

## **TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD**

**WEDNESDAY, 5TH JULY, 2017**

**PRESENT:** John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Olga Gailite, Michael Healey, Maddie Hunter, Rita Ighade, Maureen Lillywhite, Peter Middleton and Jackie Worthington

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

There were no late items.

### **11 Late Items**

Late item introduced by the Chair around fire safety in multi storey tower blocks.

### **12 Apologies for Absence**

Roderic Morgan.

### **13 Minutes - 14 June 2017**

**RESOLVED** That the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 be approved as a correct record.

### **14 Chair's Update**

The Chair opened the meeting and gave apologies for room change at short notice.

On Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June the Chair, along with Peter Middleton held an interview for recruitment to the Board. The Chair introduced Maureen Lillywhite to the Board and noted she has joined the Board as a new member further to the recent recruitment.

The Chair noted as the board had instructed, he attended the VITAL meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June at Navigation House along with Lee Ward. The Chair gave a short presentation about the work of TSB, and in line with our term of reference I asked them to forward to the Board any suggestions they have before our August meeting with regard to future inquiries. The Chair noted that the final decision rests with TSB on the inquiry chosen for the coming municipal year.

The Chair noted that since the last meeting of the Board, he had held a meeting with Sharon Guy with regard to preparing the agenda for this meeting and the year ahead for TSB, and they also have communicated by phone and email.

On 26th June, the Chair explained he attended the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board.

The Board discussed the following items:

- Terms of reference
- New remit – Crime and Disorder
- Co-opting members as the need arises
- Work schedule for the coming year

Following the meeting the Chair met with Councillor Barry Anderson, the new chair of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board. Cllr Anderson has accepted an invitation to attend the August meeting along with Angela Brogden from the Governance Team.

The Chair also noted he will be asking board members at the August meeting if they are able to receive the monthly meeting agenda and any other post via email rather than it being sent to them as a hard copy. This will be a saving to the Council on postage over the full municipal year. The Chair noted that if members are not able to receive this online it will continue to go out to them as normal. We do not expect board members to have to bring in any laptops or tablets, so a hard copy of the agenda will be available at each meeting.

## **15 Next Inquiry Discussion**

The Chair introduced Councillor Hamilton. Councillor Hamilton explained that she had been delegated future meetings by Councillor Coupar. Councillor Hamilton explained that she had spoken with Councillor Coupar on ideas for the Board to investigate in the coming year. Councillor Hamilton explained that tenant engagement across the city, especially around those which are under-represented such as young people, disabled would be something she would like to see investigated and how to involve them more, especially involving them digitally. One of the suggested ways to look at doing this is by doing webcasts rather than having people come to physical meetings as some people would not be interested in this.

The Chair requested clarification from Cllr. Hamilton in relation to having involved tenants that match the profile of the community. Councillor Hamilton explained that we need to involve a wider base of tenants in our engagement exercises. Jill Wildman explained this is a key priority for Housing Leeds and this links to the STAR survey which showed that tenants who were younger were more dissatisfied with the service.

The Chair also asked if this inquiry should look at the Housing Advisory Panels. Councillor Hamilton explained this would not be appropriate as it is

being looked into by Environment, Housing and Communities and would create duplication.

The Chair asked Councillor Hamilton if she received comments from her constituents in regard to the ways they can be involved in the Council. Councillor Hamilton responded by saying she did and whilst not everyone can be accommodated, i.e. some want an evening meeting or some want a daytime meeting, one of the things she has noticed is that it depends on the topic being discussed and also the venue. A critical point is that if a venue is difficult to get to, or parking is a problem people won't attend.

Jill Wildman explained that Communities Can week was very successful last year which consisted of events being held within the community. SB asked about some of the groups which have been created in the past such as YAGI, and also the disabled group. JW stressed that whilst these are good they need to expand much wider in order to gather views. MHE noted that he has seen a TARA which was based around Facebook which means tenants could discuss things at a time to suit them rather than coming to a meeting which they might not be able to attend. Councillor Hamilton explained how the Community Committees have the general topics at first and then allow people to leave if they don't want to stay for the second half of the meeting which is more formal. Councillor Hamilton noted that when something makes a difference this increases the reputation of the meeting and makes it more likely someone else would come along to it in future.

## **16 Next Inquiry - Discussion with Jill Wildman**

Jill Wildman was introduced to the group by the Chair. JW explained that she is attending on behalf of Neil Evans. JW explained that she would like the Board to look at how tenants can be involved in the planning of the investment strategy and how money should be allocated. JW explained that currently Housing Leeds have a process for how they identify works, but often tenants would prefer that money is spent on a new kitchen rather than a new bathroom, or new windows as this would improve the energy efficiency of their home and reduce fuel bills.

The Chair asked how the Council could work this effectively, for example one tenant might want a kitchen but another might want a bathroom and clearly this wouldn't be possible. JW explained that it would be around the initial planning of the investment programme they would want tenants to be more involved with, as at present there isn't very much. In effect it is challenging the investment programme.

SB noted that in the past a programme of works was published and this was kept to, however now it seems a programme of works is published, and then the work is never done and no update is given as to if it will ever be done, SB gave an example of the lifts which were due to be replaced in her block but this has now changed and they are not but tenants were not informed of the reason and so this is disheartening. ML noted that when Annual Home Visits are carried out that this could be an opportunity to ask tenants what they feel

should be improved within their property. JW noted that opt outs often cause issues because an opt out is made and then that tenant leaves but the new tenant has no opportunity to have the improvement made.

## **17 LATE ITEM - Fire Safety in Multi Storey Tower Blocks**

The Chair introduced Mark Grandfield who was in attendance to talk about fire safety in multi storey blocks in Leeds. MG noted that as expected this is a busy time for the Council and was in attendance here to give reassurance to Board Members.

MG noted that the cladding which was used on Grenfell Towers is not used in Leeds City Council high rise buildings. As the next step MG noted that the Council have a mature relationship with the Fire Service in West Yorkshire and the Council have asked them if what they are currently doing is fit for purpose. The Fire Service report at present the current policy is adequate regarding evacuation procedures. It is acknowledged there may be changes in the future but none have been suggested as yet. It is noted the investment on compartmentation has been effective in preventing fires from spreading and that there was a fire in a block of flats last week and this did not spread.

MG explained the Council have been undertaking fire safety surgeries at all of its high rise blocks. He further explained that daily checks continue to be carried out by cleaners and quarterly by Housing Officers.

MHE asked about fire doors and internal walls in properties which are replaced by leaseholders and concerns about them not being fire proof. MG noted that internally they are able to change walls at their own risks, but where this affects the safety of the block in these instances there would need to be a discussion with the Leaseholder as this would cause issues with the integrity of the fire safety of the block. The Board stressed there is a need for this to be checked by officers.

**RESOLVED** – MG agreed that this should be looked at.

The Chair asked if any blocks currently have sprinklers installed. MG confirmed that work was in progress to install sprinkler systems in sheltered housing blocks, 6 of 8 blocks have been completed to date.

SB asked about entanglement and referred to an incident which occurred, resulting in the deaths of some fire fighters. MG noted that work is being carried out to ensure all wires are strapped appropriately but noted it may not be obvious when this work has been completed, however MG was happy to provide information on this to provide reassurance.

The Chair asked about parking, especially overnight where cars are blocking access for the fire service should they need to attend in the case of fire. MG noted this is not an easy fix and that there is now work to look at the environment around blocks.

MG noted that although the Council have been seen to work on their own blocks, they have been offering advice through Building Control to private owners of high rise blocks.

The Chair, on behalf of Tenant Scrutiny Board thanked the Council for their work since 14th June on high rise safety.

**18 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017 at 1:30pm  
(pre meeting for all Board Members at 1:00pm)

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