

Private Sector Leasing Scheme

Shire Homes Lettings Board Meeting Minutes

Date: 17 July 2019

Time: 1pm

Location: Spitfire Room, South Cambridgeshire District Council

Present: Redacted data

Agenda Item

1. Apologies and Minutes of the last meeting

Apologies were received from (DP), (SH) and (DG)

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

2. Introductions

- Introductions to PF who was then formally appointed as a Board Member.
- Actions from the previous minutes to be picked up throughout the agenda. General information will be explained to PF throughout the meeting.

3. Repairs

- South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) now have a contract with SSE for electrical work on council properties, Ermine Street also have an agreement to work with them which went through Sean Missin. Now Mears have a lot more time to complete our electrical checks.
- DP is still working on contractors approved list for SCDC, not Shire Homes Lettings (SHL).
- Mears have declined 3 meetings organised by Chris to discuss Shire Homes. Our contract with Mears is due to expire in April 2022 and the Council is already looking at a replacement contract.

4. Governance and structure

- PF has now been appointed as a board member and Louise is going to register him with Companies House.
- Discussion over appointing a company secretary (previously AC then RP). There are internal options such as TR and PM, Trevor is only temporary, so Peter is the preferred choice. We also have the option to go external to someone like PR or JH for a small cost. CP mentioned that it is not a legal requirement to have a company secretary, instead we could have 2 directors. The main requirement is having someone that is available to sign things off along with Heather. Heather is going to discuss this with MH.
- Once someone has been appointed, we shall look at the board meeting structure and attendance, possibly having one operational group and one group for decision making.

5. Business Plan

- The business plan needs to be updated again in September/ October. LM and ML are going to organise a meeting to look at 'assumptions' in the business plan.

6. Finance Update

- The results of the Business Plan will be slightly different due to not meeting the 40 properties; however, all the figures will work out.
- The audit didn't produce any concerns other than the Bad debt allowance in the business plan. However, LM confirmed that we are on top of rent collection and are not struggling to cope. We are currently in the process of writing a policy for Bad Debts.
- We will continue to go external for our VAT returns due to the capacity within the council.
- It would be useful to work out what Shire Homes is saving the council. A Bed & Breakfast for a year for one family is £25,000. We have helped 36 families who would have probably all together accumulated a years' worth of B&B

fees. We should also consider the fact that B&B are unsatisfactory living conditions on a long-term basis.

Discussions with Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC)

- Discussion are ongoing and there is a possible property in St Neots. SC has drafted an interim agreement letter which has been handed to legal to start the process off as the legal side can be a long process.
- There is a potential for the amount of properties in Huntingdon District to grow, however this isn't a concern as it is not far to travel

7. Rental Negotiations

- We are currently at 33 properties which are all occupied. LM is busy with visits to potential properties including 4 with CCC (2 of which are vacant), 2 farms, and one in Linton.
- Mid-terms are up to date; Helen will be taking on solo visits where she feels comfortable. She has already completed a few by herself.
- Landlords are being recharged for relevant works.
- We are starting to look at houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and it is important to be very particular with these to ensure they are up to a satisfactory standard.

8. HMO'S / Job role

- The role has now been advertised on insite and externally. Once they are in place we can start to focus more on HMO's. The figures have been difficult to calculate in terms of council tax, service charges etc.
- Our relationship with Environmental Health will help us greatly.
- Our client group is something we need to look at and the new member of staff needs to understand that often the tenants will be vulnerable.

9. Any other business

- PI'S - Currently monitoring tenant debts is hard due to open housing not having the service to do so. However, Shire Homes are confident in their

management of rent accounts and we all agree that we can wait till the new orchard is running to then look further into ways of monitoring debt.

- PI'S – HW is going to check whether the business plan is measured on properties or on preventions. HMO reports will be kept separate from the business plan as the funding is from a separate pot. The HMO role may well pay for itself in terms of claiming rent and funding.
- Policies and procedures – Louise is updating the current policies and procedures. Regarding complaints we will look into using the Council's portal and following the council's general response times. Any escalated complaints from outside the district should go to the Local Authority rather than SCDC.
- GDPR – the Lease is fine; SC is amending the Tenancy Agreement and there was also recommended amendments for the Service Level Agreement. There is nothing urgent as it is between SHL and SCDC.

10. Future meeting

Wednesday the 9 October at 1pm in the Spitfire Room – Location to be confirmed.

Please ensure all background papers are distributed a few days prior to the meeting.

The minutes of this meeting held on were agreed as a correct record.

Signed by the Chair: Date: