

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Notice of Meeting

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

CALL-IN

Wednesday, 10 November 2004 - Civic Centre, Dagenham, 5:00 pm

Members: Councillor Mrs P A Twomey (Chair); Councillor Mrs M M West (Deputy Chair); Councillor W F L Barns, Councillor J R Denyer, Councillor Mrs K J Flint, Councillor Mrs D Hunt and Councillor D O'Brien

Also Invited: Councillor P T Waker (Lead Call-In Member), Councillor W C Dale, Councillor L R Waker (Call-In Members) and Councillor L A Smith (representing the Executive)

Declaration of Members Interest: In accordance with Article 1, Paragraph 12 of the Constitution, Members are asked to declare any direct/indirect financial or other interest they may have in any matter which is to be considered at this meeting

Graham Farrant
Chief Executive

2.11.04

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AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. The Call-In Process (Pages 1 - 2)
3. Call-In - Selection of Barking & Dagenham's Panel of Registered Social Landlords (Pages 3 - 10)
4. Any other public items which the Chair decides are urgent
5. To consider whether it would be appropriate to pass a resolution to exclude the public and press from the remainder of the meeting due to the nature of the business to be transacted.

Private Business

The public and press have a legal right to attend Council meetings such as the Scrutiny Management Board, except where business is confidential or certain other sensitive information is to be discussed. The list below shows why items are in the private part of the agenda, with reference to the relevant legislation (the relevant paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972). *There are no such items at the time of preparing this agenda.*

- 6. Any other confidential or exempt items which the Chairman decides are urgent**

THE CALL IN PROCESS (The Executive)

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Call-In is the process by which decisions of the Executive can be challenged before implementation by non-Executive Members and referred to the Scrutiny Management Board for further consideration. The statutory co-opted members of the Scrutiny Management Board are also entitled to Call-In Executive decisions in respect of education related matters.
- 1.2 Urgent actions taken under paragraph 17.1 of Article 1 of the Constitution are subject to Call-In. However, only the principles for taking the action can be challenged; the action itself can not be overturned.

2. Definition of an Executive Decision

This includes any decision made by the Executive, including a recommendation to the Assembly or another part of the democratic structure.

3. Call-In Procedure

- 3.1 Minutes of meetings of the Executive will be circulated to all Members of the Council and, when relevant, statutory co-opted Members, within three working days of the meeting (e.g. for an Executive meeting on a Tuesday, the minutes will be circulated not later than the Friday of the same week).
- 3.2 Any two Members of the Council, or statutory co-opted members, individually or collectively, may Call-In a decision by submitting a written request to the Chief Executive by 12 noon on the Wednesday following the circulation of the minutes, with reasons (where days are lost due to Bank Holidays the Call-In deadline will be adjusted accordingly). The Call-In request may be posted, handed in at the Civic Centre or the Town Hall, sent by e-mail, fax or via the Council's website (www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk).
- 3.3 Requests received after the deadline can not be considered because of the need to keep delays to decision-making as short as possible.
- 3.4 Requests which, on investigation by the Director of Corporate Strategy, are found to have been made without the support of sufficient Members or statutory co-opted members will not be considered by the Scrutiny Management Board.
- 3.5 In the event that a recommendation is called in, the matter shall not be put to the Assembly (or other meeting) until it has been considered through the procedure. Where such a recommendation has already been included on the agenda for an Assembly (or other meeting), it shall be withdrawn on receipt of the Call-In.

- 3.6 Scrutiny Management Board Members will be notified of the need for a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity. Meetings will be programmed for this purpose and cancelled if necessary.
- 3.7 At least one Member will be required to represent the Executive at the Scrutiny Management Board meeting to explain the reasons for the Executive's decision, and to answer any questions. Similarly the relevant Chief Officer, or his/her representative, will attend to clarify any aspects associated with the issue in question.
- 3.8 The Members or statutory co-opted members Calling-In the decision, or one representing the others, will also be invited to attend to present their case.
- 3.9 The Scrutiny Management Board may also invite any other persons to assist during the Call-In meeting.
- 3.10 The papers to be considered by the Scrutiny Management Board will be those considered by the Executive when the decision was made, the decision itself, and written details of the Call-In.
- 3.11 Having considered the matter raised by the Call-In, the Scrutiny Management Board will have three options available to it:
 - (a) Dismiss the Call-In and let the Executive decision stand, or
 - (b) Refer the matter back to the Executive with proposals for an alternative course of action, or
 - (c) Refer the decision to the Assembly for wider debate. This latter option will only apply where there are issues of Council policy involved.
- 3.12 Reasons will be given for the decision taken by the Scrutiny Management Board.
- 3.13 Any disagreements between the Executive and the Scrutiny Management Board will be referred to the Assembly.
- 3.14 In exceptional circumstances, and where delay would be prejudicial to the interests of the Council, it may be necessary to waive the Call-In procedure. In such cases the Chief Executive or the relevant or lead Chief Officer, as appropriate, will take urgent action in accordance with Article 1 - Paragraph 17.1 to waive the Call-In procedure.

SCRUTINY CALL-IN

**Names of Members:
(minimum of 2)**

(indicate Lead Member)

Phil Waker (Lead)
Lee Waker
Bill Dale

Date of Executive:

Tuesday 12 October 2004

Item for Call-in:

Selection of Barking & Dagenham's Panel of
Registered Social Landlords

Decision of Executive:

Agreed, in order to strengthen the Council's ability to deliver high quality new affordable homes and bring about community regeneration programmes, to:

1. Include the Southern Housing Group on the Council's panel of preferred RSL partners; and
2. Request the Southern Housing Group to invite a Ward Councillor from each of the Abbey, Gascoigne and Thames Wards to sit on the Board of the housing development management company for projects in this Borough.

Reasons for Call-in:

As Attached

REASONS FOR CALL-IN

1. Southern Housing has a number of properties in Village Ward. Approximately 160 are on the Rookery Farm Estate (which includes the area often referred to as the Leys Estate).
2. In recent weeks we have spoken to a number of tenants of Southern Housing on the Rookery Farm Estate who have long been very unhappy with Southern Housing. This includes tenants who were involved in the Tenants Association until they wound the Association up in despair because of the performance of Southern Housing and the feeling that they were getting nowhere with the problems.
3. There is still a great deal of dissatisfaction regarding a £3.75 million refurbishment that took place some time ago. The tenants do not believe the agreement was adhered to by Southern Housing regarding the use of that money and a fund that was due to be set aside for other use when some tenants did not want particular aspects of the refurbishment. Southern Housing was supposed to supply a breakdown of costs, but failed to do so despite many requests for the information.
4. Tenants state that Southern Housing cut the number of surgeries and often cancel them without notice.
5. Tenants complain they have trouble contacting people who understand their issues.
6. Tenants state that while the repair company now used by Southern Housing is a great deal better than the previous one, the information the Association passes to the company is often incorrect.
7. Tenants also believe that Southern did not supply the children's play area they were due to under the refurbishment agreement.
8. The above problems are far from all the issues. We are informed there are many more. We are grateful for the Officers arranging a site meeting with Southern Housing in November, but we do not believe Southern Housing should be placed on the Council's Registered Social Landlord preferred partner panel until we can be assured that the issues we have with this Association are either addressed or we are confident are being addressed.
9. Should we be satisfied that Southern Housing will address the outstanding problems, many of them *long* outstanding, we would want the ongoing involvement with Southern Housing that has been proposed for Abbey, Gascoigne and Thames Wards.

EXTRACT FROM

THE EXECUTIVE

Tuesday, 12 October 2004
(7.00 – 7.10 pm)

Present: Councillor C J Fairbrass (Chair), Councillor J L Alexander, Councillor H J Collins, Councillor S Kallar, Councillor M A McCarthy, Councillor M E McKenzie, Councillor L A Smith and Councillor T G W Wade

Also Present: Councillor Mrs V M Rush

Apologies: Councillor C Geddes and Councillor G J Bramley

138. Selection of Barking & Dagenham's Panel of Registered Social Landlords

Further to Minute 286 (17 February 2004), received a report proposing the inclusion of the Southern Housing Group on to the Council's Registered Social Landlord (RSL) preferred partner panel.

Agreed, in order to strengthen the Council's ability to deliver high quality new affordable homes and bring about community regeneration programmes, to:

1. Include the Southern Housing Group on the Council's panel of preferred RSL partners; and
2. Request the Southern Housing Group to invite a Ward Councillor from each of the Abbey, Gascoigne and Thames Wards to sit on the Board of the housing development management company for projects in this Borough.

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THE EXECUTIVE

12 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING & HEALTH

SELECTION OF BARKING & DAGENHAM'S PANEL OF REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORDS	FOR DECISION
<p><i>This responds to the request from the Executive for a further report</i></p> <p>Summary</p> <p>This report responds to the Executive's request that officers continue to monitor the performance of Southern Housing Group (SHG) with a view to SHG's possible inclusion on the Council's Registered Social Landlord (RSL) preferred partner panel.</p> <p>The report provides details of progress on schemes in development and local initiatives taken by SHG together with information obtained from the Housing Corporation which is relevant for consideration. The report also highlights local action taken by SHG to improve estate management services and readiness to work in partnership with the Council.</p> <p>The report proposes that SHG be admitted to the Registered Social Landlord (RSL) preferred partner panel given the evidence obtained and the contribution made to achieving the Council's Community Priorities.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>The Executive is asked to admit Southern Housing Group to the Council's panel of preferred RSL partners.</p> <p>Reasons</p> <p>The admission of SHG will strengthen the Council's ability to deliver high quality new affordable homes and bring about community regeneration programmes.</p>	
Contact : Ken Jones	Head of Housing Strategic Development Tel: 020 8227 5703 Fax : 020 8227 5595 Minicom: 020 8227 5755 e-mail : ken.jones@lbbd.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1 At the Executive meeting on 7 October 2003, Members received a report proposing to add additional RSLs to the panel of preferred partners (Minute 141). The Executive agreed to admit SHG to the Council's panel of preferred RSL partners subject to good progress over the next six months with its new housing development at St. Ann's.

- 1.2 The Scrutiny Management Board called-in the decision and the matter was reconsidered by the Executive at its meeting on 17 February 2004. It was agreed at that meeting that officers should continue to monitor SHG's performance and to report back in due course.

2. Southern Housing Group Performance

2.1 New Developments

- 2.1.1 St. Ann's - The mixed tenure development of 125 new homes at St Ann's is ahead of schedule and now planned for completion in February 2005. Good communication has been established with the local Tenants & Residents Association, Council Members and officers. Problems had been encountered in appointing a locally based Residents Liaison Officer although covering arrangements had proved effective. The Council has provided the first set of nominations to the rented homes (the Council has 100% nomination rights)
- 2.1.2 Barking Reach Zones 11, 8 and 6 – Zone 11, consisting of 34 rented and 22 shared ownership properties, was completed in December 2003 on schedule. Zones 6 and 8 were completed ahead of schedule in July 2004 with 20 rented and 46 shared ownership properties.
- 2.1.3 Review Road and Goresbrook Road – both comprise 8 keyworker flats and were completed on time and have been marketed.
- 2.1.4 Tanner St (Poulten site) - 12 keyworker flats (4 rented and 8 shared ownership) are on schedule.
- 2.1.5 Each of the above schemes has contributed to meeting local housing needs, with particular emphasis on keyworker needs. Nominating to these rehousing opportunities has proved to be successful and the schemes have provided very positive press coverage for the Council.
- 2.1.6 SHG have given a commitment to work with the Council to plan a local housing company / housing regeneration company to manage their housing developments – this could relate to Barking Riverside and will involve board representation from Council Members and local tenants.

2.2 Initiatives

SHG have introduced several local initiatives which are contributing to the achievement of Community Priorities:

- A Social Investment Officer has been employed by SHG dedicated to working in the borough. The officer's work programme covers a number of projects across estates.
- The Youth Development Officer employed by SHG works with young people on their estates in Barking and Dagenham. An example of this is on Marks Gate where

SHG play an active part in encouraging youth activities – they provide £2,500 towards the Summer Scheme and £5,000 to a Youth Environmental Project.

Members of their staff are involved in the Crime and Disorder Working Group. SHG have assisted in developing an Anti-Social Behaviour booklet for Marks Gate and provided funding of £500.

- SHG have set up their Thames Gateway Regional operation for their management, maintenance and regeneration teams in Crown House, Barking Town Centre. This comprises 25 staff and gives a local contact and service access point to their tenants in Barking and Dagenham (and neighbouring boroughs).
- They are to commit £30,000 towards Active Citizenship pilots after having received support from the Housing Corporation to run 2 pilots in London. SHG had identified Barking and Dagenham for one of these and begun discussions with the Council.
- A member of SHG's staff is secretary of the Marks Gate Agenda 21 Neighbourhood partnership.
- A residents' panel is being established for consultation purposes on services.

2.3 Housing Corporation Assessment

The Housing Corporation Assessment system is now based on the "traffic light" system to illustrate its evaluation of compliance with the Regulatory Code and Development performance. A green light indicates no material concerns. The 4 areas for assessment are:-

- viability
- properly governed
- properly managed
- development

The assessment gave SHG 4 green lights with an attaching commentary of "The group achieved all of its targets. A good performance." SHG have been awarded programme partner status by the Housing Corporation which gives additional flexibility to the RSL in terms of the use of their investment allocation.

SHG succeeded in securing £22.4million in Housing Corporation grant for investment in new affordable housing from the 2002/03 allocation – this was the 5th highest in London (from 101 developing RSLs).

2.4 Local Estate Management Service Improvement

SHG has demonstrated commitment to raise their estate management profile in Barking & Dagenham, tackling anti social behaviour and responsiveness to the community and in particular to Council Members. A range of initiatives being put in place and being considered for Gibbfield Close Marks Gate which will bring about a

sustainable long term solution, evidence this. This work has been aided by involvement of the Lead Executive Member for Housing, Health and Adult Care. These improvements have been helped by SHG's office base being in Barking Town Centre.

3. Proposal and Justification

- 3.1 The addition of SHG to the Council's panel of preferred RSL partners will strengthen the regeneration and development capacity available to the Council and it is therefore proposed to admit SHG with immediate effect.
- 3.2 The justification for this action is the contribution that will be made to achieving the community priorities, as is demonstrated above.
- 3.3 An annual review process of the performance of RSL panel members has been agreed by the Executive. This will assess:-
 - estate and tenancy management
 - repairs performance
 - compliance with nomination agreements
 - development performance
 - participation in RSL forum
 - commitment to building sustainable communities.

The assessment of SHG (and all other partner RSLs) will then be reported to the Executive with any proposals to exclude / suspend an RSL partner.

The following Background papers were used in the preparation of this report: -

Executive report - Selection of Registered Social Landlords 20 May 2003
Executive report -Selection of Registered Social Landlords for Barking & Dagenham's Preferred Partner Panel 7 October 2003
Executive Report – Response to Scrutiny Management Board Call-In: Selection of Barking & Dagenham's Panel of Registered Social Landlord Partners 17 February 2004
Housing Corporation Assessment – Southern Housing Group (LH3947) September 2003