

TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM MINUTES

19 JULY 2011

Chairman: * Councillor Bob Currie

Councillors: * Mrs Camilla Bath * Mano Dharmarajah
* Kam Chana

* Denotes Member present

Representatives from the following Associations were in attendance:

Antoney's Close Tenants' and Residents' Association
Churchill Place Tenants' and Residents' Association
Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Association
Elmgrove Tenants' and Residents' Association
Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations
Harrow Weald Tenants' and Residents' Association
Kenmore Park Tenants' and Residents' Association
Leaseholder Support Group
Little Stanmore Tenants' and Residents' Association
Pinner Hill Tenants' and Residents' Association
Weald Village Tenants' and Residents' Association

48. Introductions

Following introductions by those present at the meeting, the Chairman wished to welcome the newly appointed Members to the Forum.

49. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

50. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: That the following interests were declared.

Agenda item: 8. NFORMATION REPORT - Feedback from other Council led Resident Involvement Activities; 9. INFORMATION REPORT - Launch of Housing Ambition Plan 2; 10. INFORMATION REPORT - Review of Terms of Reference for TLCF; 11. INFORMATION REPORT - Resident Services Manager Report; 12. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn Report 2010-11; 13. INFORMATION REPORT - Asset Management Team

Councillor Bob Currie declared personal interests on the above items in that he attended monthly meetings of the Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Associations. He would remain in the room whilst the matters were considered and voted upon.

Councillor Mano Dharmarajah declared personal interests on the above items in that he was a member of the Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Association. He would remain in the room whilst the matters were considered and voted upon.

51. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Mrs Camilla Bath as Vice-Chairman of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum for the 2011/2012 Municipal Year.

52. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 21 February 2011 and 31 March 2011 be taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of representatives of Kenmore Park Tenants' and Residents' Association being marked as present.

53. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received.

RESOLVED ITEMS

54. INFORMATION REPORT - Presentation by the Kier Group

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following item was admitted late to the meeting to allow a representative

from the Kier Group to have the opportunity to review the salient points of the repair and maintenance contract during the last four years prior to a new contract being considered by Cabinet on 8 September 2011.

The Kier representative advised that:

- customer satisfaction had reached 75% in 2010, a 10% increase from 2008;
- Decent Homes customer satisfaction was consistently reported at 95%;
- Kier attended estate walkabouts, sponsored garden makeover schemes and refurbished community centres;
- in 2010/11, 75% of repair work was completed within the first visit;
- the accident incident rate was zero, with no accidents being reported in over one million working hours;
- Kier had delivered over 3300 Decent Homes on time and within budget;
- performance in terms of total cost per property for repairs and voids in 2009/10 was in the upper to mid quartile. Kier ranked 10th out of 27 authorities in terms of value for money;
- Kier was returning £140,000 of overhead costs to the Council as part of it's LEAN Review;
- two full time apprentices were employed on Kier's contract framework;
- challenges over the last four years included a complicated client management structure, key personnel changes and payment delays.

In response to questions, the representative advised that:

- a recent incident involving a fall from scaffolding was still under investigation and was not included in the statistics as no outcome had been reached;
- the £140,000 being returned to the Council would remain within the repairs budget;
- the possibility of recruiting additional apprentices was being explored;
- thorough procurement exercises were conducted when awarding contracts, with individual tenders being opened under strict conditions;
- there were a number of options regarding sustainable energy being investigated. Cleaning of solar panels would be inclusive of the maintenance programme, if they were installed;

- staffing statistics included permanent staff, sub-contractors and the supply chain;
- the turnaround times for the completion of work were affected by a number of categories within the contract. Emergency jobs for example would require immediate attention;
- it was believed that the two apprentices had successfully completed the programme. It was always the priority for Kier to retain those who had successfully completed their training. New training and recruitment initiatives were being considered;
- payment delays were caused by a complex pricing structure, with jobs being priced individually. A discrepancy highlighted with an individual job would result in the whole account being postponed. Sub-contractors would still receive payment in such circumstances.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

55. INFORMATION REPORT - Feedback from other Council led Resident Involvement Activities

An officer introduced a report which provided feedback on a number of Council led resident involvement activities. She advised that:

- 169 residents had become involved in the Resident Recruitment Campaign during 2010/11. At the end on Quarter 1, 51 residents had become involved, with a large number contributing to the Council's parking strategy consultation;
- shortlisting for the Estates in Bloom competition would commence on 25 July 2011, with judging taking place in August 2011;
- costing work was underway to recruit apprentices for the caretakers service.

In response to questions, the officer advised that:

- all access issues for sheltered housing were being addressed;
- consideration would be given to consulting Neighbourhood Champions in relation to resident recruitment.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

56. INFORMATION REPORT - Launch of Housing Ambition Plan 2

An officer presented a report which introduced the launch of the Housing Ambition Plan 2 (HAP 2). She advised that:

- the HAP 2 provided Members and residents the opportunity to scrutinise performance in relation to progress made at quarterly Challenge Panels. The next Challenge Panel would be held on 28 July 2011;
- the appendix to the Plan included a 'You Said - We Did' document that took account of the challenges presented by members and residents at previous challenge panels. There was also a simplified scorecard to engage residents and hopefully assist with providing constructive feedback;
- it was envisaged that a new Communications Planning Team would be established to take account of a range of issues and what residents wanted. Members of the Forum would be kept up to date with the progress of the Team.

In response to questions, the officer advised that:

- the possibility of including previous years indicators on the Housing Scorecard would be considered;
- there was no definitive reason as to why the number of those in temporary accommodation had increased. A possible reason could be emerging nervousness in the market as a consequence of benefit changes, but detailed analysis would be conducted;
- in light of Government reforms, the Housing Department was likely to be placed in an unprecedented situation with extra demands on the service. An update on the Government proposals would be provided at a future meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED: That the item be noted.

57. INFORMATION REPORT - Review of Terms of Reference for TLCF

An officer introduced a report which highlighted proposals for the review of the Terms of Reference for the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum. In response to questions, she advised that:

- the possibility of changing the name of the Forum to make it more inclusive for all residents would be considered;
- further options regarding voting would be looked into. As the Forum was a subsidiary body of Cabinet, it had no direct decision making powers but had the ability to recommend matters to the Executive for final decision. Votes were sought on topics such as rents to gauge how suitable the Forum felt proposals were;
- provisions to allow members of the public to speak at meetings were included in the Executive Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution;

- a requirement of the Tenant Services Authority was for the Council to develop resident scrutiny. Reports were now being presented at quarterly meetings of the Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations' to scrutinise performance.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

58. INFORMATION REPORT - Resident Services Manager Report

An officer introduced a report which provided an update on the work conducted in relation to Resident Involvement. She advised that:

- £51,000 of credit notes in relation to electricity charges remained outstanding and were being pursued by the Council's Energy Manager;
- there were 206 miscellaneous properties within the borough;
- following legal advice, it had been determined that it would not be lawful to charge freeholders services charges;
- the Interim Head of Home Ownership had now left the Council. Officers were appreciative of her contributions during her time with the Council. Her replacement was now in post and was looking forward to her new role;
- prior to April 2007, no service charges were applied to tenants. Instead, charges were recovered as part of the overall rent. Since 2007, rents in Harrow had been de-pooled, a means of separating charges for services from rent.

In response to questions, the officer advised that;

- it was anticipated that the Value for Money Group would specifically investigate the area of service charges. These charges were applied for work conducted on land that was deemed to be owned by the Housing Department, as Council Tax income could not be used for these services. As it was the first year of operating in this way it was possible that some of these boundaries were unclear which could possibly result in tenants paying for services that they did not receive. The officer proposed to look into these matters in more depth at a Value for Money Residents Group where there would be the opportunity to look at a number of case studies to help explain how the boundaries were drawn up;
- miscellaneous properties were Council owned dwellings that were deemed not to belong to a particular estate. The 206 properties listed as miscellaneous did not pay service charges;
- including a London or UK average in future service charges tables for comparison purposes would be considered.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

59. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn Report 2010-11

An officer introduced a report which set out the outturn for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2010/11. He advised that:

- at 1 April 2010 there were 5,058 dwellings and 1,170 leaseholders;
- money held in reserves was currently £4.784 million;
- average weekly rent was £86.60, with the average weekly service charge being £4.77;
- budgeted spend was greater than income by £0.677 million;
- at 31 March 2011, the total spend was £26,532 million. The income was £25,528 million;
- revenue balances reduced £4.784 million at the start of the year to £3.258 million in line with budget.

In response to questions, the officer advised that;

- the refund for the electricity charges were included in the bad or doubtful debt provision within the budget;
- 98.36% of rents were collected in 2010/11, which equated to an additional £350,000 on the previous year;
- £920,000 was available for external decorations this year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

60. INFORMATION REPORT - Asset Management Team

An officer introduced a report which updated the Forum on the progress made with the Asset Management Team and included plans for the future. He advised that:

- following a recent recruitment process, a new Head of Asset Management had been appointed, subject to receiving satisfactory references;
- a high level of customer satisfaction had been achieved in relation to responsive repairs;
- a retro-fit trial was conducted on a property within the borough, with modifications including solar panels, reinsulated cavity walls and a

rainwater harvesting tank to improve efficiency and become more environmentally friendly.

In response to questions, the officer advised that:

- there were no plans to extend estate entry systems to video. Older systems would be upgraded to a modern standard;
- an additional column in the Programme for Major Works to monitor spend for previous years would be considered;
- the retro-fit trial was funded by a Government grant. The recipients of the retro-fit were selected with input from colleagues in the Housing Needs department and were obliged to subscribe to two year monitoring programme;
- the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) promoted the development of energy saving initiatives through community based partnerships which ended in 2012. Officers would investigate the possibility of applying for CESP funding, although research had indicated that suitable energy suppliers had reached the ceiling for available funds associated with the Programme.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

61. Suggestions for agenda items for next meeting

The following were suggested as agenda items for the next meeting of the Forum:

- Update on Disabled Access to Council Estates;
- Update on Installing Video Entry Systems to Council Estates;
- Update on Government Proposals Affecting Housing.

RESOLVED: That the items be noted.

62. Any Other Urgent Business

RESOLVED: That no items were raised.

63. Extension and Termination of the Meeting

In accordance with the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 48.2 (Part 4D of the Constitution) it was agreed at 9.55 pm to extend the closing time of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the meeting continue until 11.00 pm.

64. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED: That the Forum were next due to meet on 8 November 2011.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 11.00 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BOB CURRIE
Chairman