

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 17TH JULY, 2020

PRESENT: Keith Mack in the Chair
Sallie Bannatyne
Stanley Burton
Mary Farish
Maddy Hunter
Rita Ighade
Peter Middleton
Jackie Worthington

67 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

68 Late Items

None.

69 Apologies for Absence

John Gittos

70 Minutes -

RESOLVED – The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3rd July 2020 were passed as a true record.

71 Service Presentation (Tenant Engagement Enquiry)

IM presented the Board with an update on the current work of the Tenant Engagement team, and specifically how the service has responded during Covid-19. The Council as a whole had to respond and adapt quickly to provide support to the most vulnerable residents as well as continue to provide essential services. However, with restrictions easing there is now a process of re-mobilising those services that we hadn't been able to carry out, such as lettings and non-emergency repairs. Services are being re-introduced on a priority basis subject to new safety measures, and there is a backlog of work which will take a number of months to clear and for services to return to normal.

There has naturally been a financial impact as a result of Covid-19, with details still being worked out as to how the Council can meet the financial challenges required.

During the lockdown, Housing staff have been contacting residents identified as vulnerable (60+ and Retirement LIFE tenants) including the Tenant Engagement Team who were supporting making welfare calls to Retirement LIFE tenants across the city.

Physical meetings with tenants have been unable to take place, and combined with the pressure on resources, has meant we have had to find other ways to involve and engage with tenants and residents – such as using Skype and Zoom.

Regular HAP meetings are now taking place for all area panels, and feedback has been widely positive from panel members and ward members alike. Online HAP meetings are more convenient for many of those with busy schedules and as a result some attendance rates have increased. The online requirement has encouraged HAP members to improve their online skills and in some cases to use these online platforms for the very first time which will benefit their engagement and social inclusion going forwards.

To support the council wide effort, HAPs are prioritising the funding of applications that help local community and third sector organisations in their response to Covid-19. To date, HAPs across the city have supported 50 projects, 30 of which have are directly Covid-19 related. To encourage newer groups, and to remove any potential barriers to accessing funding, HAPs have instigated a simpler application form for projects up to £500 to help ensure local tenants and residents can easily and quickly apply. Applications are also being accepted by video, for example Dance Action Zone Leeds (DAZL) has brought their work to life in a way that a regular form could not capture.

Action: Share the link to the DAZL HAP application video.

TARAs continue to be supported, with a number embracing digital methods to communicate with their residents. The team are taking a flexible approach in terms of the normal process and requirements related to TARA support grants. The service are also starting to review the support generally for TARA's and community groups, and to understand what future support groups may find most useful. For example, can we offer more information about asset based approaches as part of an enhanced training offer to groups and are the practical needs of groups changing depending on the interests and activities the group has.

More widely, we have continued to engage with tenants in the form of emailing and texting communications and we have been able to continue carrying out user research with tenants who have had recent experience of receiving a particular service. Officers are also sharing experiences of having different, broader conversations with tenants when engaging with residents to ask how they might be supported.

Tenant Engagement Officers each have their own Facebook pages which, in some areas, has generated in new contact and communication with residents, and these pages and groups remain a way to open up the activity of the HAPs

in particular. We have also noted an increase in the number of online learning opportunities for tenants and tenants groups, as other services also respond to Covid-19 on issues such as scam awareness or safeguarding for example. This includes an increase in the online engagement offer from organisations such as TPAS.

Finally, in terms of digital engagement, the service has recently committed to a 12 month trial using 'Engagement HQ' – an online engagement tool helping council's and landlords engage with tenants and residents in a purpose built website where tenants can comment, ask questions, respond to surveys, quick polls and submit ideas in response to consultations or questions from the service.

Action: Share links to the Engagement Officers' Facebook pages.

IM concluded by sharing some of the questions and issues currently being considered by the team:

- Not all 'involved' tenants online - so how do we get round this to be more inclusive?
- How do we keep developing wider engagement and more easy to access digital approaches?
- Need to work smartly, making sure we get the best outcomes in the most cost-effective way.
- Many of the new ways of working are successful – let's keep what works
- Expect face to face activity to be less in the future – re-introduced for some activity, some of the time.

Questions from the Board

SBa commented that she had received welfare calls from her housing officer as mentioned earlier, and she had been able to suggest ways that the officer could help other tenants in her area which had been helpful for the officer. IM replied he was pleased to hear it, and similar conversations have been happening across the city between officers and tenants with good outcomes.

SBa further noted that there used to be meetings attended by housing officers and representatives of the anti-social behaviour team which were very well attended. IM agreed that meetings can be effective as one of the approaches we can use, especially when involving the local officers to build up day to day relationships.

SBu asked if repairs that were begun before the lockdown will be completed and if there will be any further communications sent out. IM replied that repairs should be completed based on a priority basis and that that if a repair has already been reported to us, the service will be in touch in due course.

KM asked the panel if they had been attending any online meetings outside of the TSB, no panel members had attended meetings but confirmed they are

using Zoom and similar platforms to keep in touch with family or others. KM proposed the creation of a Whatsapp group for the board members, however not all of the members have a phone that could support the app.

Action: Share the organisational structure chart for Housing/Tenant Engagement with TSB members

The board discussed that they were now in a position, having had an overview of the service from Mandy Sawyer, and an update about how the service has responded during Covid, that they were now in a position for their next meeting to be dedicated to setting out the scope of the review – for example, what have the board heard that they like, what would they like to know more about etc. - YD is happy to help with this conversation.

72 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next zoom meeting is scheduled for Friday 31st July at 12:45 for a 1.00pm start