

DERBY HOMES LIMITED

MINUTES OF THE LOCAL HOUSING BOARD NORTH MEETING

Held on Thursday 10 June 2010

The meeting started at 6.00 pm

Board Members Present:

Donald Beard, Alison Brown, Gary Featherstone, Bob Osler, Brian Perry, Dennis Rees (Chair), Margaret Redfern, Terry Rogerson, Roy Webb

Officers Present:

Steve Astle, Steve Bayliss, Paul Cole, Phil Davies, Maureen Davis, Matt Hands, Brett Harrison-Doyle, Lorraine Howe, Pete Matthews, Julie Wren

Partner Organisations Present:

Steve Marriott, Operations Director, Hi-Spec
Carolyn Hilton, Business Manager, Hi-Spec

10/42 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Shaun Bennett

10/43 Admission of Late Items

There were no late items.

10/44 Declarations of Interests

The Council Board Members were noted as declaring their interest in matters relating to Derby City Council.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Board Members declared their interests as tenants (as defined in the Memorandum and Articles of Association) of Derby City Council.

10/45 Minutes of Previous Meeting on 8 April 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2010 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

10/46 Matters Arising

Minute 10/11 Estates Pride Quick Fix Bids

Terry Rogerson advised that tenders have gone in regarding work to the fencing, paths and drying area on Fenchurch Walk. Measurements have also been taken.

Minute 10/18 Draft Capital Programme 2010/11

Terry Rogerson reported that following the last meeting a visit was made to the tenant of 8 Fenchurch Walk to look at the storage heaters in place. It was confirmed that they were modern type storage heaters, fitted only a few years ago, not the old ones that are being replaced.

Minute 10/32 Mobility Scooters

Margaret Refern referred the Local Housing Board decision that providing safe storage would be deferred until full consideration was given in June 2010. She asked if there was an update.

Terry Rogerson advised the Local Housing Board that the SHOUT group had held discussions with Farooq Malik however there has been nothing recently.

Margaret Redfern said that this issue could not be ignored and asked that this item goes on the agenda for the next meeting.

10/47 Questions from members of the public

The Local Housing Board North received a report containing 9 written questions from tenants living in the North of the City and responses from Derby Homes.

Roy Webb referred to the question from a tenant in the Brook Street area who reported that they have lived there for 15 years and was still awaiting replacement heating. The response provided listed several types of replacement systems. Roy Webb asked if an explanation had been provided to the tenant as to what these different forms of technology are and how they work.

The Maintenance Manager responded that in areas supplied by gas these tenants have been offered the option to replace storage heaters with a gas supply. However this property is Rivermead House and there is no gas supply. Energy Advice is trying out 3 or 4 different systems. Once it is established which is the best option it will be offered to all. The tenants with trial systems have been given full instructions and advice and we are monitoring energy useage.

The Chair referred to the tenant living in this property for 15 years and not receiving a replacement system, he asked that the Maintenance Manager check this.

Roy Webb asked if it was possible to provide tenants with an explanation as to how these technologies work, the advantages and disadvantages and a recommendation as to which system works best for which property. The Chair agreed that this would be helpful. The Operations Manager agreed that the Housing and Neighbourhood Manager will arrange for this to be done.

10/48 Items from Part B to be discussed

Agreed

The Local Housing Board agreed to discuss item B3. All other reports on Part B of the agenda were noted but not discussed.

10/49 Items from Contractor Partners

Changes to the Cleaning Contract

The Maintenance Manager explained that following a request by the Local Housing Board the cleaning contractors Hi-Spec were in attendance to provide a verbal update and to put forward proposals for an improved service. An accompanying written report set out proposals for an improved service.

Steve Marriott, Hi-Spec Operations Manager gave an introduction to Hi-Spec and an overview of their background. He advised the Local Housing Board of the service they currently provide.

The Maintenance Manager advised that major changes are needed to the contract. Currently only two thirds of flats are receiving the cleaning service and of those most are only cleaned once a fortnight. Other than this, all residents are jointly responsible for keeping communal areas clean, which is often a problem. Residents of blocks on the cleaning contract pay a service charge, based on the cost of cleaning at that block.

The first step was to include some caretaking work as part of the cleaners visit – an extra 15 minutes per block, on top of normal internal cleaning. This makes some difference now, but will have a much bigger effect if nearly all blocks are on the cleaning contract, with visits every week.

The second stage has been to identify blocks of flats in an unsatisfactory condition and add them into the contract. This will take place in manageable stages. Residents will be notified and advised of the charge for this service.

Flats already kept to a good standard by residents will not be included. Residents will be given a monitored opportunity to improve standards themselves, if they don't want to receive our cleaning service. The first batch of unsatisfactory blocks has recently been added and this process will continue.

The next proposed improvement will be to provide a weekly cleaning service rather than fortnightly, with reasonable time allocated and caretaking time added in. This improved service will include regular stripping and resealing of floors and the cleaning of windows in communal areas. There will be a revised service charge for this, based on the cost at each block divided by the number of residents.

To make the improvement from fortnightly to weekly cleaning and to introduce a revised charge, the Council wants to see evidence of consultation. Residents of affected blocks have been asked for their opinions and there have been mixed responses. Some have stated that they should not have to pay for mess that other residents cause.

Where the consultation response has been positive the proposal is to recommend to the Council that they move those blocks to a new weekly service with a revised charge. Where the response is negative the proposal is to talk directly with those tenants and see if they change their minds. If not and if still not in agreement, we will monitor standards to see if residents are keeping the block satisfactorily clean in between fortnightly cleaning visits.

Margaret Redfern referred to different people having different acceptable standards of cleaning. Identification needs to be made as to what meets this standard. The Maintenance Manager advised that housing officers now assess and rate the cleaning standards at each block. A series of Joint training sessions are taking place, with various housing officers visited several sites with Hi-Spec and maintenance staff, to agree common standards for assessment.

Alison Brown referred to those already carrying out their cleaning satisfactorily not being included. She asked if it was possible to give them the opportunity and offer them this service. The Maintenance Manager said this was a valid point and will extend the offer, even to blocks that are currently being cleaned satisfactorily by residents.

Roy Webb commented that tenants not receiving Housing Benefits may struggle to afford the typical £4.00 cost. He asked if there was any other way to generate funding to provide this service. The Maintenance Manager said he was not aware of any and that this has to be a service charge. He added that no profit is made.

The Chair said that Hi-Spec are in effect taking on the roll of caretakers in which case the tenants should not be paying for this as it was Derby Homes who got rid of their caretakers. The Maintenance Manager advised that caretaking services to flats is supposed to be a service charge, regardless of whether our own staff or contractors do the work. The Chair also queried the discrepancies between current weekly and fortnightly charges. The Maintenance Manager replied that these made no sense, have been like this for a long time and cannot be explained.

Bob Osler suggested that a solution for all flats be brought back with a timetable.

The Chair agreed with Bob Osler and asked that something is brought back with specific prices included for service charges.

Chubb

Margaret Redfern raised a concern regarding Chubb. She said that whilst in the Derwent area she had come across Derby Homes' Chubb service cards littered around on paths and bushes. She commented that this was not a good advertisement for us. She has also noticed leaflets advising Derby Homes' tenants how to stay safe sticking out of letter boxes. She pointed out that this is an indication that there is no one at home. She asked what standards are in place for this. The Chair said he would raise this with the Director of Investment and Regeneration.

Connaught

Margaret Redfern raised an issue with the new contractor partner Connaught. She informed the Local Housing Board that they are still driving around in Vinshire vans. Alison Brown agreed and added that she has noticed vans with no logo on.

The Chair said that he has heard mixed reviews on Connaught with some saying the work is good and others not. He asked that we ensure that Connaught are invited to attend the next meeting. Terry Rogerson commented that he had heard positive comments on the work carried out by Connaught.

Terry Rogerson asked if Vinshires were still in existence. The Chair replied that Connaught had won the contract and had TUPE transferred Vinshires' operatives. Vinshires are still operating on other contracts, including new heating installations for Derby Homes.

The Chief Executive responded to the issue raised around the use of vehicles. He pointed out that although ESD staff had TUPE'd to Derby Homes they are still using ESD vehicles and it takes time to get the right vehicles in place.

The Chair asked the Maintenance Manager about Vinshires vans still being used. The Maintenance Manager agreed it was not good practice. He advised that the Connaught vehicles are to have temporary transfers until the vans are properly marked.

Bob Osler said that it was not acceptable that Derby Homes is still using ESD vans and that this should have been sorted out before the merge took place. The Chief Executive replied that this was impossible due to the short time between the contract signing and staff transferred to Derby Homes.

Margaret Redfern said that she did not yet feel comfortable with our new partners Connaught. She said she was disappointed that they were not in attendance tonight as was expected and added that usually when a Company has just won a contract they are keen to impress. The Maintenance Manager emphasized that Connaughts had not been invited and that this was a Derby Homes error, not any fault of Connaughts.

Agreed

The Local Housing Board supported:

- ongoing changes to increase the level of the cleaning service offered at blocks of flats
- aim to set a minimum standard of cleaning across all blocks
- cleaning of communal areas needs to be shared between Derby Homes and tenants / leaseholders.
- new service charges to be introduced, that reflect the correct cost of the service

The Local Housing Board did support the proposals however asked for further information to be brought back to the next meeting.

The Local Housing Board agreed to invite Connaught to the next meeting in September.

10/50 Housing & Leaseholder Focus Groups' Items

The Resident Involvement Officer provided a report containing outstanding issues raised at Housing Focus Groups. He said that these were regarding repairs, anti-social behaviour or estate issues. Alison Brown said that this is not shown in terms of when reported.

Alison Brown asked why case number 60457 regarding icy pavements was still open as this was obviously earlier in the year. The Chief Executive advised that Derby Homes is looking at ways to have a gritting service available in bad weather.

A meeting has taken place with Highways and Grounds Maintenance who currently provide this service. He said that work would continue on this and he will have a report available before the winter.

Terry Rogerson asked what the SHOUT issue was (paragraph 3.3). The Resident Involvement Officer replied he could not remember. The Chair asked that we see all issues and when they were raised.

Agreed

The Local Housing Board noted the report.

10/51 Training for Local Housing Board Members

The Chair informed the Local Housing Board Members that they should contact Jackie Mitchell if they have any requests for training.

10/52 Estates Pride Quick Fix Bids

The Local Housing Board was asked to consider bids for funding from the quick fix fund within Estates Pride in response to known problems, in particular to reduce crime, nuisance and vandalism.

The bids for funding were:

- 1. 1 Parker Close** – Supply and fit 1m high black metal bowtop perimeter fencing, 2 single gates and one double gate.
- 2. 2 -20 Kinross Avenue** – Supply and fit 1.8m high black metal bowtop fencing, one single and one double gate. Dig out grass verge at rear of houses and lay tarmac at road level. Tarmac grass verge at entrance.
- 3. Highgate Green** – Supply and fit 1.8m high black metal bowtop fencing and 1m high black metal double gates.
- 4. 60-78 and 117-135 Cobden Street** – Remove wooden fencing to the drying areas and replace with 1.8m high black metal bowtop fencing and two single lockable gates.
- 5. Adjacent to 37-47 William Street** – Supply and fit 1.8m high black metal gate and fit metal fencing to existing wall using cranked extensions.

Margaret Redfern referred to the bid for Kinross Avenue and asked if consultation had taken place with people who owned their home. The Chair replied that there are 5 home owners and 5 who are not and they have all been consulted and will get the benefits.

The Chief Executive advised the Local Housing Board that we cannot force the owner occupiers to pay for the gates. Margaret Redfern said that this was unfair on the rent payers. The Chair recommended that this item be

deferred and brought back to the next meeting.

Alison Brown said it would be useful to receive feedback on bids approved. She said for example where fencing has gone up in response to anti-social behaviour it can be shown that incidents have reduced. Bob Osler agreed that this could be done and suggested it be annually reported to the Local Housing Board. The Resident Involvement Officer said that the TSA are to do an annual report and it could be part of this.

The Chair referred to fencing to walling on William Street. He noticed that consultation letters had gone out but no responses received back. He asked if there was a problem here or not. Bob Osler suggested that this should be withdrawn. The Housing and Neighbourhood Manager replied that this was a health and safety issue. The wall is adjacent to a walk through route. He said that this was probably why no one had responded.

Margaret Redfern said she could not understand why consultation had taken place and no response and commented that if this is a health and safety issue it should not be part of a quick fix bid.

Bob Osler asked what the decision was regarding this request. The Housing and Neighbourhood Manager urged the Local Housing Board to agree to this as it was a health and safety issue for residents. The Chief Executive said that he was in agreement with this. The Chair said that the bid would be agreed on this occasion but added in future we need to see more support to back any bids.

Agreed

The Local Housing Board

1. approved bids for funding at
 - 1 Parker Close
 - Highgate Green
 - 60-78 and 117-135 Cobdon Street
 - Adjacent to 37-47 William Street
2. 2-20 Kinross Avenue This bid was deferred by the Chair to be discussed at the next meeting
3. noted the update on the works outlined in paragraph 3.6.

10/53 Review and Restructure of Community Watch Patrol (CWP) Services/Concierge Services

The Operations Manager presented a report containing proposals for the restructure of the Community Watch Patrol (CWP). These proposals seek to

refocus the out of hours work undertaken by the CWP, more closely link in with the management of anti-social behavior and develop a long term strategy around youth engagement.

The external funding for the CWP ended in March therefore one of the proposals included is the integration of the CWP team within the Neighbourhood Safety Team. The Operations Manager explained that this realignment would enable Derby Homes to reduce down to 1 patrol vehicle, working 4 evenings a week between 4.30 pm and 11.30 pm.

Due to the growth of the Junior Warden Scheme it is proposed to create a new post of Youth Engagement Assistant. With regard to the Concierge Team at Rivermead House it is proposed that a review of the service takes place.

Alison Brown commented on the positive work of the Junior Warden Scheme. She asked if the hours given for the patrol vehicle reflected when most wanted. The Operations Manager replied that the CWP have said that most of their work happens before midnight.

Agreed

The Local Housing Board approved the proposals subject to further consultation with Housing Focus Groups and Process Improvement Teams and delegated the implementation of the proposals to the Chief Executive of Derby Homes.

10/54 Fire Safety Management in Blocks of Flats

The Local Housing Board was presented with a report proposing the adoption of a sterile area policy for the management of fire risks within the communal corridors, landings and stairwells of flats managed by Derby Homes it also contained an outline to the background of the recommendation.

Following recent fatal incidents in blocks of flats a more stringent approach has been taken. This issue has been highlighted by the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Roy Webb referred to adopting sterile areas and asked how this will conflict with the cleaning contract. He also asked how we ensure areas are kept sterile. The Operations Manager advised that the new cleaning contract and Local Housing Office Staff will maintain this. Roy Webb said that if we are responsible for managing sterile areas or risk facing prosecution then inspections would be needed twice a day.

The Chair replied that this was not possible and advised that monthly inspections of flats are already in place. He said that more communication would be required.

Agreed

The Local Housing Board agreed that Derby Homes adopts a “sterile” fire management policy for blocks of flats to help ensure the safety of residents, requiring the communal corridors, landings and stairwells of flats managed by Derby Homes be designated a “clear zone” or sterile area free of all extraneous items.

10/55 Notice to Vary Tenancy Conditions

The Local Housing Board received a report recommending a variation to tenancy conditions. This contained a proposal for 2 new conditions which are:

- A condition for fitting and servicing smoke alarms.
- The sharing of information with utility providers. We will provide details of tenants leaving Derby Homes’ properties with debts on meters to the utility company. Currently Derby Homes meets this cost.

Bob Osler asked if this would need to be taken to Council. The Chief Executive replied it would and may have to go to Cabinet.

Brian Perry asked if tenants had been sent letters regarding the Utility Companies change to their tenancy conditions. The Operations Manager replied they had. Brian Perry asked what the response had been. The Operations Manager said she had not yet seen the responses and added that tenants have up to 28 days to reply and this time is not up yet,

Agreed

The Local Housing Board approved the report and recommended the variation of the tenancy conditions to the Council.

10/56 Comedius & Roundabouts Trust UK – Relocation and Development Grant

The Local Housing Board received a report requesting a grant of £10,000 for Comedius and Roundabouts Trust to relocate and for future development of activities and initiatives. The Local Housing Board North was asked to approve a grant of £5,000 from Estates Pride.

Alison Brown referred to item 3.1 regarding access to training for unemployed and disadvantaged people and this having a focus on entertainment. She commented that this should instead be aimed at something useful.

The Chair referred to the Stakeholders listed and pointed out that none of these are in a position to help in providing this grant. He added that he did not agree that this amount should come from Estates Pride fund.

The Chair asked if any around the table were in favour of this request. All said no.

Agreed

The Local Housing Board agreed to decline the request for funding.

10/57 Directors' Update

The Local Housing Board received a report prepared by the Director of Investment and Regeneration and the Director of Housing and Customer Services containing a general overview and update on current issues.

Agreed

The Local Housing Board noted, but did not discuss this report.

10/58 Performance Monitoring

The Local Housing Board received a report submitted by the Performance Management Committee to highlight key performance issues arising from the discussion of Quarter 4 2009/10.

Agreed

The Local Housing Board noted, but did not discuss this report.

10/59 Flats Inspection Update

The Local Housing Board received a report containing an update on flat evaluations carried out during April 2010.

Agreed

Margaret Redfern had requested that this item be discussed however she had left the meeting at this point. Therefore it was agreed that this item will be carried over to the next meeting.

10/60 Minutes of the Derby Homes Board 25 March 2010

The Local Housing Board noted, but did not discuss the minutes.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 9 September 2010 at 6.00 pm at Cardinal Square.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.

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CHAIR

Signed as true and accurate record of the meeting held on 8 April 2010.