

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 22ND JUNE, 2018

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Michael Healey, Maddie Hunter, Rita Ighade, Peter Middleton and Jackie Worthington

1 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

2 Late Items

The Chair asked about estate walkabouts, noting that at the informal meeting in April, it had been raised by some members that walkabouts were not being carried out. David Longthorpe was asked what happens in a situation where no Councillor or tenants attend, and what checks are in place that a walkabout has actually been carried out. DL explained that a walkabout should still take place and the relevant feedback forms completed, which should then be sent out to local Councillors and also tenants who might normally come along. DL will carry out checks and report back findings on this to the Board.

RESOLVED – DL to report back on findings on estate walkabouts to the Board.

3 Apologies for Absence

Roderic Morgan.

4 Minutes - 18th April 2018

The Chair welcomed Peter Middleton back to the Board after a period of absence.

It was confirmed that Olga Gailite had now resigned from the Board. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, passed on thanks for the work done in the previous three inquiries.

The Chair welcomed Colin Halliwell who attended the meeting with a view of becoming a Board Member.

It was noted no meeting has been held of the Environment, Housing and Communities Board since the last meeting of the Tenant Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2018 be approved as a correct record.

5 East Leeds Repairs Inquiry Recommendation 8

The Chair introduced this item and confirmed that since the last meeting of the Board, a request had been sent to Leeds Building Services for guidance in regard to a recommendation made by Tenant Scrutiny Board in last years report. The response to recommendation 8 was that it wouldn't always be possible for a named officer from Leeds Building Services to be available in the Contact Centre as planned, perhaps due to sickness or leave, as there wouldn't be anyone there to respond to queries. It was therefore suggested the Repeat Call Team at Leeds Building Services are the named officers for the Contact Centre in case of query to ensure a response is provided quickly and effectively. It was noted that the Repeat Call Team are based in Seacroft rather than at the Contact Centre.

RESOLVED – That recommendation 8 of the East Leeds Repairs Inquiry be marked as completed.

6 Lifts in Cottingley Towers

The Chair introduced this item which had been raised as a late item at the last Board meeting. The feedback received was that the wheel which takes the lift up or down had excessively worn which is an unusual occurrence for this part to go wrong and as such a new part had to be made. The part then took seven weeks to be delivered with a further week before being fitted. The Board noted there had been an acceptance that there was poor communication from Housing Leeds to tenants about this work, especially given the size of this block of flats and the excessive use the lift that was working was under. It was also noted that during this period contractors were fitting sprinklers in the block adding to that stress.

A Board Member asked would the same manufacturer be used across the City, and could this be an issue for all lifts?

RESOLVED – Housing Leeds to be asked if this issue could be a problem in other blocks where the lifts are replaced in the city.

7 Anti Social Behaviour Recommendations Response

The Chair introduced this item and thanked the two Officers in attendance, Harvinder Saimbhi and David Longthorpe for their responses.

The Officers proceeded through each of the recommendations, whether accepted or rejected and gave their comments around this decision.

Recommendation 1 – That the Anti-Social Behaviour team carry out an initiative such as a 'Noise Action Week' to provide a wide range of

information about noise, around prevention in the first place and how to deal with this if it does occur.

HS noted that this recommendation was accepted.

HS noted that there are concerns around noise and the service wishes to carry out an action week, taking advantage of social media, referencing tenancy action and also the sanctions for causing a noise nuisance. HS noted that we will change the student version of the noise awareness leaflet so that it is suitable for more general tenant usage. It was explained that we would track the progress of this work to measure its impact.

A discussion was held around laminate flooring and that this is now specified in the tenancy agreement review which will hopefully help reduce the instances of this occurring. It was noted that Housing Leeds could explain the different types of laminate flooring which is less noisy than others. It was noted that tenants themselves should have responsibility as well for preventing noise in the first place. DL noted that noise is difficult to eliminate completely.

A member asked if fire doors are checked as they can be very noisy and can be heard in individual flats. DL noted that there are daily checks being carried out by various officers who should be picking this up as an issue.

RESOLVED – The Board resolved that recommendation 1 is not fully implemented, progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.

Recommendation 2 – That the Board support the implementation of a new computer system for Anti-Social Behaviour cases and that the Board are kept informed of the implementation of this.

DL noted this recommendation was accepted. It was noted the new system would be made up of various modules within Housing Management. It was noted that since the recommendation responses had been made, the date for the lettings module has been delayed and so the whole programme is pushed back a few months. However the principle is agreed and the intention is for the new system to manage cases whereas the current system only records. However this wouldn't be until later next year.

It was noted by a member that during evidence gathering, officers had reported that the letters produced by the current system cannot be easily amended to reflect the current case. However DL noted they can but it isn't straightforward and so the new system would look to address this.

A member asked if the new system would be one which could be used when officers are visiting tenants out on the estate via a tablet device. DL explained that this was the case and as it was just one system we would be using things would be linked up which they are not currently in some instances.

RESOLVED – The Board resolved that recommendation 2 is not fully implemented, progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.

Recommendation 3 – The Council look at their current plans and consider in certain circumstances to use rooftop signals to provide centrally linked up CCTV quicker – but with a longer term objective of moving over to fibre.

HS noted that this recommendation was partially accepted.

It was noted a modernisation programme is ongoing – with some blocks having a permanent fibre solution. It was explained this is a long and complex process and as learning will occur throughout the programme, the plan may be changed in order to reflect this.

A question was asked around camera funding. HS explained that there are often different sources of funding depending on the situation.

A member asked if the cameras with poorer picture quality would be replaced first or if it would be by the most problematic areas. HS noted analogue cameras would be moved over to digital and new cameras installed where there is a need and a case for installation can be made based on the prevalence of crime and disorder.

A question was asked if all the cameras would be linked up. HS explained that Council cameras would be linked up to LeedsWatch, but they wouldn't be linked up automatically to the Police, however if requested the data could be passed to the Police if appropriate.

RESOLVED – The Board resolved that recommendation 3 is not fully implemented, progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.

Recommendation 4 – That the Council make available a clear code of practice around the sharing of CCTV camera pictures to members of the public.

HS noted that this recommendation was not accepted as there are already clear guidelines of how this can be obtained via the LeedsWatch website. DL added that there is a misconception as to who can access the cameras, not least that Housing Officers can view footage. However this isn't the case and Housing Officers have to go through the established protocols for viewing images and sometimes their requests are refused.

A question was asked if the Police can come into the Housing Office and request images, but it was explained that LeedsWatch as the data controller would need to receive a request from them. DL noted that a small number of cameras are recorded locally and the Housing Office do have access to these but any requests for the images would still need to be made formally, however longer term upgrades to cameras would mean these will be linked up to LeedsWatch and fall under the existing protocols.

RESOLVED – The Board resolved that recommendation 4 is achieved.

Recommendation 5 – That the Council agree, as a matter of priority, their approach to carrying out future training with staff, especially in regard to the new IT system which will be implemented in the future.

DL noted that this recommendation was accepted.

DL explained the current training which had been carried out with new starters recently. Refresher training is carried out at all times, through the internal staff newsletter and also at Wednesday afternoon training. The project plan of the new IT system for Housing Management also has training for staff built into this so officers can use the system from day one. HS noted that LASBT Officers work in the Housing Office to help with joint working.

A member asked, given a lot of the recommendations are marked as ongoing, if the inquiry has had any impact on the service? HS noted that from LASBT that they have welcomed these ideas and made procedures more robust based on the inquiry as it has been carried out.

RESOLVED – The Board resolved that recommendation 5 is achieved.

Recommendation 6 – That the Council consider providing information that reporting Hate Crime does not affect an asylum case which may be ongoing.

HS noted that whilst she understood the reasoning behind this recommendation, it was noted this recommendation is rejected, as the Council are not responsible for the decision on an asylum case.

HS outlined some of the work which is currently being carried out such as door knocking and using translators to explain that they shouldn't have to tolerate hate crime, also how the Council give background when G4S are buying properties to ensure they are located in as safe an area as possible. A question was asked around why using a third party for this – HS explained that this is a national contract from the Home Office and asylum seekers must be housed in a G4S property until their status is confirmed, at which point they can move out of G4S properties.

A member asked if anyone on an estate would know that they are asylum seekers, and it was noted that this isn't the case. It was also clarified that none of the G4S properties are Council housing stock.

RESOLVED – The Board noted that recommendation 6 has been rejected.

Recommendation 7 – That the Council consider providing information that reporting Domestic Violence can be done with confidence.

DL noted this recommendation was accepted, commenting this is a Council priority and a team within Safer Leeds are working to promote this and how it can be reported in confidence.

Housing Leeds have various posters in HUBs, Housing Offices and is also applying and working with Safer Leeds to obtain the Quality Mark for Domestic Violence to ensure staff are aware of the signs that domestic violence might be occurring and understand why victims might choose not to disclose. DL noted that there are also domestic violence champions who come together for joint learning and ensure teams are updated. It is important that we don't just wait for tenants to come tell us and that we take a pro-active approach.

RESOLVED – The Board resolved that recommendation 7 is achieved.

Recommendation 8 – That the Council consider introducing a form of audit of ASB cases which have been ongoing for a period of time.

DL noted this recommendation was accepted, and has been picked up during the course of this inquiry and has been introduced accordingly.

RESOLVED – The Board resolved that recommendation 8 is achieved.

Recommendation 9 – That the Council consider looking at the survey being used and identify if dissatisfaction is more predominant in Housing Officer cases or Anti-Social Behaviour Team cases.

HS explained this recommendation has been rejected. Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team already survey tenants on this, surveys being undertaken at four weeks and then at case closure. LASBT then look to take any improvements from this feedback.

DL explained that there hasn't been a satisfaction process for this within Housing Leeds as any cases which are not resolved are passed onto the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and then that questionnaire on satisfaction would be acted on.

A member noted that they were surprised this wasn't agreed given this wasn't around apportioning blame across each service, however it was noted that there is dissatisfaction and carrying out this survey would help identify this. It may also identify if the workload of the Housing Officer was having an impact and a separate survey might be the only way to find out if this is the case.

HS noted that the new system may give us some learning and that there is a good working relationship between the services, so that officers can be confident that cases can be passed to LASBT when the Housing Office have completed their work and that any joint learning is picked up for the benefit of all parties concerned.

RESOLVED – The Board noted disappointment with the response on recommendation 9 and that it is not fully implemented, progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring.

Recommendation 10 – That the Council provide more information around the Mediation Service, and more importantly the benefits to this in potentially resolving complaints between parties.

DL explained this recommendation is partially accepted, however we have to accept that not everyone wants to engage with mediation, and although it has been included in the tenancy agreement, that enforcing someone to go down mediation is still difficult, although officers always try to encourage people to take this up.

RESOLVED – The Board resolved that recommendation 10 is not fully implemented, progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.

The Chair thanked both HS and DL and those Officers who came before the Board over the past year. He also thanked the Board for their work and explained that this report will go to VITAL and also Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board.

8 Action Plan for Tenant Scrutiny Board

This item was deferred due to time constraints to the next meeting of the Board.

9 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 20th July 2018 at 1:15pm
(Pre meeting for all Board members at 1:00pm)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3:00 PM