

TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM

10 NOVEMBER 2009

- Chairman: * Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane
- Councillors: * Bob Currie * Yogesh Teli
 * Phillip O'Dell

* Denotes Member present

[Note: Councillor Susan Hall also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 220, 222 and 227 below.]

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL

PART II - MINUTES

Representatives from the following associations were in attendance:

- Cottesmore Tenants' and Residents' Association
- Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Association
- Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Association
- Little Stanmore Tenants' and Residents' Association
- Leaseholders Support Group

214. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

215. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
8. Update by the Interim Divisional Director of Housing Services) Councillor Bob Currie	Declared a personal interest on all items of the agenda, in that he attended monthly meetings of the Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Association. Accordingly, he remained in the room during the discussion and decision-making on all items.
9. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Forecast Outturn 2009-10		
10. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010-10 to 2010-13		
11. Capital Programme Consultation		
12. Lean Review of Repairs		
13. Rechargeable Repairs Policy		
14. Parking Enforcement Proposals		

- 15. Update on actions taken by Officers)
- 16. Suggestions for agenda items for next meeting)
- 17. Any Other Urgent Business)

216. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 21 July 2009 be taken as read and signed as correct record.

217. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:**

RESOLVED: That Councillor Bob Currie be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the Tenants and Leaseholders Consultative Forum for the remainder of the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

218. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions, petitions or deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory and Consultative Forum Procedure Rules 16, 14 and 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution)

219. **INFORMATION REPORT - Update by the Interim Divisional Director of Housing Services:**

The Interim Divisional Director of Housing introduced the report which set out a range of items that she wished to bring to the attention of the Forum.

The officer reported that she had attended the last Leaseholder Support Group (LSG), and heard a wide range of questions and concerns raised. An internal audit on billing and recharging of electricity, which had found in favour of leaseholders had been conducted. The Chief Executive of the Council was aware of the severity of the situation and discussions were now taking place to resolve it.

The officer reported that proposals had been made to make further improvements in gaining access to premises to provide gas servicing. Amongst the suggestions were for Kier to inform tenants of their arrival via text.

The officer advised the Forum that Tribal, an executive recruitment agency, was managing the process of recruitment of four new members of the Senior Housing Management team. The posts had been advertised in Inside Housing on 16 October 2009. Members of the Forum were advised that final selection interviews for the post of Divisional Director were likely to be held on 4 December 2009, members of the Forum were asked to participate in this process.

The officer provided an update on the Mill Farm Close Regeneration Proposal, and advised that Catalyst Communities Housing Association had been appointed by residents. She added, subject to consent by the Secretary of State, that the transfer would take place early in the new year.

In response to a question regarding recent press coverage, the Chairman and the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment Services and Community Safety, reiterated the need to enforce what could be done with regards to anti-social behaviour, and added that working closely with the TRAs would assist the Council in resolving the problem. The Chairman added that the issue was borough wide and requested that a report be drawn up for the next TLCF meeting to identify the problem and possible ways forward.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

220. **INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Forecast Outturn 2009-10:**

An officer introduced a report which provided the projected outturn for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2009-10 at the close of August 2009. Officers outlined the following:

- HRA income levels were expected to be £139,000 lower than the budget. This was due mainly to differences between void assumptions in the budget and void periods of properties during the year;
- an in year deficit of £1,055,790.00 in 2009/10 was budgeted, but that this deficit was expected to increase by £114,000.00 to £1,170,000.00 by 31 March 2010.

In response to various questions, officers stated that:

- void properties were being turned around as quickly as possible, but that improvements in turn around time were being worked on;
- the minimum amount of work was being carried out where possible to minimise expenditure;
- there was no evidence to suggest that the increasing number of void properties was due to the current economic climate;

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

221. **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010-11 to 2012-13:**

An officer introduced a report which set the budget assumptions and issues to be considered as part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010/11 to 2012/13. The officer confirmed that the position would be reported to the Cabinet meeting on 17 December 2009.

The officer advised that:

- the anticipated balance carried forward at 31 March 2010 was expected to be £3.972m;
- a minimum balance of £750,000 would continue to be maintained in line with the business plan;
- the in year position in 2009/10 showed annual spend of £26.778m and annual income of £25.722m, which meant a reduction in reserves of £1.056m and that the medium term strategy would need to identify ways to bring annual expenditure in line with income;
- the average weekly service charge were anticipated to be: £4.53 in 2010/11, £4.66 in 2011/12, and £4.80 in 2012/13, which were (subject to Government guidelines);
- average weekly rents, which were also subject to amended Government guidelines at the end of October were anticipated to be: £88.51 in 2010/11, £93.04 in 2011/12, and £97.71 in 2012/13;
- the average rent increase would be in line with the Government rent model of 3%;
- service charges for tenants' and leaseholders' had been recommended to increase in 2009/10 by 5.5% and 10.6% respectively;
- the deletion of Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO), would assist in bringing expenditure back in line with annual income;
- re-letting void properties at target rent would be a quick solution to help maximise income. Based on an estimated 232 void properties, an additional rental income of £126,000 in a full year could be generated;
- by increasing utility charges to fully recover costs. A shortfall of £139,000 had been calculated between the cost of utilities and amount recovered from tenants. This resulted in an increased average weekly cost of £3.90 or 40% over the prior year 2009/10.

In response to questions by TRA representatives, officers advised that:

- the rent proposals would only affect tenants not in receipt of housing benefits;

- in exceptional circumstances, tenants evicted for rent arrears may need to be re-housed as a homeless person;
- temporary accommodation in hostels would be offered dependant on circumstances.

Following a question, the Chairman mentioned that he would investigate why tenants' were paying the same rates for garages as those who used their garage for business purposes. He added that the outcome would be presented at the next HFTRA or TLCF meetings.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

222. **Capital Programme Consultation:**

An officer introduced a report which set out the current position regarding the Decent Homes Programme, and proposals for the Capital Programme for 2010/11, together with indicative programmes for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

It was estimated that £3 million would be required to complete works needed to meet the Decent Home standard. Work was planned for completion in 2010, with greater emphasis being placed on the external fabric of the buildings and was shifting away from the internal replacement of kitchens and bathrooms.

The report detailed the pressures surrounding the Capital Programme, which included:

- replacing timber doors and window frames with uPVC, which would eradicate the need for painting and therefore minimise re-decoration costs;
- updating Warden call alarm units;
- upgrading door entry security systems.

In response to questions from TRA representatives and Members of the Forum, the officer advised that:

- environmental issues were being addressed;
- the Environmental Improvements budget included the renewal of 'curtain walling', whereby a central staircase had a glass frontage which was in need of renewal;
- the best time to work on insulation was when performing other works;
- there was a pilot scheme being bid for to incorporate a number of enhancements into an existing property, this included reclaiming heat from roof space, recycling 'grey water' and using solar panels.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

223. **Lean Review of Repairs:**

An officer introduced the report which set out the current position with regard to the lean review process of the responsive repairs service. The officer stated that there were two main issues surrounding the lean review of repairs, which the Forum were asked to consider:

- (1) it was proposed that categories K2, 3 and 4, would be amalgamated as they made the repairs process inefficient;
- (2) as an alternative offer, convenient appointments with the residents was proposed;
- (3) to make sure that the appointment system worked;
- (4) it was recommended that repairs be prioritised in following manner:
 - KE - out of hour's emergency (no change)
 - K1 - daytime emergency (no change)
 - K2 - all other repair work to be undertaken by first available appointment that was convenient to the tenant.

The second main proposal was to develop a predictive tool that would forecast the demand for repairs and their costs with increasing accuracy. The officer stated that the objective of the tool would be two fold:

- it would help to manage the budget as the year progressed;
- it could be used before the start of the new financial year to compare the predicted demand with the proposed budget.

He added that the formula would be calculated using historical data, and that the projected costs for 2010/11 of this model would be shared with the Forum at the next TLCF meeting in January 2010.

In response to comments by TRA representatives, the officer confirmed that in removing categories K2, 3 and 4, a problematic boiler would still fall under category K1, a daytime emergency. The TRA representative mentioned that a neighbour required a visit from Kier, to which an officer requested details of the Tenants' address in order to resolve the problem.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

224. **Rechargeable Repairs Policy:**

An officer introduced the report which outlined the need for the Council to change the culture of tenants, leaseholders and their visitors. The officer mentioned that a policy was in the process of being drawn up that included the input of officers from Housing Services, the Property Management team and Access Harrow. The policy would look to 're-charge' current and former tenants and leaseholders for any anti-social behaviour or damage caused to the premises.

In response to a question by a TRA representative, the officer advised that freeholders were included in the proposed policy because damage could be caused to the property of a tenant or leaseholder by a freeholder.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

225. **Parking Enforcement Proposals:**

A TRA representative requested to know why the Parking Enforcement Proposals report, which was marked as 'to follow' on the agenda, was not presented. An officer informed the representative that the report was withdrawn due to issues surrounding financial implications.

RESOLVED: That the report be presented at a future TLCF meeting.

226. **INFORMATION REPORT - Update on actions taken by Officers:**

An officer introduced a report which sought to address issues raised by TRA representatives at a previous meeting.

A response to a letter tabled in advance of the meeting was circulated relating to External Decorations and the decoration of Communal internal spaces.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

227. **Any Other Urgent Business:**

Kier: Cost of Contractual Repairs

A TRA representative, who was representing the Leaseholders Support Group, requested to know why, in reference to the breakdown of costs issued by Kier, there appeared to be two services for the same job. In response to the question, a representative from Kier stated that Client Representatives were there to administer the contract, and added that the valuations were still under review and not the final account. The Chairman advised that a smaller meeting would be arranged for the representative from Kier and the TRA representative to address these issues, and for clarification on how the figures were reached.

Dogs in Council Housing

The Forum discussed issues surrounding keeping dogs in Council Housing. The Interim Divisional Director of Housing stated that the team would report back to the next HFTRA, provided that the dogs were kept safely and securely in houses, tenants of Council houses could own dogs. It was also discussed that following a meeting at City Hall, London, it was suggested that the cases of dangerous dogs were mainly

found in housing estates. The Portfolio Holder also requested that if TRAs knew of any issues surrounding dogs on estates to let the Director know.

HFTRA Training

A TRA representative provided the Forum with an update on recent HFTRA training. It was mentioned that seven representatives attended and that training was offered on chairmanship and minute writing. The Chairman stated that HFTRA could be the focus of a feature article in future 'Homing In' publications.

RESOLVED: That the item be noted.

228. **Suggestions for agenda items for next meeting:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no suggestions made for the next meeting

229. **Extension and Termination of the Meeting:**

In accordance with the Advisory and Consultative Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4e of the Constitution) it was agreed to extend the closing time of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the meeting continue until 10.15 pm.

230. **Date of Next Meeting:**

RESOLVED: To note that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Wednesday 6 January 2010 at 7.30 pm.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.31 pm, closed at 10.15 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BARRY MACLEOD-CULLINANE
Chairman