

TENANTS', LEASEHOLDERS' AND RESIDENTS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM MINUTES

11 DECEMBER 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Mrs Camilla Bath

Councillors: * Bob Currie * Joyce Nickolay
* Kairul Kareema Marikar

In attendance: * Barry Mcleod-Cullinane Minutes 214, 215, 216
(Councillors)

* Denotes Member present

Representatives from the following Associations were in Attendance

Brookside Close Tenants' and Residents' Association
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

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

213. **Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget 2014-15 and Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015-16 to 2017-18, Draft rent strategy for 2014-15**

The Forum received the report of the Director of Finance and Assurance which set out the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2014-15 and the draft medium term financial strategy (MTFS) to 2017-18.

An officer explained the methodology, assumptions and policies used in preparing the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2014-15, and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2015-16 to 2017-18. He highlighted the key points, including:

- Retail Price Index (RPI) was 3.2% in September, which resulted in a proposed average rent increase of 5.1% for 2014-15;
- future rent increases assumed a change in national rent policy in line with current consultation proposals, and were based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%;
- service charges were assumed to increase by RPI + 0.5%;
- there would be no increase in garage rents or parking charges pending finalisation of the garage strategy review;
- utility charges would increase in line with corporate assumptions for utility costs.

He added that the budget included a HRA new-build programme for the first time in many years, which had been approved by Cabinet on 20 June 2013, and provided for up to 50 3-bed properties, including 10 for shared ownership with the remainder to be let on affordable rents.

In conclusion, he informed the Forum that the budget and MTFS projections demonstrated the HRA was forecast to remain in an extremely sound position over the next few years, and longer-term projections suggested this would continue to be the case.

In response to queries, officers clarified definitions on 'affordable' and 'target' rents, and explained the variations in figures quoted for arrears.

A TRA representative commented on the assumption that Community Hall charges would increase by 4% in line with corporate fees and charges, and outlined a proposal for estate residents and communities to pay a reduced rate for hire. A Member seconded the proposal, adding that the discount could be extended to voluntary sector groups, and suggested a pilot scheme to run from January to April to test the feasibility of the proposal.

An officer agreed to feedback the Forum's comments to Cabinet the following evening.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet)

- (1) That the proposed strategy for setting rents for 2014-15 be agreed by Cabinet;
- (2) That Cabinet note the proposal to introduce a pilot scheme in which estate residents and voluntary groups pay a reduced rate for hire of community halls.

Reasons: (for recommendations)

To consult on proposals to be considered by Cabinet in setting the HRA budget for 2014-15.

To encourage greater use of community resources, maximise occupancy of premises, and thereby generate income.