

## TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 11TH OCTOBER, 2017

**PRESENT:** John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Olga Gailite, Maureen Lillywhite, Roderic Morgan and Jackie Worthington

### **30 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

None.

### **31 Late Items**

None.

### **32 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies received from Michael Healey, Rita Ighade, Maddie Hunter

### **33 Minutes - 9th August 2017**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 August 2017 be approved as a correct record.

### **34 Chair's Update**

The Chair apologised to the Board and today's guests for the cancellation of the September meeting.

The Chair explained he has attended two Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Boards on 11<sup>th</sup> September and 9<sup>th</sup> October.

The Chair noted that at the previous Tenant Scrutiny meeting that the Chair of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board had explained that an inquiry into the Leeds Council response to Grenfell would be held and this Board would have a seat at the inquiry. The inquiry would take the form of three meetings, two as a working group and a third meeting which will discuss the recommendations. The terms of reference at that inquiry would be around Council housing stock safety, resident engagement and investment decisions. The Chair explained that once the report is completed in November that this would be brought to this board for discussion.

The Chair also explained that he had attended a training course with six Councillors who chair the other scrutiny boards. The course looked at chairing scrutiny meetings. The Chair explained that he had spoken to other chairs

across the country and they were impressed with this Board's work and approach to scrutiny.

### **35 Draft Terms of Reference**

The Chair explained to the board that he would introduce the draft terms of reference for the inquiry, prior to the introduction of the managers who would be presenting evidence at this meeting.

The Chair explained as in previous inquiries that we will start with senior managers who would attend to provide evidence and give a strategic overview of the service. After this the Board would ask operational staff in, to test what has been said by management, to ensure the golden thread is carried out. The Board will also look at performance, policies and processes. It is likely we will do a questionnaire again to consult more widely with Leeds residents to obtain feedback on the ASB service, along with workshops which members can be involved in, outside the regular meeting schedule. The Board outcomes for this inquiry will be to improve performance, provide value for money and reduce complaints.

**RESOLVED – The Board agreed to the draft terms of reference for this inquiry.**

### **36 Discussion with Senior Managers**

The Chair introduced Harvinder Saimbhi, Head of Operational Delivery, and Jeff Clarke Lead Officer for Housing Leeds on Anti-Social Behaviour.

HS went on to give a presentation about the Anti-Social Behaviour service.

HS explained what ASB is and gave a definition of this, explaining that it is a broad range of issues. However a definition is required to work to; where anti-social behaviour has occurred in a housing context the test will be to consider whether the conduct is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises or the conduct is capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person. Where anti-social behaviour occurs in a non-housing related context the test will be as to whether the behaviour causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person.

HS explained that 5 to 6 years ago anti-social behaviour was dealt with in a different way, and there was an objective so that people could come to one point of contact. The aim in Leeds is to tackle anti-social behaviour at the earliest opportunity through a tiered approach of prevention, enforcement and support & resettlement. Low level ASB is dealt with by the Housing Office, such as tenancy breaches, messy gardens and noise nuisance to name a couple. HS noted that ASB have trained Contact Centre staff to deal with calls that come in and that they capture the correct details which are required for the investigation.

HS explained that initial ASB reports are looked at by the Housing Office, and only if they are deemed more serious or complex would they pass this to the Anti-Social Behaviour Team to work on. The Anti-Social Behaviour team have a number of enforcement tools, such as mediation.

HS explained the team structure, broken down by the three areas, East, South and West. HS explained that 50% of calls for ASB is related to noise nuisance. HS explained that some of the Case Officers within the team were formerly Housing Officers and so have a good background to situations that are occurring. Three Police Officers are allotted to each area and are known as link officers.

HS explained the service standards which are in place. The Team will respond in one or two days, on hate crime incidents or cases with safeguarding issues then a response will be carried out on the same day. HS explained that a vulnerability matrix is created for each case the team works on and an officer will meet the complainant and will conduct a case review every 28 days.

JC gave a presentation on the STAR survey which was carried out in 2016. Tenant satisfaction for ASB was reported at 55%, and as such there is a need to improve this. From the STAR survey an action plan was created and this was gone through to the Board in order they could see progress which has been made on improving satisfaction.

The following actions were reported as being completed:-

- Increase understanding of the nature of ASB across Leeds.
- Improve implementation of ASB procedures and customer care
- Undertake a customer survey on satisfaction with the current ASB process
- Ensure relevant staff are suitably trained and equipped to effectively deal with incidents of ASB
- Establish impact of initial ASB staff training to support future training improvements
- Improve level of customer understanding in the management of ASB to better manage expectations.
- Improve Housing and LASBT operational team relationships to maximise good case management.

The following actions were reported as being planned or in progress:-

- Ensure tenant ASB and noise nuisance literature is fit for purpose
- Improve management of ASB within high rise blocks
- Consider existing repairs and maintenance, planned works policies and how they might further support the management of ASB
- Increase understanding of Housing Leeds staff ASB training needs to improve future training provisions
- Improve consistency of ASB case investigation
- Improve staff confidence in the use of Caseworks ASB Module
- Improve quality of ASB statements recorded by Housing Staff.

- Ensure newly appointed Housing Officers are equipped to deal with ASB at the earliest opportunity.
- Improve awareness of ASB management tools.
- Improve levels of Customer Care delivered during ASB case investigation and as part of routine service delivery.
- Ensure staff ASB management training provision is delivered in a timely manner.

The Chair asked if there was information which pointed out which areas had the most ASB. HS explained that East have a lot of calls, but certain streets are more problematic than others. In the West area a large number of noise nuisance calls are received, with Headingley being problematic for this type of complaint. The South area includes the city centre and so gets reports of evening economy ASB issues. The Chair asked for this information for the Board so they can use this to help with the inquiry.

RM asked about private landlords and if they are a problem, especially where they ignore issues being caused by their tenants. HS explained we would talk to the Landlord first but if this fails to bring resolution then the council can serve warnings or notices to enforce this. HS talked about Headingley noise nuisance complaints and that sometimes it is the first time they have had their own place and need an understanding of what it is to be a good neighbour. HS explained they work with the university to help enforce good neighbour messages.

SB asked about the land around a housing estate. SB explained she has been told that the Council can't do anything unless there is criminality taking place. HS qualified this by saying where they are just using a public facility then this is correct.

SB also noted that some CCTV cameras are not connected to LeedsWatch. HS explained they are looking to upgrade cameras where possible and taking advantage of new technology because the further away the camera is from the Middleton central hub then the more this costs.

OG asked about who covers the north of Leeds. HS explained that this is covered by the West Team.

A question was asked about victims who, for fear of reprisals, want to remain anonymous. HS explained if we need to carry out enforcement then we need a known victim and a perpetrator. The Council offer support to the victim help with this. Community impact statements are also used in some cases and also a street survey can be done which can be presented as evidence.

JW asked if victims are being moved away from the perpetrators to resolve the issue. HS and JC both explained the Council does not encourage this but has to accept sometimes the issues could have gone on so long that the victim wishes to move away and so the Council will accommodate this but as a rule we look to resolve the issue.

It was asked if the perpetrator is evicted then they can just re-apply for rehousing and move the problem to another area. JC explained that the Council has the option to apply suitability to an applicant where they have been evicted and refuse to rehouse them. However, this doesn't mean that that person could then move into private rented accommodation, or with friends and relatives in the same estate, which does sometimes happen and the Council cannot prevent this.

The Chair asked if there are any issues with the IT systems being used by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team. It was explained that the same system is used by both Housing Offices and the ASB team.

The Chair thanked HS and JC for their presentations and explained that they would be invited back at the end of the inquiry to discuss what the Board has found during its investigation.

**RESOLVED – HS to provide figures to outline hot spot areas for ASB and the type of this to the Board.**

**37 Draft Work Programme**

The Chair took advice that there would be some revision required for the work plan, and given time constraints, this could be discussed at the November meeting.

**RESOLVED – The Board agreed to the defer agreement of the work programme until the November meeting.**

**38 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2017 at 1:15pm  
(pre meeting for all Board members at 1:00pm)

**THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3:15 PM**