

REPORT TO THE SCRUTINY PANEL for PLACES
MEETING OF 20th OCTOBER 2011

Status: Recommendation
Title: Partnership Working with Seven Locks Housing – Progress Review for 2010-11
Originator: Jim Wheeler
Where from: Scrutiny Panel - Places
Where to next: Not Applicable

<p><u>Objective:</u> Monitor delivery of the promises to tenants of Seven Locks Housing. Review progress on the development of partnerships with Seven Locks Housing on projects to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of the people of Harborough.</p>
--

1. Outcome sought from Panel

1.1 To note this report, and confirm that the Panel is satisfied with the current progress on delivery by Seven Locks Housing (SLH) of the promises made in the Formal Consultation Document published by the Council prior to the transfer of Council owned homes to SLH.

2 Background

2.1 The transfer of Council owned homes in Harborough District to SLH was completed on the 3rd December 2007.

2.2 Progress on delivery of a five-year programme of improvements as part of the promises made to tenants in The Formal Consultation Document (referred to as 'The Seven Locks Standard') has been monitored through regular annual reports to the Scrutiny Panel Places. Appendix (A) records progress achieved on the delivery of the promises by 23rd September 2011.

2.3 Projects completed in years 1-3 (including 2010-11) include:

- § New bathrooms in 1381 homes (completed in year 2)
- § A choice of a walk-in shower for sheltered housing tenants (completed in year 2)
- § Replacement front/back doors to improve security in 1310 homes (completed in year 2)
- § New/Upgraded heating systems to 908 homes (completed in year 3)

- § Spend £750,000 within the first five years on aids and adaptations – actual spend on aids and adaptations; £763,778 (completed in year 3)
- § Upgrading digital TV aerials and additional security cameras – actual spend £232,000 (completed in year 3)

2.4 Projects where progress is on target include:

- § New Kitchens to around 1,600 homes (1413 homes with new kitchens)
- § Support for tenant participation
- § Tenant Resource Centre
- § Environmental Improvements (actual spend up to 23rd September 2011; £501,901)
- § Development of community initiatives

2.5 Projects requiring further work to achieve targets include:

- § Provision of storage/charging facilities for mobility scooters in sheltered schemes
- § Provide 60 new affordable homes within 5 years of transfer (39 homes completed in years 1-3)
- § Spend £1 million within the first five years on keeping areas around tenant's homes to a high standard (actual spend up to 23rd September 2011; £463,850)
- § Additional roof insulation
- § Cavity/solid wall insulation

(Seven Locks Housing are confident that all properties requiring additional wall/roof insulation will be completed by March, 2012. However, the actual number of properties requiring additional cavitywall/roof insulation will be significantly less than those originally anticipated by Savills through their sample survey carried out pre transfer – these were the numbers that were used in the Promises document. British Gas has surveyed all properties to establish the exact requirements and complete the improvements.

SLH have recently tendered for contract for circa 230 properties requiring external wall insulation, to start in October 2011. However, it is anticipated that this number may reduce because of planning restrictions and the unsuitability of some properties due to the aesthetic impact it will have. Some properties may drop out of the programme for technical reasons.)

2.6 Appendix (B) shows information published by SLH about their performance in key areas of service delivery. SLH has achieved continuous improvement in key areas including:

- § Rent collected 102.2%
- § Reduced arrears – 1.8% in 2011(2nd quarter) compared with 2.91% in 2007 (before stock transfer)
- § Repairs completed within target time – 99.97%
- § Repairs right first time 98.5%
- § Appointments made and kept 99.96%

2.7 SLH is currently working on achievement of the Investor in Excellence Standard in 2012. It has also introduced changes in procurement policies to facilitate tendering by local contractors thereby achieving improved customer service and significant cost savings; also investment in IT systems to further improve efficiency and service accessibility.

2.8 Local service and community standards have been developed by SLH based on full consultation with residents. Quarterly reports to the Board monitor performance on achievement of the service and community standards.

2.9 Current service and community standards include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Aids and Adaptations § Anti-social Behaviour § Complaints § Customer Service § Repairs and Maintenance § Gas Servicing § Cleaning § Grounds Maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Major Improvements § Customer Involvement § Empty Property Re-let Standard § Rent collection and arrears recovery § Service Standards for Estates § Service Standards for Sheltered and Supported Accommodation
--	--

2.10 Residents (including leaseholders and tenants) are involved in decisions about further development of the SLH “Customer Offer” at all levels based on principles of co-regulation, including equal representation on the SLH Board alongside Councillors nominated by Harborough District Council and independent members.

2.11 Tenants have a varied menu of options for involvement to match their commitment, interest and capacity, supported by training and access to the tenant resource centre. Options for tenant involvement include:

- § Level 1 involving individuals through profiling, satisfaction surveys, complaints monitoring and STATUS surveys
- § Level 2 involving Customer Panel members, either as individual voices or as representative groups through, Mystery shopping, Service Reviews, Focus Groups and Void Inspections
- § Level 3 where involved tenants on the Board and the Resident Scrutiny Panel work to ensure that they can represent the views of all customers

2.12 The Resident Scrutiny Panel acts as a “critical friend” to the Board, independently challenging SLH performance against agreed goals and objectives, including value for money comparisons with other providers, satisfaction with service delivery and ensuring equal access to services. It has recently reported on SLH policies and procedures dealing with anti social behaviour.

2.13 The most recent STATUS tenant satisfaction survey (2010) shows significant increases in tenant satisfaction compared with 2007 (before completion of stock transfer) e.g. Overall satisfaction with services 91.8% (81% in 2007).

2.14 SLH works with partners to promote sustainable communities including its partnership with the Clockwise Credit Union and work on anti social behaviour issues in Broughton Astley leading to development of a local service standard for estate management. Recent initiatives include a drop in “Rural Roadshow” where staff can meet tenants in villages to find out what improvements in services they wish to see.

3 Points for discussion

3.1 Deborah Bennett, Executive Director and the Chair of the SLH Board as well as tenant representatives will attend the meeting to discuss:

- § Building on progress already achieved in delivery of the Seven Locks Standard through further development of the SLH Customer offer.
- § Opportunities for the further involvement of Seven Locks Housing in community development.

4 Equality Impact Assessment Implications/Outcomes (attach completed EIA)

4.1 Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as described below in paragraph 12.4.

5 Impact on Communities

5.1 Harborough District Council and SLH are committed to working in partnership on projects which are of mutual benefit, and which promote the social, economic and environmental well being of people living in Harborough District.

6 Legal Issues

6.1 The Transfer Contract between Harborough District Council and Seven Locks Housing Ltd provides the legal framework for managing the relationship between the Council and SLH following the completion of stock transfer on 3rd December 2007.

6.2 SLH must also comply with the requirements of the regulatory framework for Registered Social Landlords. Regulation of registered social landlords is currently undertaken by the Tenant Services Agency (TSA).

6.3 SLH is also required to publish a report to tenants every year to give an honest and helpful account of how well it is delivering against the TSA service standards. The annual report is available on the SLH website (www.sevenlockshousing.co.uk)

7 Resource Issues

7.1 The Formal Consultation Document has promised delivery of the “Seven Locks Standard” by December 2012.

7.2 The “Seven Locks Standard” includes commitments to improved services and a £35 million five year programme of improvements.

8 Community Safety Implications

8.1 Delivery of home improvements including new doors and environmental improvements such as better lighting in public areas is contributing to improved community safety.

8.2 SLH contributes to improving community safety through involving tenants and partners as referred to above in paragraph 2.10.

9 Carbon Management Implications

9.1 Energy efficiency improvements undertaken by SLH contribute to reductions in CO2 emissions

10 Risk Management Implications

10.1 The Board of SLH is responsible for effective management of risks including issues such as financial management, governance, health and safety.

10.2 Regular meetings between the Deputy Chief Executive for Harborough District Council and the Executive Director for SLH enable ongoing monitoring of risk management issues jointly affecting SLH and the Council.

11 Consultation

11.1 SLH consults regularly involves tenants and leaseholders as described above in paragraphs 2.6-2.8 above.

12 Background Papers

12.1 The Transfer Contract

12.2 Formal Consultation Document (Minutes 308; 357; 584/2006-07 refer)

12.3 SLH annual report to tenants (www.sevenlockshousing.co.uk)

12.4 Equality Impact Assessment considered by Scrutiny Panel (Service Development) 6th March 2008 (Minute 552/2007-08 refers).

Previous report(s): *Meetings of Scrutiny Panel Places -*

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: *N*

Appendices:

- A. *Seven Locks Housing – Monitoring the Delivery of Promises 2010/11***
- B. *Seven Locks Housing – service performance***
- C. *Equality Impact Assessment***