

## TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 19TH JULY, 2019

**PRESENT:** John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne (SBa), Stanley Burton (SBu), Mary Farish, Maddy Hunter, Peter Middleton, Jackie Worthington.

### 17 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

### 18 Late Items

JG raised a question asked during the LASBT enquiry regarding which CCTV cameras on estates are connected to the Middleton centre and which are not. As the responsible officer was unavailable, JG asked if KM could contact the service and ask for a response.

### 19 Apologies for Absence

Rita Ighade, Roderic Morgan.

### 20 Minutes - 28 June 2019

**RESOLVED** – The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 June 2019 were passed as a true record.

### 21 Chair's Update

JG told the board members that following the previous discussion about the inclusion of the minutes of the Environment, Housing, and Communities Scrutiny Board, the sections of the minutes relevant to the Tenant Scrutiny Board have been highlighted in the pack.

### 22 Housing Star Survey data (Consideration for new inquiry)

Frank Perrins introduced himself and explained the scale and premise of the STAR survey. The survey is undertaken once every two years for the purpose of collecting large-scale benchmarking data from tenants covering many aspects of their homes and the council's service. The survey was conducted in November 2018 and was sent to roughly one quarter (~16,500) general needs tenants, and half of retirement life tenants (~2,000). Additionally, a survey was sent to all tenants living in a high rise block to give a clearer picture of the opinions of that particular group. The survey used a stratified sample so that all areas and demographics were represented proportionally. Using a confidence interval based on the sample size, it is possible to assess which results are statistically significant.

JG asked how the responses are differentiated if broken down by ward and area, FP answered that an individual's response may be counted in each breakdown for city, area, and ward level, and this highlights which issues are

important to tenants in each geographic area of Leeds. SBa asked if the surveys work on an anonymous or confidential basis, FP replied that they are confidential as it is important to be able to link a response to the areas of Leeds they concern. JG also asked how the confidence interval is calculated, FP answered that it is a consistent calculation based on the Housemark<sup>®</sup> recommendation and the same that is used for National surveys.

FP explained that the overall satisfaction scores for the city have remained within the confidence interval and so are not considered significant changes, but do indicate where satisfaction levels are rising and falling. Other trends indicate that older people are generally more satisfied than younger people, and those that self-report they are financially comfortable are more satisfied than those that are struggling. The satisfaction for the BAME community is lower than the general result, but this can be explained by BAME respondents being on average a younger demographic than the wider Leeds population.

Using more calculations, it is possible to gain an understanding of the issues that drive satisfaction, that is, those that have the most impact on the overall satisfaction score. These issues are:

- Providing an effective and efficient service
- Repairs and maintenance
- The overall quality of the home
- Listening to views and acting upon them

These results correlate with the tenants' top priorities which are:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Overall quality of the home
- Neighbourhood as a place to live
- Dealing with ASB
- Value for money of rent and service charges

JG queried the wording of 'rent and service charges' as it had not been asked on previous surveys, FP replied that it is the same basic question that had been asked before and the wording had just been altered to include service charges.

JG observed that the satisfaction scores for East Leeds does not seem to have improved much despite the recent investigation and improvements recommended by the board. FP confirmed that there have been improvements, however they are lower than those of other areas. MH mentioned that despite a repair for her requiring three visits to correct, it was reported as being resolved first time, FP advised that Mears have different criteria for recording repairs, and the results are based on what Mears report.

FP noted that there is a trend across most neighbourhood issues that tenants are reporting fewer issues than they had in the previous survey. JG questioned what the definition of a 'neighbourhood' is as areas constitute

many different types of housing and some neighbourhoods might consist of one or two high rise blocks in a small geographical area and other neighbourhoods may be much larger estates. FP confirmed the neighbourhood will be the subjective view of the tenant, but would not make the results less valid as most tenants in similar areas will hold a similar concept of their own neighbourhood. Car parking remains the most reported issue, and noisy neighbours is the key driver of dissatisfaction in neighbourhoods. JG reminded the board members of the LASBT review highlighting that 60% of ASB reports concerned noisy neighbours. KM added that car parking had previously been commented on by David Longthorpe, who had explained that the issue of parking especially for high rise blocks was due to the significant rise in car ownership over the last 50 years, this being very different from when most high rises were built. JW noted that parking is an issue around Headingley stadium especially on match days, and JG noted the same is true for Elland Road.

For those that reported ASB, tenants were most satisfied when the issue was first reported to LASBT, followed then by Housing Leeds, then the police, then elsewhere. FP noted that the number of tenants that reported ASB are relatively low but the figures do paint a picture of the tenants' satisfaction of how issues are dealt with. JG asked if the results are flawed because the survey only asks for the first report, and some cases are passed from Housing to LASBT to resolve, FP answered that this is again a self-reported question so the figures of satisfaction with cases that are passed on is not available.

FP told board members that even though all high rise tenants were surveyed, only a representative sample of the responses from each area were included to not bias the results towards the responses from high rise tenants. The high rise responses will be analysed and reported separately at a later date, and will be available to TSB members when they are finished.

JG asked if the figures relating to rent and value for money as well as the self-reported financial status would have been affected by Universal Credit. FP answered that the survey was undertaken just a month following the start of the UC rollout and so it is unlikely that it would have made a large impact on the results in such a short period.

There was an open comment section in the survey, of which 1,689 were received. Repairs was the most frequent subject with 295 made, but there were also a significant number of comments that were positive about the council and its service with 169 received.

JG asked if there were any questions regarding waste asked in the survey, FP answered that the issue is best reflected in the reporting of rubbish and litter as a neighbourhood issue. JG further asked if the survey will affect policy, FP replied that it does, and the previous survey resulted in a full action plan with heads of service involved in actioning change.

## **23 Housing Performance Framework Data**

Lee Ward introduced the housing performance data, beginning with the home decency standard. LW explained there is no government set target for how many homes should meet the standard, however there is a standard that each individual home must meet to be considered decent. As of March 2019 93.19% of homes meet the standard which is higher than the same time last year. Properties will fall in and out of decency based on repairs that are needed throughout the year so the figure will never be at 100%, but as close to that figure as possible is desirable. The figure for March is much higher than other months as there was a drive to get as many homes to meet the standard as possible. JG asked if the data meant that there are roughly 8% of homes that do not meet decency standards at any one time, and LW answered that it does.

The percentage of repairs completed within the timescale is below the current target. The data is run by the performance team, and any discrepancies are queried by Mears or LBS in a reconciliation process. If it can be proved that the contractors' data is more reliable than the data of the performance team that data is used instead. The figure for March 2019 of 96.35% is the highest it has been since July 2012. JG questioned how the reconciliation process works as it would be in the contractors' interest to report higher figures, but LW explained it is the contractors who must question the performance team's data first and there are checks in place to ensure it is not artificially inflated, and the most common issues are simply inputting errors. There has been an increase in the performance of LBS over the last three months coinciding with the introduction of the new repairs logging system, though there is still a backlog of work concerning bricklaying and plastering. JG commented that the board has previously heard from LBS that these jobs are generally the most difficult to get trained staff for.

Responsive repairs data is collected with rolling monthly surveys to customers who had received a repair. The figure for repairs that are right first time is currently 93.77% and above the 90% target, and the satisfaction with responsive repairs completed is 96.83% and the highest in two years. JG questioned why the STAR results and the performance data seemed to be showing opposite results, and LW answered it is mostly down to the perspective of the tenant versus that of the actual data.

Capital works include repairs on roofs or to whole rooms within buildings, and the satisfaction is above target at 93.09%. Gas services completed on time is at 99.87% and there is a legal obligation to complete these works on time otherwise legal action can be enforced to allow access to complete the service. JG recalled that he has previously suggested conducting annual home visits and gas safety checks at the same time where access has previously been an issue.

The average re-let time falls outside of the target of 30 days at 34.43 days, but this time has decreased over the year. JG questioned if the letting time was related to the decency of properties, and LW replied it could potentially be, but in many of the longer re-let cases there are situations which require a visit from the occupational therapist and adaptations made to the property

which can take longer to install. The target is for all homes to take no more than 20 days with the contractor plus an additional 10 days to re-let. In some circumstances, such as capital works or for squatters taking occupancy in the property, the time taken can be deducted from the overall let time, however LW insisted that the conditions are strict for what is deductible and situations where time is deducted relatively rare.

The number of mutual exchanges has dropped compared to previous years, which LW explained is because there is no longer an incentive scheme to exchange properties. JG asked if there is an incentive to encourage single occupants to move to single-bed properties, and LW responded that this would be encouraged by the housing offices.

The target for completing AHVs was reached, and the figures for satisfaction with ASB services have been consistently higher than for all of the previous year. KM added that LASBT surveys are only conducted on closed cases, and JG questioned if that includes cases. KM explained it was his understanding that only those victims involved in cases that were referred on to LASBT would be surveyed.

The complaints responded to within the timescale remains an area of improvement, as does the number of calls answered at the contact centre. JG asked whether the disparity between the total number of calls and calls answered meant that those people did not get their call answered, LW replied that it did, and the issue might be linked to staffing levels or the sheer volume of calls. Some people may also become frustrated with long wait times and hang up before getting through, which SB and PM agreed is a fairly common issue. JG noted that he is aware there is a high turnover of staff at the contact centre. LW agreed that a combination of staff leaving and moving to other positions can contribute to the high turnover, but this is not just a Housing issue but for all council services. SBu noted there are times when reporting a repair to the housing office has been the most efficient method of reporting, and though SBa agreed, she pointed out that it is not the role of housing officers to report repairs and can detract from their other duties.

JG asked LW if there was any data on the number of repairs that subsequently needed further attention in the 90 days following the repair, as it was his understanding that in these instances the tenant was advised they should ring Mears direct and not report it again to LCC. LW said he didn't have any figures as Mears haven't been asked for them. JG felt this was something that LCC should be asking for especially when this same question is put to the councils own in house repair service, and if LCC don't know this data how then can they be sure Mears aren't charging them twice for the same job? LW offered to find out if the data for repeat callouts can be collected.

JG thanked LW for his presentation.

## **24 Tenant Scrutiny Board Review**

KM directed the board members to the pack item, which includes two process maps and summary notes of the review sessions previously held, and encouraged anyone with any ideas to add to the plan to let KM know. A meeting will be held with KM, SBa, SBu, and MF as an induction into the wider work of the board for the new members. JG reiterated that the best way to implement the new ways of working is to try them out in the next enquiry, and so it is in the board's best interests to decide a topic in the coming months.

## **25 TSB Workplan**

KM noted that the dates for all meetings up to April 2020 have been set, and are included as a part of agenda item 8. All meetings are scheduled to be held at the Civic Hall unless they are organised otherwise as part of the new ways of working.

KM will be arranging a meeting between the chair and Rob Goor to discuss out of hours repairs, and Simon Costigan will be attending the September meeting, but as yet there is no set speaker for the October meeting. JG raised that he has spoken with the leader of the council, who is willing to attend a future meeting, and he will arrange accordingly for that to happen at a suitable time.

JW pointed out that due to the delayed rollout of Universal Credit in Leeds, the city is still only open for new applicants and changes to the current system, however everyone is being migrated and as a result the rate of arrears is rising. KM reminded the members this was the topic covered by Paul Harris at a previous board meeting, and that it could be worth inviting him back for an update on Universal Credit in the future.

SB asked what the proposals for the next enquiry are, JG answered that there was a lot of housing data presented at the meeting, and an even clearer idea for topics can be formed after Simon Costigan's presentation. JG proposed that no matter the area of enquiry, a shorter investigation would be more favourable to implement as many new ways of working as possible, and choosing a topic promptly would favour the board's ability to carry out more than one enquiry. JW recalled previous years when the board's membership was larger and able to split into groups to cover two enquiries at once. JG proposed that a shortlist be created by September's meeting so the options are clearer to members, but that the out-of-hours service might be a promising option on the list. JW asked if members of the Repairs and Investment Group might be available to contribute to the enquiry and be co-opted onto the board.

## **26 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place at the Civic Hall on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, 1pm - 3pm.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3:00 PM

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting  
to be held on Friday, 20th September, 2019