

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 21ST DECEMBER, 2018

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Maddie Hunter, Peter Middleton, Roderic Morgan and Jackie Worthington

41 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

42 Late Items

None.

43 Apologies for Absence

Michael Healey, Rita Ighade.

44 Minutes - 19th October 2018

The Chair opened the meeting and introduced Stephen Ilee to the Board as a new member of Tenant Scrutiny Board. SI gave a brief overview of his previous work with the Board and how he hoped he could provide a positive contribution to the Board going forward.

The Chair also explained that Lee Ward would be leaving his current role as Scrutiny Officer and as such this would be his last meeting with the Board. The Chair and Vice Chair gave thanks for his work with the Board and wished him success in the future. The Chair noted that Navigation House need to consider the January meeting and preparation for this given it would come soon after Christmas. The Scrutiny Officers in attendance noted this and agreed to make enquiries to minimise any impact of LW's departure on the January meeting.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2018 be approved as a correct record.

45 Minutes of the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

Information only item.

46 Recruitment to TSB Update

The Chair explained that he would be changing the agenda order, so the item on recruitment update would be first, given its importance to the Board at present.

A draft leaflet was distributed to all members for information, its purpose being to raise awareness of the board and advertise the opportunities for new members.

KM noted that at the last meeting there had been a discussion around recruiting members from other involved groups of Housing Leeds. KM explained that whilst this suggestion from the board had been acknowledged, it was important that the Board recognised Housing Leeds ambition to broaden participation. KM explained this further advising that there are currently approximately 155 tenants that are involved with Housing Leeds across various forums such as VITAL, HAP's, High Rise Strategy Group and the Repairs & Investment Group. 49 of the 155 are involved in more than one forum and the average age of members is 63, looking further into this 48% are aged 65 or over.

KM gave an update on current work he is involved in to analyse the use of Annual Home Visit data and subsequent recruitment of tenants expressing a willingness to become involved. KM referred to his personal experience of using the data to try and identify new members for the High Rise Strategy Group, where he had contacted 74 tenants and recruited one new member. Noting that other officers will contact tenants independently in respect of individual forums (with some delays from receipt of interest until contact), he was inclined to suggest that Housing Leeds should be contacting tenants more quickly on receiving AHV data and making them aware of the full range of involvement opportunities (an A4 menu of involvement' sheet was referred to) rather than ad-hoc opportunities as they arise.

It was also noted that the 'menu of involvement' has been updated and re-worded and the Tenant Scrutiny Board is now listed at the top of the menu rather than lower down to make it more prominent.

The Scrutiny Officer noted that at the previous meeting there was a discussion around the Board's Terms of Reference and the provision that members of Board do not hold a position on any Housing Leeds City Wide group. The Scrutiny Officer would therefore aim to facilitate a meeting between the Governance Team, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board and Housing Leeds to clarify any scope to amend this rule. The Chair noted that the reasoning behind this rule this has been raised by Councillors before to which a member noted this may have been to preserve independence of the Board due to the type of inquiry they may carry out. The Chair noted that he would argue that Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) are local rather than citywide and that Councillors sit on HAPs as well as Scrutiny Boards and that if elected members can do this then why can't tenants? A member noted that whilst HAPs are local, they and other forums feed into other citywide bodies i.e. the Cross City HAP Chairs Group which mean that the conflict of interest could occur that way. Another member spoke about whilst not objecting to HAP members joining the Board, that there is still a large risk of someone being on multiple Boards, and that this is currently occurring. A compromise suggested was that someone should be able to join the Tenant Scrutiny

Board and one other group only to try and prevent someone from being on multiple forums.

The Board carried out a vote as to the best way to proceed on this matter giving support to the Chair taking this forward via a meeting with Housing and Governance.

RESOLVED – That work continues to be carried out to clarify the reasoning behind HAP members being unable to join the Tenant Scrutiny Board.

47 Management Styles in Multi Storey Flats

The Chair introduced Sharon Guy to the Board for this item.

SG explained that the High Rise Strategy was introduced in 2016 and contains a 10 year investment programme and service delivery. The Board were explained the differences between the three management styles in multi storey blocks. In identifying the management style which would be applied to a block a number of factors were taken into account such as turnover in the block, demand, number of communal repairs, ASB levels and tenant perception (from the STAR survey). Housing Officers working on an enhanced block have patch size of 100-200 compared to a standard patch of 300-400.

Alongside this strategy is an investment programme of work on high rise blocks, which includes CCTV and connection to LeedsWatch. It was noted by SG that enhanced blocks have been worked on first in order to see if it had a positive impact. This improvement work will also provide much better quality images and in enhanced blocks cameras are also in the stairwells and landings. Improved security measures have also been carried out on enhanced blocks and also standard management blocks where required.

SG noted that the STAR survey results would be available soon and the service is looking at this with interest to see if there has been a positive impact or not.

Going forward, it was noted that an enhanced block could be taken out of this type of management if there are improvements and new blocks could come into enhanced management style.

A question was asked around the fire safety checks which are carried out by the cleaners and if they are getting more time to carry out these checks. SG explained she was not aware of any increase however enhanced blocks do receive a second check.

A question was asked about how blocks with a bad 'reputation' were being given more investment than what could be termed 'good blocks'. SG explained that the overall aim of the high rise strategy is to improve all blocks and that all blocks will receive investment but someone has to be first and someone has to be last.

Asked about Grenfell report and future investment as no additional government money for this work. SG explained that the capital programme is broken down into several parts and not all the investment is focused around enhanced blocks but this work is to be carried out over five years for some elements of the programme.

A member noted that in the past a blocks residents would be informed when work would be carried out to their block, however this no longer occurs and this partly drives the view that enhanced blocks are receiving all the investment. SG explained the recent engagement session in all blocks, and at these the investment plans should have been available for residents who came to them. However SG noted that Property and Contracts can provide this information but agreed that communication of this work programme is an area of improvement.

A discussion was held around block champions and that when this was presented to the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board it felt this was a 'done deal' and could the role of block champions be explained? The Scrutiny Officer explained that on the back of the Grenfell tragedy that all opportunities for tenants to be engaged with the Housing Service be explored. Benchmarking with other housing organisations bearing in mind not all residents want to attend meetings. It was also made clear Housing Leeds would not want to create a situation where tenants i.e. champions are becoming responsible for fire safety. Working with the High Rise Strategy Group, a questionnaire was developed which residents can complete online in order to give feedback on their block and by doing this a resident can pick and choose what they want to do within giving feedback on their block. The Chair noted that since his attendance at the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board that the role of Champions had been watered down.

A member noted that the block champion role in the past was subject to tenants who volunteered for this role being harassed when things don't go right and that they were being blamed for things which ultimately they couldn't control as it was down to Housing Leeds. It was explained that this shouldn't happen and complaints around things which are raised by block champions should be referred to Housing Leeds.

The Chair in closing this item noted he would keep the Board updated around the block champion role through his attendance of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board. The Chair thanked Sharon Guy for her attendance today.

48 Wifi in Multi Storey Flats

The Chair introduced Keith Mack to present this item. KM explained that this work was part of a wider city ambition to broaden digital inclusion by providing internet access for Council tenants. It was reported that whilst only 13% of the Leeds population are digitally excluded this figure rises to between 25 and 33% for council tenants.

It was explained that seven blocks had been included within the free Wi-Fi pilot programme, blocks having been identified in part by the commercial interests and scheme viability of the internet service provider, but also to blocks where we are aware that internet usage is not very high. Two suppliers are currently providing the free service across 5 blocks in return for which the supplier has reduced costs for siting its equipment/antenna on the blocks roof. The pilots will run for up to 18 months. At the end of the 18 month pilot a review will be carried out to determine if the scheme should continue but this may depend on both take up and whether the pilot has been a commercial success (i.e. the supplier has generated new business through the equipment to offset its free service).

KM noted that the success has been better in some blocks than others and this is in part down to the construction of the blocks, and one supplier had enhanced the service by providing individual routers.

The Chair asked how the free Wi-Fi works for tenants who are already tied into contracts with suppliers for internet and what would the price be after the free period as this would drive whether it would be worthwhile to take it up. KM clarified that it was down to tenants to decide whether to cancel existing contracts noting that this was purely a Wi-Fi service rather than a TV/phone/internet package and any decision on what would happen following the pilots is something which Commercial Asset Management would be better placed to advise on. A member noted that if this was clearer that take-up may improve, and another member noted that when they were on the High Rise Strategy Group that this was brought up then.

49 Work Plan for Tenant Scrutiny Board

The Board were presented with this for information and a request was made to include Councillor Coupar to attend at a future meeting.

A member noted that minutes of other forums are not being published on the Councils public website as regularly as they should be with some having not been uploaded for several months.

RESOLVED – The Scrutiny Officer noted that he would take this up with the Tenant Involvement team to ensure up to date minutes are being regularly provided online.

50 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Friday 18th January 2018 at 1:15pm
(Pre meeting for all Board members at 1:00pm)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 2:55 PM