

## TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER, 2017

**PRESENT:** John Gittos in the Chair

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

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

None

### **40 Late Items**

None.

### **41 Apologies for Absence**

Maureen Lillywhite, Peter Middleton, Jackie Worthington.

### **42 Minutes - 11th October 2017**

The Chair noted that the item "Chairs Update" will no longer form part of future meetings and the update given here today will be the last one. This will occur instead in the pre meeting and the minutes for the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) will appear at the back of the pack of papers sent out in future meetings.

The Chair noted his attendance at the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board on 6<sup>th</sup> November and noted the discussion around the 10 year high rise strategy. The Chair explained that the report on Grenfell Towers will be presented at their board in their December meeting. The Chair noted that the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board will be discussing Housing Advisory Panels at their January meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2017 be approved as a correct record.

### **43 Discussion with Managers around the Anti-Social Behaviour Service**

The Chair reviewed from the last meeting attendance of the Head of Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team, and also Lead Officer for Housing Leeds on this.

The Chair asked those in attendance today to give an overview of their job role to the Board as an introduction.

Neil Bowden, ASB Team Manager explained that he is one of the managers in the East area of the City and manages a multi-agency team consisting of the Police, Victim Support and Youth Offending Service. His team also field Councillor and MP inquiries. NB noted that his team also deal with private rented and housing association properties, as well as Council properties.

Jamie Martin, Housing Manager, explained his role as managing the local housing service in the Gipton and Harehills area. Claire Smith was also in attendance, also as a Housing Manager for the Swarcliffe area. JM explained that local Housing Officers deal with some of the ASB issues which arise. He explained although Housing Officers have a general knowledge, that they use the expertise of LASBT where appropriate, and also do this through monthly meetings with them. Other ways of sharing best practice for dealing with ASB is through Tasking meetings which are multi-agency meetings where an issue is looked at and it is targeted by several agencies, an example was given of youths congregating in a lobby area of a block of flats. As it was the summer, the Tasking team got together the local Breeze team who do activities to give the youths something to do other than loiter in the lobby. JM also explained that audit checks are carried out by manager at the local office to ensure correct ASB processes are being followed.

The Board were presented with performance data showing types of ASB along with the number of cases and broken down by Ward area. The figures showed Killingbeck and Seacroft and Gipton and Harehills to have the highest number of cases, with the outer areas of Leeds having less. The Chair asked if the number of cases relating to noise in the Headingley ward were caused by students. NB confirmed this was the case.

NB explained that there is a slightly different approach taken with these cases and on the first instance of noise occurring, a notice will be served. NB noted we work with universities and housing providers in the area to try and prevent this from occurring in the first place. This is in contrast to other areas in Leeds where this wouldn't be the approach if it was a first incident. The Chair asked if there was more staff working in West Leeds because of the noise issues. It was confirmed this is the case.

NB explained how mobile vehicle monitoring is used and there is one team working Monday to Thursday, with an extra team working on Friday to Sunday. When visiting incidents, they will ask the person causing the noise to turn the volume down and then this will be passed to the day team who will serve a notice after. The Chair asked if you move staff around to meet demand and it was confirmed by JM that we do.

The Chair asked if noise was more likely to happen on a night and noted that he has been told that it can be difficult to speak to officers on an evening. NB explained that yes noise is more likely to occur on a night, but Case Officers work a general day shift of 9 to 5pm – however it was noted that initially when visiting properties for noise, especially when caused by a party that occupants causing this are often intoxicated and can be difficult to work out who the

property is actually rented/owned by and so this is why cases are followed up the next day by Officers.

A question was asked as to the procedure following a complaint. It was explained this is allocated to a Housing Officer who will investigate. This can include speaking with neighbours to prevent spurious complaints being made. We will write to the complainant to explain that a case is being opened, and then a letter will be sent notifying the perpetrator that an investigation about them, which is a breach of tenancy, inviting them to an interview to discuss the matter. Where an incident is resolved but then re-occurs then the case may be referred to LASBT as they would have more powers to take further action against them. Where a case has criminality then this would also be passed to the LASBT.

The Chair asked who makes the final decision as to whether a referral should be made to LASBT or if it should be dealt with by the Housing Office. A Team Leader carries out these checks and ensures the referral is appropriate.

SB raised issues around noise especially when it involved older people and noted that what can happen is that a support worker can become involved which 'complicates' matters and has been known to drag the noise complaint out which has a knock on effect and the case can eventually be overlooked if it goes on for a prolonged period. JM explained it is important when initially dealing with the incident to be honest about what can and can't be done on a case, as sometimes incidents can occur of noise complaints where someone has lived next to a very quiet person for a number of years and then a family may move in and this is just noise from normal living which nothing can be done about. CS noted that the case management system which identifies cases which have been outstanding for a long time which can be looked at by a manager. It was agreed that Board Members may wish to explore this area in more depth, given feedback from Officers.

The Chair asked where the tenant is not happy with a case outcome can the case be reviewed by another office. JM explained that they always have the option to go through the formal Council complaints process, but in some cases we have referred to other offices for a second opinion in the past of letting another office have a view of the case to see what their thoughts were. It was noted that a case closure survey is also sent out to the complainant. JM and CS explained they both use team meetings to discuss open cases and see if there is any best practice from other officers who may have had a successful resolution to a case to prevent dissatisfaction with case management.

Michael Healey asked if the team have more empathy for noise during the weekend when people are less likely to be at work. It was explained that noise is noise regardless of time and day of the week and so this wouldn't be taken into consideration.

RM raised a case where ASB was caused and Housing didn't become involved until the case went to Court, and he felt that they should be trying to

prevent that from happening. JM explained that in some cases other teams would be involved in the case and Housing Leeds would be involved where and when it became appropriate.

The Chair asked about underreporting of ASB. JM noted this was true and from using STAR survey results can see this is the case, but it is important that people realise that by raising complaints about ASB things can be done in cases and if this is better realised then more might come forward reporting. NB noted that some areas do have apathy to reporting ASB, and hate crime is especially unreported, and gave an example of asylum seekers who mistakenly think that if they complain it may jeopardise their asylum case if they create a fuss reporting hate crime.

SB talked about ASB on estates, rather than at a particular property, and the areas around properties are designated as public land. JM noted that these sort of issues are useful to bring to Tasking meetings so that a multi-agency approach can be taken. A question was asked if all multi storey flats have CCTV linked to LeedsWatch, and it was noted that this isn't the case and would depend on the block.

The Chair asked if travellers come under ASB. It was explained that Leeds traditionally had a Gypsy and Traveller service who would deal with illegal encampments, however with this becoming a more frequent occurrence, other teams are being involved across the city. A new approach of Community Protection Notices being issued which allows the police to seize vehicles. The Chair asked if the Council can take travellers to Court which they can as they are the land owner. NB explained LeedsWatch are used to identify people leaving waste and follow this up where possible but there is still a large cost to the Council regardless.

The Chair asked about begging and the policy on this. NB explained this is a sensitive issues because they some are very vulnerable. It was explained there is some leniency on passive begging, but criminal behaviour orders can be applied to the more aggressive forms of begging. Teams work around the city to try and help and signpost to third parties who can help beggars.

SB asked if Housing are using outreach teams especially when homeless people are getting inside the block. JM explained that in his area he has been putting posters on notice boards so that they can use them to try find themselves support.

The Chair asked if the Contact Centre have enough knowledge in order to process cases which are coming through to them. CS explained they have a script which tells them where a case should be referred to.

The Chair asked if there was any frustration between the two teams. JM explained there is a good working relationship between the two teams and the training which has been provided recently to officers has helped strengthen this. NB acknowledged that on occasion there may be areas of ambiguity but went on to explain the importance of resolving issues for the benefit of the

customer. The Board have resolved to test this line of enquiry further with operational staff.

**RESOLVED – The script used by Contact Centre to be supplied to the Board for their next meeting.**

**44 Draft Work Programme**

The Chair presented the draft work programme which was an item deferred from the last meeting. The Board were requested to view the programme and make any comments.

**RESOLVED – The Board agreed to the work programme for this inquiry.**

**45 Election Process for a Vice Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board**

The Chair introduced this item. It was noted that the Vice Chair would be involved in the setting of the agenda so that if the Chair could not attend a meeting then the Vice Chair would have knowledge about how and why the agenda was set that way.

**RESOLVED – That members who wished to be considered for the Vice Chair role let the Scrutiny Officer know and return a completed form no later 29th November 2017 so that a vote could be carried out at December's meeting.**

**46 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017 at 1:15pm  
(Pre meeting for all Board members at 1:00pm)

**THE MEETING CLOSED AT 2:45 PM**