

Housing news



April 2017



Lee and Ben

fit new kitchens as part of our £54 million investment



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Where we invested



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Future Plans



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Improving the business

Find out more at www.southlakeshousing.co.uk

£54 million invested into homes

It has been 5 years since South Lakes Housing (SLH) became an independent housing association following the transfer of homes from SLDC in March 2012.

Tenants at that time were asked to vote on whether to transfer the ownership of the former council homes to SLH and around **85%** voted in favour.

SLDC produced a consultation offer document entitled 'Your Home...Your Future' which contained a series of 'promises' which SLH has been working towards and has now successfully completed.

- The Tenants' Committee have been at the forefront of monitoring the delivery of the 'promises' ever since and has recently 'signed off' the successful delivery of the programme.
- Since March 2012 over **£54 million** has been invested into your homes. As part of the change in ownership, tenants' rights were protected and all homes have been brought up to the government's 'decent homes' standard.



SINCE MARCH
2012 OVER
£54 MILLION
HAS BEEN
INVESTED INTO
YOUR HOMES.

SLH has exceeded its targets and highlights a range of successes, including

Installing

768

new kitchens



and

532

new bathrooms

£1.3M

invested in disabled aids and adaptations

Upgrading boilers and central heating systems to

1,621 homes



Developing

41



new homes

compared to

20

in its original plan

Taking a tougher stance on anti-social behaviour including:

22 and

injunctions



3

evictions

Investing in community initiatives such as healthy eating projects, school holiday activities and DIY projects



Collecting several awards along the way including; 'training and development', Investors in People 'Gold', Gas Safety 'best partnership' and for 'dementia friendly' services.



Creating

16



new apprenticeships

More detail can be found in a short film on the SLH website
<https://www.southlakeshousing.co.uk/about-us/who-we-are/>



Future plans

Continuing to invest in homes and services

Improvement programme and new development

SLH will continue to invest in your homes and has earmarked a further **£5.3 million** for major repairs over the next twelve months. This will ensure that items such as kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and roofs are replaced in line with our surveying programme and where they have reached the end of their useful life.

There are exciting times ahead and together with continued investment into your homes in partnership with SLDC, SLH wants to make an

even greater impact by increasing the supply of new homes – including affordable home ownership and rented homes.

This includes increasing our new development programme to over **250** new homes in future years and undertaking maintenance services in partnership with other local housing associations.

**BUILDING
OVER 250 NEW
HOMES AND
UNDERTAKING
MAINTENANCE
SERVICES FOR
OTHERS**

Work under way to build family homes at Dowkers Lane in Kendal

Improving value for money & cost effectiveness

Getting better value for money with our funding arrangements

SLH is keen to achieve value for money in all its costs, including the cost of borrowing. Whilst the 30 year funding agreed in 2012 was a good deal at that time, reductions in interest rates since then mean it is now more cost effective to cancel those loans and enter into new ones.

This will not only reduce the cost of borrowing, but will enable us to access additional funds to build more much needed affordable homes.

Sharing costs with other housing associations

SLH has established a 'Cost Sharing Vehicle' with Two Castles Housing Association which will see SLH carry out repairs for Two Castles in the south of the county.

There are plans to expand this venture to include other housing associations and to bring more of our existing repairs contracted work in-house. This is part of SLH's Board's strategy to reduce operating costs and is set to save around £800,000 over the next 5 years.

Getting involved

SLH wants to enable as many tenants and leaseholders as possible to get involved in influencing decisions about services and there are lots of different ways in which you can have your say.

This ranges from completing surveys, getting involved in scrutiny groups which examines areas of the business and makes recommendations to the Board or by attending Tenants' Committee who get involved in all major decisions affecting tenants including early input into policy changes.

If you are interested in getting involved then please contact customerservices@southlakeshousing.co.uk.



Tenants Committee

Improving the running of the business

Constitutional changes

There are also plans in place to amend the SLH constitution in order for the Association to successfully deal with the current business challenges and remain fit and agile for the future.

The current SLH Rules allow the Board to comprise 4 independents, 4 councillors and 4 tenant representatives. An external governance review undertaken in 2016 reflected on the challenging external operating environment and recommended changes to the Board composition as part of a move towards a 'skills based Board'.

The intention is to reduce the number of direct Local Authority and Tenant representatives which following informal consultation has the agreement of both SLDC and Tenants' Committee. In future, Board vacancies will be recruited according to skills required at the time to better assist with the delivery of the Association's priorities.

- A Special General Meeting in June will formally consider amending rules regarding the composition of the Board. If this is approved the revised composition of the Board will be up to 2 Council Nominees, up to 2 Tenant Board Directors and up to 8 Independent Directors. This will ensure that SLH will have the required skills to deal with the increasing challenges in the future.

- A further revision will allow the Association to pay reasonable remuneration to its Board members, in recognition of the increased responsibility and in order to attract highly skilled and experienced recruits to serve on the Board.

- This does not mean that Board members will be paid automatically. The Board is reviewing this and is likely to approve payment at a later date if it is in the best interests of the Association. Rules and guidance restricts the amount to be paid to reasonable levels, which (if introduced) will be made public and open to scrutiny.



New homes at Over Sands View, Grange



New homes at Jubilee Close, Kirkby Lonsdale

Rent Payment Free Weeks

Current tenants are charged rent over 48 weeks in the year, with four non-payment weeks from April 2018. SLH is proposing to change this to a 52 week rent year, in order to align rent charges with the timing of the majority of our tenants' income. Overall the same amount would be charged over the year, so weekly payments over 52 weeks would be lower. This will help tenants plan household budgets better and will help SLH to manage income collection more efficiently. Further consultation is planned for later this year, this proposal has support from both the SLH Board and Tenants' Committee.

Rent Statements

SLH along with Tenants' Committee have reviewed the rent statements which we send out to you. Your rent statement shows the

charges and all the payments made by you. The statement will provide your current balance and explain if you are in credit or if you owe arrears to SLH. It is proposed that in future you will receive two rent statements a year and be able to log on to our online services to view your own rent balance. However, you can contact us at any time for a copy of an up-to-date statement which we will send to you.

New tenancy agreement

SLH is drafting up a new tenancy agreement (for new tenants only). The purpose of the review is to bring the tenancy agreement up to date, to clarify rights and responsibilities and to strengthen our position as a landlord. The new tenancy agreement will only be for new tenants to SLH.



Getting in touch

Customer Services

On our self-service website you can pay your rent, report a repair, update your contact details, request an appointment and much more. Also on our website you can talk about your enquiry with one of our Customer Advisors on our Live Chat service.

Our new Customer Portal is coming soon – here you will be able to view your rent account online 24/7.

 customerservices@southlakeshousing.co.uk

 www.southlakeshousing.co.uk

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