

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 17TH JANUARY, 2018

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Michael Healey, Maddie Hunter, Rita Ighade, Roderic Morgan and Jackie Worthington

56 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

57 Late Items

There were no late items.

58 Apologies for Absence

Olga Gailite, Rita Ighade, Peter Middleton

59 Minutes - 13th December 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2017 be approved as a correct record.

60 Housing Officer Discussion

In opening the discussion, the Chair went through the history of the current inquiry, listing who had already been before the Board and a brief outline of what they stated.

ASB OFFICERS

The Chair asked ASB Officers to give a brief overview of their work. They explained cases can come through Contact Centre, Housing Officers, Out of Hours Service, Councillors and Police. In dealing with a case they work with the victim initially to make sure they are safe and then carry out an investigation with the perpetrator. The Chair asked if an area such as Wetherby has ASB issues. It was noted by the ASB Officer that there is ASB there and it is often caused by youths and so is important we work together with Youth Services in order to deal with the problem. It was noted whilst an area may be seen as affluent and there are no problems, that problems do exist. The Officers noted that since budget cuts to services such as the Police, and also within the Council, that this is starting to have a knock on effect.

It was noted by ASB Officers that whilst an incident may be deemed 'low level' by some, it could have a much greater impact to someone else, but when investigating it may reveal a whole host of other issues for both the victim and perpetrator which also will need to be resolved by other agencies other than LASBT. However, it was explained these agencies are suffering from lack of resources due in part to budget cuts. The ASB Officers stressed they have to in some cases give support to the perpetrator in order to bring about a lasting solution, and whilst many ask that perpetrators be moved out, that it isn't so simple to do. The Officers also noted the issue of complainants going to Councillors about ASB but are then reluctant to give statements, which means the ASB carries on and the ASB team then get the blame for not dealing with it. It was noted where Social Services might need to intervene in a case then they require up to 30 days to do an initial assessment which adds to the time to resolve an issue.

The Chair asked if Officers are moved around if there are shortages of staff in other areas of the city. It was explained what usually happens is they take on cases, but this isn't so much of an issue because although ASB Officers have a defined area, perpetrators can come from anywhere in the City and so their work is cross city.

The Chair asked if PCSOs are being moved around regularly. The ASB Officers explained that like ASB Officers, they work best when they are known in a particular area/community. The ASB Officers also explained that they regularly meet with Housing Officers to discuss cases ongoing, or to arrange joint visits on cases.

SB gave an example about where groups or gangs congregate on public land and what would happen in these instances. The Officers explained in this instance if they become aggressive then the only option is to call the Police. If not, then this can come to the ASB team, but they have to prove that they are doing something wrong. Related to this an example was given that parades of shops attract groups to congregate which can be intimidating to people who need to go past them. SB stressed that congregation can also happen on fields. The Officers explained that in these instances they would work with youth services to try and find them something else to do and gave a recent example in Shadwell where this was successfully carried out. The Officers also noted that they work with schools and where appropriate enforce Acceptable Behaviour Contracts. The Chair asked about parents and if their children's behaviour was putting their tenancy at risk. The Officers explained that there had been an incident with motorcycles in Seacroft and the families whose children were the cause of this were visited and their behaviour was discussed with them. For the serious perpetrators of the problem, tenancy warnings were served and parents told that where their children's behaviour did not improve they would take further action against them.

HOUSING OFFICERS

The Chair asked the Housing Officers in attendance if they received training on ASB and how to deal with this effectively. They explained that they were

aware of what is in their remit and how to address expectations with tenants as to what Housing Officers can and cannot do. The Housing Officers also explained that they conduct action days and ASB questionnaires as a proactive way of finding out about ASB before it becomes more serious.

It was explained noise is a major issue and this sometimes results in the use of recording equipment and there is often a wait to be able to install noise recording equipment, but some noise is more acceptable in some types of properties than in others. The Housing Officers went on to explain the importance of the diaries which are handed out but noted there is a reluctance for some tenants to use them, but they form part of the evidence for the case. The ASB officers explained that noise equipment is only installed for a number of weeks and often noise starts and then stops and the recording equipment doesn't capture any of it.

SB asked about repeat nuisance cases and at what point the case officer would progress further on with the case. The ASB Officers explained the length of time to link a previous case to a new incident is a grey area and one which is looked at on a case by case basis. The Officers noted that they can issue Section 80 notices which are part of the Environmental Protection Act which never expire and can be used to seize equipment causing the nuisance if it continues.

A discussion was held about high rise blocks and ASB being caused in them, such as people trying to gain unauthorised entry to the block by pressing the entry buttons and hoping someone will let them in. Where a block has CCTV this can be used to identify those who do this and also it was noted by Housing Officers that some blocks now have fobs which are linked to a property and so it can be seen if their fob was used to let someone in who caused a nuisance.

The Chair asked if due to lettings changes which mean more children were being rehoused in high rise blocks had this caused more noise incidents, especially caused because of the type of flooring in the property. The Housing Officer noted that there hasn't been a discernible difference in the number of noise nuisance cases since the changes, but there is a new management model to have family friendly blocks so that families are living together which will mean they are potentially more tolerant of noise, especially that caused by children running around.

The Chair in closing asked all Officers in attendance if there was anything they could change which would help them do their job better or more efficiently. The ASB Officers explained that the system such as the Caseworks system is clunky. It was explained that template letters from the system cannot be changed and so they have to be amended manually, an example that the letter of where the address of the office is cannot be changed and so this has to be done manually and it can be easy to forget to do this if in a rush.

Also using the system to identify private properties can be difficult. None of the systems talk to each other which means obtaining information is very difficult, for example is a property a Council one or private rented.

The ASB Officer explained it would help if there were more mental health workers available to support families of ASB and the perpetrators to try and resolve issues would improve the situation, as well as and being able to contact them better, for example where someone has a health worker it is difficult to identify them without having to go through the NHS inquiry line which takes up time. They gave an example of a Council officer who worked with them for a short period of time who had access to this system which saved a lot of time but this is no longer available to the team as the officer no longer works with them.

The Housing Officers explained having contact numbers for other agencies, such as Social Services would be helpful and knowing who to go to, as at present a lot of time is spent looking for this information. It would also allow us to see if they are engaging with other agencies.

The ASB Officers noted that they have only just received mobiles which can receive emails on them. The Chair asked if having laptops would be of assistance, but they explained that Officers would not be comfortable walking round an estate or going into perpetrators homes with them, given the information which would be contained in them.

61 ASB Officer Discussion

Both this item and the previous one were combined together.

62 ASB Survey

The Chair presented the proposed survey for Anti-Social Behaviour to the Board. The Chair asked that as wide an audience is given for this survey.

RESOLVED – The Board agreed with the proposed survey for Anti-Social Behaviour.

63 Revised Work Programme

The Chair explained that due to the cancellation of one of the previous meeting this has thrown the planned schedule out. The Chair noted that the Board are not tied to other reports like in previous years which are ongoing which the Board wanted to be part of. It was noted that this report into Anti-Social Behaviour would be unlikely to be completed before April.

RESOLVED – The Board agreed with the revised work programme for the Board.

64 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 14th February 2018 at 1:15pm
(Pre meeting for all Board members at 1:00pm)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3:10 PM

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 14th February, 2018