

Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum

AGENDA

DATE: Wednesday 24 April 2013

TIME: 2.00 pm

VENUE: Committee Rooms 1 & 2,
Harrow Civic Centre

MEMBERSHIP (Quorum 3 Council Members)

Chairman: Councillor Bob Currie

Councillors:

Mano Dharmarajah

Mrs Camilla Bath (VC)
Kam Chana

Representatives of Individual Housing Estate Tenants' and Residents' Associations

Reserve Members:

1. Victoria Silver
2. Ben Wealthy

1. Susan Hall
2. Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Contact: Nicola Fletcher, Democratic & Electoral Services Officer
Tel: 020 8416 8050 E-mail: nicola.fletcher@harrow.gov.uk

AGENDA - PART I

1. ATTENDANCE BY RESERVE MEMBERS

To note the attendance at this meeting of any duly appointed Reserve Members.

Reserve Members may attend meetings:-

- (i) to take the place of an ordinary Member for whom they are a reserve;
- (ii) where the ordinary Member will be absent for the whole of the meeting; and
- (iii) the meeting notes at the start of the meeting at the item 'Reserves' that the Reserve Member is or will be attending as a reserve;
- (iv) if a Reserve Member whose intention to attend has been noted arrives after the commencement of the meeting, then that Reserve Member can only act as a Member from the start of the next item of business on the agenda after his/her arrival.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests, arising from business to be transacted at this meeting, from:

- (a) all Members of the Forum;
- (b) all other Members present.

3. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 12)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2013 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

To receive questions (if any) from local residents or organisations under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 51 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

5. PETITIONS

To receive petitions (if any) submitted by members of the public/Councillors under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 49 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

6. DEPUTATIONS

To receive deputations (if any) under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 50 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

7. HEAD OF ASSET MANAGEMENT'S REPORT (Pages 13 - 20)

Report of the Divisional Director of Housing

8. RESIDENT SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT AND FEEDBACK FROM OTHER COUNCIL LED RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES (Pages 21 - 26)

Report of the Divisional Director of Housing

9. INFORMATION REPORT - ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION
(Pages 27 - 30)

Report of the Divisional Director of Housing

10. COWAN AVENUE CAR PARK

In accordance with Paragraph 4 of the Forum's Terms of Reference, this item has been included on the agenda following a written request by a representative of the Leaseholder Support Group.

11. SUGGESTIONS FOR AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Which cannot otherwise be dealt with.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

26 June 2013 – 7.30pm

AGENDA - PART II - NIL

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TENANTS', LEASEHOLDERS' AND RESIDENTS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM MINUTES

27 FEBRUARY 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Bob Currie

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

In attendance: * Kairul Kareema Marikar Minute 173-183
(Councillors)

* Denotes Member present

Divisional Director of Housing

The Chairman circulated a card for Members of the Forum to sign for the Divisional Director of Housing expressing their condolences for one of her relatives who had passed away.

Representatives from the following Associations were in attendance

Churchill Place Tenants' and Residents' Association
Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Association
Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations
Harrow Sheltered Residents' Association
Harrow Weald Tenants' and Residents' Association
Kenmore Park Tenants' and Residents' Association
Little Stanmore Tenants' and Residents' Association
Weald Village Tenants' and Residents' Association

from Honeybun Estate, Meadfield - Kings Road, Milan Close and William Allen House were also in attendance.

173. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that no Reserve Members were in attendance.

174. Declarations of Interest

Agenda Items 7 – Head of Asset Management’s Report, 8 – Housing Complaints Handling, 9 – Cash Incentive Schemes for Council Tenants and 10 – Resident Services Manager’s Report and Feedback from Other Council Led Resident Involvement Activities

Councillor Mano Dharmarajah declared a non pecuniary interest in the above items in that he was a member of the Eastcote Lane Tenants’ and Residents’ Association. He would remain in the room whilst these matters were considered and voted upon.

Councillor Kairul Kareema Marikar declared a non pecuniary interest in the above items in that she was a Council tenant. She would remain in the room whilst these matters were considered.

175. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2012 and of the special meeting held on 31 January 2013 be taken as read and signed as correct records.

176. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

177. Housing Complaints Handling

An officer introduced the report which explained that the Localism Act had changed the way in which housing landlord complaints were handled from 1 April 2013. The report set out the proposed next steps for the housing service to ensure that it met the requirements set out in the Act. The officer made the following comments:

- from 1 April 2013, all complaints about housing landlord services would be referred to the Housing Ombudsman (HO) following completion of the landlord’s own complaints procedure;
- there would be a new role for MPs, local councillors and tenants panels as designated persons who would be able to have a role in resolving complaints;

- there had been ongoing discussions with the Forum, other social landlords and other local authorities;
- Appendix 1 to the report contained a new escalation paragraph example which would be sent out with stage 3 complaint responses;
- information on the new complaints procedure would be included in Homing In and briefings would be offered to Councillors;
- the Localism Act did not provide much detail on the role of a designated person and the HO had advised that they would not be providing any additional guidance. The Act did state that a designated person might help to resolve a complaint in one of two ways; they could attempt to resolve the complaint by making a recommendation to the landlord or they could refer the complaint in writing to the HO;
- to date there had been no interest expressed by tenants in establishing a tenants' panel to act as a designated person.

Members of the Forum asked a number of questions to which the officer responded to as follows:

- the tenants' panel would comprise of other tenants of the social landlord. There was no requirement that they were members of a Tenants' and Residents' Association but they must be tenants of that particular social landlord;
- the Localism Act did not allow the social landlord to establish a panel, it was the responsibility of tenants to approach the landlord to be asked to be recognised as a tenants panel and as a designated person. Landlords would support any tenants who approach them to be recognised as a tenants panel;
- the role of the designated person was to put forward recommendations to the landlord or complainant on how they should resolve the complaint and to act as an advocate;
- a Councillor acting as a designated person had two options for resolving a complaint, one was to make recommendations to the landlord or complainant and the other was to refer the complaint in writing to the HO;
- the designated person could be any of the 600 English MPs and any of the 63 Harrow Councillors;
- information about the new process would be sent to all Councillors via their group officers and briefings and training would be offered to Councillors;

Localism Act did not prescribe a minimum number of tenants for a tenants' panel. The Council would work with and support any tenants panel;

- a progress report would be presented to the Forum in 6 months.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

178. Head of Asset Management's Report

An officer introduced the report which set out a range of information and discussion items for the Forum's attention. The officer made comments including the following:

- a meeting with the Fire Service Borough Commander had taken place on 12 February 2013. One of the immediate outcomes of the meeting was that smoke alarms would be fitted in the properties of vulnerable people;
- further consideration had been given to tenant inspectors carrying out inspections on completed repair and health and safety works. Discussions had taken place with the Senior Professional – Communities and Investment, as trained tenant inspectors had been used for Estates Services;
- it had been decided to establish a training programme for any tenants or leaseholders who were interested in undertaking an inspector role. Anyone who was interested should approach the Head of Asset Management or the Head of Resident Services;
- the overarching commitment of Asset Management in their service plan would remain the same as last year. It was proving challenging to measure success against the commitment. It was suggested that the measure of a first class asset management service be based on a combination of value for money, quality performance measures and customer satisfaction measures. A first class service would be dependent upon Harrow rating in the upper quartile for all the key performance indicators for the measures;
- Quality Heating, the gas contractor had indicated that they would be willing to take calls for heating and hot water breakdowns direct from tenants. There were a number of advantages including a faster response, a dedicated Resident Liaison Officer for Harrow, longer telephone opening hours and specialists answering calls who may be able to diagnose the issue immediately;
- the new service from Quality Heating would be delivered within existing resources and the only cost would be for an IT upgrade to allow the contractor to feed in to the Council's system in real time. This cost would be a one off cost and would be funded from within existing budgets;

- performance data on the proposed new arrangements would be reported to the monthly contract appraisal panels. There would be intensive management of the new scheme for the first 3-6 months to ensure that the service was operating well;
- there were risks associated, such as call centre staff shortages and IT failures but to minimise these Quality Heating would be required to confirm that suitable procedures were in place;
- works had commenced on the Repairs MOTs and 5 had been completed. It was anticipated that 15 would be completed by the end of February. The target groups were the 100 most prolific callers to the repairs system and elderly and disabled tenants. It was expected that this work would be linked with the gas safety inspections;
- the recharge procedure for voids had commenced on 1 January 2013 and it was focused as a preventive measure to encourage people to leave properties in a good condition. £6706 had been raised as recharges in January;
- it was proposed to go live with recharges for responsive repairs from April 2013.

The Forum Members raised the following points on the Quality Heating proposal:

- specialists answering the phone would help to alleviate some of the detailed knowledge issues with Access Harrow;
- some tenants had concerns about the service offered by Quality Heating;
- there were concerns about the emergency out of hours service and the quality of the call responses;
- there had been instances of contractors not attending appointments and not having the correct equipment;
- the work carried out by Quality Heating was to a good standard and they provided a good service.

The officer made the following comments in response:

- the current monitoring programme would be used to ensure that jobs were completed and the Council would still have overall control;
- the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Access Harrow would be reviewed for future years;

appeared to be a good service for tenants as they would be dealing directly with the experts and there would be fewer stages in the process. The service would be reviewed and reconsidered if it appeared not to be working properly;

- Quality Heating had provided assurances that staff would be trained, callers would not receive a recorded message and all incoming calls would be recorded and monitored for quality purposes.

The Chairman requested that Quality Heating be invited to attend a future meeting of the Forum in approximately 6 months.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

179. Cash Incentive Schemes for Council Tenants

An officer introduced the report which explained that social housing stock in the borough of Harrow was limited and in increasingly high demand. The report outlined some ideas on a variety of schemes which could help to free up properties in the Council's housing stock by offering cash incentives to tenants to move elsewhere. Funding for the schemes had been allocated within the HRA budget and MTFs for the period 2013-14 to 2016-17 approved by Cabinet on 14 February 2013, and within the HRA business plan to 2018-19 subject to Cabinet approval. The officer made comments including the following:

- cash incentives were one way to achieve the best use of limited social housing stock and they would also offer options to be tenants whose 5 year fixed term tenancy were not renewed;
- the cash incentives would only be paid to tenants who met certain criteria and who left vacant possession of a Council property;
- the benefits of a cash incentives scheme included realising family-sized accommodation for re-letting, encouraging under-occupying tenants to downsize and increasing the options available to council tenants;
- there was currently a scheme which offered incentives for under-occupying tenants to downsize to another social housing property. Tenants had their removal costs covered and were paid £1,500 per under-occupied room in their home when they downsized. The maximum amount which would be paid was £4,500 and the average payment was £2,400. There were approximately 30 tenants a year who downsized under this scheme;
- the current scheme could be enhanced by increasing the financial incentive offered per bedroom or the additional services offered. In addition, the scheme could be extended to include tenants wanting to move to social housing outside of London;

- an incentive could also be offered to households affected by the 'bedroom tax' from April 2013;
- incentives could be offered to tenants wanting to move to an assured tenancy in a privately rented property . This might be appropriate for older tenants wanting to move to an older persons' housing scheme. It was proposed that the incentive could be up to £20,000 dependent upon the size of the property being vacated;
- consideration could also be given to paying an incentive to tenants seeking to downsize to a property with an affordable short hold tenancy of at least 2 years in some exceptional circumstances;
- cash incentives could be offered to tenants wishing to move outside the UK. The proposed incentive would be up to £20,000 depending on the size of the property being vacated. There would be a limited application of this incentive and the Council may not be able to stipulate the type of tenancy that was taken overseas. Tenants would be made aware of the potential insecurities of their tenancy if they moved abroad;
- tenants could be offered an incentive to move into a shared ownership property. A lump-sum cash payment of £12,000 would be offered, dependent on the size of the property being vacated, which could be used to cover a deposit or pay legal fees. At present, 61 Council tenants had registered an interest in purchasing a shared ownership property;
- incentives could be offered to tenants wanting to purchase their own home and there were 2 schemes which were being considered. One was to offer a simple payment to tenants and this could be used to meet any financial difference between the maximum obtainable mortgage and the price of the property. The other option was to offer tenants an interest free loan of £80,000 over 5 years to contribute to the mortgage;
- any cash incentive scheme operated by the Council would need to be approved by the Secretary of State;
- it was hoped that the cash incentive schemes would result in the release of 12 properties over the next 2 financial years which would save on the costs of homelessness to the General Fund;
- further consideration would be given to a number of issues regarding cash incentives, such as sustainability of the scheme and the need for an agreement to reclaim any incentive should a tenant move within a short time of receiving the incentive.

Members of the Forum made a number of comments to which the officer responded to as follows:

5 year fixed tenancy period came into affect following a successful one year probationary period;

- the incentive scheme was limited to the budget available. Housing Options offered an advice service and if there were no suitable council properties available consideration would be given to privately rented accommodation;
- the Council had no plans to convert warehouses into accommodation units but this may be an option considered by developers;
- partners, such as Housing Associations, would be encouraged to offer similar incentive schemes;
- the implications of the welfare benefit cap were matters for further consideration as the proposals for cash incentives were developed;
- a system would need to be put in place to monitor any person who was given a cash incentive for moving abroad;
- a Resident Services event was taking place on 23 April 2013 to facilitate potential interest in mutual exchanges. This event would also be used to discuss the cash incentive options;
- the Council was not working directly with other boroughs but had researched what incentive schemes others had in place;
- the comments of the Forum and Tenants' and Residents' Associations about the schemes were welcomed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

180. Resident Services Manager's Report and Feedback from Other Council Led Resident Involvement Activities

The Forum agreed to consider the report as a matter of urgency in order to receive the most up to date information.

An officer introduced the report which set out a range of information for the Forum's attention and provided feedback to the Forum on a wide range of Council led service specific and service wide resident involvement activities. The officer made the following points:

- since 1 April 2012, 13 properties had been sold under Right To Buy and 10 more were likely to be completed by the year end;
- MyHarrow accounts were being developed for leaseholders and it was anticipated that these would be live by the start of the new financial year;

- notification of Ground Rent due would be sent to leaseholders the next month, this was not a request for payment but a legal requirement;
- leaseholders would be billed shortly for their contribution to the cost of a number of major works schemes. Surgeries would be held by the Leasehold Team to discuss individual payment options;
- there had not been a seasonal increase in rent arrears over Christmas and the total rent arrears for February of £382,654 was the lowest ever;
- 350 tenants who would be affected by the bedroom tax had been contacted and encouraged to attend an event to consider the implications;
- a third direct debit payment date would be introduced from 1 April 2013;
- officers were meeting with the Credit Union to help develop information to support tenants with their budgeting skills;
- work had commenced on the tenancy agreement review and the alterations would include the tenure changes from the Localism Act and new clauses about keeping animals and succession rights. Consultation with staff and the Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations would commence by the end of February and tenant consultation would take place from the beginning of March 2013. It was anticipated that the new agreement would be in place by the middle of June;
- the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel was considering new tenant 6 week visits as its first item. The progress reported to the Panel was good and 100% of visits had been achieved. The Panel would be making recommendations to the Forum in due course;
- a mutual exchange event was being held on 23 April to help those affected by the bedroom tax to downsize their accommodation. The Sheltered Housing Team would be attending the event;
- Barnet Homes had visited the Council to discuss good practice regarding how to manage tenancy fraud and it was hoped that following the success of the meeting, further meetings would take place;
- a bid had been submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government to develop the tenancy fraud team. Over the last 2 years the Council had recovered almost one property per month following a fraud investigation;

ng December 2012 and January 2013, 3 out of 4 stage one complaints were responded to on time but 3 stage 2 complaints had been received;

- work to implement the Sheltered Housing review was ongoing and all current permanent staff had been successful in gaining a position in the new structure. The remaining posts would be advertised for internal applicants within the next week;
- managers had visited all of the 18 schemes to discuss the new service with tenants and to ensure that there was understanding of the changes to the service;
- the Resident Involvement Strategy (2013-2016) was being reviewed and would be circulated in March 2013;
- the Resident Involvement Team had helped to support a completion ceremony at Meadfield and the event had been very well attended;
- the Resident Involvement Team had commenced a door knocking exercise to generate an improved response from residents in TRA areas where attendance at meetings had been poor;
- the terms of reference of the Estates Services Steering Group (ESSG) were being reviewed and consideration was being given to widening the membership. The next meeting of the ESSG was on 6 March 2013;
- the trial period for the new way of working for caretakers was nearing completion and the trial was being reviewed. The feedback to date had been positive;
- there had been a reduction in the number of members on the value for money group and staff would be considering ways to help recruit new members. The meeting in February had been cancelled and the next meeting in March would be considering an update on Public Liability Insurance;
- the service review for six week tenant visits was on target for completion by the end of March 2013;
- the next meeting of the Scrutiny and Challenge Panel was due to take place on 4 March 2013.

A Member of the Forum commented that the date of the ESSG meeting was incorrect and the Chairman advised that the Garage Strategy meeting scheduled for 6 March 2013 would be cancelled.

Members of the Forum raised a number of points to which the officers responded as follows:

- some of the information contained within the report will be included on the website and selected parts would be included in Homing In;
- the Value for Money Group was established approximately 2 years ago and considered matters such as insurance, ground maintenance costs, support service charges and service level agreements;
- the recent information about negative interest and paying for bank accounts related to commercial and not personal accounts;
- information on the news feature about targeting fraud had been made available to Members and officers but the meeting with Barnet staff had been officer based;
- the full report with the results of the Citizens Advice Bureau project on welfare reform awareness would be shared with Members when it was ready.

The Chairman requested that a report be presented to the next Forum meeting on the work programme of the scrutiny panel.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

181. 2013/2014 Meeting Start Times

The Forum agreed that the start times of the meetings for the Municipal Year 2013/14 should continue to alternate between a 2.00 pm start time and a 7.30 pm start time as listed below.

Wednesday 26 June 2013 – 7.30 pm
Thursday 24 October 2013 – 2.00 pm
Wednesday 11 December 2013 – 7.30 pm
Wednesday 19 February 2014 – 2.00 pm
Wednesday 30 April 2014 – 7.30 pm

RESOLVED: That the start times for future meetings of the Forum be agreed.

182. Suggestions for Agenda Items for Next Meeting

The Chairman advised that any suggestions should be sent to the Head of Resident Services.

ext Meeting

Wednesday 24 April 2013 – 2.00 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 9.44 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BOB CURRIE
Chairman

**REPORT FOR: Tenants', Leaseholders
and Residents'
Consultative Forum**

Date of Meeting: 24th April 2013

Subject: Head of Asset Management's Report

Responsible Officer: Lynne Pennington
Divisional Director of Housing

Exempt: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out a range of information and discussion items that the Interim Head of Asset Management would like to bring to the attention of the Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted

Section 2 – Report

Updates from previous discussions and new items for information

1.0 Fire Safety

1.1 Joint working with the fire service continues with a number of positive ideas being explored. The next partnership meeting is taking place on 19th April. In particular TLRCF members asked for an update on the work to improve the information held about smoke alarms installed in our homes. We have shared information with the London Fire Brigade on where each of us has installed smoke alarms and in addition to Quality Heating checking these and reporting any concerns to us when undertaking annual gas safety inspections, colleagues in Resident Services are also reporting on any missing or broken alarms they see when visiting properties. This has now given us all the tools needed to develop a comprehensive database of where we have alarms installed and whether they are battery or hard wired.

1.2 A verbal update on progress with new initiatives to improve the safety of tenants and leaseholders will be provided at TLRCF, following the partnership meeting on 19th April.

2.0 Quality Heating taking tenant calls direct

2.1 On 2nd April the Asset Management Board endorsed the trial of Quality Heating taking all their own responsive repairs calls direct from tenants during working hours and have asked for a report on how well the trial is working out after 3 months. We will aim to introduce this in June and organise publicity so that tenants are aware of the change.

3.0 Recharges

3.1 As previously reported to TLRCF the process for recharges in voids went live from 1st January 2013, following a dummy run throughout the month of December. The dummy run enabled the system to be tested with both officers and contractors to ensure it is applied consistently. Whilst the main focus of a recharge policy is to educate tenants not to increase our costs by looking after their properties to the best of their ability while they live there and not leaving properties in poor condition at the end of their tenancy we will seek to recover all monies due from outgoing tenants.

- 3.2** As a result of this dummy run it was decided that all void specifications are now to be passed through the Responsive Repairs Manager, to ensure that the recharges are applied consistently across all 3 contract areas. From 1st January to 12th March 2013 just over £20k has been raised in recharges from voids in 2013. It is too early to provide an update on collection of this money, although final accounts processes will identify any amounts recovered in 2012/13. It is suggested this will come to a future TLRCF.
- 3.3** The proposal was to introduce recharges on responsive repairs from April 2013 but it is now thought it best to bring this in at the same time as the new tenancy agreement (currently out for consultation, but planned for July 2013) as this is an opportunity to underline, and in some instances clarify tenants' responsibilities in relation to repairs. This may lead to a review of the policy document. The Asset Management Board have agreed to postpone the responsive repairs recharges to coordinate with the launch of the new tenancy agreement, which will also allow time for additional publicity on the change.
- 3.4** To compliment the introduction of rechargeable repairs for this years summer events we are working with our contractors to offer best advice to tenants on how they can take better care of their homes. This will include issues such as reducing condensation, clearing rubbish and refixing items before they require replacing. The idea would support the intended outcomes of the rechargeable process positively by demonstrating we are supporting tenants to maintain their homes.

4.0 Launch of the 2013/14 Capital Programme

- 4.1** As TLRCF members will now be aware the launch of the 2013/14 capital programme is taking place on 23rd April. We are working on improving consultation and communication on this years programme and proposals will be going to the May Asset Management Board for discussion. These will be reported to a future TLRCF
- 4.2** A number of new initiatives are in development to help with keeping tenants and leaseholders more involved and informed about works that will affect them and to keep disruption to a minimum. A number of these ideas have been put forward by HFTRA, others by Councillors. These include:
- a) installing a "sample" kitchen in a community centre so that tenants on the kitchen programme can go along to see what they can expect in their own homes

- b) for larger projects looking at introducing an area (possibly a mobile rest area) where residents can go to get away from noise and dust whilst works are ongoing
- c) introducing a joint customer satisfaction survey that will cover areas that both the Council and contractors want to monitor-so customers are only asked for their views once.

Customer Journey Mapping

- 4.3** This is a new technique we are introducing as part of Asset Management's commitment to "get closer to the customer" that will enable us to measure customer perceptions from the point at which they know that improvements are to be made to their homes, right through the process to completion of the works. The Grange Farm Estate Programme is the biggest single year project to be delivered in 2013/14 so we will pilot it here. The project will cover external and communal internal works such as:
- Pod windows
 - Front Doors
 - Enveloping works
 - Communal stairways
 - Bin stores
- 4.4** We want to continue with the effective consultation methods used at Francis Road but also to experiment with new and better ideas aimed at improving how we consult with all residents on such programmes.
- 4.5** The first part of the Grange Farm project is to develop one block as a pilot and to use this as a showpiece for the next phase of works so that people can see the kind of improvements they can expect to their homes. This will start in May.
- 4.6** Customer Journey Mapping is a way to engage with the customer from day one and chart their experience of the project throughout key stages by tracking and describing all the experiences that customers have as they encounter a service or set of services, taking into account not only what happens to them, but also their responses to their experiences. Used as a strategic tool, it can reveal opportunities for improvement and innovation in that experience that we would be able to use to ensure continuous improvement to the service we provide. For the purposes of this programme, this will be split into two main types of research:

- Qualitative (in-depth) research: with a selected number of tenants / leaseholders who are willing to take the time to engage with us throughout the process to describe their experiences and feelings throughout key elements of the programme
- Quantitative (large scale) research: with as many tenants/leaseholders as possible giving us their views-in not quite so much detail.

The idea is that we combine the research analysis with project system mapping to produce a report that highlights the customer experience at key aspects of the programme. The result will be an overall diagrammatical “heartbeat” representation of customer satisfaction throughout the process backed by a report including detailed analysis of the data collected throughout the process. If successful we will repeat this with other schemes and projects and can adapt our communication techniques in future to learn lessons from the outcomes.

External Decorations

- 4.7** At TLRCF in January an update on the External Decorations programme was requested. Works for the part of the programme that involves houses have just been procured and works should start in April or May. At the time of writing this report the contract award has not been formally approved but if possible a verbal update will be given at the meeting. There are significant procurement savings in this contract in comparison with the costs of the previous programme undertaken by Kier. The elements of the programme that involve flats have yet to be procured because of the longer lead in time required for leaseholder consultation. However it is proposed that this work will also be completed this year.
- 4.8** Although we still refer to this as an external decorations programme it should be noted that it is no longer an accurate title. This is because more of the work is now targeted to upgrade elements such as soffits and fascia boards so they will not require painting in future.

Linbrook and Quality Heating –Feedback on concerns raised at earlier TLRCF meetings

- 4.9** At the December and February TLRCF meetings concerns were raised that contractors from Linbrook and Quality Heating did not always show their ID to tenants when arriving to undertake repairs. This concern has been raised at Contractor Appraisal Panels and all

operatives have been reminded that their ID should be visible at all times, and shown on request.

- 4.10** In February a request was made for Quality Heating to attend a future meeting of the Forum to answer tenant and leaseholder queries. Quality Heating, along with Linbrook and Slade have been invited to attend the June meeting to undertake a short presentation on their experiences of the first year of the contract, their aspirations for the future and to answer any questions you have.

5.0 Green Deal and Energy Efficiency

- 5.1** Asset Management staff are continuing to work with the Companies appointed by the government to champion the Green Deal-which aims to improve energy efficiency of homes. Some of this work is in partnership with the Council's Climate Change Team and a Housing Association. There is significant grant funding available for this objective and Harrow are currently in active discussions with British Gas who have money to give us to explore the best options to utilise this funding for Harrow's housing stock.

- 5.2** To date we have secured funding to upgrade a terrace of six houses (three council, two A2Dominion, and one private) following a Green Deal assessment. As I write this report I am awaiting confirmation of the exact work that will be done and whether Harrow will need to contribute to the cost, but early indications are that there will be significant reductions in the residents fuel bills at either a very low cost, or no cost at all to Harrow.

- 5.3** This is a pilot and if successful will help us to secure funding for more of this work. We are currently undertaking Green Deal assessments on a further 25 randomly selected properties across the borough to help design a forward plan for energy efficiency works and to attract external funding. Whilst nothing is agreed as yet we hope to secure funding for a wide range of new initiatives to include:

- Heat pumps
- Green roofs
- Solar PV panels
- Solid wall insulation
- Glazing

- 5.4** There is also a possibility that funding can be secured towards some of the energy efficiency work we have already committed to do within the Capital Programme, which would mean that subject to financial approval we would be able to undertake additional works from the HRA money set aside for the current programme-either bringing

forward work from the 2014/15 project or undertaking projects that would not otherwise be done. Depending on the amount of additional funding secured it could be a combination of the 2 options. If there is any more news by the date of the TLRCF meeting a verbal update will be given.

- 5.5** In addition we are looking to use British Gas funding through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) to complete the cavity wall and loft insulation programme we started in 2012/13 but is not yet complete. If this proves possible it will lead to a marked improvement in our performance in the thermal insulation of our homes, all at no cost to the tenant.

6.0 Feedback from VFM Sub Group

- 6.1** The group met on 19th March and discussed a number of issues relating to Asset Management. The first was a presentation from the Council's Insurance Officer on Housing Liability Claims from 1 April 2006 – 18 March 2013 and Leasehold Buildings Claims 1 April 2007 – 18 March 2013
- 6.2** The group noted that the majority of the claims since 2007 related to water leaks and water ingress and asked to see a further report in June 2013. It was explained that the current Leasehold Building Insurance ends in March 2014, and the contract will go out to tender. Part of the process will include consultation with Leaseholders. The tenders are expected back in November. The group asked to see the results of the tender process.
- 6.3** The Asset Management Strategy was also discussed and it was agreed to consult with the group on one of the key priorities, Value for Money at the April meeting.
- 6.4** Discussion also took place on energy efficiency / green deal and how officers are working to attract grant money so that tenants and leaseholders can take advantage of these offers. The group requested that the officer who has been investigating the various funding strands, be invited to the next meeting.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1** Any financial issues are contained within the body of the report.

8.0 Equalities Implications

- There are no equalities implications associated with this report.
- No Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out.

9.0 Corporate Priorities

All of the above contribute to the corporate priorities, in particular:

- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe.
- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads.
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Dave Roberts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 9th April 2013		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Maggie Challoner
Interim Head of Asset Management
Tel: 020 8424 2473
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Background Papers: None

REPORT FOR: **Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum**

Date of Meeting: 24th April 2013

Subject: **Resident Services Manager's Report and feedback from other Council led Resident Involvement Activities**

Responsible Officer: Lynne Pennington
Divisional Director of Housing

Exempt: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary

This joint report sets out a range of information items that the Head of Resident Services would like to bring to the attention of the Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum and provides feedback to TLRCF on a wide range of Council led service specific and service wide resident involvement activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

Section 2 – Report

1. Introduction

1.1 Key service priorities continue to be progressing:

- Implementation of the Resident Services restructure proposal which integrates a service review of leadership and communication has been delayed to reflect the outcomes of consultation with staff and Unions Implementation will now be rolled forward into April 2013 with a number of posts now ready to be advertised
- Sheltered Housing Review Implementation – recruitment to all posts near on completion with finer logistics and practices and procedures to be rolled out during April 2013
- Consultation on the community based leadership project with an existing community centre and agreeing terms of lease – finalising of lease subject to one final area of negotiation in terms of window security
- Preparation for welfare reform
- Completion of the Resident Involvement Strategy and embedding tenant and leaseholder scrutiny arrangements – tenant and leaseholder scrutiny panel due to complete first review by the end of April
- Service Planning and HAP 4 preparation 2013/14 – sign off meeting due 9th April 2013

2.0 Updates from previous discussions and new items for information

2.1 Leasehold Services

2.2 Performance

2.3 The Right to Buy Discount increased to £100K in the last budget. As a result the number of Right to Buy enquiries and applications continues to grow. During the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013 our records indicate that we sold 14 properties in comparison to one sale in the previous financial year.

2.4 With the additional resource the Leasehold Team have completed the task of scanning all leases onto CIVICA. This means that staff now have immediate access to leases to respond to any enquiries received from stakeholders regarding lease conditions.

2.5 Information

2.6 The project developing MyHarrow Account for leaseholders is progressing well. There has been a slight delay as the major supplier involved in the delivery of the portal has been working on delivering services based on Council Tax and Benefits due to the major welfare reform changes. However it is scheduled to be in place by June.

2.7. Ground Rent invoices were posted to all leaseholders during the week commencing 8th April 2013. This year we informed leaseholders in several forums of the legal requirement to send out a Ground Rent Notifications prior to the issue of an invoice and, this resulted in far less enquires and complaints being received in comparison to previous years.

2.8 The Leasehold Team has now billed in the region of £600K to leaseholders for their contribution to the cost of completed major work schemes. A number of leaseholders are now on affordable payment plans. Individual appointments continue to be offered to all leaseholders who wish to discuss the payment options available to them.

2.9 Housing Management

2.10 Performance Income Management

2.11 The high performance of rent recovery continues. The record rent arrears recorded at the beginning of February has been surpassed by a balance of £372,982 recorded in the middle of March.

2.12 The team will have to work hard to maintain this performance with the first tranche of the welfare reform taking place at the beginning of April. The team are making personal contact with tenants who have been identified as needing support. They are being sign posted to other agencies including CAB for further specialist advice.

2.13 A third direct debit dated (25th of each month) will be introduced this month. This now provides a total of three direct debit dates to be offered to tenants who choose to pay by direct debit and seeks to improve our maximisation of income opportunities.

2.14 Information

2.15 Preparation for the impact of Welfare Reform continues to develop within the department and across the council. Resident Services and other housing colleagues currently represent housing on a number of corporate forums and have been working with colleagues to develop criteria for a range of schemes for assistance in financial hardship.

2.16 The CAB project for Welfare Reform Awareness was extended until the end of March to facilitate staff absence and pressures from other service areas. The content requirements for the final report has been agreed with the CAB and on completion will be presented at a future meeting of TLRCF.

2.17 Performance Tenancy Management

2.18 Housing Tenancy Fraud:

We have been successful in securing £200k government funding towards tenancy fraud for the next two years. A comprehensive bid endorsed by portfolio holders and the Director of Housing proved that a lot has been

the team to date and that we have plans to deliver more with the support of the funding.

2.19 The National Mobility Scheme

Welfare Reform has impacted on those who have more bedrooms in their accommodation than they need. Housing Benefit will no longer pay for bedrooms that are not being occupied.

The proposed revised National Mobility Scheme will assist households in housing need to move across the country and access support and employment advice.

The scheme will assist us to respond to welfare reform and benefit caps, whilst offering more options to tenants to move. The scheme makes use of low-demand or hard-to-let properties across the country.

So far 15 authorities have committed to joining the scheme. Our neighbours Barnet and Ealing are included.

We are looking forward to working with colleagues in piloting this scheme as another option to make best use of our stock.

2.20 Tenancy Audits

We are pleased to report that our target to visit 35% of our stock between April 2012 and March 2013 has been achieved. Tenancy audits are a rolling programme but we set ourselves yearly targets to ensure a manageable number of properties are visited by Housing Officers and to establish appropriate occupation and management of our dwellings.

2.21 Tenancy Agreement Review

Consultation is in progress for staff, tenants, members and stakeholders. A number of presentations have been made to groups and feedback from both these forums and online has been positive. All consultation will end on the 10th May 2013 with a view to launching the revised tenancy agreement on the 1st July 2013.

2.22 Sheltered Housing Modernisation

2.23 Work to implement the Sheltered Housing review is ongoing. Managers are continuing to meet with staff and Trade Unions to ensure a seamless transition.

2.24 As previously reported all permanent staff have been interviewed and been successful in gaining positions in the new structure. The remaining posts have been advertised and interviews have been taking place over the past few weeks. Due to the vast numbers of applicants, it has not been possible to have all new staff in place for the 1st April; however, we are now in a transitional period until the end of May and will have all staff in place by 1st June. The new staff teams will be visiting all 18 schemes to introduce themselves to tenants by way of meet and greet sessions.

2.25 Resident Involvement and Activities

2.26 Circulation of the Customer Involvement Strategy (2013-2016) is has been delayed but will now take place during April 2013.

2.27 Contact by the Resident Involvement Team with non - constituted TRA's is being prioritised, for development. A meeting date for Pinner Hill TRA (which includes Miller Close) has now been agreed, which HFTRA have agreed to chair. A door knocking exercise at Pinner Hill will take place to generate improved attendance by residents in May.

Section 3 –Report Back from Resident Involvement Activities

3. Estates Services Steering Group (ESSG)

3.1 The terms of reference for ESSG have been discussed with the group and copies have been issued. All comments will be considered and draft terms of reference will be written and taken to the next meeting for consultation and discussion prior to new terms of reference being agreed.

3.2 The trial period for the new way of working for caretakers which started on the 1st August 2012 is now completed. Feedback received has been very positive. We are now considering rolling out the use of estate based caretakers to all sites across the borough which will enable us to include wet cleaning to all blocks.

3.3 The apprentices have now been interviewed and were successful in gaining permanent positions within the team. We will aim to take on 2 more apprentices giving young local people an opportunity to work and gain practicable experience and qualifications.

The next meeting of the ESSG is on the 12th June 2013.

3.4 Value for Money Group

3.5 The last meeting of the group took place on the 19th March 2013 when the focus was Public Liability Insurance. The next meeting will take place on the 16th April 2013 where the topics for discussion will be the VFM section of the draft Asset Management Strategy and the Green Deal and energy efficiency agenda for 2013/14.

3.6 Developing Tenant Scrutiny

3.7 The Harrow Tenants' and Leaseholders' Scrutiny Panel have recently completed Equalities Impact Assessment training, and have now received the requested information pack for the new tenant six weekly visit review. The service review for six week tenant visits, including interviews with officers, is on target to be completed by the end of April 2013, when, on completion of the review an initial report will be submitted to the Housing Management Team.

3.8 HFTRA Scrutiny and Challenge Panel

3.9 The panel last met on the 27th November. The next meeting due to take place on the 4th March was cancelled due to tenant and leaseholder representative illness. The next meeting date has yet to be confirmed.

Section 4 - Financial Implications

Any financial issues are contained within the body of the report and any service improvement issues that arise as a result of residents' ideas and suggestions will be considered within the relevant service area budget.

Section 5 - Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications associated with this report. No Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out.

Section 6 – Corporate Priorities

All of the above contribute to the corporate priorities, in particular:

- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe.
- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads.
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.

Section 7 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Dave Roberts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 10 April 2013		

Section 8 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Toni Burke
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Background Papers: None

**REPORT FOR: Tenants', Leaseholders
and Residents'
Consultative Forum**

Date of Meeting: 24th April 2013

Subject: INFORMATION REPORT – Asset Management Strategy Consultation

Responsible Officer: Lynne Pennington
Divisional Director of Housing

Exempt: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary

This report gives some basic information concerning the draft Asset Management Strategy to facilitate discussion, and so gain TLRCF members input into the final version that is due to go to Cabinet in June.

FOR INFORMATION and DISCUSSION

Section 2 – Report

1.0 The Housing Asset Management Strategy

- 1.1 The Asset Management team was brought back under the management of the housing department in 2010, and restructured to take account of changes in the delivery of local authority housing services. Due to the department being newly formed, and also undergoing a further restructure of the service in 2012, this Strategy has been drafted to set out how we aim to develop the Asset Management service as a whole, over the next 5 years.
- 1.2 More traditional strategies have looked specifically at what investment will be made within the council stock over a period of 5-10 years, however, we are still in a position where we need to understand our stock better, and to clear the backlog of works required from previous programmes of work. We also need to determine what the standards will be to invest in our housing stock as we move forward from the Government's Decent Homes standard.
- 1.3 The strategy will look at key work areas such as delivering a first class responsive repairs and what that means to tenants and leaseholders, improving customer service, achieving value for money, energy efficiency, health and safety, planned investment works, and other innovative projects. To give a clearer picture, the strategy will be supplemented by 2 further documents:
- The Harrow Decent Homes Standard, which looks to detail how we invest in our stock and what our planned investment is over the 5 year life of the strategy
 - Harrow Housing Services stock profile by ward, which details the level of investment needed in each ward of the borough, as well as providing a clearer picture of our stock provision to meet the level of demand
- 1.4 The Strategy will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, or when an identified need arises. This review will be carried out by the Senior Management Team within Asset Management, with further input from stakeholders.
- 1.5 There still need to be links made between the Asset Management Strategy, the HRA business plan and the work to develop more affordable housing in Harrow. The work to do this is underway and TLRCF members will be consulted on this separately.
- 1.6 A presentation will be made to TLRCF on the main aspects of the strategy in relation to the work of the Asset Management Team, and time will be allowed for discussion on the main themes and proposals for the future of the Asset Management service.
- 1.7 In addition the Value for Money section of the strategy will be discussed at the Value for Money sub-group on 16th April and the intention is for that group to feedback on their discussions .

2.0 Financial Implications

2.1 Any financial issues are addressed in the strategy document and will be taken forward with the HRA business plan.

3.0 Equalities Implications

3.1 An initial Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for this strategy and approval for this will be sought before submission of the final draft strategy to Cabinet

4.0 Corporate Priorities

All of the above contribute to the corporate priorities, in particular:

- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe.
- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads.
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Dave Roberts



on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 9 April 2013

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

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Background Papers: None

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