months and I hope that the Federation can continue to serve the people of Doncaster. Sadly we have lost 2/ 3 TARAs this year, but unless more people become involved with the TARA movement then I can envisage more folding.

The Federation will always be here for any TARA that is struggling. If you let us know that you are having problems, we will do our utmost to ensure that your issues are resolved quickly and efficiently.

Sadly, this year will also see a number of Community Engagement staff leaving St Leger Homes of Doncaster. We thank Sue Bowie, Lynne Harrison and Gavin Shawcroft for their hard work and commitment and wish them every success in the future.

I would like to express my appreciation to our guests for taking time to come to our AGM and I hope that you have enjoyed it.

Many congratulations to all the award winners and thank you for your valued contributions to your neighbourhoods. Not forgetting those who did not receive an award, because without your efforts Doncaster would be a poorer place. Finally, my thanks to all of you who have taken the time to come to the AGM and I wish each and every one of you a safe journey home.

