

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 2018

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Maddie Hunter and
Jackie Worthington

35 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

36 Late Items

None.

37 Apologies for Absence

Michael Healey, Rita Ighade, Roderic Morgan

38 Minutes - 21st September 2018

The Chair explained to the Board that since the previous meeting, Colin Halliwell had resigned from the Board. The Chair thanked him on behalf of the Board for his work.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2018 be approved as a correct record.

39 Tenant Scrutiny Board - Discussion

The Chair explained to the Board that prior to this meeting, he had planned the coming municipal years' work with Housing Leeds Scrutiny Officers. However, it was now felt it would be difficult to deliver all aspects of the plan due to the low number of members on the Board at the present time, especially given that recent attendance has been affected through sickness.

The Chair explained that he had initially proposed the Board be suspended and relayed this suggestion to the Scrutiny Officer around two weeks ago. However, in retrospect and after speaking with the Vice Chair he appreciated this should be a matter for the Board to decide, not just the Chair. The Chair noted that the management of the Board falls between Governance Services at Civic Hall, Scrutiny Officers at Navigation House, and also the members of this Board and all three need to agree on changes to this Board.

It was noted that the number of recruits to the Board has been low in the last 3½ years and this has been recognised as a problem by Scrutiny Officers in

the past. In response to this, the Chair suggested that the Board should also be involved with the recruitment of new members, as opposed to leaving this solely with Scrutiny Officers, and going forward the Board should meet with Scrutiny Officers to discuss what the progress has been with recruitment.

The Chair also commented that whilst he felt there should be no Chair during any suspension of the Board, and was prepared to stand down, he had since been advised this cannot happen. The Chair asked that the Board make a decision as to whether he should stand down.

SB noted that she felt he shouldn't stand down given his experience and knowledge of the board and being Chair and because of him being passionate about the Board and its success. JW noted there currently is no natural successor and supported the current Chair to remain.

RESOLVED – The Board decided to keep the current Chair in place.

The Chair commented that, looking back, he felt issues with the Board seem to have occurred since March, and in particular since the previous Scrutiny Officer left the role. The Chair explained that he had expressed at the time that it would have been useful for the previous Scrutiny Officer to remain supporting the Board until the conclusion of the prevailing inquiry, however a decision was made by management at Navigation House that the Scrutiny Officer would leave the Board with immediate effect. The Chair noted at the time was not appropriate given the previous Scrutiny Officer had been replaced with a, new Officer who couldn't be involved with that inquiry due to a previous conflict of interest.

The Chair suggested that he had expressed a hope that a handover with the previous Scrutiny Officer would have taken place in order that there was a continuation of the process the Board worked to, but although there had been an interim support arrangement and the new Scrutiny Officer had been briefed by the service, there had been no direct handover. At this point the Chair expressed that he should have explained the issues he was facing to the Board at the time they were occurring.

Focusing on the current situation and the need to prioritise recruitment of new members, the Chair asked those present for their suggestions. It was noted that currently, members of this Board cannot be involved with other tenant involvement groups which is clearly a barrier for tenants wanting to join this Board. A question was asked as to whether this restriction be lifted in certain circumstances? The Board asked that the Scrutiny Officers look into this and identify groups where someone could be on Tenant Scrutiny Board and that group, and to explain to the Board where it would not be appropriate due to conflicts of interest.

It was explained that at a time when Housing Leeds were looking to broaden participation across all tenant forums, drawing new members from an already limited tenant resource would be counterproductive to this aim. It could also result in those tenants having a conflict of interest if the board subsequently

elected to run inquiries on 'Tenant involvement', 'High Rise' or 'HAP's' etc. JW noted that there shouldn't be a situation though where one person sits on several groups/board as this naturally produces a conflict of interest. It was noted that the Repairs group is very popular and it would be useful for the Chair to attend that to find out why this is the case.

SB noted that the current terms of reference of the Board state what you can and cannot be on. The Chair noted that whilst this is the case they are the same as the Councillor Scrutiny Board. The Board asked that the maximum number of members for this Board be looked at as he had seen terms of reference for a Scrutiny Board in Croydon where this wasn't considered in their terms of reference for their Board.

The Chair suggested that the Board should go round to other groups and sell ourselves to them, and explain that they have the opportunity to join us. It was noted by a member that a jobcentre type event where several stalls are set up would be a good way to attract new members to the Board and that this had worked in the past.

The Board spoke about best practice and sharing of ideas and the Chair asked if one of the meetings, perhaps Januarys could be one with the scrutiny Board from Bradford, Rotherham or Wakefield, given these are close.

The Chair also made reference to the times of this meeting, as he is aware of people who would like to join but cannot due to work or family commitments and that the dates and times of meetings could be looked at. The Chair explained that there was no evidence to suggest that the location of Scrutiny meetings being in a room with microphones and TV recording equipment was holding people back from joining, and that the room was appropriate for carrying out Scrutiny inquiries. If however evidence can be provided to show this, then he would be happy to move the meeting to another location, however members noted that should this be a later in the day or evening meeting that a central location is more appropriate given transport links are better nearer the city centre.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that he had listened to the Board's discussion and wanted to clarify that the Council had not asked that the current Chair stand down as Housing Leeds wanted to continue to work with him to help reinvigorate and refresh the board.

In regard to recruitment, the Scrutiny Officer explained this Board is not unique in its challenge to find new members to join and noted that there are vacancies for involved tenants across the engagement framework. The Scrutiny Officer gave an example of the High Rise group which has had 7 new members in the last three years but of those only 2 remain. It was also explained that the Annual Home Visit data had been used where tenants had expressed an interest in being involved, and of 74 emails sent out to high rise tenants advising of vacancies on the High Rise Strategy Group, only one response had been received.

The Scrutiny Officer noted there needs to be other ways to engage with tenants to encourage them to join us. One approach has been to include an article in the high rise newsletter for the High Rise group. Another suggestion could be a press release offering an interview with the Chair to outline the positives of the role and being part of the Scrutiny Board. The Scrutiny Officer explained that having articles about individuals are more interesting and captures people's attention compared to just articles about policy.

The Scrutiny Officer also explained that the times that the meeting is held can also be an issue and something which could be looked at and also reviewing the upper limit on members could be increased because often due to illness or people being on holiday and such, the maximum number of tenants are rarely all available at one meeting.

The Chair concluded the meeting by asking that the Board meet next in December as planned to report back on any progress in recruitment.

RESOLVED – Scrutiny Officers to look into whether tenants on other Housing Leeds Tenant Involvement groups could also be involved with the Tenant Scrutiny Board, and where this is not appropriate that the reason is provided to the Board.

RESOLVED – If there is a possibility of inviting Scrutiny Boards in the local area to share best practice with this Board.

RESOLVED – That the Board look to visit other groups within Housing Leeds to see how they attract members and if there is a way to use their methods to attract new members to the Board.

40 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Friday 21st December 2018 at 1:15pm
(Pre meeting for all Board members at 1:00pm)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 2:50 PM