

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 26TH APRIL, 2019

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Stanley Burton, Mary Farish, Hunter, Stephen Ilee, Peter Middleton and Jackie Worthington

79 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

80 Late Items

None.

JG updated the board about a previous late item – the request for a breakdown of the increased service charge for those living in high rise blocks. KM told the board there had been a partial response, detailing that the charges would cover the communal cleaning and repairs for the blocks. KM offered that he will ask for a more comprehensive breakdown and update the board with any response at a future meeting. JG suggested that the service charges are the same for everyone, and that the total charge may not be based on an exact calculation but are more of an arbitrary figure.

DL confirmed that all high rise tenants pay the same higher rate service charge as each other, and all low rise tenants pay the same lower charge as each other, the difference in cost due to high rise blocks receiving more services than low rise. DL explained that despite there not yet being a breakdown of the cost, the amount raised from the charges does not meet the total costs incurred by the council for those services, therefore tenants are still receiving value for money.

81 Apologies for Absence

Michael Healey, Rita Ighade, Roderic Morgan

JG informed the board that in a recent conversation with MH, MH has decided to step down from the board due to health reasons. JG expressed his thanks to MH for his contribution, and told the board that he will send the card signed by members at the meeting to MH at the next opportunity.

JG told the board of his view that due to her work commitments consistently conflicting with meetings over the last ten months, RI should no longer be a member of the board. JG proposed that with agreement from the board, a letter would be sent to RI to ask if she will be able to attend any future meetings, or else to terminate her position on the board.

The issue of RM's position on the board was raised. JG told the board his inability to attend over the past three months is due to his obligation to attend the job centre at the same time on Fridays, but that a letter from JG confirming RM's attendance at the board may be suitable evidence to allow RM to attend the meetings again, and JG will follow up to see if this is possible. Failing this, RM's position may be similar to that of RI. JW confirmed that RM had mentioned a letter could help his situation, and JG confirmed that he will follow it up with RM.

82 Minutes -

JG opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. A round of introductions were made for the benefit of the guests.

RESOLVED – The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 March 2019 were passed as a true record

83 Draft Minutes of the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing & Communities) held on 13th March 2019

Information only item.

JG informed the board that since the previous meeting he has observed a meeting of the high rise strategy group, and of the repairs and investment group, and will also be observing a HAP meeting. This is with a view to observing the best practice of other tenants' forums before the upcoming TSB review meeting in May.

84 Recruitment Update

KM updated the board on the current recruitment efforts, highlighting Andrew Bates' presence at the meeting to observe, and advising that should he become a member the roster of members would be at the maximum of twelve. However, given the update of MH's resignation from the board, and with further updates to follow concerning RM and RI, he acknowledged that there may soon be more available places on the board, which will be filled as a part of the ongoing recruitment process. If the board decide at the next meeting to alter the timing or location of the meeting, this may provide some flexibility in recruiting new members

85 Updated responses to ASB Inquiry

JG outlined the previous 2017/18 investigation into anti-social behaviour in Leeds, noting that the board's recommendations are included in the meeting pack. The report was finalised and presented just prior to the announcement of a review of the entire ASB service, so the updates will outline the changes made by the service itself and as a result of the scrutiny report. JG introduced Harvinder Saimbhi, Head of LASBT Service and David Longthorpe – Head of housing management for Resources and Housing – to the board.

HS began by explaining that the scrutiny report directly helped to inform the current LASBT service review, and had demonstrated that some areas required a lot of work to improve. Many of the board's recommendations were

also highlighted as key areas of development in the review, and so have been fully or partially accepted by the ASB team.

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 confirmed that this is a key area for LASBT as over 60% of the complaints made are due to noise disturbance. The suggested 'Noise Week' was received successfully by tenants and staff. Advertising took place via social media and the distribution of a pamphlet with advice about dealing with household noise. The pamphlet was distributed to students via the students' union and staff speaking at events. DL added that housing staff utilised the week to identify local hotspots such as high rise blocks, and a door to door campaign to deliver the information to tenants took place. Staff protocol for the management complaints was also reinforced, and renewed efforts of picking up issues at new tenant visits and at annual home visits also.

The review highlighted potential issues with the out-of-hours noise service. A month-long period can see around 1,000 individual complaints made, so analysis of the reports seeks to find the hotspots for noise reporting so the team might be better positioned to deal with them. A new IT system will be put in place to log reports, and allow for easier online reporting, while a triage service will be put in place to assess risk factors/vulnerability so responses can be prioritised. The timing is also being reviewed, as it may be worthwhile beginning the out-of-hours service later and working further into the morning.

JG raised the issue of laminate flooring in high rise blocks as a significant cause of noise. The report highlighted that the type of flooring tenants in high rise blocks are permitted to have is not dictated in the tenancy agreement. SB agreed that laminate flooring is particularly an issue where tenants have children running around, but that LASBT has recently been involved in such a case and as a result the flooring in the residency has been changed. SI added that the new tenancy agreement now specifically states that laminate flooring is not allowed in high rise blocks. DL confirmed this and added as a result it will be easier to take action against it. This, however, does not mean immediate action can be taken for those who already have laminate floors, nor is it a path to begin to create legislation for every complaint raised by tenants.

JG asked if the improvements required by the service are mainly due to the prevalence of noise complaints and the difficulty sometimes faced acting upon them. HS replied that noise complaints can often be subjective and what could be considered standard living noise from neighbouring residences is reported as a nuisance by some. The new tenancy agreement will make dealing with complaints easier, and the improved reporting and knowledge of tenants about how and what to report should mean more appropriate complaints are made. DL added that there has to be an acceptable level of noise, and that action will not be taken against unreasonable complaints of

toilets flushing or doors closing for example. HS continued that there is a further issue regarding complaints about dog noise, and that it is often very difficult to pinpoint. In some cases the dogs are acting as guard dogs as the owners feel unsafe about being burgled, and in such cases mediation can be an effective method, and will be used as a method where applicable in future. JG asked if the noise week concept will be utilised again, DL confirmed that it was a useful process that would be beneficial to run again.

MH asked about the process for recording noise complaints for music events or bank holiday weekends, as some establishments have loud music playing until the early hours of the morning. HS replied that there is still a service on bank holiday weekends, except after 3:30am when the service finishes, hence the review of the operating hours of the response team. MH added that longer weekend events can be the worst as the music is on consistently, HS replied that notices are given to residents of the event, but that these events are difficult to manage without police intervention due to the sheer number of people in attendance.

JG mentioned that some tenants were not happy with recording noise via a diary, and asked if there will be an online system of reporting. HS confirmed that a range of options are being developed for tenants to report a complaint, including a branching question system that can guide tenants to the most appropriate course of action based on their experience, as well as apps that can make reporting the issue easier.

Recommendation Outcome – 2. Achieved

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 informed the board that Housing Management has been working on updating the computer systems for some time, and that despite running behind the intended schedule, the first module for lettings was launched in February 2019. This has caused a delay of the modules due to be released, and the ASB module is due for release in late 2019. Housing are working closely with LASBT to ensure the system meets all needs, and the aim is for a system that logs and manages reports, providing appropriate actions for the officer and the timescale within which they should be achieved. There have been setbacks trying to ensure that the system will work not only for council tenants but also private tenants, and these have not yet been entirely overcome, but there will need to be compromises made as the system will not be able to satisfy every possible requirement.

JG asked if there will be any other parties who might be able to access the ASB data, for example social services. HS replied that the system will be connected between Housing Leeds and LASBT, and that the systems of other authorities are being reviewed to look at best practice for interconnection. The system will be cloud-based, allowing access to any applicable parties that would require information about an individual to ensure the correct support is offered. There may be issues about how data is restricted and accessed due

to GDPR, but wherever possible the data will be available on one central system.

JG asked if the will allow the sharing of data between Housing and LASBT. HS confirmed that this is already happening, and DL confirmed that because the same cases are often being managed by both departments, the information can be accessed by any relevant officer that requires it. Outside departments, are unable to access an individual's data because of GDPR, and should only see anything that is directly necessary. Information will be shared between departments wherever necessary.

JG asked if the data can be accessed by the police, HS answered that as a multi-agency team there are police officers that work with LASBT who can access information that might be otherwise unavailable to LASBT, and that it can be accessed efficiently so no time is wasted waiting for a request to be approved. From there the most appropriate lead for a case can be identified. Being developed as a part of the review is a community MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk-Assessment Conference) which can help identify cases where children's or adult's services are required, so families can get the tailored support they need.

JG asked if new tenants are housed in a different areas as a result of previous ASB issues. DL answered that there are background checks on new tenants based on the systems the council has access to, including the council's own ASB database. The council are not allowed to request data from the police or other outside organisations as that would be considered 'vetting for letting'. There are some cases of tenants being rehoused who appeared not to have any ASB issues prior to a council tenancy, but have later gone on to cause ASB. JG asked if another authority would be able to inform Leeds City Council if there were previous issues, DL replied that it would not be automatically passed on, however enquiries could be made by the council if necessary. JG asked when the new system might be in place, DL answered that the release date is currently set for November 2019, however this is likely to be pushed back to 2020.

Recommendation Outcome – 4. 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 told the board that this recommendation is currently ongoing, with a modernisation plan in place across all high rise blocks. Currently the blocks in the west are scheduled to be upgraded and those in the east are ongoing. Many of the cameras are currently analogue, with the aim of upgrading to a digital service. This will be aided by the acquisition of a program which will speed up the modernisation process.

JG mentioned a previous guest from LeedsWatch who told the board that there is a two year implementation period for this update. HS confirmed this, but that due to contract negotiations the project has been delayed, but that issue should be resolved soon. JG asked if the enhanced blocks have now received the updates, HS answered that the process is ongoing, but the Clydes and Wortley have received the new cameras, with the feed sent directly to LeedsWatch which has allowed for instances of ASB including identifying drug dealing to be reported where necessary. This will be possible in all blocks once the updated cameras have been installed.

JG asked if the cameras around the city are still shared with the police, HS answered that there are cameras all around Leeds that are managed by the contact centre, and that there are strong links with the police allowing them to view the recordings. JG asked if the cameras are a part of the Leeds budget, HS answered that they are, and that new cameras are subject to a check that they are not impacting people's private lives, and that there is sufficient need. There is a long turnaround time for installed cameras as they have to then be linked to the LeedsWatch system. JG asked if mobile cameras are used, HS replied that they are, and can be sent to necessary areas and the data accessed by police very quickly.

SB asked how the cameras are observed by LeedsWatch. HS answered that there are multiple monitors in the control centre for the West, South, and East of Leeds that are monitored 24 hours by an officer, and if any ASB issues are observed they are able to call 999 or to record the data and send it to the police for review. All cameras are recording for 24 hours so even if an incident is missed, the footage can be accessed and viewed for action.

Recommendation Outcome – 2. Achieved.

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

JG reminded the board that this issue was raised concerning the ability of tenants to access the cameras situated in lifts. It is understood that those images are not accessible to tenants except through legal channels, and since the issue was raised there has also been the implementation of GDPR. The issue can go no further as far as the board is concerned.

Recommendation Outcome – 2. 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 explained that the system has not yet been introduced or developed, but once it is implemented training will be provided for all staff. The training model can be based off the system used for the ABRITAS system, where every member of staff received in-depth training on how to use the system for a

suitable timeframe before its release. All ASB staff have received refresher training, moreover the training is a part of the induction and there are additional sessions when policy updates are introduced, and is naturally an ongoing process. JG asked if information is passed on to block managers, and similarly if those accountable for an area are informed when there is an ASB case. DL confirmed that the manager is informed of any ASB that is handled by the council, however there may be circumstances where police are involved which may include confidential matters. DL informed the board that the council does fund a team of police officers to work mainly around high rise blocks to provide a quick response to any issues that arrive. The police are more effective in these situations as they have the powers of arrest that council staff do not. JG asked if LASBT warn housing officers of any previous ASB issues, and DL confirmed they are made aware.

JG asked if the funding for PCSOs is still ongoing, HS answered that it is, and that Leeds are the only council within West Yorkshire that is funding this kind of project. JG questioned if the PCSOs are stationed in specific areas so that relationships could be built with the residents, but added that he was aware that the council might not have much say over this. HS answered that the police resources are stretched and so are moved around more frequently, but the feedback can be taken back to see if this issue can be addressed.

SB asked if it would be useful to further roll out the scheme of ASB coordinators to all blocks rather than just the enhanced blocks. DL answered that the coordinators ensure that consistency is kept between the blocks, but there are clear links between housing officers and LASBT so conversations are already taking place. There are currently no plans to increase the number of enhanced housing officers due to budget restrictions, instead there is a review of the enhanced blocks taking place to decide if the blocks need to remain under the enhanced model, and if any blocks currently in the standard model can benefit from becoming part of the enhanced model.

AB raised the issue of homeless people entering and inhabiting corridors and stairways in high rise blocks, and even though the council had brought in a concierge team to tackle the issue, the people have simply moved to another block. DL confirmed that the concierge team is funded by the council, and as the team is a limited resource it is moved around to different blocks to deter the issue. The team cannot be kept on indefinitely, but will be moved to any block where a need is identified. AB continued that the PCSOs weren't always aware of the ASB issues, and that some of the tenants were actually encouraging the homeless to enter, and there is concern that if there is another situation similar to Grenfell Tower these people cannot be accounted for. JG summarised that this issue predominantly affects inner city blocks, and that the issue is exacerbated by tenants, however this is not currently the most appropriate forum for this issue.

Recommendation Outcome – 2. Achieved.

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

DL confirmed that this recommendation was rejected as Housing Leeds does not see a connection between hate crime and asylum applications, and everyone is encouraged to report hate crimes whenever they are subject to one. There has been a change in that the contract is no longer held by G4S but by Mears, but the council is working closely with them to ensure that all hate crimes are reported.

JG explained that the board are aware that the council does not have a say in asylum applications, but wanted the council to explain to asylum seekers the reporting of hate crimes would not affect their application.

HS replied that there has recently been an OBA session which looks at identifying vulnerable groups in the city, and encouraging the reporting of hate crimes, from which a number of recommendations have emerged. One recommendation was to speak with the migration partnership, and have been working with other organisations that support migrants and individuals experiencing hate crimes to refer them to the hate crime MARAC. This enables more support to be given to individuals and dispel the myth that reporting a hate crime will affect their application. JG asked DL for confirmation that the council do not house asylum seekers, and DL replied that they do not, and are they actually housed in private properties. Once an asylum seeker has gained resident status, they can then be eligible for a council property. HS added that when Mears purchase a property in Leeds, they send the details to Housing Leeds making them aware of any issues with the area, so a vulnerable person or family will not be rehoused where there are issues with hate crimes.

JG asked if there was a standard that the private owners have to meet when they rehouse an asylum seeker. DL replied that the private rented team can assess the house and serve notice if it does not meet the standards of Leeds City Council.

SB noted that there are some properties that seem to be empty for weeks before a new tenant is moved in, and asked whether this is down to adaptations made for disabled tenants taking longer than for a standard repair. DL clarified that the process for re-letting begins as soon as a tenant gives notice, but it cannot be known what repairs are necessary until the tenant has vacated the property. Usually repairs begin as soon as the keys to the property are returned, and the target turnaround is 30 days. Most properties will take less than this, however some will take more time such as those that need specific adaptations.

Recommendation Outcome – 1. Stop monitoring.

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

HS confirmed that the sessions have been delivered by Housing and LASBT and are ongoing, with complex issues referred on via the 'Front Door hub (A DV safeguarding process).

JG asked about the managed area and if it is still ongoing, HS confirmed that the managed approach is still happening, and there have been some good outcomes regarding both perpetrators and the victims. DL added that Housing Leeds have recently submitted an application for a quality mark, though there has not yet been a response. As a result of the report there has been a question added to the annual home visit survey asking tenants about domestic violence wherever it is safe to do so, and to encourage anyone who may be suffering to report it confidentially to their housing manager. Housing staff have been trained to identify potential signs of domestic violence, and to only ask the question where it is safe to do so.

Recommendation Outcome – 2. Achieved.

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

JG told the board that this enquiry was due to cases that had been ongoing for a long time were not being flagged. HS confirmed that there is now a system whereby such cases are flagged if they are over 6 or 12 months. JG added that it was found that some of the delays were caused by outside factors such as the involvement of social services.

Recommendation Outcome – 2. 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 updated the board that this recommendation was not accepted, however it would be worthwhile to mention the changes to be made as a result of the ASB review. When a tenant phones the contact centre the objective is now to have a much more informed discussion. The caller will be asked a series of questions about the risk, impact, and the vulnerability, with the cases then triaged and assessed to find out how it should be handled, and address any safeguarding concerns. The triage system will allow for a more focussed satisfaction survey and produce clearer results. JG clarified that the investigation revealed that some cases remain within housing and some are further handled by LASBT, with no way of being able to tell where the respondent was dissatisfied for the latter cases. JG suggested that this might become clearer once the new computer system is in place. HS agreed, however the one council approach taken by the services doesn't necessarily mean the services can be distinctly separated. Cases are actioned based on which service is most suited. DL continued that cases are passed on to LASBT when Housing Leeds cannot deal with them, and that any tenant who is passed on will report dissatisfaction with Housing Leeds even though the correct process has been followed, ultimately skewing the result. DL added that the STAR survey results indicate that overall there has been an improvement in satisfaction for ASB across Leeds.

Recommendation Outcome – 2. Achieved.

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.

HS updated the board that LASBT have previously commissioned mediation from an outside provider, and also has an in house mediation service which was found to be not delivering the desired outcomes. In the coming months a mediation service will be procured to deal with low level ASB cases as well as some of the more complex cases. JG told of how when the review began there was only one individual responsible for mediation and asked if this was still true, HS answered that Yorkshire Mediation used to deliver this service but that resources have been stretched and so the service was brought in-house through housing options. The preferred method of mediation was to bring individuals in to the city centre, however the vast majority of people involved would prefer for the mediation to take place locally to them. Mediation will become a part of the service offer, requiring individuals to attempt it where applicable as it can be a more effective way of eliminating their issues, and if residents can't discuss their issues there are not many ways Housing Leeds or LASBT can help.

JG asked how the external mediation team might be monitored, HS replied that there will be a service level agreement with key objectives and outcomes, and these will be monitored by LASBT to ensure these goals are being met.

Recommendation Outcome – 4. Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)

JG thanked HS and DL for their report, and noted that it appears that much work is being put into the improvement of the service, and that the report has had an impact on how the improvements are put into place.

JG asked when the review will be finished, and HS replied that the review has been to full scrutiny and will go to the full council board in June. By August/September the new triage system should be implemented.

86

TSB Workplan

JG reiterated to the board members that the May meeting will be used as a workshop to develop the direction of the Tenant Scrutiny Board, so from there it may be decided what the next area of scrutiny may be. JG confirmed that the meeting time would be the same as the current meeting – 1pm to 3pm. JG asked the members to submit any ideas they have for the meeting to KM or IP, which can then go on to the meeting agenda.

JG advised of the outcome of a vote in the pre-meeting, in which members had decided the same format of the current meeting should be utilised, and that KM should act as a joint chair with JG.

JG reminded members that they should express their interest in becoming the chair or vice chair of the board by the 7th of June, with expressions submitted to KM or IP. KM handed around expression of interest forms to all in attendance, and explained the layout of the forms to members. The same

forms will also be sent to all members via email where members have email addresses.

JW informed the board that on the 10th of May the Leeds Tenants' Federation will be launching the new homeless charter and that she will be in attendance.

KM updated the board that all members have now submitted a consent form to share contact details, so KM will now be able to circulate a list of members' details so they can contact each other outside of meetings. SB questioned if it is appropriate for members to discuss meeting details outside of the meeting. JG replied that it can be an issue that only the chair has the contact details of the members, and there is nothing to stop members discussing anything outside of the meeting.

KM added that the May meeting of the board could identify more informal ways of working, and gave the example that if an investigation into a matter relating high rise blocks was to happen, it would be useful for the members to speak to others that live in a high rise block. Better relationships might also be forged between members, which would be more positive for the cohesiveness of the group.

JG suggested that the matter be put onto the agenda of the May meeting. KM added in response to a point made by SB about the policy of other forums that many Housing Leeds groups are now communicating with each other using a group chat via WhatsApp with no reported problems and complete transparency.

87 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – The next meeting will take place on the 17th of May.
(Pre-meeting for all board members at 1:00pm)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3:00 PM