

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD.

WEDNESDAY, 1ST JUNE, 2016

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Olga Gailite, Christine Gregory, Maddy Hunter, Peter Middleton, Roderic Morgan and Jackie Worthington.

1 Late Items

There were no late items.

2 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted by Michael Healey.

3 Minutes - 6th April 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2016 be approved as a correct record.

4 Chair's Update

The last Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board meeting was held at the Peckfield Landfill site. Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board did not attend as he felt his attendance would not be useful for the board. The Chair will be attending the next meeting as usual.

The Chair has met with Sharon Guy in between this meeting and the last to discuss agenda items for the next municipal year and also to discuss recruitment to the Board.

On recruitment: two tenants have been invited to the next board meeting on 29th June as observers. After the meeting a discussion will take place with the prospective new members.

5 Discussion with Director of Environment and Housing and potential future areas of work

Neil Evans, Director of Environments and Housing gave an overview of his areas of responsibility.

Neil spoke about investment into council housing, this has been achieved through savings bringing ALMOs back into the Council, which has enabled the Council to deliver stock investment. Around £80 million was spent last year on improving the housing stock.

Looking forward there will be investment in sheltered housing and multi storey flats in future years. This will provide longer term benefits such as energy efficiency, which will help reduce fuel costs for tenants and improve health.

Neil explained there will be future issues for the Council around the Housing and Planning Bill. He advised the key issues facing the social housing sector include; the impact of Universal Credit. However within the new Bill there is an area of pay to stay; a household earning £31,000 or more (could be a couple earning £15,500) including pensioners, will be required to pay 15p in the pound towards the difference between Council rent and the market rent. The Council will have to collect this and then return funds back to central government.

Neil provided his thoughts on potential future areas of work for the board, which include:-

- Adaptations service
- Void and Lettings, (Lettable Standard)
- Repairs service (Leeds Building Services)

The Chair asked about repairs, as his impression was it had improved. Neil explained there has been significant change to the internal repairs service, in particular the East area. Neil advised that the timeliness of repair completion was not as good as expected.

Neil explained that Housing Leeds collect about 97.5% of rent due and that allows the Council to commit to investment needs. However future changes to legislation may impact on this.

6 Lettings Policy Review

Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services, presented a report about the Lettings Policy Review.

The Chair explained at this point the Board would be consulted on proposed changes but that a full inquiry would not be undertaken.

Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services explained a report is going to Executive Board about the Lettings Policy and gave interpretation of the current lettings policy. Whilst Housing Leeds have been reviewing local letting policies with residents over the last few years it has become apparent a fundamental review of the policy due to wider issues was needed. The main areas are:-

- Introducing a tenant transfer policy
- Local connection
- Housing children at heights
- Pre tenancy training
- Age related policies

Mandy explained that consultation began in May 2016. An online survey is available via the website. This will conclude at the end of June and then Housing Leeds will collate the findings from the review and consultation and feed into Executive Board in September.

In summary, the main areas of questioning by the Board were around:-

- Anti-Social Behaviour – does the council consider the wider community needs as well as the person being rehoused.
- Training for current tenants not just new ones
- Lettings process for a property
- Transfers can be a long process
- How many properties have been empty for a considerable length of time
- Rehousing under 25s and those coming out of care who may have specific needs
- Council currently has a policy for letting sheltered housing to those over 60s whereas Housing Associations rehouse under 55 year olds.

Neil advised that new build properties in Little London and Beeston and Holbeck had been let on the basis of good tenant behaviour. It was noted that in Little London, full rent collection had taken place and no issues of anti-social behaviour were recorded.

7 Joint Response to Tenant Scrutiny Board Inquiry - Environment of Estates

David Longthorpe, Head of Housing Management (East), presented a report in response to the recommendations produced by the Board. David noted that all recommendations have been accepted. He explained he was giving a collective response from Housing Leeds, Waste, Localities and Parks and Countryside.

Firstly he thanked the Board for their time and effort put into the inquiry. All observations and queries are welcomed.

The following general points were noted:

- Issues of consistency across the City
- Communication between involved parties
- Resident communication
- Enforcement action.

David explained that Housing Leeds want to look at new ideas and ways of working to bring about improvements, but it wasn't just about the council doing more; Housing Leeds want to involve tenants more in the management of estates.

David went through the recommendations with comments in agreement to them. He explained that more comprehensive responses are available if required.

RESOLVED – That all services will work together on the recommendations and will return to the Board in six months' time with an update on progress.

8 Environment of Estates Inquiry - Response from Director of Environment and Housing

The Housing Manager – Tenant Scrutiny, presented a report which gave the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing an opportunity to respond to the recommendations to the Environment of Estates report.

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing agreed with the response to the recommendations and a need to have a one Council approach to issues raised and advised these should be resolved collectively by the department.

It was acknowledged there is a need to encourage tenants to take more responsibility, for example around household waste.

9 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 29 June 2016 at 1.30pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 1.00pm)