

Private Sector Leasing Scheme

Shire Homes Lettings Board Meeting Minutes

Date: 7 November 2018

Time: 1:30pm

Location: Stephens Hills' Old Office, South Cambridgeshire District Council

Present: Redacted data

1. Apologies and Minutes of the last meeting

Apologies were received from (MW) and (GC).

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

2. Legal Updates

- Public Liability and Officers/Directors Insurance – public liability insurance all in place just waiting on the invoice of £3,343.20. CD to chase the invoice.

3. Directors/Governance

- HW has now officially replaced SH as a Director for Shire Homes Lettings (SHL).
- AC will be stand down as a Secretary to the company, after his retirement in December. Resignation document given to AC for signature. It is not known whether his replacement will be asked to joint the Board.
- Suggestion of a councillor joining the Board. SC to send proposal to Hazel to see who would want to come to the next board meeting. An additional member will not be a member of the executive cabinet. See who has the best experience and can bring good debate to the table.

4. Business Plan

- Risks have been updated since the last meeting. Change the layout /format so they are similar to other councils or put them on four risk instead. HW to speak to Suzi about how to do this.
- Need to focus on the risks – HW and SC as service managers need to look at what risks Shire Homes has being an external company to the council.
- Set up a rent policy – add in that due to personal circumstances someone may need to have a particular type of property / area. The rent will then need to be set accordingly.
- CD to speak with DG and then create a flow chart for whether a tenant should claim HB or UC.
- For future reference, HMO's – 1 bedroom rate no matter their age.
- Staffing – Looking at making CD's admin role permanent. Costs have been factored in and the flexible homelessness support grant (FHSG) or other future funding will cover this. We have put in a financial bid for this as we believe it would be beneficial to recruit on a permanent basis. Can't go through HR as this needs to be approved by the council. Post meeting note: post can only be advertised as a fixed term until future budgets/bids are approved in February.

5. Finance Update

ML circulated a copy of SHL budget to date.

- We are now VAT registered. Majority of the VAT charged we cannot claim back. Over the first 2 months we have claimed £135 back.
- Need to look at changing the estimated 8% rent arrears that we are currently assuming and look at the actual figures. Break this down into which arrears are due to HB paying in arrears and which are arrears from tenants not paying.
- We recently had an eviction with £3,000 rent arrears. We will recharge but are assuming we will not get this back. We are in contact with all of the other tenants in arrears; most have payment plans in place. Natalie Dane is also

assisting in contacting / visiting the tenants who are in arrears if they are reluctant to speak to CD.

- Use the rent arrears and the void periods as performance indicators. When using the void periods, we will need to take into account that there are two elements; the first being the time taken to repair and clean the property. The other being the time taken to find a tenant.
- Void periods are being affected by the contractors – repairs and maintenance are taking longer due to Mears and other contractors being very busy/ understaffed. This also increases the time taken to get new properties on the scheme.
- ML to incorporate the new breakdown of void figures in the next meeting. Create a new code to use on invoices and T1 for works carried out to a void property.
- DP to differentiate the works done on a void property and the voids done on an occupied property.
- Issue with Mears raised – time scales and pricing. Looking into alternative contractors for price comparison and to reduce void periods, especially electrical works.
- LM to make a chart to show the number of gas and electric certificates being carried out. If there are any overdue what is the reason.
- Landlords will be paid on the 1st of December and then again on the 15 December for January's payment, to prevent any delays over the holidays.

6. Payment Options Update

- JJ is working on Post Office payment cards; initially one authorised user will do the payee payment. Then it will be rolled out to all shire homes and contact centre staff.
- Payment cards are being tested at the Post offices.
- Barclays working on transferring the money to rent accounts automatically. About a week away from all going live.

7. Rental Negotiations

- 3 Nominations going through to housing tomorrow for their meetings.
- Ongoing negotiations with more owners.

8. Repairs / Maintenance

- See above notes in section 5

9. Marketing

- The Council has sent out a consultation letter and form to the approximately 167 owners of empty homes in South Cambridgeshire. The letter explains the proposed changes to increase Council tax in empty homes and outlining the potential income they are missing out on. A Shire Homes leaflet was enclosed.

10. Any other business

South Cambridgeshire District Council are going to put in a bid for some funding to create houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) for Shire Homes. This bid is for the 'Access to the Private Rented Sector' – This targets areas where people are at risk of homelessness due to the high rents. The funding will be used for setting the property up, another member of staff to act as tenancy support, extra training etc.

11. Future meeting

Wednesday 16 January 2019 – Spitfire Room (Stephen Hills' Old Office)

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

The minutes of this meeting held on 7 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

Signed by the Chair: Date: