

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 9TH AUGUST, 2017

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Olga Gailite, Maddie Hunter, Peter Middleton, Roderic Morgan and Jackie Worthington

19 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None

20 Late Items

There were no late items.

21 Apologies for Absence

Michael Healey, Rita Ighade, Maureen Lillywhite

22 Minutes - 5th July 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2017 be approved as a correct record.

23 Chair's Update

The Chair noted that he was unable to attend the recent Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board meeting but gave an outline of items discussed.

The Board discussed the following issues:

- Air quality
- Rent collection, including direct debits
- Repair performance
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Illegal encampments
- Refuse
- Repeat Customer Contact
- Domestic Violence

The Chair also reported that

- the Board had been asked to provide a brief outline of their work in the 2016/17 municipal year for the forthcoming Housing Leeds Annual Report
- discussions have been held with Scrutiny Officers in relation to this meeting and the Boards forthcoming work
- The Chair has accepted an invitation to attend a Regional Scrutiny Chairs Training event to be held in York during September

The Chair in closing this item noted he has also a meeting planned with Sharon Guy in September with the Council's Head of Governance.

24 Next Inquiry Discussion

The Chair introduced this item and Councillor Barry Anderson to the Board. Councillor Anderson opened by saying he was looking forward to developing a good working relationship between Tenant Scrutiny Board and the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board.

Councillor Anderson explained that the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board will be looking at the effects of Grenfell and how this impacts on council housing in Leeds. There is currently scoping work on this and will hold discussion about this in September.

Councillor Anderson then gave the following ideas for subjects the Tenant Scrutiny Board could look at in the coming municipal year.

- Empty Properties
- Adaptations—the Board could look at when the property becomes void if these should be kept and the property remains adapted, or if should we remove them
- Capital Programme – how this should be spent
- Rent collection
- Effectiveness of Annual Home Visit
- Targets for repairs completion
- Car parking on housing estates – feedback from the STAR survey
- Effectiveness of consultation with tenants
- Tree management – effectiveness of the bandings used to classify trees
- Accessing the local housing office

Councillor Anderson noted that he also endorsed the previous suggestions from Councillor Coupar and Chief Officer Jill Wildman.

The Chair asked about future stock investment given the circumstances at Grenfell Tower. Chief Officer, Simon Costigan advised that an investment programme is already underway. It was noted that some retro-fitting sprinklers may also be required but Housing Leeds would await government guidance on this and other matters.

SB raised an issue that in the past investment plans seemed fairer, were agreed and the programme kept to, whereas what seems to be happening now is that investment is being focused on what could be described as deprived estates and other estates are being ignored. Councillor Anderson suggested that the Board could look at how the Council works out investment plans and if they should be looked at, but Councillor Anderson noted the government requirement to reduce rents has had an impact on resources available for investment.

The Chair spoke about possible mandatory direct debits for rent payment and if there is evidence that this has a positive impact on collection. Councillor Anderson explained that if tenants are required to pay by Direct Debit then they have the amount deducted before there is a temptation to spend this on other things. He noted that it is also cheaper for the council to collect and administer, with a further benefit of reducing the number of potential former tenancy arrears.

The Chair asked on Annual Home Visits that the Board are under the impression that the officer has about 15/20 minutes per visit to carry these out and the Chair had concerns about adding further questions into the visit would lengthen this which could have a further impact on the performance of these. Councillor Anderson didn't disagree with the comments made by the Chair but noted that the time spent dealing with queries by the Housing Officer could save time later on with other teams which would have an overall positive effect. Councillor Anderson also noted that different questions could be asked depending on the responses or problems which the tenant may be having. Councillor Anderson also noted that other changes could potentially be made, for example on things which were not having a positive impact.

25 East Leeds Repairs Feedback

The Chair introduced Simon Costigan, Chief Officer, Housing Leeds to the meeting. SC thanked the Board for their work on East Leeds Repairs in the past year and noted that he would be addressing each of the recommendations the Board has made.

Recommendation 1 – accepted. This was accepted and all new staff are part of the training regime and linked to the Contact Centre training programme.

Recommendation 2 – accepted. SC explained we have started introduction of Total Works. Phase 1 operational and Phase 2 is now being rolled out which will complete the rollout of the new system.

Recommendation 3 – accepted.

Recommendation 4 – accepted. SC explained that a lot of analysis is carried out on customer complaints and look at trends. We are now looking at more sophisticated such as areas and property types, trades and operatives to give a wider picture.

Recommendation 5 – accepted. We are ensuring training is more robust to ensure this and this links into recommendation one.

Recommendation 6 – accepted. Work is ongoing to look at systems update and also closing work down needs to be done quicker and a more efficient process. SC explained the recharging model may be stopped and so a proper charging model will need to replace it.

Recommendation 7 – partially accepted. We have a system already for tenant to report repairs online but it is not the best. The new Civica system will allow a better reporting tool for reporting repairs.

Recommendation 8 – accepted. We have gone through phase 2 of the organisation so a new structure is in place. Head of Operations of LBS has been tasked to ensure this remains.

Recommendation 9 – accepted. At present we are having a discussion around apprentices. As we have been through a review we were holding posts and now we have gone through the review now advertising the posts on a full time basis. We currently have a programme where they go through a training programme with college attendance. We appoint six and give them full time apprentices. This allows us to have 18 apprentices on the books. Further work is being carried out with HR to expand this.

The Chair asked about the Contact Centre and the turnover of staff due to impact of internal recruitment. The Chair asked if consideration had been given to the high turnover of staff and the impact on service delivery. The Board were advised that discussions have taken place with Senior Managers at the Contact Centre to ensure that this doesn't have a negative impact.

The Chair asked about the out of hours service and if East Leeds deal only with East Leeds properties. SC explained they can go out to different parts of the city if required and this often happens on a regular basis. The Chair asked if this causes any problems with finances and service delivery in East Leeds, SC responded that it doesn't.

RESOLVED – That the Board will revisit the recommendations in six months time. The Chair suggested a possible visit to Leeds Building Services if appropriate to see Total Mobile Works in a live situation.

26 Repairs and Investment and East Leeds Inquiry

The Chair introduced this item to the Board. The Chair noted that now this inquiry has concluded, that if agreed to by the Board, this report is provided out of courtesy and for information only.

RESOLVED – That the Board share the East Leeds Responsive Repairs report for information only with the Housing Leeds Repairs and Investment Group.

27 STAR Survey Reply

The Chair introduced this information only item to the Board and explained this was further to the presentation given by Jackie Fox of the Intelligence and Improvement Team.

28 Next Inquiry

The Chair went through the suggestions which have been given to the Board so far, including those from Councillor Anderson.

RESOLVED – The Board proceeded to carry out a vote by show of hands on the next inquiry. The majority of votes from those in attendance was for an inquiry into Anti-Social Behaviour.

29 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 6th September 2017 at 1:30pm
(pre meeting for all Board members at 1:00pm)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3:15 PM