

TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

FRIDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY, 2019

PRESENT: John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Stephen Ilee, Peter Middleton and Jackie Worthington

60 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

None.

61 Late Items

None.

62 Apologies for Absence

Michael Healey, Maddy Hunter, Rita Ighade, Roderic Morgan.

63 Minutes - 18th January 2019

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. A round of introductions were made for the benefit of the attending guest and members.

RESOLVED – The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 January 2019 were passed as a true record.

64 Update on Recruitment to Tenant Scrutiny Board

JG welcomed the new prospective board members Mary Farish and Stanley Burton to the meeting, and explained that despite attending as observers for this meeting, they are free to take part and ask any questions they wish.

KM began by reminding the board of the recent email campaign discussed in the previous meeting, noting that over one thousand emails had been sent out based on responses from annual home visits and star survey data. KM advised the board that he had received seven responses enquiring about the Tenant Scrutiny Board, elaborating that information about other means of engagement such as HAPs and other tenants' groups was included in the email.

Attempts had been made to get in touch with all seven respondents following which KM and SI met with four interested individuals to discuss the aims of the TSB and to learn more about why they expressed an interest.

KM advised members that it was felt by both SI and himself, one of the individuals, had a much keener interest in matters in his local area, therefore his details had been passed on to the local Tenant Engagement Officer with a suggestion he be considered as a new HAP member.

Two of the three other attendees were in attendance today and a third tenant had been unable to attend this meeting, but hopes to be able to attend the next meeting. If all three prospective members are approved by the board and invited to join, this would take the total number of members to 12.

SI welcomed the two observers and expressed his hope that they both find the meeting interesting and would join the board as members. JG opened the floor to any questions from the board members.

SBa asked if there will be any future meetings with MF, SBu, and the third individual to assess their suitability for the board. JG responded that he would talk with both attendees following the close of the meeting to discuss their thoughts on the meeting and answer any questions they might have around joining. JG mentioned that the previous system of formal interviews could often be a barrier to potential members as they were put off by the formality, and talking in this manner can often be more beneficial to both parties. KM agreed, and explained to the board that this had influenced the decision to invite the 4 tenants to a group discussion and not separate interviews, as it allowed KM and SI to assess how the individuals engaged in a group setting and were confident putting forward ideas.

JG asked if there had been an update on the issue that was noted with the engagement flyers not displaying correctly when viewed on Twitter. KM responded that he had liaised with the communications team, and that the issue could have been caused by a variety of factors, including the device on which the flyer was viewed. The flyer has not been re-uploaded, however it can be deployed again if necessary. KM further informed the panel that the council has recruited a staff member with experience in graphic design who can produce superior content, and may be asked to do so in future.

JG requested an update on the uploading of minutes onto the council website. KM responded that Tracey McGarry (who attended the previous meeting) had personally resolved the matter, requesting the upload of the latest available minutes to the website for each group that wasn't yet up to date. KM advised that due to some groups meeting bi-monthly, the latest approved minutes may appear to be some months behind the present date, though there is potential scope for draft versions of the most recent meetings being uploaded prior to their approval.

JW enquired if there was possibility for a younger member of the TSB to join the board. KM replied that the 3rd tenant unable to attend today, is a 35 year old male who would no doubt provide a younger perspective if subsequently approved to join the board. JW further asked if work may be a barrier to his attendance, but it wasn't thought this was the case. JG responded that it is unfortunate that the time of the meeting can conflict with workday hours as it does, but there is the potential for the meeting room to be reserved into the

evening which could better accommodate members that struggle with attending due to work, and the topic can be a matter of discussion at the next meeting.

JG also informed the board that the boards development plan can also be an agenda item for the next meeting, and a request would be sent inviting Mandy Sawyer (Head of Neighbourhood Services) to attend.

65 Retirement Life Report

JG introduced Sue Donaldson, Development Manager for Retirement Life, to provide an overview of the Sheltered Housing Service, and its rebranding as 'Retirement Life'. JG asked if SD might begin with a short history of the service and its development into what it is today. SD explained that the sheltered housing service name has been used since 1970, and used to be made up of separate schemes with wardens living on site and effectively providing around the clock service to the residents. From 2003 the service was funded by Support & People, and in order to receive funding the service had to meet many strict KPIs and report the quarterly performance across all three ALMOs that existed at the time. In 2005 the staff that lived on site were given the legal right to their tenancy, meaning they could still occupy the on-site properties even after their employment had finished, creating an issue that new staff could no longer live in such close proximity to the residents. From this, area teams were implemented, creating a team of staff that worked at the site but did not live there. Most of the staff working for Retirement Life today do not live on site and work regular 8am-4pm hours, removing some of that extra availability granted by living on site. When the three ALMOs were disbanded in 2014 and the services joined under the Leeds City Council, the separate working practices had to be revised to be consistent across the whole city. To do this, best practice was observed across other authorities, however many other sheltered services were disbanded due to the withdrawal of funding support from Support & People. The fact that the Leeds service was eligible for housing benefit meant that the service could remain, but had to review the ways in which best value and outcomes could be achieved. The rebranding to Retirement Life ('Life' being an acronym for 'Living in a friendly environment') better reflects the aims of the service, and moves away from the less appealing associations of living in a sheltered property.

SD informed the board of the service as it is in the present day, managing approximately 4,000 properties across 122 schemes. SD elaborated that 77 of these schemes have a community centre or complex for residents, and the remaining 45 are dispersed schemes and do not have a community centre. The Retirement Life scheme is provided to all residents for a flat rate of £13.00 per week which is eligible for housing benefit, and for that price residents can choose to be visited by a member off staff from one to five times per week. Residents can also choose to decline any visits, though the service charge remains as they can then opt in to visits at any time. There are many vulnerable people living in Retirement Life properties and staff may spend more or less time with residents depending on their needs, or visit them multiple times per day. Around 75% of residents stay in their property until the

end of their life, and as a result can have more complex needs than those who are healthy or remain active, so it is vital the service can adapt to the changing needs of residents and provide effective support based on each individual's needs.

Combating social isolation is another important factor in the Retirement Life service, as some residents may not have family networks to provide additional support. Older people often prefer to remain in a local environment with a strong community around them, so there has been a focus on developing the number and range of activities across the 77 schemes equipped to do so. On a monthly basis, over 1,800 activities are delivered across Leeds, which are factored into the role of support officers who share the delivery across their teams. Each staff member can contribute based on their personal strengths, whether it is organisation, running the activity, or another area. Some staff have been trained in the delivery of armchair exercises, for which the number of activities has risen from 267 per month to approximately 700 per month, and some staff cook food and organise lunches for tenants, but the key theme is responding to the residents' requests for the types of activity they would like to see. The evolution of Retirement Life has seen the social aspects become more prominent, additional to the service offer already in place.

SD advised the board that the official launch of Retirement Life will take place on the 1st of April 2019. Training has been key to ensure all staff are fully up to date with the expectations of the service, and consultation with residents via focus groups has taken place to address any issues or concerns that residents may raise. Throughout March, a whiteboard will be installed in prominent locations in each community centre, detailing the members of staff who are working, their available hours, and their contact details so that residents have a clear point of contact should they need it. An activity plan will also be posted near to the whiteboards detailing the available activities, as well as 'meet your team' posters helping familiarise residents with the members of staff they can expect to see. SD opened the floor to any questions.

JG asked SD for clarification on how the 4,000 properties break down into communities. SD reiterated that there are 122 schemes, and that 77 of those have a communal complex, and eight of the complexes are made up of high rise blocks. JG raised a point that he was aware of an individual who was receiving some aspects of the support offered by Retirement Life but who didn't live in a sheltered property, and asked if this support should be offered to them. SD answered that it should not be, though following the merging of the ALMOs, some tenants were left over that had no other means of support and could not be excluded from the support they were receiving at the time. It is an ongoing area of development that in future the service could be expanded to support residents in their own homes who are unable to move to a Retirement Life property, where staff would be able to provide support and update their support files. SD stressed that the support staff are not the ones who provide the service such as cleaning that Adult Social Care would, however they are able to make referrals for such services for the resident if they were needed. JG asked if the people who are receiving support are on a

waiting list to receive support from Retirement Life. SD answered the support they may be getting might be privately offered, and there are many other providers of similar services not attached to Leeds City Council. Retirement Life only cater to the properties included in the scheme, and the properties are advertised as category 2 sheltered when they are in the lettings process. Retirement Life is only responsible for the 4,000 properties that it covers, and consults with every resident about the service they require, and twice yearly with those that decline home visits during the week. JG asked how long the waiting list is for sheltered housing, though SD explained that those figures would have to come from the lettings team, though there are doubtless areas that are more highly in demand than others. The bidding system is based on priority determined by the needs of the applicant as other properties are. SI asked if the new ABRITAS system will show the waiting list for properties, and SD confirmed that it would.

JG asked if there was a cap on the amount of benefits that somebody living in a Retirement Life could receive, based on a similar cap having been put in place on other council residents. SD confirmed that there is no cap she is aware of, but the issue would primarily be the remit of the Universal Credit team. There may be issues in individual cases, such as for those over the age of 65 who fall outside of the UC boundary, or those with a partner under or over the age of 65, but again they are not handled by Retirement Life and so a comprehensive answer could not be provided.

SI enquired how many support officers were a part of the retirement life team, SD answered that there is the full time equivalence of 81 members of staff, comprising both full and part-time staff meaning the number of staff members may be higher than 81. Managing those staff are seven team leaders, each of which covers a geographical area and can cover for other managers in case of sickness. SI further asked if the figures provided were actual or budget, SD replied that they are actual, and that there have been no cut backs from the previous budget. A review of staff numbers revealed there were enough staff to cover the service, although some particular areas may have had a surplus of staff members which meant they may have been moved around, though the demands for each area are constantly changing. SI asked if the sickness rates of staff was known, but SD replied that she did not have that figure as she is not responsible for the direct management of the team.

SI asked how closely retirement life works with Adult Social Care. SD answered that the two services work very closely together, and that Adult Social Care are pivotal in helping to maintain the service offered to the 75% of residents who stay in their property until the end of their life. SI challenged the statement that the two teams communicate closely as he stated there is no continuous interaction from the two services. SD replied that the care packages put into place by Adult Social Care are privileged and not available to the Retirement Life support staff. There are meetings that take place to discuss specific individual cases where necessary, however it is unreasonable to expect the service staff to speak to every social worker about individual cases when it is not necessary to do so. SI further questioned if it was not possible to converse when the two teams may visit a resident every day,

however SD confirmed the confidential information a social worker may have was on a strictly need-to-know basis. SD informed the board that there is a log of calls across the service made by the support staff to social workers regarding the situation of residents, but that the social workers are only active with an individual when the case is live. If there is a safeguarding issue however, it is possible to find out pertinent information about a case which could then be used meet the resident's needs more effectively.

JW raised the issue that the schemes around her area seem to lack staff due to sickness and other reasons, leaving them reliant on family members or other means of support. SD answered that some shortages due to sickness are unavoidable, especially as the service is unable to recruit a replacement for a sick staff member that is off long-term. SD informed the board that the Retirement Life staff do not deliver all of the 1,800 activities per month, and some of the activities are tenant-led by choice. As a breakdown, 25% of activities are led solely by staff, 50% are led by staff and residents in conjunction, and the remaining 25% are led by external providers and volunteers. JG asked SD to clarify the structure of the activities as some of the activities seem to be regimented, SD responded that some activities take place on a regular basis so the residents know they happen at a particular time, and the ones that are led by external parties are also pre-planned so correct rooms and facilities are booked and it can be ensured the activity takes place. Communal facilities, however, are open for tenants to use whenever they need it and for whatever reason, and all tenants have fob access to the buildings. The activities between tenants such as playing cards and board games cannot be captured by the data as only those that are pre planned can be.

JG asked how people are referred to sheltered housing. SD explained that sheltered housing is a part of housing Leeds, and is for those that are over 60 and/or have certain needs. Referrals can be made through the Health and Housing team, or it can be recommended by a GP, but Health and Housing can set the priority of the applications. The bidding system is otherwise similar to the process of bidding on any other property. JG continued by asking if there are any people in sheltered housing who perhaps did not need to be there and so applicants with needs were missing out, however SD replied that the perception of need is important, and not all residents have visible needs. Physical disability is not the only reason a person may need sheltered housing, and some residents may face mental health issues, social isolation, or a range of other invisible needs that means sheltered housing is the best option for them.

SI raised the issue of peoples' general misconception about sheltered housing being more akin to a care home, when in reality they are two different services, with support officers are only there to assess the residents' needs and make appropriate referrals. SD admitted that Retirement Life is like a double edged sword, and that it is uncertain whether it works better under social care or under housing, but the allocation of property based on needs is more effective than the allocation of property solely to fill an empty house. JG further asked if there were ever occasions in which Housing Leeds could

move someone to sheltered housing in order to free up a home that might be more suitable for another family. SD answered that people are not predominantly moved for that reason, though she was responsible for the addition of five questions to the annual home visit survey asked to over 75s about the suitability of their current home to their needs, which can then be used to assess whether a move to sheltered housing might be suitable for them. The five questions are;

1. Can you manage to get in and around your home independently and safely?
2. Can you manage to bathe independently and do your bathing facilities suit your needs?
3. Can you manage to shop, cook, and manage your own finances?
4. Do you get to see your family and friends or are you isolated?
5. Are you able to access your GP and other services when required?

The questions are based on the five health and wellbeing support plan basis that older people need to maintain their independence when living in their own homes. JG questioned what the process would be if there was no space in sheltered housing but there was a resident who needed it, and if their own home could be adapted. SD responded that adaptations would only take place if they are financially viable. SBa asked if there was any available budget to help those who require a move to sheltered housing, but are unable to afford the inherent cost of moving belongings. SD answered that there is no budget available for this, however there is a tenant support team that can make referrals to voluntary services, and that Leeds Housing Options may have money to be able to support a move like this, however it is not usual practice for Retirement Life to fund a move.

SI stated that having looked at the website, the text still refers to the sheltered housing name and onsite wardens, appearing to be out of date. SI mentioned that everyone he knows in sheltered housing believes the quality of service has reduced since teams took over from the wardens. SI also said that the whiteboards due to be put in place don't seem to answer some of the more prevalent issues residents have. As a final point, SI suggested that with an aging population, residents were finding it more and more difficult to maintain the communal gardens when the only service the council provides is grass cutting, and asked if Parks and Countryside might be able to do this. SD replied that where there are communal gardens there is an enhanced grass cutting service and shrub maintenance, but unfortunately tending to flowers and weeds is not a part of the service and would be expected to be maintained by residents, as this level of service across all of the gardens would be unmanageable. A possible solution to this issue would be to replace the flowers with shrubs and add them to the shrub maintenance, though this would likely not be the preferred option for the residents. SI answered if that could be an option then that would be acceptable, however he had previously been told that this would not be possible. JW added that her complex has issues with shrubs that have been seeded by birds in an area unreachable by the residents, but has also been told these cannot be cut. SD answered that the environment comes under Housing Management which looks after the

properties themselves and the environment around them, and they are the ones with the remit to cut those shrubs.

JG raised the issue of sheltered housing not always having provisions for those that require motorised scooters to go about their daily lives. SD answered that there are scooter pods fitted in the schemes with internal complexes, but some areas cannot fit the pods as they can cause a fire safety risk if they were left in corridors or near to emergency exits. Over the last three years the accessibility of complexes has been reviewed, assessing whether there is a safe ramp to access the building, self-opening doors, and key fobs to allow access.

JG asked regarding repairs if there are complaints that are not followed up. SD answered that the support staff often raise the repairs for residents in their own homes who ask for them or are unable to raise them themselves, as well as raising repairs for communal areas. In cases where repairs are not carried out staff will chase them up, and there is an escalation process. The team carry out stage two health and safety checks, ensuring that such repairs are followed up for health and safety reasons.

JG opened the floor to any further questions, summing up that everyone has a different perspective on what sheltered housing is and does, but that it is clear that the reality of people living in sheltered housing is different to the perception of those in sheltered housing. SD in closing told the board that she agreed perception is a focus for Retirement Life, and that the website is on the agenda to be updated, however there have been some issues regarding what details will be included or changed, and that is why it hasn't been able to be altered straight away. SD posed some key questions to be addressed by the service; Do people understand what the service is? Is the service being marketed and promoted appropriately? Is the service fit for purpose? Retirement Life is not meant to act as a care home, however that the services it does provide meet the needs of the residents in the schemes. JG agreed that some more distinction between the two services would be helpful, and asked if the ABRITAS lettings system would help in the allocation of residents into sheltered schemes. SD agreed that it would benefit the service, and would show those that bid the properties that are most suitable for their needs.

JG thanked SD for her update to the board, divulging that it may become a subject of a board inquiry in the coming year if the board choose to pursue it.

66 Work Plan for Tenant Scrutiny Board

JG informed the board that the agenda for the March meeting is still to be finalised but he will be asking for TSB members to propose their interest in becoming chair for the election in April.

JG reminded members that because a review of the LASBT service is still underway, they will be attending in April to report on the recommendations

that were made in the TSB review, (of which six were accepted, two partially accepted, and two rejected).

JG confirmed that following discussion, the names of the officers and guests in attendance at TSB meetings shall be added to the front page, as it makes it easier to see at a glance who the guests were for each meeting and saves time searching through the minutes to find names. The contact number for IP at the tenant engagement team shall be provided to members and on the front sheet of the meeting packs, as Lee Ward is no longer responsible for arranging taxis.

JG proposed that 'any other business' be added to minutes where anyone has some, adding that it is not included because other similar boards have tended not to include it. JG opened the floor to members who had an opinion on the matter. SI agreed that 'any other business' should be added to the agenda.

SI asked if the prospective members of the board could be sent a copy of the reports on LASBT prior to the April meeting, KM responded that they have already been provided with copies of all 4 completed inquires.

JG asked if an up-to-date list could be created of members' contact details to ensure correct information is held for all members, and requested that anyone who did not want to be on the list tell KM or IP.

KM reminded the board that Mandy Sawyer will be invited to attend the March meeting, and that LASBT will attend in April. KM asked if the May meeting will be cancelled, JG noted that whilst this had been suggested, the May meeting should go ahead but the August meeting should be cancelled instead as members are often away on holiday during August.

67 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Friday 15 March at 1:15pm
(Pre-meeting for all board members at 1:00pm)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 2:45 PM