

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 18TH JANUARY, 2019

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Stephen Ilee and Peter Middleton

51 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

No exempt items.

52 Late Items

None.

53 Apologies for Absence

Michael Healey, Rita Ighade, Roderic Morgan, Jackie Worthington.

54 Minutes - 21st December 2018

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed the attendees, and introduced Ian Parr who has taken over from Lee Ward.

SI commented that previous minutes from the various tenant's groups, such as the Repairs and Investment Group, High Rise Strategy group and VOLT have not all been updated to the Leeds City council website and are seemingly some months behind. The Scrutiny Officer (KM) agreed to take this back and clarify procedures to ensure all obligations were being met. An explanation was offered that minutes of these meetings are not normally uploaded until they are approved at the following meeting, which can lead to a one or two month delay depending on whether meetings are monthly or bi-monthly.

JG reiterated that for the Tenant Scrutiny Board there is a 10 day limit to publish the minutes, and that the agenda should be published at least 10 days prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED – The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 December 2018 were passed as a true record

55 Recruitment to Tenant Scrutiny Board

KM updated the board members that the leaflet shown to them in a previous meeting advertising the various ways to become involved with the TSB had been circulated via email to over 1000 tenants who had expressed an interest

in being involved during either their annual home visit or in response to the STAR survey. The leaflets circulated on Facebook had been seen by over 5,000 people, with approximately 300 engagements (likes/shares/comments etc.). KM advised he had received four responses from interested individuals, and is in the process of contacting them via phone and email to obtain further details having undertaken the appropriate checks to ensure the individuals are not in rent arrears, and have no antisocial behaviour/neighbour dispute issues. JG mentioned that he has heard from another potentially interested individual and will pass details on to KM.

SI enquired whether KM had spoken to the individuals, expressing that anybody who responded should receive a personal response and not a generic reply via email or telephone. KM confirmed he had spoken with two respondents and had left answerphone messages with the other two.

KM acknowledged that the global email that was sent out may have been deemed impersonal (as it was addressed from Tenant Engagement Team), but assured the members this was to manage responses noting that anyone contacting the office would be passed directly on to KM or contacted directly as soon as possible.

SB enquired about a letter she had received from a Tenant Engagement Officer (TEO) in the post, advertising the HAPs and other ways to be involved with LCC. SB asked whether the details of any respondents to that letter would also be passed on to KM. KM clarified that responses to targeted letters sent out to tenants in specific HAP areas would be passed to the appropriate TEO to follow up.

JG asked if SI wished to lead on issues of recruitment and provide future updates to the board, as he particularly had expressed concern in this area. SI agreed and there were no objections from any of the other board members. SI noted that following last month's previous suggestion that current members of the HAPs should be able to join the TSB, advice from Legal Services confirmed this would be a conflict of interest and therefore not possible. DL added that this was an issue raised when the three ALMO tenant scrutiny panels became one, and that it was agreed that there would be a conflict of interest.

JG enquired about progress on his request to meet with Housing Leeds and Legal & Democratic Services (governance) to which KM advised he is putting together a briefing note for the head of service and will update the board when further details are confirmed.

JG informed the board that the recruitment flyer posted on Twitter had not displayed correctly and he advised the communications team to remove it. KM said he was unaware of this, and told the board as far as he knew the leaflet was displaying correctly as it was correct on Facebook, but he will seek clarification from the communications team.

SI mentioned he had recently been in Merrion House, and there were no leaflets or advertising materials promoting opportunities for tenant involvement displayed on the walls or notice board of the building, and also none in the Horsforth housing office.

56 Update on Estate Standards

JG introduced David Longthorpe (Head of Housing Management, Resources & Housing) to discuss the two recommendations given a monitoring brief by the board.

Recommendation 3 – That the Council introduces the best waste collection solution for individual estates, even if that results in variations across the city

DL discussed the first monitoring brief regarding the refuse service, referring to the issue with the bin rooms for the Wortley blocks being closed off and unusable while repairs were taking place. DL confirmed repairs have been concluded and the chutes and bin room are operational.

DL advised the Refuse Service will be conducting a review of waste strategy, concerning the collection routes taken and new housing built since the previous review 10 years ago, which is estimated to take approximately six months to complete. The Refuse Service are aiming to align their strategy with national guidelines released in December, and are working with WRAP to assess how collection and recycling systems can be changed and/or improved. The standardisation of collection around Leeds with the collection service in other authorities would be beneficial to increase the amount of recyclable waste, and ways to achieve this goal are being considered.

JG raised an issue that waste collection is not tailored to the needs of high rise blocks or individual streets where access can be problematic and would require a more bespoke approach. DL confirmed there are already some bespoke solutions in place, for example having a kerbside bag collection on streets that are too steep for wheelie bins, but the review will help to solve further issues that are not yet satisfactorily dealt with.

PM pointed out that there used to be stickers on wheelie bins that told residents what kinds of waste may be put in bins and asked if they were still in use. DL answered that the stickers and letters are expensive to produce and distribute to every Leeds household, and the same information can be more cheaply and effectively accessed online. Residents' awareness of recyclable material can also be increased if new collection services for glass and food for example were introduced in line with existing collections in other authorities.

SB asked if there were bespoke strategies for each high rise block, and suggested solutions might be found by discussing issues with the cleaners. DL clarified the strategy is primarily to deal with the external removal of waste from the blocks and not the internal waste, but chutes are provided, and much work is put in to educate residents about the potential fire hazard and risk of

leaving rubbish in corridors and other communal spaces. Regarding external solutions, DL gave examples of some blocks having more frequent collections and others having outside bin storage to keep in line with the needs of the block.

JG asked about the issue of overflowing bins, as if bins are too full or there are large items in them they are not taken by the collections. JG asked if fly tipping was still as big an issue as it had been two years ago. DL replied that following meetings with the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Teams and the introduction of a charge for the collection of large items it was considered that there would be an increase in fly tipping, however the statistics across Leeds show that there has been no significant increase in cases. PM added that in his sheltered housing complex, large items are placed in the bins that are not put there by residents which would not count on fly tipping statistics. DL confirmed these cases do not count towards the statistics, but cleaners who find large items can report them for removal and where possible perpetrators are identified and appropriate action taken.

JG asked if there are still days on which skips are provided for residents to dispose of large items, DL responded there are action days but their purpose is not for disposal of large items, but are to highlight areas in need of action. DL informed the board that the council pick up service should be used, and that those in receipt of benefits can use this service for free.

RESOLVED - Position Status agreed as (4.) Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)

Recommendation 10 – That Housing Leeds reports back to Tenant Scrutiny Board back on any recommendations and or proposed policy changes following its review of garages.

DL provided an update on an action plan for letting of garages across Leeds, aimed at addressing a significant number of garages that are empty, noting that from February 2018 to January 2019 there were 311 fewer empty lettable garages. DL explained the focus was on using social media to promote the availability of empty garages. DL noted it is difficult to let some garages due to the smaller sizes, designed for the smaller cars of the past, however progress is being made.

Garages deemed fit for refurbishment are improved and re-let where there is demand to do so but there is also an ongoing program of risk assessments which have led to the demolition of 68 garages freeing up land which could be repurposed for new housing, allotments, or other uses.

JG asked by what criteria garages are demolished, DL responded that they are risk assessed, and can be a target for vandalism and arson and so demolishing them can result in less antisocial behaviour or risk to the public. The decision to rebuild garages is based on the requirement for residents, and the council is looking to build more in at least one location.

JG asked if the uptake of garages might be facilitated by a decrease in rent, DL informed the board that a request to maintain the rental price has been put forward but there is also the option to lower and raise the rent per area according to demand. A system is also in place whereby non council tenants can rent garages at a higher rate than for council tenants (standard rent + VAT) to ensure as many garage spaces as possible are occupied, but DL emphasised that priority is given to council tenants. PM asked about those who rent garages and move from the property, or those who use them as storage for household objects rather than for vehicles. DL noted that the garage rents are separate from household rents and therefore a garage could be held by a previous tenant, however the lease should not be passed on to someone else.

RESOLVED - Position Status agreed as (4.) Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)

JG asked if the process for walkabouts is still in place, DL confirmed they are and provide a way for residents of the area to have an input and get involved. Housing officers should be communicating with residents and inviting them to walkabouts, updating them on the changes as a result of walkabouts, and escalating issues that have not been actioned due to the reliance on other services being involved.

JG questioned if feedback from the walkabouts was being sent to councillors as there had been an occasion when he had heard that it had not been received, which DL assured was an oversight, and that there has been no pattern of reports to say process is not being followed. A question was also asked if councillors themselves were attending these meetings so they can then see any issues first hand. SI added that he is the only person in his area that attends the walkabouts, they are not well advertised, and in one case the housing officer didn't turn up. There are also ongoing issues in SI's area that do not seem to be getting resolved. DL noted that the walkabouts should be advertised in more ways than just online, and community notice boards and other means could also be utilised.

DL continued that some issues can be resolved as a priority by certain services, but some issues such as trees that are reported as dangerous may take up to 18 months to be resolved if they are not identified as an emergency. JG raised a question about mapping, and DL explained that though it isn't a common occurrence, areas that aren't mapped have to be researched to find out who is responsible for the land which can take time to be achieved, and then relevant services called which that might not mark certain issues as a priority, leaving them for weeks or even months before they are resolved.

PM asked what the process is if no residents turn up to a walkabout, and JG added the question of how line managers know if a walkabout was attended by the officer. DL answered that walkabouts are diary items and so if an officer is away they should be covered by a colleague and still go ahead. Similarly if no residents turn up, the walkabout should still go ahead as the

officer has a list of inspection criteria to check on any and all site visits, and some residents may want to see the feedback but be unable to attend the walkabout.

JG thanked DL for his attendance.

57 Update on East Leeds Repairs

JG introduced Simon Jarman and Rob Goor to discuss the new repairs system.

Recommendation 2 – Implement and roll out the Total Works system.

SJ told the board the new repairs system TOTAL has now been rolled out across all of Leeds Building Services.

Recommendation 3 – Implement new working practices through Total Works, in relation to creating additional appointments, by reducing waiting times and increased tenant satisfaction.

The TOTAL platform records all orders, labour, and charges, and will incorporate a feature called Optimise which was due to be in use during 2018 but is now scheduled to be trialled in March 2019. The Optimise system acts as a calendar which shows operatives their appointments for the day, can plan journeys and track the time taken per job, re-arranging jobs where necessary or allocating them to other operatives.

The system can show updates on the progress of jobs, and incorporates mapping, so jobs can be attended faster and resolved faster resulting in higher customer satisfaction. The new scheduling system will replace the current manual timesheet system and will allocate each operative 7.5 hours of jobs per day, tracking productivity by time stamping live jobs to ensure they are not over-running.

RESOLVED - Position Status agreed as (4.) Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)

Recommendation 6 – Administration on repairs performance is improved – so that orders are closed down in a timely manner on systems, including sub-contractor orders. This will ensure that performance reporting is not adversely affected.

Van stocks are also being reviewed, aiming to reduce the number of times an operative has to visit the stores. TOTAL will also incorporate an out of hour's system that can allocate jobs at any time, or schedule a repair for the first thing the next day. Monthly meetings are in place with subcontractors to chase up projects that are nearing deadline and need to be resolved as a priority. LBS is seeking to utilise a subcontractor portal which will reduce the administration of allocating jobs, and allow subcontractors to report on repairs in the same way as other LBS operatives. The TOTAL system will be trialled with a smaller repairs subcontractor of around 35 staff before being rolled out

across all responsive repairs in the future. SJ offered to bring to a future meeting a live demonstration of the TOTAL system.

JG noted the TOTAL system had been introduced as a simple way of streamlining the repairs process, however Simon Costigan had revealed to him there have been glitches that have slowed the progress somewhat. JG asked how the vans are currently stocked, and if the current process of stocking vans was still in place. SJ answered they are still stocked with a variety of items for various jobs, and are still partnered with Wolseley for re-stocking. Wolseley had promised 100% delivery to site, however this is not always possible especially in responsive repairs as opposed to voids or pre-planned repairs. RG stated that a target of 100% deliveries would not have been realistic, however the current rate of 30-40% is not high enough at the moment, especially when it takes longer for some parts to reach the operative than it does for the repair to be completed. JG added that the TOTAL system incorporates mobile phone GPS functionality which is standard for all responsive repairs staff, and is less intrusive than the vehicle tracking system used previously that was unpopular with operatives and had to be discontinued.

JG asked if there was some separation between commercial repairs and repairs operatives. RG clarified that LBS is formed by the housing repairs and property management services, and there is work in progress to bring the two services closer together with some of the same infrastructure, operatives, meetings, and accounts. SJ added that there is a focus on trying to utilise LBS operatives wherever there is capacity to do so, and that operatives could clarify the areas they have the skills or are equipped to cover, reducing chances of the wrong person being sent to the job and making sure as many job types are covered as possible.

JG enquired if the number of apprentices has been increased and how many there currently are. SJ answered that the last cohort of QCF apprenticeships have recently finished, and 15 of the 17 have been taken onto full time apprenticeships. SJ added that next year a specialist trade apprenticeship scheme would be in place, recruiting six electrical and six gas apprentices. This is because it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit apprentices in specialist areas as pay scales are not competitive with other companies or nationwide. RG added that Mears are also struggling to recruit operatives, even though they currently pay their operatives more than LBS, and potential apprentices are choosing to work at other major construction works happening elsewhere. Options exist such as increasing the salary of higher skilled staff to tempt them to join, though discussions are ongoing on how best to overcome these barriers. SB asked if there is the capability to train operatives in more than one discipline to ensure they are more highly skilled. RG answered that LBS training already covers multiple trades and is more advanced than Mears' own training. There is ambition to increase the capabilities of both the system and of operatives, with a potential process that could be developed through which residents can submit a photo so the fault can be better diagnosed and operatives can ensure they are properly stocked. JG questioned if the process would be able to cater to everyone, RG

answered that it might not work for those who are not online or able to access online services, however the needs of those people will also be taken into account.

JG suggested the possibility of TSB members seeing the TOTAL system in use first-hand to see the its benefits, and accepted that there are developments still ongoing despite having expected more progress to have been made at this point in time. JG thanked RG and SJ for their attendance.

RESOLVED - Position Status agreed as (4.) Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring).

58 Work Plan for Tenant Scrutiny Board

JG told the board that he had proposed that Sheltered Housing (Retirement Life) is to be on the agenda for the next meeting, and provided an update that LASBT would now be an agenda item for April, as LASBT are currently undertaking a review of the service and so it would be worthwhile waiting until the review is over before being discussed.

SI asked if guests to future meetings would be able to submit a report to the board members prior to meetings so members had an opportunity to read beforehand and frame any questions they might wish to ask. JG clarified that the reports in this meeting were not new information and so did not require a new report, but that guests generally do offer to send reports prior to attending a meeting. KM offered to enquire with Sheltered Housing about information being shared with board members before the next meeting.

JG informed the board that he will be on holiday from 29 January to 6 February.

59 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Friday 15 February at 1:15pm
(Pre-meeting for all board members at 1:00pm)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 2:55 PM