

## TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021

**PRESENT:** John Gittos in the Chair  
Sallie Bannatyne  
Mary Farish  
Rita Ighade  
Jackie Worthington  
Roisin Donnelly  
Andrew Holroyd  
Ian Montgomery  
Ian Parr

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

None.

### 40 Late Items

None.

### 41 Apologies for Absence

Stanley Burton (SBu), Maddy Hunter, Peter Middleton and Peter Greenwood

### 42 Minutes -

RESOLVED – The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th January 2021 were passed as a true record.

### 43 Welcome and introductions

JG opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

### 44 Chair's Update

JG informed the panel he will be attending the next meeting of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February

JG and IM hosted a workshop at the Northern Housing Consortium tenants' panel conference. The Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) is a not-for-profit membership organisation encompassing 96% of local authorities, housing associations and ALMOs in the North of England. We shared how tenant scrutiny is conducted in Leeds and our work on the first stage of the review into Tenant Engagement, followed by a question and answer session. It was interesting to hear that Community Gateway Housing Association have

launched their own digital engagement site very similar to our own “Your Voice Leeds”.

JG had a meeting with Councillor Debra Coupar, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Housing and Communities to discuss progress to date and the board’s intention to produce a report on stage 1 by the end of April. Councillor Coupar expressed her thanks to all of the board for their work, especially given the challenges Covid-19 has presented.

#### **45 Joint working with Customer Access - Roisin Donnelly**

RD explained her role and gave an overview of how the service analyses and interprets customer insight data to improve customer. Customer insight can come from many sources including calls to the contact centre and housing offices along with the reasons for calling; website visits; complaints; and surveys, among many other sources. By analysing the contact made, new issues can be identified and activity put in place to address them. Examples of changes made in response to this insight include improved website content, extra staff training, social media posts responding to an emerging issue, or changes to processes for a better customer experience.

Since customer feedback is so useful it is important that it is gathered frequently and from a variety of sources. Regular surveys of customers are undertaken across different services such as when repairs are undertaken, as well as ad-hoc surveys to identify new issues. Surveys are a useful tool as they provide immediate feedback in a standard format that can be compared with others in the same time period as well as to track changes over time.

To improve the gathering of customer insight the service has recently started using a new system known as ‘CATS’. The system enables staff to log any customer contact and assign actions where necessary. The system can identify trends in call volume and the type of issues raised, allowing for better performance reporting and improved service responses to complaints. RD offered to arrange a demonstration of the CATS system for panel members if they wish to see it in operation.

JG questioned how the information is reported to individual teams. RD replied that the system can be accessed by any managers and teams as necessary so they are able to see their data first-hand, and all teams work closely with the Customer Insight team to assess data and develop responses.

RI asked how complaints are handled with the CATS system, RD responded that there is still a separate and defined system for formal complaints handling where each complaint is assigned an investigating officer. Issues that are not necessarily formal complaints can still be monitored using CATS and can be followed up as appropriate.

RD explained that further to the Council’s own complaints system there has recently been a new Housing Ombudsman has recently published a new complaint handling code. As a result, the Customer Insight team has

developed a number of actions in response – a summary of which is available to tenants on the council's website.

RD summarised next steps are to continue the development of the CATS system, to work with Customer Access to identify areas of improvement, to implement any necessary improvement to services, and to continue to review and develop the complaints handling code.

JG noted he had received contact about joining the Housing Ombudsman's tenant complaints panel and expressed interest in joining. IM agreed it would be good for Leeds to have representation on the panel and offered to send information out to the panel members.

JW asked if the CATS system would monitor incomplete repairs, RD responded it would not monitor the issue specifically, however it would flag repeated contact made by a tenant which could then be further investigated. IM added that there is consistent work to identify issues raised from the contact centre regarding repairs and their completion, and responses have included adding extra staff to cover peak times and automated messages to explain delays where necessary.

JG asked if Mears data is fed into the reporting system since tenants are encourage to contact Mears directly for repairs. RD responded that council teams work closely with Mears and share data to improve both services. Mears themselves work hard to inform their customers of any potential delays to repairs caused by illnesses or other factors outside of their control.

JG thanked RD for her presentation.

#### **46 Social media and email campaigns - Andrew Holroyd**

AH explained his role within the Information Team. AH told the panel about how social media such as Facebook and Twitter is used by the team to share news and important information quickly and effectively to a broad range of tenants. Using a variety of platforms ensures the widest reach and allows for maximum engagement with tenants who able to comment and give their own opinions on a post.

It has been identified that frequent social media posts increase the feelings of engagement between tenants and council services, and staff are being encouraged to post and promote more positive work in the community. Examples of posts include signposting to services and useful links, as well as corporate messages. JG asked what is meant by corporate messages, AH responded it includes messages from the government and the NHS about coronavirus and other important citywide issues. Further messages have included warnings about tenants being targeted by disrepair campaigns which are often detrimental to tenants.

As well as social media, regular monthly emails are used to share information to around 30,000 tenants with an email address. It can be identified how

many emails are opened as well as which links are clicked, which is useful to identify topics of interest and how best to format emails, what time of day to send etc. Emails are also used to share specific messages in particular areas of Leeds if needed.

Letters and leaflets are used to target specific areas or blocks as was done with the high rise engagement project which contained information specific to that block. Posters are also used and can be placed on noticeboards to attract attention in a more visual manner which can be an effective way to convey information across a language barrier. This method has been used to communicate the safer use of lifts during COVID-19. Information has also been sent with quarterly rent statements for example, letting people know about ways to resolve and manage condensation. The annual report is published annually, in digital formats, and has been adapted to be more concise and visually appealing to increase engagement.

JG asked if all tenants receive digital communications, AH replied that digital communications cannot be sent if an email address or mobile phone number has not been supplied, however options are considered to ensure communications reach as far as possible. AH noted that emails have a high level of engagement according to the statistics of the number that are opened.

JG asked if there is ever any sensitive information that is posted online and if there are any mechanisms to prevent it. RD replied there is a disclaimer advising people not to post any sensitive data, but it is rare that anyone does this as most social media users are aware of the risks of doing so and the team will then encourage direct communication to be able to take a query forward.

SB asked how social media feedback is collated, AH replied that feedback is gathered and shared with services where appropriate, and that all feedback is used to improve services in the same way as feedback by any other means.

JG thanked AH for his presentation.

#### **47 Initial thoughts**

Due to time constraints, JG suggested removing this item from the agenda, panel members were in agreement.

#### **48 Your Voice Leeds update**

RI informed the panel she had met with PG to discuss engagement with the Your Voice Leeds Site. The site in general is achieving higher numbers of hits for individual projects, however the Tenant Scrutiny board page receives relatively fewer interactions. RI offered to provide more statistics at the next TSB meeting. IM shared that there were some really good outcomes emerging from the consultations on Your Voice Leeds, but that for the TSB review, there has been less interaction. This shouldn't though detract the

board from learning about the wider benefits and opportunities for tenant engagement as a whole.

#### **49 Forward planning**

JG informed board members that the next meeting would include panel feedback on Your Voice Leeds and suggestions about how to maximise its future use. JG suggested the board also consider how the service uses feedback about tenants who aren't online and who use non-digital forms of engagement.

JG told the panel that the April meeting will not be attended by any guests or officers due to the need to commence the writing up into a report the first stage of the review.

JG asked members to review the webpages and engagement materials of other councils and housing associations, and if they would prefer to offer feedback individually or within an extra meeting. Panel members agreed they would prefer an extra meeting, date to be confirmed.

#### **50 Date and time of next meeting**

The next zoom meeting is scheduled for Friday 19<sup>th</sup> of March at 12:45 for a 1.00pm start