

## TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 15TH JULY, 2022

**PRESENT:** John Gittos in the Chair  
Neil Battison  
Sallie Bannatyne  
Stanley Burton  
Mary Farish  
Sue Easton  
Jackie Worthington  
Peter Middleton  
Dennis Moody

**APOLOGIES:** Rita Ighade

**GUESTS:** Ian Montgomery (Service Manager)  
Maddy Edwards (Head of Housing Mgmt)  
Neil Bowden (Anti Social Behaviour Lead)

**OFFICERS:** Emma Lomax  
Peter Greenwood

### 1 **Welcome Introductions and Apologies**

JG opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. Everyone introduced themselves and apologies were noted for Rita Ighade.

### 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**

JG – We formally welcome new member Sue Easton to the Board. Apologies again for the cancellation of the June meeting. Both Jackie and I attended Maddie Hunters funeral at Chapel Allerton on behalf of the board. I was unable to attend the National Resident Involvement Conference on the 21<sup>st</sup> June which was held in Leeds. The Vice Chair and Ian Montgomery attended. The Environment, Housing and Communities Board had their first meeting following the local elections. Councillor Anderson remains the Chair. During

the meeting they decided once again to co-opt the Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board to their board when they discuss housing matters. The Vice Chair and I met with Peter Greenwood on the 28th of June to write up the draft report that will be placed before you in Item 5 of today's agenda. I have a meeting on July 25<sup>th</sup> with Councillor Rafique Executive Member for Environment and Housing, to update him on the work of the TSB overall.

The board do not meet in August. Next meeting is Friday September 16<sup>th</sup>. I will not be available other than by email between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> August.

## **6 Anti-Social Behaviour**

Neil Bowden talked through his presentation. He discussed the various approaches and strategies currently being used to manage anti-social behaviour in the city. These are to tackle a range of issues and concerns including organised crime, nuisance vehicles, noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour in areas or places of concern.

Maddy Edwards gave an overview of the Housing Leeds role in managing ASB. Instances of ASB rose during the pandemic, there now being 205 live cases of ASB particularly related to noise nuisance and an increase of domestic abuse cases. All cases enter an ASB 'triage team', which officers assess to look at the severity and then based on the available information make contact and discuss with customer. Once assigned to an officer the service undertakes a vulnerability matrix to assess needs and if there are any particular issues that need to be tackled. The triage team also decide if the case is to be managed with the Housing Office, who take on lower-level case or for more severe cases, the Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team (LASBT)

Housing Leeds work very closely with LASBT and Police and share information as required. We are very careful with what is shared and who to. Most cases within local housing teams get a resolution early in the process. If early stages are exhausted and behaviour is still prevalent, then we are able to serve a Housing Caution. If behaviour remains a referral is made to LASBT who then lead on taking the case for prosecution.

We manage cases by putting the victim first. LASBT meet every 6 weeks to review open cases. We do use mediation but this needs to be accepted by both parties and if therefore something that isn't used as much as it would ideally be.

Injunctions are also a tool we can use in certain cases, and if these are breached we can take further legal action.

To help manage any ASB that occurs in multi-story blocks we are able to deploy security patrols and make use of static guards and have CCTV linked into Leeds Watch who monitor CCTV. We also look to instil a sense of professional curiosity in staff, which can lead to asking residents questions, building up knowledge of what is happening and helping us achieve better outcomes. The questions asked by officers can sometimes be challenging, but are essential to help take action. When we look at lessons learnt from how

we have managed ASB cases, we are interested and do look to see how we have managed a case and if we have demonstrated our professional curiosity at the initial stages so we can resolve as many cases as early in the process as possible.

Questions from the Board:

JG – What we learnt in the ASB previously undertaken by the board is that at least 50% of LASBT work is noise related?

ME – Yes.

JG – And a lot of what you spoke about just then noise wasn't included?

ME – Noise often be difficult to prove. In tower blocks, for example, pinpointing the source can be very difficult. Noise reverberates around blocks, as Maddy alluded to with Covid, people are seeing and hearing their neighbours more than usual and various other factors can lead to an increase in noise complaints. We have complaints from the student areas but have also had complaints about windchimes, mechanical bird sounds, some are quite bizarre. Triage will ask for noise reports to be filled out over a period of 2 to 3 weeks. When the noise diary is then submitted, we can assess the level of disruption that is being caused.

SB – For ME, I'm confused about initial reporting of ASB by tenants, if you don't have access to a Housing Officer what do you do? Do you report to direct to ASB team?

ME – There are several reporting routes for ASB, such as the contact centre, local housing team, joint service centres and direct to LASBT team. Wherever the report comes from it always ends up with triage at LASBT for them to assess and allocate.

JG – ASB to most tenants is looked upon as a very slow process, last night I was looking at the number of agencies called into one problem. Can lots of agencies being involved slow down the process?

ME – It depends, sometimes there is a more in-depth process. For example, people with mental health issues where we need to ensure they have full capacity and need to engage Adult Social Care to undertake an assessment. However, all officers should be clear on who is managing the case as it's transparent on the online system and we should always be clear on next steps to inform the customer.

JG – Am I right in thinking when it goes to LASBT it's because the initial person who writes the report will hand to another for a decision?

Neil – In regard to transferring cases we have regular meetings with housing colleagues to discuss cases which need to be transferred and the supervisors and managers will decide. Everyone involved in the case would then be contacted by LASBT rather than the housing office if transferred.

NB – Are you hoping government will strengthen ASB legislation?

Neil – There are no plans for the current government to do so, we have a range of powers to tackle what we have in front of us.

JG – 205 live cases, is that a high figure or standard?

ME – We review cases monthly to check activity and their status. We previously had higher numbers but this included some cases that had been on the system that had natural resolutions so have now been closed. 205 is an average number now.

JG- When a tenant with previous ASB is moved to another property, are checks done on the tenant's previous behaviour? It appears there have been instances where this has not happened and then the ASB continues in another property.

ME – When any property is let, officers check the online system for any ongoing ASB. If there is then this reduces priority and they can be bypassed and the property be offered to the next applicant. ASB cases aren't restricted and are available to view by staff delivering the lettings function, and so this should have been picked up prior to the property being let.

JG closes for questions due to time constraints for this meeting and will return to this subject within the next few months.

## **7 Report and Proposals on Phase 2 of Tenant Engagement Review**

Vice Chair Neil Battison read through the proposals that have come out of the review into Tenant Engagement which the board have a hard copy of in front of them.

The Chair then re-joins to discuss the proposals with the board and take any questions for Ian Montgomery. The Chair asks for votes on each proposal as they are discussed, and all are passed with some caveats to be ironed out at later meetings in the year once the Voice Panel is launched.

SE – My understanding is that the Tenant Voice Panel includes how we are responding to the Building Safety Bill?

Ian – Yes, the new panel will have a number of roles, one of which will be to help self-assess with us how we are meeting the Social Housing Regulators Consumer Standards, which includes building safety.

Sue – One of the standards is engagement?

Ian – Yes, there are four consumer standards currently, with a proposal to increase this to six, with new standards around building safety and on the theme of transparency.

The Board have asked for the standards to be explained in the September meeting in more plain English and to learn more about the changes coming from the White Paper.

JG – Why not do a launch event of Tenant Voice Panel and see each other face to face?

DM – Need some new blood, that's the way to go as other city-wide groups have disbanded.

JG – It needs to be made clear that it is a launch event for the Tenant Voice Panel in case there are any previous city-wide panel members which would like to attend.

IM – It's a good idea to have a launch event. I have shared previously we would like to hold an induction so people are aware what the panel will be doing, and a launch event is an effective way to do that and it's good for people to reconnect. For the board's reassurance, the launch event will come after what will be the launch to all tenants. It will be put out there in the public domain so anyone who participates in it will be clear what the role of the panel is and how it'll work. We could offer a face-to-face session and an online session too for people who are unable to attend in person.

JG – Are we talking about 2 launches?

IM – We would launch it out in public domain, attract new and interested members, then have a launch or induction event – a face-to-face session to give more detail about what it is and how it will work, but would like to offer an online launch and induction also.

JG – Might attract city wide group members, needs to make it plain it is a launch and the panel itself is not still up for discussion.

IM - These proposals we are discussing today can go out to all previously involved tenants for information. When launched we want to have everything set up correctly so we get off to a good start. We want the panels to run well and for it to be a positive experience. For example, if one of the first activities for the panel to look at a particular policy, we need to work closely with the team that wants to engage and be clear about what they are expecting from the panel to ensure quality conversations and good feedback from those taking part.

JG – Can a member of this board be a liaison between now and the launch?

IM – We will be creating content over summer to launch September/October time, it would be good to have a couple of people to share drafts with to get opinions, what do you think? Via phone calls or emails.

JG – We want two people to be able to work together and be able to report back to the board. Neil Battison (Vice Chair), Jackie Worthington and Dennis Moody volunteered and will report back to the Board periodically.

JG – There is concern that people not online will need other ways of communication to be involved in the Tenant Voice Panel.

IM – We ran through at last meeting what the framework looks like and shared a diagram of all the different ways that tenants can interact with the service, some is on individual basis or at a strategic level and includes a range of ways so that those not online can still be involved.

IM – In response to queries about current tenant membership of the Strategic Housing Board, IM clarified that the Strategic Housing Board has its own terms of reference and recruitment, that cycle will continue. As and when they reach the point in time when they reselect membership, they will reselect from the Tenant Voice Panel. Tenant Scrutiny Board members can become Tenant Voice Panel members, by that virtue you could put yourself forward for Strategic Housing Board.

JG – Could a permanent seat on Strategic Housing Board belong to a Tenant Scrutiny Board member?

IM – In principle yes, as would help strengthen the relationship between the Tenant Scrutiny Board and the Strategic Housing Board. IM will take this point away and report back to the board.

DM – Would you provide braille copies for blind?

IM – We have a couple of options, there are often audio solutions which tend to work better depending on the individual. Would work on case-by-case basis.

SB – As somebody that can't use Tenant Voice Panel online, could you keep me informed as to what access people like myself can have to it?

IM – If someone isn't online or confident to be online or they aren't well suited to look at a screen, there are aspects of panel work that can be participated in.

JG – There could be 10 members joining for each review, concerned that we could end up co-opting more than we have Tenant Scrutiny Board members. We say co-opted members can't vote, and I'm not keen on that.

IM – Appreciate it's an interesting one, how we've set it out is acknowledging that over time there are fluctuations in membership and sometimes members can give more time than others. On a review-by-review basis, it would be valuable contribution to help the board. I feel they should be treated as equals in terms of the value of their contribution and for that review their input and influence are on par with board members.

JG – When I go on another board, I can't vote if there is a vote.

IM – You're all tenants and have a valid opinion for that topic. It would be more difficult to justify to co-optees that we want your opinion, but you can't vote. The risk is that's how it could be perceived.

JG – We will play it by ear for the moment but would rather have it written down in our terms of reference. Could we decide how many members come for each review?

IM – Depending on the review, could be 5 or 6 if the board feel this is a more appropriate number.

SE – If Tenant Voice Panel members bring evidence and have an opinion and bring it to board, does it not all come together and be treated as equals?

JG – Do we need more consultation or information on this point or how it'll work?

NB – Yes more consultation required and information.

JG – All in favour of proposals?

Proposals are passed but more clarification required on Point 9.

IM – Thanks for all your input and contribution

PG – Have a nice summer all board members.

## **8 Forward Plan**

The Chair wished everyone a good Summer before the next meeting in September.

**9 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

16<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 12:00 – 14:00.  
Civic Hall Committee rooms 6/7 and on MS Teams