

**TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS'  
CONSULTATIVE FORUM****30 OCTOBER 2006**

Chairman: \* Councillor Marilyn Ashton

Councillors: \* Don Billson \* Phillip O'Dell  
\* Bob Currie

\* Denotes Member present

[Note: Councillors Mrs Camilla Bath, Mrs Kinnear and Susan Hall also attended this meeting in a participatory capacity].

**Tenants and Leaseholder Representatives**

Representatives from the following Associations were in attendance:-

Alexandra Avenue Tenants' and Residents' Association  
 Antoney's Close Tenant's and Resident's Association  
 Berridge Estate Tenants' and Residents' Association  
 Brookside Close Tenants' and Residents' Association  
 Cottesmore Tenants' and Residents' Association  
 Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Association  
 Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations  
 Harrow Weald Tenants' and Residents' Association  
 Honeybun Community Association  
 Stonegrove Gardens Tenantss and Residents' Association  
 Weald Village Tenants and Residents' Association

(In total, 19 representatives were in attendance.)

**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL****PART II - MINUTES****17. Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.**18. Declarations of Interest:****RESOLVED:** To note that the following interest was declared:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
Councillor Bob Currie	Declared a personal interest in that he attended meetings of ELTRA and Brookside Close TRA.

**19. Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That all items be considered with the press and public present.**20. Minutes:****RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2006 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.**21. Public Questions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).**22. Petitions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions were received at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

23. **Deputations:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

24. **Tenant Compact:**

The Forum received a report from the Head of Housing outlining work undertaken on revising the Tenant Compact, which had first been published in 2000.

It was stated that the new agreement would give tenants and leaseholders opportunities to shape and influence a range of housing services. A recent example of this was said to be the establishment of the leaseholders' forum. The Compact had been through a comprehensive consultation, and would be the charter by which services would be provided.

In response to questions, the Forum heard that all residents would be receiving a copy of the revised Compact, and a summary would appear in the next edition of 'Homing In'.

It was also stated that whilst tenants were not advised when estate inspections were taking place, the current program was scheduled at six monthly intervals. The Chairs of relevant Tenants' and Residents' Associations (TRAs) were invited to the meetings, at which formal minutes were taken.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

25. **Progress on Revisions to the Standard Tenancy Agreement:**

The Forum heard that the last review of the Tenancy Agreement had taken place in 1992, and therefore a revision was required to reflect changes in Housing Acts. Another objective of revising the agreement was to help establish a clear contract between the Council and tenants.

It was noted that the new agreement was out to consultation with tenants, and 20 meetings were being arranged as set out in Appendix A to the officer report. An officer stated that it was planned that the revised agreement would be recommended to Cabinet in January 2007, for implementation the following April.

The Forum heard that comments from individual Tenants and Residents would be included in the revised agreement subject to legal compliance.

Residents were encouraged to attend one of the scheduled consultation meetings, in order that their comments on the agreement could be received.

On opening the item to questions, various aspects of the proposed agreement were discussed, including policy on pets, sub-letting, and the size of the Council's housing stock.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

26. **Rent Restructuring and Service Charges:**

An officer presented a report from the Head of Housing, outlining proposals for rent restructuring and the separation of service charges.

It was stated that Harrow currently included service charges within rent, but that Government guidance called for greater transparency and required separation or 'rent de-pooling'. Services such as grounds maintenance, communal lighting and caretaking would therefore be itemised separately.

It was added that the amount of service charge levied would remain unchanged from the amount that was currently incorporated into the total weekly rent charge. The proposed reforms would therefore provide a breakdown showing a separation of charges for services relating to the amenities of the estate and the actual rent charged relating to a residents' home.

In response to queries about the nature of the charges and the requirement to pay for particular services, the Forum heard that a more detailed explanation would be brought to the next meeting, and would clarify which services would be likely to make up the service charge. It was also stated that services such as refuse cleaning and the cleaning and upkeep of public highways did not form part of the rent charged to tenants. These items fell within expenditure collected through council tax.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

27. **Housing Management Issues: Anti-Social Behaviour:**

The Forum received a report of the Head of Housing concerning anti-social behaviour. The Forum heard that the report provided details of how complaints of anti-social behaviour were responded to with reference to certain types of behaviour, but that the discussion was general in nature and did not discuss specific complaints. It was reported that Housing were currently investigating 22 complaints of anti-social behaviour.

The Forum heard that the following improvements were being implemented by Residents' Services in order to tackle anti-social behaviour, among others:

- Training for Staff and TRAs;
- Booklet entitled 'Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour' currently in production;
- The introduction of new tenancy agreements with stronger clauses on anti-social behaviour.

In response to questions, the Forum heard that it was not the policy of the Council to move tenants, as this action did not resolve the matter but only transported the issue to another area. In instances where a vulnerable tenant was alleged to be causing anti-social behaviour, a number of agencies would be involved with the aim of trying to sustain the tenancy, because of the statutory duty of all local housing authorities to provide a home to vulnerable people about which complaints had been received. In cases where there were particular kinds of mental health issues, there was a statutory obligation to provide housing.

A Member commented that in certain instances, criminal proceedings might be the most appropriate course of action.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

28. **Grounds Maintenance:**

The Forum received a report of the Head of Housing Services, which outlined the standards set out for the Grounds Maintenance Service.

The Forum heard of required standards for, amongst other: grass-cutting, maintenance of hedgerows and beds, weed control and fly-tipping. Details of the Service's monitoring arrangements through Estate Liaison officers, and proposals for its possible improvement, were also discussed.

In response to the report, a number of issues relating to grounds maintenance were raised by individual representatives, which officers responded to or agreed to respond to outside of the Forum. It was added that any issues with the service would be identified by Estate Liaison Officers during inspections. Residents were also urged to inform Housing staff or their Ward Councillors of problems soon after they arose, in order to ensure they were dealt with promptly.

A Member drew attention to recent cuts to the service, but also assured residents that the Council was seeking to provide the best possible service with the funds available, and that the resources for the service were under review.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

29. **Harrow's Integrated Property Services Partnership:**

The Forum received a report of the Head of Housing Services, which outlined progress in the Harrow Integrated Property Services Partnership (HIPSP). The Project Manager stated that the purpose of the partnership was to improve service delivery and achieve greater value for money by combining the response maintenance service and housing capital programme, as well as maintenance of all Council owned assets including school premises, libraries and social services buildings into a single procurement project.

The project would seek to reduce the complexity of the provision of the above services by offering long-term contracts with providers (typically 5 years) which would enhance efficiency.

It was stated that there was currently a lack of coordination in the way the Council procured these services, and that the Partnership would aim to remedy this by reducing

the number of suppliers. This could have other benefits, such as the creation of employment in the local area.

In addition, it was said that the project would have other potential benefits such as improvement in the diagnosis of repairs, and better coordination between minor and major works.

In response to questions, the Forum heard the following:

- potential suppliers would be evaluated on a number of criteria, not purely on price;
- that there would be enhanced accountability of suppliers through long-term contracts;
- improved IT would assist contractors in providing a more prompt, reliable service.

The Forum was also advised of a letter inviting tenants and leaseholders to be part of an evaluation process for the appointment of the partnering contractor. Representatives were reminded that this was an opportunity to ensure their involvement in the decision-making processes that would affect future service changes to the repair and maintenance of their homes.

**RESOLVED:** That the above be noted.

30. **Older People's Housing Review:**

The Forum received a report detailing the recommendation of the older People's Housing review, and its key implications for tenants and leaseholders.

An officer stated that there were 550 sheltered housing units in blocks around the Borough, and the work was being conducted jointly with People First to implement the proposals of the review.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

31. **Any Other Urgent Business:**

Tenant Advisor

The Forum was informed that an independent Tenant Advisor had been appointed, following a selection process including both residents and the Council.

Chairman

The Chairman stated that owing to a planned re-allocation of duties, she would not be Chairing the Forum in future. Residents expressed their thanks to the Chairman for her involvement in the Forum.

32. **Date of Next Meeting:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that the next meeting of the Forum was scheduled to take place on 8 January 2007.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.45 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MARILYN ASHTON  
Chairman