

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY, 2020

PRESENT: John Gittos (Tenant Chair)

Tenants: Sallie Bannatyne, Stanley Burton, Mary Farish, Maddy Hunter, Peter Middleton and Jackie Worthington

Officers: Sean Travis (Leeds Watch Compliance Officer), Cheryl Fixter (Leeds Watch Compliance Officer), Keith Mack (Scrutiny Officer), Ian Parr (Housing Assistant)

52 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

53 Late Items

None.

54 Apologies for Absence

Rita Ighade, Denise Linley

55 Minutes - 29 November 2019

RESOLVED – The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29th November 2019 were passed as a true record.

56 Matters arising

The Chair updated the board on the estate walkabout review, noting that recommendations for improvement had been made previously that are currently not being followed. The Chair suggested sending an updated recommendation of fewer estate walkabouts each year, per estate to encourage attendance, with a further suggestion that they be undertaken around April and September to address the challenges of the changing seasons. This recommendation was supported by all members present.

57 Chair's Update

The minutes of the Environment, Housing, and Communities board have been included in the pack, topics of interest to the TSB were highlighted, including;

- Waste management and accessibility to collection services.
- The number of Universal Credit claims across the city and available support especially out of hours.

- Discussion regarding the use of green space, car parking, and nuisance fireworks.
- Void properties and the rethinking repairs review.

The Chair updated the board on his attendance at the Tenant Scrutiny conference in December which was attended by many housing associations and was very informative, with much of the focus being around new ways of working as previously discussed by the board last summer. The Chair also attended VITAL in February to update them on the decisions made by the board regarding a new enquiry.

58 CCTV Update

ST updated the board about the work to upgrade all high rise blocks in the city to a digital solution for transferring camera images to Leeds Watch. The project has been ongoing for two years with 26 blocks currently connected via digital fibre to Leeds Watch out of a total of 116 blocks. There had been a significant delay to the upgrade process due to the requirement to procure a new fibre supplier to meet all Leeds requirements in addition to this project. There will be a contract in place by the end of March, and should enable acceleration to progress for the camera upgrade.

The Chair questioned that the board had previously been told the upgrade would take two years and in that timeframe should have been complete by now, ST responded that initially that was the case, however the securing of a fibre supplier had a significant impact on the initial schedule. CF explained the new supplier contract is important as it covers other digital needs such as internet, Wi-Fi, and communications infrastructure as well as the camera feeds.

SB asked if there will be preference given to any blocks that still use the older CCTV system, ST responded that all blocks that are currently due to be upgraded will be, but the order they are completed will be designated by the work program.

The Chair asked about the viability of some older systems until the digital fibre is installed, for example rooftop signal transmission. ST replied that all blocks currently have a mixture of solutions that are all viable, but the goal is to unify the method. The rooftop signal can be affected by range, weather, and line of sight. Some blocks still have an on-site hard drive recording method that can be accessed by engineers. The drives record 31 days' worth of footage after which it over-writes the oldest data unless it is requested by police or other appropriate authorities.

The Chair asked if there any blocks with no CCTV at all, CF responded that all blocks have some form of coverage as far as Leeds Watch are aware, and that all blocks in West Leeds are on the digital system. The Chair asked what the camera coverage is like for the digital blocks, ST responded that coverage is full for the ground floor entrances and exits, as well as the lifts. SB

commented that the cameras in some block lifts do not appear to have been upgraded despite signs from Leeds Watch communicating that all cameras have been upgraded. ST confirmed that all cameras are upgraded when the work takes place, and the signs and communications are the responsibility of the contractors when work goes ahead, and any enquiries should be made to planned works.

KM reminded the board that there is a programme of tenant engagement sessions taking place at all high rise blocks in the city, beginning with those where there are indications of lower satisfaction. Officers are attending the sessions to hear tenants' views or issues and inform tenants of future investment plans relating to individual blocks. Reminder notices are being sent via text to tenants in the blocks ahead of each scheduled event with full details, and the sessions will run through to the middle of March. KM suggested those members in high rise properties speak with the investment officers that attend the session if they wish to have a better idea of what, and when, work will be taking place at their block.

KM referred to an issue that had been previously raised, that camera feeds can no longer be viewed on the television in apartments, and confirmed that this is likely a restriction due to GDPR. ST confirmed this is the case, there are some images that will become unavailable however door visitors can still be viewed on screen.

The Chair asked how cameras are monitored at Middleton, ST replied there is a 'monitor wall' with live feeds been shown and viewed by trained staff 24/7. The screens can be isolated and viewed based on location as necessary, and the fibre upgrades mean features such as loiter and movement detection can make spotting issues more efficient. CF continued that if there is an incident, only the police can request to view the live feed via a direct link, and recordings can be requested by the police or a solicitor only. The police can also be contacted directly from Middleton office.

The Chair asked if mobile cameras are still in operation as they can be deployed in areas with a high rate of fly tipping and antisocial behaviour. ST responded that mobile cameras are mostly used for events but there is other deployable CCTV that may be used if relevant GDPR permission is obtained.

The Chair asked for clarification on which cameras are council operated and which are police operated in the centre, CF answered that all cameras are Council operated and the only ones operated by the police are temporary or hidden for investigative purposes.

MH asked if there is CCTV for sheltered housing schemes, ST replied that he did not know for certain but the question could be posed to Housing for a response.

The Chair asked if there is an updated time frame for when the upgrade might be completed by, ST replied it would be a guess at this stage, but reiterated

that with the award of a new contract in the next month the work would begin to progress much more quickly.

59 Next Inquiry

The Chair explained the delay in choosing the next topic of inquiry. Whilst a topic had been voted upon in November, it was agreed it did not encompass or embrace the new ways of working agreed upon by the board, so it was decided to circulate a survey to involved tenants to seek their views. Unfortunately an objection was received regarding the proposed survey which led to a meeting between the Chair and Councillor Coupar to discuss the issues that had been raised. It was noted that Cllr Coupar had acknowledged that the Council supported the independence of the board at every stage, however there were different views about the appropriateness of the survey being sent in light of other citywide surveys and a discussion about the scope of topics needing to focus on housing services and functions they were responsible for. During the meeting Councillor Coupar asked if she could make her own suggestion regarding a future inquiry and she suggested "Tenant Engagement" the Chair said this would be put before members but reminded her the final decision is up to the board. There have been future meetings set up between the Chair and Councillor Coupar to ensure closer ties between councillors and the board.

In light of this further suggestion and there being no immediate way forward the chair felt it timely to remind the board of the full list of possible inquiry topics, these being:

- Housing Advisory Panels
- The repairs strategy
- Estate walkabouts
- Fly tipping
- Car parking
- The contact centre
- Out of hours repairs
- Tenant engagement

The Chair gave a brief reminder of each topic and some of the possibilities and issues that were attached to each. KM was then asked to outline the role of tenant engagement to TSB members and explained that it is best thought of in three strands; Tenant involvement (referring to those formal groups that are involved in shaping the service and providing input on policy, procedures and key activities); Tenant Engagement (being the more direct participation of tenants in HAPs and any other community projects that impact on tenants or schemes within their community); and community development (whereby the service helps tenants to shape their communities positively with their own resources and build their capacity to do so). KM gave a brief insight into some of the current issues faced by the service including attracting tenant members (particularly younger members and those from diverse backgrounds), and

new ways of engaging with tenants more digitally to enable easier access to information and improve services.

The Chair noted that tenants also used to be consulted about procurement however that does not seem to be the case, MH replied that there is a procurement strategy group that is consulted about procurement issues. KM confirmed he was aware of the group but it was not a group facilitated by the Tenant Engagement Team.

The Chair explained to the board that Tenant Engagement was something that had been suggested during previous year's discussion's about possible inquiries but for various reasons this had never been chosen. The Chair acknowledged that it was likely to be a complex inquiry but perhaps the time was now right for it to be considered, not least given the issues with some of the other suggestions which could mean the impact of any recommendations might not reach as far as the board would intend.

The Chair gave members an opportunity to vote on each topic in turn.

RESOLVED – The board voted in favour of Tenant Engagement as the next scrutiny inquiry.

Given the outcome of the vote, PM questioned whether the board should consider KM, (being a part of the Tenant Engagement Team), to have a conflict of responsibilities if he continued to advise and support the board whilst also potentially being called to provide evidence. KM was asked to inform Mandy Sawyer of the boards concerns regarding his role with tenant engagement and any potential conflict as scrutiny officer.

The Chair reported that VITAL had also queried if TSB members attending VITAL meetings would be appropriate if tenant engagement was chosen as the next inquiry, The Chair told the board that he would attend the next VITAL meeting to update them in due course.

Noting the Chair had promised the board and VITAL that TSB would start an inquiry at the next meeting in March, and he wasn't willing to contemplate any more delays, he asked the board to enable him to make a decision on what the next inquiry would be, dependent on what Mandy had advised without consulting the board members further. This would enable the Chair to put plans put in place before the next meeting, and provide certainty the inquiry would start at the March meeting. The board agreed the Chair could do this.

Given at this stage the matter could not be resolved, The Chair suggested that the board vote on a second choice should it transpire a Tenant Engagement enquiry was not possible. Given the decision in November the board decided by vote that the "Out of hour's repairs service" would be the second option.

Subject to having some clarity around any perceived conflicts the Chair therefore suggested keeping out of hours repairs as a back-up option in case

there was a reason that tenant engagement proved impossible. The board were in agreement.

60 Tenant Scrutiny Board workplan

The Chair suggested that a work plan cannot be set until it is known for certain that the inquiry topic is viable, but once it is then a full plan will be drafted.

March will see the beginning of a new election cycle for the board, and so preparations will be put in place for an election.

The Chair informed the board he will be uncontactable until the 4th of March.

61 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at the Civic Hall on Friday the 20th of March, from 1pm - 3pm.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3:00 PM