

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 21ST JANUARY, 2015

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Jim Fergusson, Michael Healey, Roderic Morgan, Keith Newsome, Barry Stanley, Maddie Ullah and Jackie Worthington

49 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

50 Late Items

There were no late items, but the following additional information was submitted to the meeting:

- Annual Tenancy Visits (ATVs) – Answers to questions arising from ongoing inquiry work
- Information regarding complaints report
- Draft questions for visit to Wakefield District Housing (WDH)
- Draft redesigned front sheet for agendas.

The above information was subsequently made available on the Council's website.

51 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted by Carol Bennett.

The Board was advised that Phil Rone had resigned from the Tenant Scrutiny Board. The Chair thanked Phil for his contribution to the Board's work and wished him all the best for the future.

52 Minutes - 18 December 2014

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2014 be approved as a correct record.

53 Matters arising from the minutes

Minute No. 47 – Any Other Business

Members were advised that the visit to WDH had been arranged for Tuesday, 27 January 2015. Carol Bennett and Maddie Ullah had agreed to attend. The Board was informed that Guy Close and Sharon Guy were attending to assist with note taking and to answer any technical housing questions.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 18th February, 2015

54 Annual Tenancy Visit - Inquiry

The Chair invited the Board to undertake a final review of the information collected and consider the answers to questions raised since the December meeting.

A form was circulated at the meeting which requested Members to propose up to six recommendations, the reasons for the recommendations and any supporting evidence that had been gathered. These were to be handed in at the start of the February meeting.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Suggestion that Members unable to attend the February Board meeting contacted either the Chair or Peter Marrington to provide details of their recommendations to put before the Board for consideration.
- Confirmation that the % of completed ATVs across Leeds, as at rent week 40, was 63%.
- Acknowledgement that further training was required regarding how information was being signposted, particularly in relation to sheltered housing.
- Clarification sought whether the use of PDAs reduced the cost of undertaking ATVs. The Board was advised that this was dependent on whether PDAs could be used to access all services, e.g. booking a repair.
- Confirmation that ATVs were not currently used to publicise the Council's tenant home content insurance scheme.
- Clarification sought regarding the cost to the Council of fraud detection. The Board was advised that there were significant challenges to calculating the exact cost of undertaking ATVs.
- Confirmation that tenancy fraud did not just include sub-letting.
- Clarification sought regarding the % of sub-letting in Leeds in the period 2013/14. Also, how many cases had been upheld in relation to sub-letting?
- Clarification sought regarding how many cases of permission for sub-letting had been approved by the Council in 2013/14.
- A query of the 186 fraud investigations in 2014/15 (to date) how many of these were identified by ATVs or other detection methods?

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board notes the information contained in the evidence pack and the additional information circulated at the meeting.
- (b) That Members unable to attend the February Board meeting, contact either the Chair or Peter Marrington to provide details of their recommendations to put before the Board for consideration.
- (c) That the above requests for information be provided.

(Jim Fergusson joined the meeting at 1.45pm during the consideration of this item.)

55 Recruitment

The Chair invited Members to consider information as part of the Board's ongoing work regarding future recruitment.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Draft information flyer 'Tenant Scrutiny Board – Involving Tenants to Improve Council Housing Services'
- Draft information pack and application form.

Members were provided at the meeting with a list of tenant groups which may act as a source of recruitment.

Amendments to the draft information flyer and draft application pack were suggested as follows:

Draft information flyer

- Delete 'quality control' and replace with 'examine'

Draft information pack

- Insert 'the' to read 'What is the Tenant Scrutiny Board'.
- Amend term of office from 4 years to 3 years (the introduction of a staggered term of office was also suggested)
- Insert 'travelling' to read '...we will pay all reasonable travelling expenses' (clarification was sought whether expenses was extended to include childcare. Peter Marrington agreed to report back with a response.)
- Addition to 2nd from last bullet point to read 'Tell us any private or personal interests, financial or otherwise which may conflict with the work of Tenant Scrutiny Board'
- Delete section of the application form in relation to which service group the applicant would like to be considered for.

The other key points of discussion were:

- Potential promotion of Tenant Scrutiny Board on 'Made in Leeds' television station.
- Suggestion for recruitment to be a standing item on future agendas.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board approves the use of the yellow and white draft information flyer, subject to the amendment identified above.

- (b) That the draft information pack be amended and re-submitted to the February Board Meeting for approval.
- (c) That recruitment be included as a standing item on future agendas.

56 Work Schedule

Members were asked to note that Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel) had been invited to attend the February meeting. It was anticipated that Councillor Gruen would attend the first part of the meeting and would then leave when Board Members discussed their recommendations. It was suggested that Members may wish to consider potential future areas for Scrutiny and seek Councillor Gruen's views on these.

The February meeting will also receive the quarterly performance report and an update on the STAR survey.

The March meeting will agree the Board's report on ATVs. Councillor John Procter (Chair of Scrutiny Board Housing and Regeneration) had accepted an invitation to attend the Board in March to discuss the work programme.

There was a brief discussion about the process for undertaking scrutiny inquiries, making recommendations and the importance of recommendation tracking.

RESOLVED – That the Boards' work schedule be noted.

57 Any Other Business

The Board discussed potential training opportunities at Trafford Hall. Peter Marrington undertook to seek clarification regarding the potential need for tendering.

Following a brief discussion, Members opted to retain the existing agenda front sheet design, which it was pointed out was consistent with the Council's other Scrutiny Boards.

Additional questions were suggested for the visit to WDH in relation to the effectiveness of PDAs and any issues associated with transferring data to new software.

RESOLVED – That the above related questions be included for the visit to Wakefield District Housing.

58 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 18 February 2015 at 1.30pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds.

(The meeting concluded at 3.45pm)