

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 16TH APRIL, 2021

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair
Sallie Bannatyne
Mary Farish
Maddy Hunter
Rita Ighade
Peter Middleton
Jackie Worthington
Ian Parr
Katie Bell
Ian Montgomery

51 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

52 Late Items

JG explained to the board that items 3 and 5 will be discussed as one item and he will explain his reasons for doing this at the time.

JG pointed out that there is usually an election for Chair and Vice Chair in the April meeting. Due to cancelled meetings and changes to the work plan IM advised it would be wise to delay the election until the completion of stage 1. Board members were in agreement by show of hands.

53 Apologies for Absence

Stanley Burton (SBu), Peter Greenwood

54 Minutes -

RESOLVED – The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th February 2021 were passed as a true record.

55 Chair's Update

JG apologised for the cancellation of the March meeting due to his emergency hospitalisation.

JG could not attend the last meeting of the Environment, Housing and Communities board. The next meeting will not take place until June because of the May elections, and due to this there may be changes to the board's representation including the potential for a new Chair.

JG asked board members if anyone could attend a 60 minute meeting between before the 21st May. The meeting is to look at the way other housing providers use digital engagement. Confirmed will take place on the 12th of May at 1pm.

The Chair will, while the present restrictions are in place, send out any TSB paper work to those members who don't have access to email before each meeting.

56 Future approach for Your Voice Leeds - Ian Montgomery & Julie Holmes

KB introduced herself and recapped the points she had previously discussed with the board. The trial of Your Voice Leeds has been ongoing since November and is due to expire at the end of July, however the budget is in place for it to extend it for another 12 months. Your Voice Leeds allows for wider engagement and informing of Leeds residents in a convenient way, with the first project going live in November 2020. The platform is being used by a growing number of councils and landlords.

As at the time of the meeting, Your Voice Leeds has 10 open projects, and has been viewed 6,200 times. Of this total, 4,676 people have visited at least one project, 1,038 have searched for further information regarding a project, 144 have actively contributed feedback, and 214 are signed up for regular updates.

JG asked what figures by which metrics would be considered 'successful'. IM explained that there is no immediate target figure and that site launches like this often take time to develop and grow. The growth of Your Voice Leeds is in line with other housing associations at a similar point in their development, and is expected to grow at a similar rate over a number of years. A useful metric that may be measured is the overall cost effectiveness of the site, by taking the overall cost of the subscription and dividing it by the number of users engaged with. As the user base grows, the more cost effective the site becomes. IM emphasised the site is in addition to, and to complement, other forms of engagement used by Housing Leeds.

JG asked if it is possible to know who the users of the site are. IM replied that users are asked if they are a council tenant, which roughly 2/3 of the registered users are, but not all projects are exclusively targeted at council tenants.

SBa asked what is done in cases where solutions to user issues or suggestions would be impossible. IM replied it would be similar as in any other offline interaction, and feedback can be provided to groups or individuals that their opinions have been heard and the responses that can and can't be taken as a result.

KB outlined a case study of the Greener Gipton campaign which aimed to deliver a number of projects with multiple council partners to improve the local area in Gipton and Harehills. The project was viewed over 700 times, with 73

engaged and 11 subscribed for updates. As a result of the project reaching a wide number of people numerous working groups were formed that meet regularly via Zoom, as well as being featured in the Yorkshire Evening Post and an interview on BBC local radio. The online project allowed a wider reach than traditional methods as well as being more cost effective, while also reaching a younger demographic.

KB noted there is a potential for Housing Advisory Panel bids to be similarly featured on the site which may be more time and cost effective than methods such as door-knocking or leafleting. Tenant and Residents Associations can also be included, allowing for connections to be made within local areas. JG, SBa, and RI agreed that Your Voice Leeds seems to be an effective and engaging way to reach a larger audience in a faster way.

Your Voice Leeds still has lots of growth opportunities as the site gains traction, and other teams can be brought in to advertise positive community projects across the city. There has been success linking to Your Voice Leeds from other platforms such as Facebook, and best practice is being developed using the learning from other housing providers.

JG suggested the platform could be useful for the HAPs to advertise projects, though the idea can be addressed as the review moves forward. IM agreed that the team is enthusiastic about using the site, and that more use and more projects will continue to grow the platform.

RI summarised the visits to the Tenant Scrutiny Board page up to the 9th of April. There had been 386 visitors to the page with 6 of those engaging with the contents on the page. There was a roughly even split between those who had visited the page directly and those who had been directed from external sites such as Facebook. There is scope to review the content of the web page, which JG suggested could be looked at in later stages of the review.

57 Managing feedback from tenants not online - Ian Montgomery

IM gave the an overview of the ways in which tenants can still be engaged if they are not online either through choice or because of a barrier around not having access to a device, connection or the confidence and skills to do so.

Non online ways on which tenants can engage more widely with the tenants include:

Annual home visits – A check in with the housing officer to address any issues face to face. Covid-19 restrictions have seen the in-person check-ins replaced with an annual phone call instead, still allowing for direct contact – and whilst the future model for delivering annual home visits or the equivalent is being reviewed, this is still an opportunity for the tenant and the service to engage and interact with each other.

Postal surveys – requesting feedback from tenants about local or citywide issues. This includes the STAR survey and the repairs survey previously

discussed by the TSB as a part of the present review. There is potential for a mixed online and postal response method to be utilised.

Retirement Life activities – A way for officers in Retirement Life to engage with their tenants.

Compliments and complaints – Residents are able to record compliments or complaints by phone, email, or online and receive feedback as necessary.

Estate action days – Promoted within local areas and a visible way of addressing local issues.

'Pop-up' consultations – being present in a local area to discuss projects.

Housing surgeries – Regular drop in sessions in the local area.

Fetes/Galas – Community events attended by housing staff with an information stall or the mobile office.

New tenancy sign ups – A check in with all new tenants to address any issues before or just after the start of their tenancy.

Day to day interactions – Any other way of getting in contact with staff that has not been covered by the above.

IM explained that many of the usual practices have been affected in some way by Covid-19 restrictions, and as a result some have been altered in line with restrictions. The changes have inspired some new ways of working which have helped developed more digital means of engagement, however there are still options for those who are not online.

JG asked if the changes to the ways of working will be maintained when Covid-19 restrictions are eased. IM explained that some may be kept as they represent a smarter and more effective way of working, but a mixed approach that balances the needs of the tenants and the service is most likely.

SB commented that she and others in her area had been contacted by a welfare officer to check in on their respective situations. IM confirmed it may have been a courtesy call in case there are any issues as similar calls had been made to potentially vulnerable people across the city.

58 Forward Planning

JG noted that the end of a review stage usually culminates in a report written by the Chair and the advisor to the board, which will be PG. In this circumstance the elements of the report will be decided upon and agreed by the board members in a meeting. When the report is drafted it will be sent to all board members for review, before being presented to the Council along with the head of the reviewed service consistent with previous reviews.

JW asked if meetings will be able to resume in person from July, JG responded it is uncertain, but it could be by June for boards such as the Environment, Housing, and Communities. IM added that there are additional considerations for council staff who are in many cases not yet fully integrated back into offices or regular places of work.

JG thanked KB and IM for their presentations.

59 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next zoom meeting is scheduled for Friday 21st of May at 12:45 for a 1.00pm start