



## South & East Area Forum

### Minutes of Meeting:

Date: 19th January 2011

Time: 10.30am

Venue: TRRC, St James Street, Town Centre, Doncaster.

### Present:

Andy Kerr (Chair)(AK)	Rossington Central TARA	(Rossington)
Mavis Pearson(MP)	Kirk Sandall TARA	(Kirk Sandall)
William Pearson(WP)	Kirk Sandall TARA	(Kirk Sandall)
Moira Greaves (MG)	Wadworth Tara	( Wadworth)
Bob Snashall (BS)	DFTRA & Clifton Court Residents and Leaseholders Association.	(Thorne)
Judith Jones (JJ)	SLHD Director of Customer Services	
Alan Hindson(AH)	South Neighbourhood Manager, St. Leger Homes	
Helen Kilshaw (HK)	Senior Performance Analyst, Performance and Compliance Team, St. Leger Homes	
Tom Cunningham(TC)	Community Engagement Officer, St. Leger Homes (minutes)	
Richard Cooper-Holmes	DMBC Councillor Rossington.	

Item No	Item	Action
1	<u>Housekeeping</u>  The location of the toilets and fire exit were announced.	
2	<u>Welcome &amp; Introductions</u>  Andy Kerr opened the meeting and welcomed and introduced everyone.	
3	<u>Apologies</u> Jane Davies            East Neighbourhood Manager, SLHD Heather Saunders    SLHD Temp – Federation Support Officer/ Community Engagement Officer Mick Wilson            Oldfield Crescent TARA (Stainforth) Dennis Wall            Thorne South Tara( Thorne) Jonathan Exley        DMBC Team Leader East ,Thorne	

4	<p><u>Minutes of the Last Meeting</u></p> <p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <p><u>Page 1</u></p> <p>No issues.</p> <p><u>Page 2</u></p> <p>Andy Kerr raised the matter regarding trees, stating that some areas we don't need them and in other areas we are keeping them even when they are causing a problem.</p> <p>The matter of trees with shallow roots damage paths and/or present trip hazards, especially and senior citizens estates, can they be removed and replaced at a location away from thoroughfares Stanley Gardens Estate Stainforth as this problem.</p> <p>The addresses were noted and a response was requested to be fed back through the minutes. With the paths effected being outside 67 &amp; 36 Stanley Gardens.</p> <p><u>Page 3</u></p> <p>Bob Snashall mentioned that he had been informed that there is no water bailiff covering the Cantley Area. It was suggested that a fishing club may have to be formed.</p> <p>It was suggested that Trevor Heptinstall may be able to advise. Also AH was asked to speak to Heather Coulthard DMBC Neighbourhood Manager on the matter.</p> <p>AK raised the issue of the footpaths at Skipwith Gardens Rossington had not been resolved. Numbers 11 and 41 Skipwith Gardens still require repair of the paths. AH noted the matter and would follow up the matter.</p> <p>AK enquired about the progress of the new association in Stainforth, Princess Avenue TARA. TC up dated the meeting regarding the present situation to date.</p> <p>The same was mentioned regarding Cantley 123 Tara and as it as finally closed. TC explained to the forum where he was with this</p>	<p>AH</p> <p>TC</p> <p>AH</p> <p>TC</p>
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Page 4

Mavis Pearson (MP) asked if the footpath to the rear of their properties could be looked into, as the paths are too narrow to accommodate access for tenants who have the use of a mobility scooter. The turning circle at the point of accessing the gate out of the rear garden is at present too tight and MP keeps causing damage to her scooter.

MP explained that a number of tenants have the same problem in exiting the rear garden area with their own scooters. It was mentioned that there are a number of gates to the area, which are all of the same design, causing other tenants the same problem as MP.

JJ explained that this is a wider issue, with more and more people getting scooters. More owners are finding the access and storage are a problem once they have obtained the scooter, as there are all shapes and sizes of vehicles to consider. As to whether issues like this are funded or not is a big problem as the number of owners are growing.

Page 5

No issues

Page 6

MP asked about the borough's garages.

The review of garages borough wide has shown the sustainability of the sites, however SLHD will be looking at three areas of work, Investment, Demolition, Further work required.

Some of the work is to be carried out before 1 April 2011. JJ talked historically, and stated that the present financial implications and the stark reality of housing's subsidising garages, means maintenance costs are not being covered.

Page 7

BP asked the question that he had received a visit from a SLHD inspector who carried out an inspection as a result of the completion of the decency work. However he was puzzled by the officer measuring the external brickwork wall of the bungalow and was questioning why this had been carried out.

In a reply JJ, it was explained that this may well have been an audit issue reviewing the contractors work. The reply was accepted by (WP).

	<p>Page 8</p> <p>No issues</p> <p>Minutes were passed by MP &amp; BP as a true record.</p>	
5	<p><u>Performance Indicators Review</u></p> <p>Helen Kilshaw distributed copies of performance information to the meeting and explained to the meeting the figures and comparisons between East and South areas.</p> <p>Andy Kerr commented on the repair figures, and the matter of frozen pipes. JJ in reply explained that one of the problems that SLHD had encountered was the freezing up of condensing drains to boilers that are external to the properties. As a result SLHD were looking into a solution to the problem and was considering larger condensing drains including what material was to be used.</p> <p>TC commented that internal drains in some circumstances were free from the problem of freezing.</p> <p>JJ mentioned that future editions of HouseProud and staff Inform publications may have articles explaining good practice for everyone.</p> <p>JJ stated that a lot of frozen tanks in lofts had been a problem to tenants and SLHD.</p> <p>Bob Snashall requested, what was the % of outstanding gas servicing for more than 12 months of the total number of services required.</p> <p>HK replied that 0.67% was this percentage.</p> <p>AK asked what the number of one bedroom bungalows are of the 29 vacant homes on the list. HK to look into this.</p> <p>Also would we have the number of bids on a property in Oct/Nov. HK to forward figures to TC.</p> <p>HK continued to present the performance figures to the meeting. The members commented on that they liked what was presented.</p>	<p>HK</p> <p>HK/TC</p>

SOUTH & EAST AREA FORUM

MANAGERS REPORT – EAST

December 2010

MANAGEMENT/STAFFING

We continue to Manage the Housing Service from the Thorne and Stainforth offices providing cash office and customer access points at both locations.

MEETINGS

- Staff and management officers 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 officers continue to attend TARA meetings where possible throughout the East area including Thorne, Stainforth and Armthorpe. 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 SLHD and DMBC & other partners have also been attended.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING INITIATIVES

- Weekly estate walks with partners to identify tenancy breaches and neighbourhood issues have been undertaken and although performance is usually shows 100% of estate walks are carried out, this fell to 65% in December due to the adverse weather conditions experienced. Reports in respect of the estate walks (working documents) have been forwarded to the Standard Joint Committee for distribution to the relevant Tara's in accordance with our agreed procedure.

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 these inspections, any repairs identified have been reported and remedial works have been completed.
- 100% of all new tenancy visits have been undertaken within our target timescale of 8 weeks from the start of the introductory tenancy. The regular introductory tenancy visits are also within target.
- Our programme of inspecting communal areas of blocks of flats is on target to achieve 100% against the service standards
- The CALM estate at Armthorpe, which is considered a Hot-Spot area is benefiting greatly from intensive management, the area has a dedicated Estates officer who is working very closely with the local Safer Neighbourhood team which is located in Armthorpe. All agreed actions are on schedule and recent discussions at the Neighbourhood Action Group meeting confirmed that figures suggested that general ASB is on the decrease. The East areas other Hot-Spot area is The Crescent at Dunscroft which is also benefiting from intense management including weekly multi-agency estate walk meetings, action plans are worked on regularly and again ASB in this locale also is indicating a decrease in activity.

#### RE-ACTIVE PERFORMANCE

- During December, we received 22 new tenancy breach cases including investigations into allegations of non occupation, neighbour disputes, loud noise and antisocial behaviour. The total number of cases received for the current financial year is now 607. 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 in December 3 tenancy related cases were resolved and 22 were closed these figures were comparative to other months low, this can be attributed to again the poor weather conditions preventing officers from visiting and also absences due to the festive period and illness.
- In December, the overall number of tenancy breach cases ongoing was 147.

- The number of tenancy breach cases, which have been ongoing for more than 6 months is 25 and cases outstanding over 12 months is 3. The Team Leader carries out full compliance checks on all high level cases and of those over 6 months old to review actions and agree a way forward if required.

## SOUTH & EAST AREA FORUM

### MANAGERS REPORT – SOUTH

January 2010

#### MANAGEMENT/STAFFING

We continue to Manage the Housing Service from the Rossington Area Housing Office. We have reviewed the area services and have implemented some minor changes but these will not affect tenants 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 continue to attend TARA meetings at Rossington, Wadworth and Tickhill when necessary. 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, however some of the funding streams are coming to an end.

#### PARTNERSHIP WORKING INITIATIVES

- 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) are forwarded to the Standard Joint Committee for distribution to the relevant Tara's in

accordance with our agreed procedure.

- St Leger Homes have been working with South Yorkshire Police, the Council and many other agencies on Operation Alliance around the Borough and these have been very successful. Unfortunately, the initiative is unlikely to continue in its current format because of reduced staffing levels, but we are hoping to keep the principle going.
- It is regrettable that funding through agencies who have supported our diversionary activities is coming to an end. It is hoped that the seeds sewn will develop in some form or other, but at present the only thing moving forward is the refurbishment of a building annexed to the Homescarr Centre in Rossington as a youth club.

#### 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 these inspections, any repairs identified have been reported and remedial works have been completed.
- 100% of all new tenancy visits have been undertaken within our target timescales. Obviously we now use introductory tenancies where appropriate and these attract 3 verification visits at 6-8 weeks, then 6 and 9 months from the tenancy start date
- Our programme of inspecting communal areas of blocks of flats is on target to achieve 100% against the service standards
- Investment in several garage sites around the Borough has been agreed with the Council. It is anticipated that work will be completed on some of them this financial year, however the overall programme will take several years to complete. Decisions are yet to be made on a number of sites.

#### RE-ACTIVE PERFORMANCE

- During December, we received 6 new tenancy breach cases including investigations into allegations of non-occupation, neighbour disputes, loud noise and antisocial behaviour. The total number of cases for the current financial year is now 274. For all new

	<p>cases received a file has been opened and appropriate action taken, including referrals and joint home visits with South Yorkshire Police. In addition 3 tenancy related cases were resolved and 23 were closed in December.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In December, the overall number of tenancy breach cases ongoing was at its lowest this year. The current number of ongoing cases is 49.</li> <li>• The number of tenancy breach cases, which have been ongoing for more than 6 months is 8 and cases outstanding over 12 months is now 2. Serious case reviews are being held for those still outstanding.</li> </ul>	
7	<p><u>Directors Report .</u></p> <p>Judith Jones (JJ) spoke positively about the effort of SLHD staff to keep delivering the service in hard times due to the snow and freezing weather. Front line staff management were happy to turn their hand to areas of work to benefit the company. One member of the management team at St. Leger Court put time in our Call Centre to help with the situation.</p> <p>JJ reported that the company had won the green business award through the Chamber of Commerce as a result of recycling 97% of recycled materials.</p> <p>JJ reported on a number of other initiatives including one with TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) where SLHD have been short-listed in two categories, 'diversity' and 'Tenant of the Year' where Frank Protheroe from the Homestead at Bentley has been put forward. SLHD have also been put forward for a Partnership working award with Fire and Rescue.</p> <p>JJ then talked about the cut in the companies management fee from DMBC and the effect of such measures on the service delivery provided.</p>	
8	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>A matter was raised regarding parking on Ratten Row Wadworth, and the turning circle, and a request by a member was for the creation of a number of additional parking bays. JJ suggested the matter should be looked at.</p>	

AK mentioned that the Federations Annual General Meeting is to take place on March 10<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm in the Trades and Labour Club, Frenchgate Centre, Doncaster.

AK spoke of the Federation's awards that will be presented at the event in line with this he mentioned that invite's for nominations for the following awards:

- Most innovative project by a TARA, TA or TC
- Best achieving TARA
- Good neighbour award

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AK spoke of his involvement as part of The South Yorkshire Network of Federations which is an informal alliance consisting of members from the following federations of tenant's and resident's associations – Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham as well as tenant members from Sheffield.

On January 6, 2011 we held a workshop to discuss the 'Local Decisions: A fairer future for social housing' consultation paper and came to the following conclusions.

Security of Tenure

South Yorkshire Tenants and Residents Network support the continuation of lifetime tenancies. Security of tenure ensures a council house is not just a house but a home. We believe that allowing tenants to have a secure 'lifetime' tenancy without stipulations on tenancy period will ensure that communities will be sustainable and will work towards the 'Big Society' ethos and the principles of the localism bill.

We fear that if short term tenancies' were fixed for new tenants there would be a number of negative impacts:

- Spiralling costs to local authorities to ensure that properties were re-let in a clean and decent standard. We believe that costs would be higher than they are at the present as there would be no onus on the previous tenant keeping the property in a good state of repair as it would only be their home on a short basis. Costs would also be incurred for staff time and re-advertising of the property.
- We believe that if individual local authorities were allowed to set their own tenancy period this would lead to disparity at both sub-regional and regional level and may lead to high fluctuations in waiting lists across the country.

- Short term tenancies could be seen by many as being a disincentive to finding employment as this under the governments proposals may mean tenants losing their properties.

Stable local communities are sustained by secure tenancies and people who live, care and look after their local areas. Without this security communities will become more transient and the onus on the individual to help improve their area will be removed.

#### Allocations

As a network we agreed that the change would have a positive effect if managed correctly. However, the key to its' success will be to ensure that comprehensive consultation is carried out at a local level between all interested parties – including tenants and residents.

We believe the management of the system should be sub-regional / regional to ensure there is not disparity between neighbouring authorities. Without this pressure will be exerted on those authorities who are providing favourable extended tenancy terms.

#### Mobility

The network once again agreed that in principal the system of being able to transfer properties and tenancies cross regionally will enhance the life of those who want to move. However, careful consideration and consultation needs to be carried out before implementing a fully operational transfer system to ensure that there is a fair access system to all regardless of technical ability.

#### Scrutiny

The network is wholly supportive of tenants and residents having the opportunity to fully scrutinise the performance, policies and procedures of social housing providers.

#### Tenant Strategy

The network welcomes the introduction of a strategic tenancy policy, which involves not only all local social housing providers but also tenants and TARA groups.

We hope that you find our outcomes beneficial to the consultation process and that they will be duly considered before implementing any changes to the social housing system.

Kind Regards

On behalf of The South Yorkshire Network of Tenant's and Resident's

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AK read out a letter sent to the Prime minister from the Northern Federation regarding the cuts in finances to local government.

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Northern Federation of Tenant's and Resident's Associations, which consists of representatives from the following groups: Barnsley Federation; Doncaster Federation; Kirklees Federation; Leeds Federation; Newcastle Federation and Rotherham Federation with regards to the impact following the Comprehensive Spending Review.

We strongly believe that the stringent cuts of over 50% to the social housing budget will drastically affect the building of future social housing.

With approximately four million people across England currently on a social housing waiting list surely it would make more sense to increase the building of social housing to alleviate this problem.

We believe that your reasoning of having a two tiered rent payment system will not solve the problem. Increasing local authority rents to new tenants who may already be on the poverty line and dependant on welfare benefits will increase the burden on the Department of Works and Pensions, who will have to pay increased subsidies to cover housing benefits.

If the government is to go ahead with the short term tenancies for new tenants, this will heighten costs to housing provider, in order to keep attracting new tenants and ensuring the property is in a lettable 'decent' condition. Therefore pressure will be once again transferred on to the provider to provide even more from their ever dwindling budgets.

We hope that you will consider our concerns when developing and implementing housing policy and budget changes.

Kind Regards

	Andrew Kerr Chair of Doncaster Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations.	
10	<u>Date &amp; Time of Next Meeting</u>  AK announced the date of the next meeting is the 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2011. TRRC St.James St at 10.30am.  Meeting closed 13:00 pm.	