



Area Forum Minutes

Minutes of Meeting:

Date: 18th May 2010

Time: 10.00am

Venue: Maple Grove Communal Hall, Armthorpe

Present:

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| Brian Naughton (Chair) | - CALM TARA (Armthorpe) |
| Catherine Swan | - CALM TARA (Armthorpe) |
| Sylvia Swan | - CALM TARA (Armthorpe) |
| George Hardy | - Poton Close TARA, Stainforth |
| Andy Kerr | - Rossington Central TARA |
| Bob Snashall | - Housing Association Rep |
| Cllr Pete Farrell | |
| Jane Davies | - South Neighbourhood Mgr. St. Leger Homes |
| Katie Dorricott | - Admin. Support St. Leger Homes |
| Alan Hindson | - East Neighbourhood Manager St. Leger Homes |
| Judith Jones | - Director Customer Services St. Leger Homes |
| Helen Kilshaw | - Performance Team St. Leger Homes |
| Heather Saunders | - Temp. Fed Support Officer St. Leger Homes |

Apologies

- Cllr. Richard Cooper-Holmes**
Cllr. Allan Jones
Cllr. Margaret Pinkney
Cllr. Patricia Schofield
Barry Johnson – St. Leger Homes
Steve Thomas - St. Leger Homes
Ken – Thorne

Item No	Item	Action
1	<p><u>Welcome and Introductions</u></p> <p>Brian welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed the members of the meeting where the fire exits and toilets were located.</p> <p>The meeting started with introductions and members in turn stated their names, job title/ TARA.</p>	

2	<p><u>Minutes of Last Meeting</u></p> <p>Page 1 - Mike Willis should read Michael Wilson Page 2 – Should read funds allocated to BME TARA not Rossington TARA Page 4 – George Hardy asked for clarification as to how Alan Hindson could have a comment minuted when he was not present at the meeting. Heather, Brian and Alan said that this comment had been included to inform members that Alan had wanted to attend the meeting but due to the day it had been planned for it had not been possible. Therefore it was a request that the meeting be scheduled for a different date in the future.</p>	
3	<p><u>Judith Jones – Director of Customer Services</u></p> <p>Judith explained that she would like to give a brief overview of what St. Leger Homes of Doncaster is responsible for and what the company has achieved, this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Service Context ◇ Our Achievements ◇ Our Performance ◇ Customer Feedback ◇ Key Performance Indicators <p>(Please see the presentation notes provided at the meeting)</p> <p>Following the presentation members of the meeting were given the opportunity to ask partners attending any questions they had.</p> <p>A member of the meeting mentioned there were issues of anti-social behaviour in the area in which they lived. Jane Davies requested that this information should be given to Alan Hindson at the end of the meeting.</p> <p>Bob Snashall requested further information with regards to the solid fuel servicing. Judith advised that St. Leger Homes carried out this servicing as Carbon Monoxide poisoning is not only related to Gas. She commented that the servicing included both chimney sweeps and the servicing of closed systems.</p> <p>Cllr. Pete Farrell asked whether anti-social behaviour is reported directly to the police and therefore have a crime reference number. Judith replied that St. Leger Homes of Doncaster take anti-social behaviour very seriously, and the figures that had been discussed refer to all incidents including untidy gardens to abuse and harassment. St.</p>	

	<p>Leger Homes believe in being pro-active as well as reactive to stop anti-social behaviour on estates throughout Doncaster.</p>	
5	<p><u>Neighbourhood Management Report</u></p> <p>Jane Davies – South Neighbourhood Manager Jane stated that regarding the South Area, the Rossington Housing office requires a lot of improvement.</p> <p>Brian asked why the work hasn't been done, as a reality check has been completed.</p> <p>Jane answered that improvements need to be made outside but there is currently an issue with vandalism in the area. She also added that it was often the case that broken windows on the building were not malicious acts but rather accidents with footballs etc. Brian commented that this may be improved if a fence was erected around the building, to which Jane answered that a fence was in place but unfortunately there was still an issue with broken windows.</p> <p>Jane explained how St. Leger Homes of Doncaster have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attended Police and TARA meetings ▪ Met with Families First ▪ Introduced hot desks in the Safe Neighbourhood Team ▪ Attended a new TARA which has been set up in the village of Tickhill ▪ Opened a boxing club for youths in Rossington (average attendee number is 20 per session) ▪ Organised family trip to Cleethorpes ▪ Worked with schools, organising activity sessions. <p>Jane then explained that 73% of tenancy visits are completed within 6 weeks, which she does not consider to be satisfactory. This issue is being tackled and it is hoped that restructuring of staff in the South and East of the borough will alleviate the situation.</p> <p>Jane explained that Estate Walks in the South of the borough are always completed and within the recommended time frame, this information is then forwarded on to the relevant TARAs. Andy Kerr said that from his experience he did not feel that this was always the case. Jane replied that she will raise this issue with area management.</p> <p>Jane informed the group that the estates team have a</p>	

number of trees to be planted in the borough and it has been agreed that these will be used to create a natural barrier between open land and housing.

Jane also added that rent arrears collection is currently very good; however it dipped in April 2010, adding that in the South Area particularly, individuals can afford to pay their arrears. It is a matter of catching these people at the right time (on an evening, out of work hours, etc) and St. Leger Homes of Doncaster are looking at ways to achieve this.

Judith added that there are no offices open on a Saturday morning due to funding issues but St. Leger Homes of Doncaster will offer appointments in the local libraries so tenants who find it difficult to pay bills during the week (due to work commitments) can get advice and pay rent.

Brian asked how contact is kept with tenants who are in arrears? Jane answered that tenants receive letters stating the issue and will always be spoken to or visited before a case is closed.

Jane informed the members of the meeting that Mutual housing exchanges are currently at 100%. Brian asked how tenants go about making a mutual exchange, whether they have to contact their local council or somebody else. Judith answered that it largely depends on the area, as some areas say you must live in the locality to be on the list.

Alan Hindson – East Neighbourhood Manager

Alan highlighted what his area had achieved/ been responsible for since the last meeting;

Management/ Staffing

We continue to Manage the Housing Service from the Bridge Centre at Thorne, where we have now been based for 12 months and the Area Office at Stainforth. We have been reviewing the area services and have considered some minor changes between the 2 offices, but will ensure tenants are made aware of any changes which affect them accessing the services.

Meetings

- Staff continue to attend regular police briefings to discuss neighbourhood issues and agree appropriate actions. These have been very successful from an information sharing perspective.

- St. Leger Homes staff continues to attend TARA meetings at Armthorpe, Kirk Sandall, Thorne and Stainforth. Issues raised by residents are discussed and appropriate advice is given, including referrals to relevant partners.
- Meetings with Family Intervention Workers (FIP), Families First, ABC+, Social Services and other supporting agencies to discuss individual cases are still a useful tool to officers. Diversionary activities meetings held by St. Leger Homes of Doncaster and DMBC & other partners have also been attended and we are supporting a fishing competition in Thorne and contributing towards the costs for tenant's children who want to get involved in Tae-Kwondo in Stainforth.

Partnership Working Initiatives

- Weekly estate walks with partners to identify tenancy breaches and neighbourhood issues have been undertaken and performance shows that 100% of our estate walks have been carried out on time in accordance with our quarterly plan. Reports (working documents) have been forwarded to the Standard Joint Committee for distribution to the relevant Tara's in accordance with our agreed procedure.
- St Leger Homes have started working with South Yorkshire Police, the Council and many other agencies on Operation Alliance which will be in Moorends in June/July.

Pro-active Performance & Initiatives

- St Leger Homes Caretakers are undertaking regular inspections of the garage sites, cutting back any vegetation and removing any rubbish. Following an inspection repairs identified have been raised and remedial works have been completed.
- 100% of all new tenancy visits have been undertaken within our target timescale of 6 weeks from the start of the tenancy.
- St Leger Homes have arranged with the Council to plant 60 trees around the Borough. Locations identified in the East Area include Lobelia Crescent, Kirk Sandal Southfield Road, Thorne and Chapel Lane, Sykehouse. The areas have been selected to assist us in dealing with specific problems relating to

	<p>cars parking on grassed areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of concerns raised by the Council and indeed our own staff about the extent of fly-tipping around the Borough, we have been in discussions with smartwater about an initiative which has been successful in other parts of the country. When officers visit tenants with untidy gardens and find bulky items or bagged rubbish we will be applying smartwater. If those items then turn up where they shouldn't be, the Council will be able to track them back to the person responsible and prosecute. We are hopeful that this will send out a very strong warning to people who have no qualms about fly-tipping. <p>Reactive Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During April, we received 37 new tenancy breach cases including investigations into allegations of non occupation, neighbour disputes, loud noise and antisocial behaviour. For all new cases received a file has been opened and appropriate action taken, including referrals and joint home visits with South Yorkshire Police. In addition 38 tenancy related cases were resolved in April. • In March, the overall number of tenancy breach cases ongoing was at its lowest for 12 months. The current number of ongoing cases is 129. • The number of tenancy breach cases, which have been ongoing for more than 6 months has reduced to 12 and cases outstanding over 12 months is now 6 .Serious case reviews are being held for those still outstanding. • The new garden recharge procedure has been used quite successfully in getting tenants to accept their responsibilities. 	
6	<p><u>Performance Indicators</u></p> <p>(Please refer to sheet handed out during meeting for performance indicators)</p> <p>Cllr. Pete Farrell asked regarding rent arrears, do St. Leger Homes of Doncaster take the total rent received against the total rent expected or do they look at individual cases? Jane replied that each account is viewed separately and St.</p>	

	<p>Leger Homes of Doncaster proactively encourages people to recover any money owed to them if they've been over-paid.</p> <p>Cllr. Pete Farrell then asked what the procedure is with tenants who are in arrears.</p> <p>Jane answered that individual circumstances are taken into account and St. Leger Homes of Doncaster appreciates that we may be working with vulnerable people. Generally St. Leger Homes of Doncaster will send out friendly letters highlighting the issue, supported by informal visits to find a solution.</p> <p>Judith added that evictions are avoided unless absolutely necessary and there is an issue in Armthorpe with loan sharking and people with financial difficulty relying on this. She also added that St. Leger Homes of Doncaster has a reasonable but realistic estimate of housing benefit against rent, ensuring that nobody is put into housing they cannot afford.</p>	
7	<p><u>Chairs Report</u></p> <p>Brian stated that estate improvement is currently funded with £80,000 but this is not enough. The chair of the committee asked for £150,000 but this was refused due to financial constraints and budget cuts.</p> <p>Councillor Pete explained that children from local schools have been causing issues. He is trying to organise a gardening scheme for young children from the surrounding areas (Shaw Wood, Southfield, Tranmoor and Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School) on an open space in Thorne Close. However, there is currently an issue with funding which he is trying to fix and would it be possible to tap into this funding. Judith said it would not be possible to get funding from this pot of money but there may be an alternative they could use she then gave Cllr. Farrell her contact details so the issue could be discussed further.</p>	
8	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>George asked if it would be possible for the forum agenda to be confirmed by the Chairman before a meeting. Heather commented that Brian had the agenda on Thursday 13 May, and was asked to let her know if any amendments needed to be made</p> <p>Judith discussed the new categories for Doncaster in Bloom.</p>	

	<u>Date & Time of Next Meeting</u> 27 July, 2010 at 10:30am Tenants' and Residents' Resource Centre, Doncaster	