

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

WEDNESDAY 20TH JANUARY 2021

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair
Sallie Bannatyne
Mary Farish
Rita Ighade
Jackie Worthington
Ian Parr
Peter Greenwood

28 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

29 Late Items

None.

30 Apologies for Absence

Stanley Burton (SBu), Maddy Hunter, Peter Middleton

31 Minutes -

RESOLVED – The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th November 2020 were passed as a true record.

32 Chair's Update

JG opened the meeting and wished everyone a happy new year. Attendees introduced themselves.

JG attended two meetings of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board. The December Meeting concerned the forthcoming budget proposals, and the January meeting focussing on the theme of poverty and financial inclusion and the disproportionate impacts Covid-19 is having on poorer communities. The meeting included speakers from the DWP, various charities and food banks and from the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Up to December 2020 there were 70,000 people across the city claiming Universal Credit – a 60% increase from 2019.

Members of the TSB had two joint meetings at the end of 2020 with Gateshead Housing, to share their scrutiny boards worked. The Gateshead Housing board currently operates within an ALMO, and a further meeting is planned in March when by which time they will have returned to council management.

The TSB meetings will revert to Fridays starting next month, the next meeting dates are:

- February 19th 2021
- March 19th 2021
- April 23rd 2021

On the 3rd February, both JG and IM will be speaking at the 10th National Tenants' Panel Conference ran by the Northern Housing Consortium, about how scrutiny works in Leeds and to share more about the boards current review, and the focus on digital engagement'

There will be a meeting of the citywide involved groups on the 10th February at 3pm.

JG will be giving an update of TSB activity to the Deputy Leader Councillor Coupar ahead of the next meeting.

33 Wider digital engagement practice - Yvonne Davies

YD shared a presentation outlining the key aspects of customer insight and how councils can use this to improve their services. More insight leads to more effective service improvements and higher tenant satisfaction as a result. Insight includes customer feedback before and after using a service, and can be gathered via a variety of means. Digital methods of gathering insight are being used more widely and are especially useful during Covid-19 where person to person engagement is restricted. It is important to consult a diverse a variety of customers, those who are confident with digital and those less so, and how we remove any barriers to allow all residents to have the opportunity to give feedback.

How well councils engage with and involve tenants will be the subject of updated regulation as a result of the new Social Housing White Paper. It is expected that all social landlords take into account and involve tenants in:

- Policy development
- Decisions about how services are delivered
- The setting of service standards and monitoring
- The scrutiny of performance
- Annual report to tenants
- Consultation on major changes
- Consultation on disposal/demolition

JG asked how the White Paper will be enforced, YD replied it is unclear at present but may include 'naming and shaming', certainly comparisons can be drawn between landlords. JG suggested that most councils should be meeting these expectations anyway. IM added that Leeds currently publish annual reports and have a number of forums to monitor performance.

YD ran through some of the types of engagement conducted by other landlords, Engagement includes policy reviews, focus groups, digital panels, resident researchers, apps, and online platforms among others. JG asked if there is an expectation to be engaging in all of the methods of engagement, YD replied that not all need to be explored, it's about what are the most effective ways for tenants and the landlord to work together.

JG noted that other associations have scrutiny boards that choose smaller topics in specific areas while Leeds seem to cover a wide range with large topics, which is sometimes a lot to take on. YD replied it may be interesting to identify how the different Leeds groups operate and explore possible options.

YD highlighted some of the other ways of gathering insight including the STAR survey, other satisfaction surveys, thematic surveys, customer journey mapping, and segmentation, but that the outcome can depend on how robust the process is. When forming a survey, it is important to ask the right questions, in a way that is most effective for the desired audience.

JG thanked YD for her presentation.

34 Repairs texting trial - Leonard Wright

LW introduced himself to the board members explaining he is supporting the Responsive Repairs Service and the automated texting pilot. The pilot surveys tenants who have recently had a repair more efficiently than the current method.

Each year the repairs service carries out approximately 200,000 repairs. Following a repair, a survey is carried out with the tenant via a phone call with a target of 1000 each month. The Bright system allows surveys to be sent via text and phone calls through an automated process in a more timely fashion. This ensures a quicker survey response and significant reduction in cost. Only one officer is required to record the feedback and they will also provide a quicker response to the tenant reducing complaints.

A pilot of the system was carried out in Q2 of 2020. The findings showed that the Bright calls and texts had a much lower response rate in comparison to the phone surveys, and that the Bright survey responses also score lower in overall satisfaction. LW explained this drop in satisfaction is expected across all industries as the anonymity generally evokes a more honest response than speaking to a human, however as a result the Bright responses are a truer reflection of the views of the respondent.

RI asked what the timescale of the process is from start to finish, LW replied that the texts are currently sent out in weekly batches but that may be automated to be sooner in future but all responses are collected immediately. LW added that when costs are factored in for software licensing, the Bright surveys are much cheaper than the current phone calls.

JG asked if a repair is not fixed right first time is the recall surveyed. LW said currently it is just the first repair that is surveyed but this can be changed to

include recalls. If any survey questions need to be added or reviewed that could only be done in April.

JG asked if Mears provide feedback to the repairs team as tenants get in touch with them directly, LW replied that they do and there are strong existing communication links.

JG asked if there are other teams using the same system, LW replied that this system is currently only being used by the repairs team but similar projects may be happening in other departments. IM added it is an opportunity for wider engagement wherever it is used and may help to ensure a broader diversity of opinions are being heard.

JG asked if the process is possible to be completed entirely in-house, LW said the software is able to send the surveys in a number of formats and this would be difficult to replicate in house.

JG thanked LW for his presentation.

35 Initial thoughts from board members

YD suggested that board members should collate their initial thoughts on the meetings presentation before close of the meeting. It is often difficult to remember clearly what was discussed at a meeting several months earlier. If these thoughts/views/opinions are documented they can be referred to when summarising each phase of the review. Points about what members like and dislike along with any further suggestions would be helpful. PG said he has begun work on a simple table that can be used for these purposes which he will discuss with the Chair but having ten minutes on each agenda to gather the boards initial thoughts should become standard practice.

Members discussed points about the Bright pilot:

Pros:

- Clear and direct lines of communication with the contractor.
- Anonymous surveys provide more honest feedback.
- Immediate responses.

Cons:

- Tenants without a mobile may get left behind

36 Your Voice Leeds update - Peter Greenwood/Rita Ighade

PG informed the panel he has been working with RI and JG on the wording for the TSB page on Your Voice Leeds. The page went live on Wednesday the 13th of January and features basic information about the work of the board and channels through which feedback can be given by tenants. There is also a note asking for new members to come forward.

RI informed the panel that an email was sent to all tenants with a link to the page on Thursday 14th of January, and despite having only been live for a few

days we had already received numerous hits and engagements from users of the site. Links have also been posted on the Facebook pages of Tenant Engagement Officers for further reach.

JG asked if we can pick up the promotion of TSB meetings on the Housing Leeds Facebook page. PG will get in touch with the communications team who operate the page.

37 Forward planning

JG noted that it will be soon time to collate the stage 1 report and he is keen to have the views of all of the board members. JG asked if there can be an agenda item added to future meetings about putting the themes together for the report, and if future agendas can be circulated sooner in advance of meetings. IM confirmed the agendas can be sent sooner as long as guests have confirmed their availability for the date.

JG offered to speak to the board members individually ahead of the next meeting to collate ideas.

38 Date and time of next meeting

The next zoom meeting is scheduled for Friday 19th of February at 12:45 for a 1.00pm start