

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER, 2016

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Olga Gailite, Christine Gregory, Michael Healey, Maddie Hunter, Peter Middleton and Jackie Worthington

27 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

28 Late Items

There were no late items.

29 Apologies for Absence

Rita Ighade, Roderic Morgan

30 Minutes - 26th October 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 2016 be approved as a correct record.

31 Chair's Update

The Chair explained the topic of the last meeting of Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board was around community safety which included ASB, youth offending, begging and CCTV.

It was noted that noise nuisance is still the biggest issue for the Anti Social Behaviour team and the difficulties faced with people not wanting to come forward to give evidence. The Board were informed that noise nuisance has increased by 30% in the last 12 months. There are plans to extend out of hours service to a 24 hours provision.

Youth offending – work is underway to try and prevent young people from going into custody through early intervention to prevent young people entering the criminal justice system as this can be a major impact in their lives for something that may only happen once as a youngster.

Begging has been highlighted as an issue. It was explained the usual approach is to give dispersal orders to beggars, with 270 such orders given to 85 beggars. 2 beggars were issued with Criminal Behaviour Orders after their behaviour was deemed aggressive. It was noted a campaign is under

way to think before you give, as many of them are on the streets due to addiction and by not giving money this helps stop a funding stream to continue it. Often beggars do have places to go so are not living on the streets.

CCTV – there are over 300 street cameras which are monitored, a further 203 are in West Yorkshire bus stations along with a further number in tower blocks. These cameras have helped with crime and disorder offences as well as missing persons.

The Chair updated Board members about the visit to Leeds Building Services in Seacroft on 16th November. The Chair explained this was done in two halves. The first was a tour round the depot which was impractical for all members to attend and so Michael Healey attended with the Chair on this tour. The second half which was open to all Board members was around the Total Works system which is being rolled out in LBS. It was noted this was the first time that LBS staff had seen this system in operation. The Chair noted the openness and honesty with questions posed during the tour and the demonstration. The Chair gave thanks to Leeds Building Services staff for their hospitality during the day and also to Total Works for their demonstration of the system.

CG asked if vans are currently being topped up of supplies on site or if this is something which will come in when the new system is introduced. It was clarified after the meeting the current situation is all responsive operatives have a van stock, depending on their trade. When they use items from the van stock, they fill out a form and submit it to Wolseley. On a weekly basis a Wolseley driver will contact the operative and arrange to meet them on site to deliver their van stock, unless they need to go to the Wolseley stores, where they will collect it.

The future aim is to get Total Repairs to order the van stock via their PDA, so this will alleviate the need for completing paperwork.

The Chair noted the Tenant Scrutiny Conference which is being held on 6th December. 4 places have been booked for this event, the Chair explained initially two officers would attend along with two Board members, however, one officer space has been relinquished to enable an additional Board member to attend. The Chair made the decision who would attend based on workloads and involvement in other areas of work, to ensure that all Board members have the opportunity to contribute. The Chair advised Board members attending that feedback would need to be provided at the next meeting.

The Chair also reported to the Board that due to his absence in early December that he has met with Sharon Guy to plan the December agenda so that it could be issued in the appropriate timescales. He also explained that he will be meeting with Mandy Sawyer and Sharon Guy to discuss governance of the Board which falls timely with the discussion held last meeting about the

terms of reference. He stressed he will continue to update the Board on this area of work.

The Chair reported that Councillor Proctor of E&H scrutiny board would be leaving that position in the coming months in order to take up a seat in the European Parliament. The Board expressed their thanks for his work and support throughout his tenure.

32 Update on Estate Standards Inquiry

The Chair introduced David Longthorpe, Head of Housing Management to go through the progress made by Housing Leeds on recommendations made for the Estate Management inquiry.

DL went through the current position on the recommendations and the Board raised various issues as well as giving a position status score.

Recommendation 1

The Chair asked if there are currently any Housing Officer shortages? DL noted there are around nine vacancies but these are currently in the process of being recruited to and it is hoped they will be in post around Christmas/New Year time.

SB asked what training is given to officers coming into post. DL responded by saying new staff have a full week induction, but clearly this cannot cover everything that could occur in their role. Ongoing training is therefore offered on new procedures and policies which come up. DL gave an example that when the new estate management procedure came in training was given on this to all officers.

The Chair noted that often Housing Officers are moved on before they get to know the estates and the tenants – and asked if this is something the department does routinely. DL responded saying that Housing Leeds don't set a time limit on how long an officer can remain on an estate, some officers remaining in the same area for many years, but acknowledged that officers leave the Council, are promoted or are moved because of other circumstances. DL also noted that there was recently a situation where there were a number of vacancies in South Leeds and so officers were moved over from other areas to ensure a more even staff resource spread.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 2

DL advised that standard posters are being used by officers and the walkabouts are advertised on social media. Letters are also sent to interested parties about future walkabouts with reminders a week before. Ward Members and TARAs should also be sent a report of actions even if didn't attend.

DL noted other services do struggle to send staff to all walkabouts Housing Leeds carries out but they will attend walkabouts where a specific issue has been identified to provide support to Housing Officers.

The Chair noted that the Board have carried out two follow up walkabouts in September / October to see the new process in action. The Chair raised concerns about work which is being done but the Housing Officer isn't notified. DL responded by saying given the volume of work this may be difficult to give feedback but he would ask if there was an easy mechanism by which jobs when completed could be reported back on. CG asked why Highway jobs done on a computer system, DL explained that they used a system which isn't compatible with the Housing IT system used.

JW reported that she felt there had been major improvements with the walkabout process since the harmonisation.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 3

It was explained that some re-landscaping has been carried out to allow easier access for wheelie bin collections. Where this is not possible then we have been looking at alternative ways. On green recycling bin collection, some areas where recycling rates were very poor or were being contaminated with waste that could not be recycled had the green bins removed and residents had to opt back in to green bin collections.

A question was asked if high rise bins are an issue. DL noted this can be an issue due to chutes and people putting things down that are too big which causes blockages which then has a knock on effect for everyone else. CG noted on a recent visit to a high rise block that there were issues with the bins being open and the risk of rats.

RESOLVED The Board voted by a majority to give this recommendation a status of 4 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable, continue monitoring)

RESOLVED A report of the situation was requested and to be brought back in February.

Recommendation 4 (Council provide more bins on estates)

DL gave an update on progress and the Board voted on the position status of this recommendation.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 4 (Timely removal of full glass banks)

DL gave an update on progress that this is something which waste are always looking at to ensure this is carried out. The Board then voted on the position status of this recommendation.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 4 (Introduce more clean up days)

DL gave an update on progress to this recommendation. The Chair asked how tenants know these are going on. It was responded that TARAs are notified and the information is also distributed on social media.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 4 (Education campaign)

DL noted that we continue to do this in a variety of ways with partners. All Housing Officers are trained by waste management to help them in their role.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 5

DL noted this recommendation and explained it does take time for Housing Officers to work through the processes associated with messy gardens and it is not always immediately obvious anything is being done, however action will be ongoing.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 6

DL explained there is a slight delay with this but it is currently being piloted in the Armley area. When we have assessed that pilot and its effectiveness, Housing Leeds will decide whether to roll this out across the city.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 7

DL explained a number of toolbanks have been set up historically and haven't been sustainable for a number of reasons.

The Love Your Garden project in Middleton have looked to flip this idea on its head, as they had experience of it not working in the past. Part of the problem is people not having transport so it is difficult to take and return equipment. As such they now have volunteers who take equipment to peoples gardens and do this work for them, or do the work to a point in which they can do it themselves in future.

They still need a van and volunteers so these are challenges to the project. They have one keen volunteer who is happy to do a lot of the work at the one in Middleton. DL noted that volunteers are often enthusiastic in summer but not so much in winter.

Current feedback on the toolbank has been positive. They have looked to do gardens for people who may have mental health problems as well who see the garden as a challenge but if it's its worked on to a point they can pick it up from it is better for them.

Housing Leeds would look to do something similar but not run a toolbank as we don't have capacity to run these. A standard toolbank in some locations may work but others may need this different approach outlined above. Housing Leeds would help with funding through various approaches as required to help them get going.

The Chair asked if any private organisations do this that could provide advice as he is aware that organisations in the South that run these who could help. DL was not aware of any but would look to benchmark and find out why it works there but not in Leeds. The Chair mentioned this was being done in Cottingley and while the uptake has been slow, it is working, but is this may be because Cottingley is more compact whereas Middleton is spread out in a wider area.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 8

DL distributed a leaflet round to members that Parks had produced. This helps residents understand what can and can't be done as part of the grounds maintenance contract. It can be used by Housing Officers on walkabouts for example and why issues arise such as cars parking on grass which means is cannot be done. The Board complimented the department on the leaflets produced.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 9

DL explained that often places are on the map but have not been maintained to a standard. Some reasons can be flytipping, no access for Continental to get into to. DL stressed the importance of weekly reports of which parts haven't been cut and then we can look to resolve this. If we don't get these reports we don't know about it and so this has been stressed to Continental. If there are reports of non-mapped areas we will investigate also to identify if this is Council land as we will not maintain private land.

SB asked about Leaseholders and how this affects them. DL explained it is difficult without prior knowledge of the area, but usually where it is a leaseholder who has a grass verge in the street its usually Council land, but

where it's within their own property boundary they would be responsible. Within a block of flats usually the Council will do this as it is on contract and they will then recharge a percentage of the costs back to the leaseholder.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to agree to position status 2 – Achieved.

Recommendation 10

DL explained that all garage sites have been inspected. All have been rated in terms of their sustainability on criteria of: are they a good site, how many are currently let, the number empty and their condition. Where sites are sustainable we continue to repair and let. Sites deemed unsustainable, Housing Leeds are looking at option appraisal, and what the land can be used for. Some may be useful for development but this is a large piece of work and some sites may be unsustainable but difficult to develop on due to access issues and so we would then need to decide what to do in the future with the site.

RESOLVED The Board voted unanimously to give this recommendation a status of 4 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable, continue monitoring).

RESOLVED The Board requested a further progress report on garages for the February meeting.

33 Lettable Standard Update

CG explained they have had three meetings. The first one was with the Voids Service Manager, the second was with a Lettings Team Leaders. The third consisted of visits to four void properties.

CG explained the concerning point was that all the voids had been returned from the contractor as ready to let when they all had issues of some kind. Two of the voids in particular were of concern as they had significant failings and did not meet the Lettable Standard, as confirmed by the manager attending the inspections with Board Members.

The best void was a bungalow visited but this had a few health and safety issues and this was a concern given it was sheltered housing. It was a worthwhile trip to visit voids.

The Chair asked if Officers attended and did they think it was ready to let. CG explained they agreed that 2 of the properties inspected would be returned back to the contractor to do more work on. It is reported the Officer in attendance was shocked by the void in Bramley.

CG explained the high rise property visited and that they inspected still had cleaners in the property. However this property had issues and whilst this was subject to the variable letting standard which meant certain rooms were

decorated there were issues with the painting of the property which even when these are difficult to let anyway this would not help.

The Chair asked would it be possible to find out what the cost of painting voids and how this compares to giving a decorating grant. CG explained the new variable letting standard is more expensive. Sharon Guy explained there has been inappropriate use of decoration vouchers in the past and this is why this a new approach is being taken. CG explained she understands why Housing Leeds are decorating hard to let properties but it needs to be done right. The Chair noted that could Housing Leeds not use discretion to award decoration grants given the cost of painting voids?

RESOLVED The Board requested information on how many times properties have been returned to the contractor for more work and how much delay this has caused.

RESOLVED The Board resolved via the sub group to visit some voids in East Leeds given they use a different contractor.

RESOLVED The Board to obtain the void schedule for the voids which have been visited by the sub group.

RESOLVED The Board requested that the final report on Lettable Standard be brought to the February meeting.

SB left the meeting at 3:20pm.

34 Questionnaire to Councillors on East Leeds Repairs

To ensure the Board receives a wide variety of feedback from key stakeholders, the Board were presented with a questionnaire which would be distributed to Councillors in East Leeds to complete. The Board were requested to consider the questions suggested and make any amendments required.

RESOLVED The Board agreed to the questionnaire for Councillors.

35 Questionnaire for tenants on East Leeds Repairs

To ensure the Board receives a wide variety of feedback from key stakeholders, the Board were presented with a questionnaire which would be distributed to tenants in East Leeds to complete. The Board were requested to consider the questions suggested and make any amendments required.

RESOLVED The Board agreed to the questionnaire for tenants.

36 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 30th November 2016 at 1:30pm (pre meeting for all Board Members at 1:00pm)

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 21st December, 2016

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3:30PM