

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 20TH MAY, 2022

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Board: Stanley Burton, Mary Farish, Neil Battison, Jackie Worthington,
Sallie Bannatyne, Peter Middleton

Guests: Ian Montgomery & Sue Easton

Officers: Peter Greenwood, Emma Lomax & Trish Parker

Apologies: Rita Ighade & Dennis Moody

1 Welcome Introductions and Apologies

JG opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. Everyone introduced themselves and apologies were noted. JG and PG spoke a few words for former member Maddy Hunter. Funeral Arrangements are on the 7th June 2022 at St Martins Church 12:45pm – Lawnswood Crematorium 14:30.

2 Exempt Items

None.

3 Late Items

None.

4 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The previous meeting minutes were approved as a true record.

5 Chair's Report

6 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

PG – There was only 1 expression of interest for Vice Chair/Chair.

Chair – John Gittos

Vice Chair – Neil Battison

JG announced this would be his last year as chair. JG thanked Sallie for all she has done in her work and support for the board, and everyone thanked SB for her service.

7 Single Tenant Voice Panel

6.1. IM – Discussed part 1. Role of Tenant Voice Panel.

TSB questions:

JG – Stated what was being proposed would create a lot of work for Tenant Engagement Team. Are there enough staff and if not will there be recruitment to the team?

IM – We have slightly fewer staff; Housing Leeds has kept as many tenant engagement staff as possible. Staffing resource is aligned locally, we also have a group of staff that support the TEO's and run city wide activity like this panel. The activity of the new panel requires less resource than administering the former involvement structure and will aim to reach and involve a wider audience, and be less costly in terms of running costs needed to support.

JG – Is the TVP being proposed to reduce spending then?

IM – It's not a cost saving activity, it's using resource to better effect so that we reduce the duplication between forums, the previously hierarchal nature of forums and respond to feedback from people in groups that they couldn't there were barriers whereby they felt able to contribute to some things, but not others.

SB – In respect of the local Tenant Engagement Officers, will specific officers be given responsibility for the entire city or only responsible for own areas as currently?

IM – Local Tenant Engagement Officers look work across the city and we have no intention to change that. These officers have a range of responsibilities, supporting local HAPS and tenant groups for example and by the nature of each locality being different, they all have different project activity. Their role is different to supporting the TVP, they have a local focus but will be able to help in promoting and raising the profile of overall panel activity.

SE – Is there a commitment from staff to focus on TVP and engaging with tenants given the new social housing regulatory standards?

IM – Yes, the creation of this more inclusive panel is supported at a senior level the organisation, and our Service Plan for 22/23 makes clear the importance of listening and responding to the tenant voice. Our progress on how well we listen and respond to tenant feedback overall will then be assessed against the regulators 'consumer standards' – and it's important that we meet these as well as possible.

NB – Prior to these changes have you consulted with others nationally about what trying to do?

IM – Yes and the board have too, an independent advisor came to speak to the board as part of this review, and officers regularly attend sessions with other landlords. Many landlords are in a similar position in terms of reviewing their engagement offer post covid, taking what can learn from the greater use of technology and having to make best use of resources as possible. Suspect once implemented, other landlords will be asking Leed how we are getting on so they can learn from our experiences.

JG – Who will monitor if it is working or not?

IM – One of the roles of the new panel is to help hold us to account. So we'll report to the panel how we are performing against the regulators consumer standards and so that panel can assess/comment on what our progress has been, and what are priorities etc need to now be. We'll also summarise the feedback from the panel about our performance against the standards to the Strategic Housing Board.

JG – It's important that the new regulatory standards are set out clearly and are easy to understand for the tenants in the new panel who will be involved. Is there a plan for this? SE – Will all Housing LCC staff be trained on the new standards?

IM – The role of the regulator is becoming greater, and we need to make sure that the panel and staff are familiar about the standards, what these mean and how we monitor our performance against them. In recent years the role of the regulator has been relatively light touch but this is changing and we need to ensure we can satisfy tenants and the regulator that we are open and honest about our performance, how we are doing and give tenants the opportunity to influence this. This is something we have also committed to in our Service Plan for 22/23.

6.2. IM discussed Part 2 of report: Recruitment and Membership

TSB Questions:

JG – If Cllr Anderson remains Chair of the Communities, Housing and Environment Scrutiny Board, and would like me to report on progress.

IM – Happy to participate and describe to the scrutiny board what the changes are and take input from them also.

NB – Will there be a contract for prospective TVP members to sign so they are aware of what is expected of them?

IM – There will be an short application process and within that a summary of the behaviour which we will expect. So by applying they will agree to 'treat each other with respect' for example. We have previously found that lots of long documents can put people off from coming forward, so trying to keep simple and accessible. Do not envisage there ever being any confidential information shared at TVP meetings.

JG – What I see is that not everyone will be interested on all issues, how will you work around that?

IM – Each session will be directed at the people who are interested in that topic.

JG – Will the present Strategic Housing Board representatives be in post until 2023? And after that potentially selected from the TVP?

IM – For continuity the current Strategic Housing Board reps will stay in post. When it is time for reselection, we will then be able to go to the wider TVP so the opportunity is open to a wider group of people.

JW – Just looking at the 10% membership to be leaseholders, does that mean TVP members could be non-tenants?

SB – When you say leaseholders are you referring to the person living in the property or the person on the lease?

IM – It would be directed at the person living in the home. There would be caveats to this and we will look at that, but we want to make the TVP accessible as possible. This also applies to residents.

Comfort Break 12:55 – 1pm

6.3. Ian discussed Part 3 of the report: How the panel is run

TSB Questions:

JG – Are there going to be any votes or decision making on the TVP?

IM – We don't envisage the TVP being asked to formally vote – it's more about identifying preferences, priorities and ideas to help us be better. The TVP is also a wider group that is there as a consultative body to hold us to account. Where we are being honest about where we are and getting positive or constructive feedback. YVL could set up a ballot or mini-poll - but can't think of a situation where this would be needed.

JG – Will this panels feedback contradict STAR Survey feedback?

IM – We don't plan on asking TVP members the same questions that are on the STAR Survey. There will be sessions to test and challenge us on improvement plans. We may say that a sample of tenants have this opinion, is this how you feel also?

JG – When feedback is given on YVL it takes a lot of time to be answered, the speed of it needs to improve.

IM – We need to make sure we respond in a timely way as possible – or if our comments come at the end of a consultation – that we're clear about this to residents.

SB – Will you ensure all staff are kept up to date with changes as they happen? Sometimes I know things before my Housing Officer does.

IM – we try and keep staff updated as much as possible, through regular team meetings, updates and our internal communications and staff bulletin.

JG - Remember that people not using technology must find a way to enter this panel.

6.4. Ian discussed part 4 of report: Relationship with the TSB and wider Framework

JG discussed the terms of reference for the TSB. Important to note that aspects may change, to incorporate the TVP and the more flexible approach to membership for example. Will have that conversation and bring it back next time.

8 Forward Plan

JG proposed that by the end of June the present review on Tenant Engagement, Stage 1 and Stage 2 should be completed. Original intention was to undertake a Stage 3 (looking at HAPs), but don't feel it would be beneficial to us or the council to continue to look into tenant engagement at this time.

When Gez Tinsdale and Adam Crampton spoke at the May meeting they gave an overview of the service which was very informative and honest about what housing's achievements and challenges are. They agreed much had happened because of Covid and are now coming out of it. There are therefore lots of aspects to look at - ASB, Repairs, Contracts, Cost of living crisis and impacted services that the board can now consider.

JW – We have a new Vice Chair; it would be good to have a project that is worked on from beginning to end with present Chair and Vice Chair.

JG – Between now and end of the year at a pre-arranged date with Neil I will step out of the role of Chair and allow Neil to Chair for the experience.

IM discussed the STAR survey, which will now be sent out on a quarterly basis to a random sample of tenants. The smaller quarterly samples when combined as the quarters progress build up a more reliable picture of what tenants think about our services. We'll be able to share data in the Autumn with the board.

SB – Are response rates equal among different ages and cultures?

IM – We send to a random sample but within that random sample we make sure to include a proportion of age groups, ethnicity etc. Results we get back have feedback from a wide range of people and we do look at that as part of our equality analysis.

JG asked the board for comments:

SB – We should be dealing with more relevant issues. Covid has meant some elements have been neglected and would much prefer to deal with pressing issues that are affecting tenants now.

JG – That is the general view from tenants as well.

MF – Agrees to concentrate on pressing issues.

SE – So long as its evidence based it is a good idea to deal with what is happening now.

NB – Good to have fresh approach and a collective way of thinking.

PM – I think we should carry on way we are working. It does work.

JW – Poverty issue with energy bills rising is going to be very serious, a lot of people are sitting with no heat on at all. Support approach and shorter projects.

SB – When we started in Housing Leeds things were more stable than they are now. Lately and particularly with covid, we can start a review and make

suggestions and things have changed by the end of it. Long reviews are not of any value. We need to target things that are important.

JG – New era of TSB. No vote required; our fundamental values are the same.

9 Date and Time of Next Meeting

17th June 2022, 12:00 – 14:00.

Civic Hall Committee rooms 6/7 and MS Teams