

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 17TH AUGUST, 2018

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Colin Halliwell, Michael Healey and Peter Middleton

19 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

20 Late Items

The Chair admitted a late item received from VITAL (Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds) regarding their suggestions for a future inquiry topic. Members were asked to note and consider the suggestions made, which will form part of the discussion at the meeting in September.

21 Apologies for Absence

Maddy Hunter, Rita Ighade, Roderic Morgan, Jackie Worthington

22 Minutes - 20th July 2018

The Chair noted the response received around the queries raised from the last meeting around some of the performance indicators.

Q What's the definition of a Section 106 and explanation of this in relation to new affordable homes

A Section 106 is a planning condition that ensures a number of units built by the developer as part of their overall housing development are transferred to an Affordable Housing Provider who will manage the units and let them as an Affordable Housing product (see below). The mix of products is defined by Planning Policy.

Q New Affordable Homes – does this include properties which are to be sold?

A Affordable Housing can mean a variety of products – these are the Government definitions, for consistency purposes:

- Social Rented: Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with Homes England.

- Affordable Rented: Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent
- Intermediate Housing: Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

Q Empty Properties – what is included in this figure?

A Long term empties are defined as housing that has been vacant for 6 or more months. In April 2012 we had 5777 long term empties across the city. A commitment was made as part of the city's Core Strategy (key planning document) that we would reduce the number of local term empties by 2000 by the end of March 2017. Hence 3777. This is vital to the Core Strategy because making use of existing housing stock means that 2000 new homes do not need to be built - hence protecting green field and green belt land from development

Q Annual Home Visits – how many have not had a visit for over two years and what process is used to deal with these cases

A The process for an Annual Home Visit begins with a letter being sent to the tenant for an appointment. If the visit is unsuccessful (e.g. either not in the property or they refuse access), then 3 further letters are sent to the tenant giving 14 days, then 7 days, and finally 24 hours' notice of an Annual Home Visit.

During this time the housing officer would also make other contact, e.g. telephone/email depending on the tenant's preferred methods of contact. The housing officer will also attempt to liaise with gas inspection checks and any other Housing Leeds contact that has been arranged (e.g. planned works, repair visits etc).

If after this stage the tenant has not granted access for an AHV for two years, then Housing Leeds can consider a range of options including issuing a housing caution to the tenant, using an external process server to contact the tenant and arrange an appointment and ultimately taking legal action to evict the tenant. This would be a matter of last resort and we would take into account all the circumstances of the tenant, including any health or vulnerability issues that they may have.

The vast majority of Annual Home Visits are completed successfully with tenants; in the period 1st April 2016 to 1st April 2018, 234 tenants (less than 0.5% of the total) have not had an Annual Home Visit during this time; these are at various stages of the process described above.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2018 be approved as a correct record.

23 Draft June Environment, Housing and Communities Board Minutes 26 July 2018

The minutes were presented for information only.

The Chair noted that he had attended this Board on behalf of Tenant Scrutiny to present the Anti-Social Behaviour Inquiry report and recommendations.

In summary, the Chair noted the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board welcomed the measure to hold a noise action week, and agreed with this Board's comments around some of the responses to the recommendations as complacent. The Chair noted that it was announced at this meeting there would be a review of the service and as such, the Board's six-monthly recommendation tracking would be deferred until March 2019 so any changes proposed by the review into the service can be factored into any recommendation updates, alongside information from the noise action week.

24 Next Inquiry Discussion

The Chair welcomed Councillor Barry Anderson to the meeting and explained he had been invited to share with the Board his thoughts around possible inquiry topics the Board may want to investigate in the coming year.

Councillor Anderson began by explaining some of the work which the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board will be looking at this year, which includes

- Financial health, in relation to Housing Revenue Account expenditure
- ASB – carrying out further investigation into street intervention in the city centre
- Looking at how drink, drugs and mental health issues can be prevented, alongside looking at the managed controlled zone.

Topics which Councillor Anderson suggested could be looked at included:-

- Refuse collection – why some areas are experiencing problems in having their bins emptied; is there a way that more tenants could have a green and brown bin collections; how do we get tenants in mutli storey flats to recycle more.
- Council Housing Growth Programme – acknowledging there needs to be more Council housing, but how do we address issues such as tenant perception – an example was given that it can take 72 months to be rehoused in some areas and this is because of other tenants getting priority.
- Review of Housing Advisory Panels and how they can bring in more money to support projects. Also how can we gain more tenant representation on Boards such as these and understanding why tenants don't want to be involved.

Picking up on the suggestions made by Councillor Anderson, a question was asked around the 'One Council Approach' when it came to waste and wasn't a bespoke approach surely an advantage given it isn't appropriate to apply a standard approach in some of these estates?

Councillor Anderson acknowledged this and agreed in some estates a more bespoke service would be more appropriate in order to provide a more efficient service to residents, he gave two examples where a more bespoke approach would be more appropriate firstly where residents are living longer in their homes and as such it is not always easy for them to move the bin out to the kerbside for collection, and secondly given that some families are larger than others, some have children and others not which has an impact on the amount of waste being produced.

There was a question asked concerning fly tipping, a member recalled an incident when a tenant reported this only to find the Council tried to charge the tenant for having it taken away, even though it wasn't theirs to begin with. Councillor Anderson noted in those instances, Housing Management needs to work closer with the refuse service and also try to identify who was carrying out the fly tipping in the first place.

A member noted that the size of bins is an issue, and also issues around what sort of plastics can be recycled and not. Councillor Anderson noted that in the case of recycling, that there are issues around where contamination of the recycling can be caused by just one person putting the wrong thing in the bin, and that recycling targets had not been met. Education of tenants on what can and cannot be recycled continues to be a focus.

The Chair asked about the Grenfell inquiry carried out in Leeds and what happens next. Councillor Anderson noted that a pause would be right at this stage whilst we understand what the national approach would be as it was noted that money which the Council requested for sprinklers was turned down by central government.

The Chair thanked Councillor Anderson for the continued support he gives to the Tenant Scrutiny Board.

25 Next Inquiry Discussion with Chief Officer, Housing Management

The Chair welcomed Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management to the meeting and explained that she had been invited to share with the Tenant Scrutiny Board thoughts around possible inquiry topics the Board may want to investigate in the coming year.

In regard to areas the Board could look into, JW explained that:-

Tenant involvement – whilst we have a Strategic Tenant Engagement Framework in place what value could the Board offer on how we can enhance this service and broaden our engagement much wider and in a different way. One of our key areas of focus is moving towards communicating and

operating differently via digital methods rather than keeping to more traditional methods.

Older Persons Service - JW noted an inquiry could focus around the Older Persons Service, and explained there are over 4000 units in different types of schemes – what value the Board can offer in developing the service further.

A question by a member was asked about cleaners in blocks and if they have been given more time to carry out checks on blocks brought about after Grenfell, and if not do they have enough time to carry out the checks? Also it was asked what assurances we have that they are being carried out. JW explained that supervisors are at present doing random checks, and went on to explain there is a pilot scheme being tried out by which technology will be used that will enable managers to know the day the check was done, the precise time it was done, and on what floor it was.

A question was asked around enhanced blocks and how these are determined. It was noted that this is based on a satisfaction survey which was carried out alongside other measures such as a high turnover of tenancies and a number of indicators. The service Housing Management service has reviewed resources and realigned officers to be able to support the blocks and offer an enhanced service. It was noted this new approach was initially rolled out to 19 blocks, however a further four have now been included. JW explained each enhanced block has a plan and noted this is a resource intensive service but is showing positive outcomes which shows the approach is working. It was noted in time, the block could no longer be deemed 'enhanced' once satisfaction had improved and the service could then move to another block which may be suffering from dissatisfaction.

In closing, the Chair thanked both Councillor Anderson and Jill Wildman for their attendance today.

26 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Friday 21st September 2018 at 1:15pm
(Pre meeting for all Board members at 1:00pm)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 2:55 PM