

## TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 26TH APRIL, 2017

**PRESENT:** John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Olga Gailite, Michael Healey, Maddie Hunter and Rita Ighade

### 56 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

### 57 Late Items

No late items

### 58 Apologies for Absence

Christine Gregory, Peter Middleton, Roderic Morgan, Jackie Worthington

### 59 Minutes - 1st March 2017

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 be approved as a correct record.

### 60 Chair's Update

The Chair outlined details of a meeting he had on 22nd March around the drafting of the East Leeds Responsive Repairs report.

The Chair noted his attendance at Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board on 23rd March which discussed recycling, air quality, and how to engage more people to recycle. There was also discussion around blocked gullies which is a particular issue in Headingley.

The Chair explained he had attended an Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board on 20th April. This has a section on private rented housing and there was discussion around the emphasis on private rented properties which are not always of good quality and that more Council housing should be built.

The Chair noted that the STAR survey had been published and this would come to the Board in June.

There was a discussion on the Lettable Standard and the targeting of certain areas with an incentive to decorate certain rooms in the property prior to letting. This links into the working group which the Board set up and we will look at this report hopefully in June or July, but this is dependent on the

Board's work schedule, however the Chair stressed this work would be completed.

The Chair discussed interest from a tenant who wishes to join the Board. It was noted that an interview for this will take place on 18th May. In line with the Board's terms of reference, the Chair, along with Peter Middleton and Sharon Guy will conduct the interview. Following the interview, a separate meeting will be held with Sharon Guy to discuss the agenda for the next Board meeting.

## **61 Scrutiny Inquiry - East Leeds Repairs**

The Chair introduced this agenda item and the supplementary document. The Chair explained to Board members that if they were not happy with the report which is presented at this meeting that they could write their own report and submit this to the Board. The Chair explained a vote will be taken on each recommendation.

The Chair explained that this report was agreed, that it would be presented at Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board on 23<sup>rd</sup> May and asked if another member of the Board would accompany him.

**RESOLVED** That LW contact OG and RI for their availability to accompany the Chair to this meeting.

The Chair then went through each of the recommendations in the draft report.

### **Recommendation 1 – That Housing Leeds provide dedicated repairs training for new staff as part of their first week induction and regularly review training needs of existing staff.**

The purpose of this recommendation is to ensure that repairs are carried out right first time. The Chair explained that what he found surprising was that the Contact Centre received training on repairs but Housing Officers don't and are learning this on the job.

**RESOLVED** The Board voted and agreed unanimously to this recommendation with an addition to be added which would emphasis this should be citywide.

### **Recommendation 2 – Implement and roll out the Total Works system.**

The desired outcome for this recommendation is for increased efficiency and further opportunities for improvement of the service. It was explained that the new system will help Leeds Building Services manage repairs more efficiently.

The Board noted that this recommendation will help get the right trades person to the job in an effective manner, especially where follow on work is required on a job which is often an area where the repair fails.

**RESOLVED** The Board voted and agreed unanimously to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 3 – Implement new working practices through Total Works, in relation to creating additional appointments, by reducing waiting times and increase tenant satisfaction. We also request that this Board be provided with an update on progress.**

This is linked to recommendation 2, but it was noted that there were concerns raised by staff around changes this will cause to new working practices, however the view of the Board is whilst rolling out this new system they should consider tenants and how this can improve the repair service and increase tenant satisfaction. The Board give this recommendation from a tenant perspective, but appreciated the concerns staff have raised. RI raised concerns about how staff feel about the changes to the system which can have a knock-on effect on performance.

**RESOLVED** The Board agreed to add in these concerns to the recommendation and voted and agreed unanimously to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 4 – Improve customer satisfaction by using and act on learning from complaints and improve the process of follow on work which may be required.**

Lengthy discussion with staff from Housing Leeds and consultation with tenants group and Councillors to some extent found if it is a straightforward repair tenants are satisfied however where the repair isn't straightforward then follow up work didn't work well and this caused dissatisfaction.

The Board noted that taking ownership of the repair is important and should be included into the recommendation. The Chair noted in particular this is a key issue as previously this has been a problem which has occurred during former ALMO boards.

SB asked that emergency repairs for out of hours be included as there is some slippage in this regard, especially around ownership as this is only made safe on these out of hours visits and is not followed up during the day.

**RESOLVED** The Board agreed to the amendment to the recommendation on out of hours and daytime service communication needs to be improved, and voted and agreed unanimously to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 5 – That Leeds Building Services, work with the Contact Centre, HUBs and local housing offices to ensure staff know how to identify key issues for properties types, such as heating type, to enable more accurate repair reporting.**

The Board discussed this recommendation and the differences between the various heating systems in properties and that the correct operative is not always sent out.

The Chair noted that the check undertaken is sometimes lacking and the Contact Centre didn't think this was so much of a problem but Leeds Building Services thought otherwise. However the Chair acknowledged that the Contact Centre takes a large number of different enquiry types and that this wasn't an easy job to carry out. MH noted that sometimes staff which are not experienced may continue to make errors until they become more experienced. A discussion was held that sometimes the tenant doesn't give the correct heating type as well which further compounds the problem.

MH raised concerns around supplying a portable heater where a repair cannot be done when the operative on site. Discussion was held around operatives not having these in their vans because they have run out of stock.

**RESOLVED** The Board asked that continue increasing awareness of heating system, providing a training script to ask the right questions and that some systems are unique in that they are both electric and gas and having this information readily available, and that portable heating is provided where a repair cannot be completed. The Board voted to these amendments and agreed unanimously to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 6 – Administration of repairs performance is improved – so that orders are closed down in a timely manner on systems, including sub-contractor orders.**

The Board discussed this recommendation and how managers explained that some sub-contractors orders hadn't been closed down and payments made which meant performance was adversely affected.

**RESOLVED** The Board voted and agreed unanimously to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 7 – Make repair raising more accessible online, whilst this is currently available, it is not actively promoted or widely utilised.**

The Board discussed that this is not widely promoted even though the service is currently available. The Board explained that they felt this is a good alternative for people who want to report things online. Whilst this would not replace calling the Contact Centre or a Housing Office it provides a wider way to report repairs. The Chair asked a proviso is put in so that the system is simple to use.

**RESOLVED** The Board noted their liking of pictures on the repair system that it is in plain English. The Board voted and agreed unanimously to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 8 – That there is a named contact at Leeds Building Service for new and existing staff to reference enquiries on repairs.**

This was a regular theme which came up – high turnover of staff at the Contact Centre and also at Housing Offices. By having an expert to call at Leeds Building Service with technical questions that they make that service available so staff can get it right first time. The Chair explained to the Board that part of the reason for the loss of staff from the Contact Centre is down to staff moving to other departments in the Council and this is because of the skills and experience they gain at the Contact Centre.

**RESOLVED** The Board voted and agreed unanimously to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 9 – Where a trade has a shortfall in operative numbers, Leeds Building Services consider apprenticeships in these trades and continues to upskill operatives in a multi skilled approach.**

Discussion was held early on about securing certain trades which could be affected due to being able to get more lucrative private contracts depending on the market conditions. This recommendation hopes to help with capacity building because these apprentices can be trained where they have certain trade needs.

The Chair noted that there is an issue around sharing of staff between repairs and the Commercial side. The Chair indicated it would be prudent to have a clear understanding of the two distinct functions and that the repairs service shouldn't suffer because of this.

**RESOLVED** The Board requested that the support for the client/contractor function is placed into the report. The Board voted and agreed unanimously to this recommendation.

The Chair asked the Board for authority to sign the report off on their behalf once the amendments have been made.

**RESOLVED** The Board gave the Chair authority to sign the report off on the Board's behalf once amendments have been made to it.

## **62 Tenant Scrutiny Board Update**

The Chair explained that this was an additional item but was to explain a number of issues which have come up.

Firstly, a complaint has been received from a member of the public around Tenant Scrutiny Board. The Chair explained that the complaint has been responded to. However, for the benefit of the Board the complaint was explained about being around transparency of the Board.

The Chair explained that he did not agree with the comments made by the complainant. There were also queries about the administration being moved from Democratic Services. The Chair explained that the Board did not accept this proposal straight away and ensured a 'trial' period was carried out in

order that it could be tested and that the Board could remain independent, the Chair explained that the Board's independence has remained intact.

The Chair then explained a second complaint was received further to the response given, which was later retracted.

The Chair then discussed VITAL Housing Leeds which meets bi-monthly and is made up of all the Chairs and Vice Chairs of city wide involved tenant groups. The Chair explained that he had been approached as VITAL wish to have a working relationship between themselves and Tenant Scrutiny Board. The Chair explained he has been advised in the past by Democratic Services that he should not attend as the Chair of TSB at VITAL meetings. However, following much thought and discussion it has been agreed that the Chair will attend VITAL at the start of the Boards municipal year as a means of increasing the Boards consultation with key stakeholders. The Chair emphasised that he would not be bound by their suggestions and the Board would make the final decision on the work programme for the coming year. SB supported this approach and stated that as a member of VITAL she could see no reason for the need to attend meetings more frequently.

The Chair attended Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board. He explained that in December they asked for a report from Mandy Sawyer around Tenant Scrutiny Board and Tenant Involvement. The Board were given an update of the history of Tenant Scrutiny, how they recruit and the work which has been carried out. The Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board would now be doing a report on this, however the Chair explained that they had decided that for future meetings of the Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board the Chair would attend on housing matters and sit with them rather than in the background and so will have a say on the Board. The Chair feels this is a positive step for Tenant Scrutiny Board, which will enable a closer working relationship. The Chair noted that this is something which needs to be included in the terms of reference and that is part of the role of the Chair.

The Chair also feedback that a Councillor had commented on the lack of feedback from a particular Housing Office on estate walkabouts. The Chair believes this might just be one particular Housing Office/Officer but as this was part of the Board's recommendations then he felt the Board should request and update on this from Housing Leeds.

**RESOLVED** The Board gave the Chair authority to attend VITAL as their representative in 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

**RESOLVED** The Board agreed that an annual attendance to VITAL by the Chair to discuss the upcoming work for the municipal year would be appropriate and proportionate.

**RESOLVED** The Board agreed that the Terms of Reference be looked at and that is part of the role of the Chair.

## **63 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting  
to be held on Date Not Specified

Dates to be confirmed in May and members will be written to once known.

**THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3:00PM**

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting  
to be held on Date Not Specified