

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 21ST JANUARY, 2022

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Tenants: Sallie Bannatyne (SBa), Maddy Hunter, Rita Ighade, Jackie Worthington

Guests: Yvonne Davies (Independent Tenant Advisor), Emma Gilpin (TPAS), Cllr Mohammed Rafique (Executive Member for Environment, Housing and Communities), Neil Battison, Dennis Moody

Officers: Ian Montgomery (Service Manager), Tracey McGarry

Apologies: Peter Middleton, Mary Farish, Stanley Burton and Peter Greenwood

1 Welcome Introductions and Apologies

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

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

Matters arising

At the previous TSB meeting in December the panel asked for more information on the costs of the former citywide forums and therefore potential savings by creating the new single tenant panel. IM explained the cost of running the citywide service improvement groups was in the region of £25,000 a year which took into account travel, refreshments and officer resources. IM to share a summary table with the board, that breaks this down. IM shared that the cost of running the forums was only part of the reasons for change,

and how it was important to look at the outcomes and overall value for money of the engagement structure.

Chair's update

JG attended a meeting on 8th December with the Environment, Housing and Communities Board and reminded those present that Cllr Rafique will be joining the TSB at 2.30pm. JG confirmed that future meetings can go ahead in the Civic Hall with an option for guests or board members to join online if they wish.

6 Phase 2 TPAS - Appraisal of the Single Tenant Panel

JG gave a brief overview of work to date and, welcoming the input from members from former citywide groups into the current stage 2 of the boards review.

Emma Gilpin, TPAS Consultancy Manager presented an overall appraisal of the single tenant voice panel – sharing what she felt were the opportunities/benefits and areas where the board and Housing Leeds may want to clarify or explore further.

Emma highlighted that the pandemic offered organisations the chance to advance on their use of online technology to access and engage more effectively with the wider tenant voice. This had opened up benefits such as those taking part can commit more or less time to be involved in specific topics where they feel their knowledge in a particular area is useful to influence a service through a task and finish approach.

Some of the points raised by Emma included:

- Clearly specify the topic of what volunteers are getting 'involved' in – it's really important to be clear from the outset about what the ask is and what we'd like from tenants.
- Ensure that within what is being created, to include a way for tenants to hold the organisation to account
- Maintain two-way communication and provide an evidence-based voice with those who have lived experiences.
- Think beyond age and issues about 'representation', more about who is using the services and who can offer the best insights about their experiences.
- That overall it was important to define the purpose and role of the new panel.

SB raised the difference in structure and regulations between housing associations in comparison to local councils. EG mentioned that TPAS have been engaging more with councils over the past 18 months and have a devoted practitioner group for council and ALMO members. Gateshead Council, for example, are working on a new framework and tenant voice panel similar to Leeds so there may be an opportunity to connect with Gateshead about this.

JG questioned the role of the Tenant Voice Panel being a separate forum and asked how TSB can provide a function to oversee and evaluate the outcomes. EG provided advice on how the Tenant Voice Panel could specifically investigate services with focus on a themed topic but designed in a way that could include the role of tenants being involved in monitoring the delivery or quality of services and the new consumer standards for example, without creating additional standing forums. Or, there could also be a role for the TSB to undertake this function with close working links with the panel. JG proposed that the role of the panel is discussed more in depth at the next meeting and thanked Emma for attending and providing support to the board.

JG invited Yvonne Davies for any observations on the presentation and discussion with TPAS. YD echoed the importance of role clarity of the new panel, and how the strategic function of holding the landlord to account needed to be designed and clarified within the panel, or as part of the role of the TSB.

For example, the TSB may review the insight and impacts from the wider work of the tenant voice panel to make sure the service was responding to all forms of tenant feedback as effectively as possible.

JG reminded stage 4 of the current review topic was to look at the strategic influence of tenants, and so this was also connected to stage 4.

7 Cllr Rafique - Executive Member for Environment, Housing and Communities

JG welcomed Cllr Rafique to this afternoons meeting and invited all to introduce themselves and their role. Cllr Rafique supported the board with their enquiry and is happy to work together with the council to help improve tenant engagement and other services for the benefit if all tenants and residents. Cllr Rafique thanked JG and the Tenant Engagement Service for keeping him up to date with the work of the Tenant Scrutiny Board as a whole

Cllr Rafique answered some general questions from board members around the current demand for council homes, longer waiting times and the time take to let homes and parking issues across the city.

IM reminded the board that there had been a lot of content to consider from TPAS and that the board's role isn't necessarily to come up with a solution but could consider recommendations that describe the kind of outcomes that a new tenant voice panel would achieve.

JG thanked Cllr Rafique for attending and will look forward to working with him in later stages of the review.

8 Forward Plan

JG suggested the possibility of inviting a representative from Gateshead to attend the TSB but EG mentioned that this may be something to do after the ideas had been explored further, so the boards work in Leeds worked for Leeds and wasn't overly influenced by another body. IM shared that we have links with Gateshead Council for us to pick this up if the board wished. IM reminded the panel that presentations delivered from the service in previous meetings did outline the role of the tenant voice panel – so perhaps these could be re-visited, and improved following today and with input from the board and it's guests from the former citywide members.

JG feels that Stage 2 is aiming to be completed by end of April 2022.

Suggestion to go ahead and arrange a meeting to share ideas and practice with Gateshead Council but for TSB to have met first to determine how to move forward with their framework and what works best.

IM to revisit the slides shared in October's meeting as this afternoon's TPAS presentation has provided useful input for everyone and noticed some elements that were outlined on the slides can be included.

NB mentioned that looking at the bigger picture is important and gathering all views within one forum whether good or bad will help towards creating a desired structure.

JG to contact the citywide members who were in attendance to capture their input.

9 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday 18th February 2022 at Civic Hall.