

**TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS'
CONSULTATIVE FORUM****27 JULY 2006**

Chairman: * Councillor Marilyn Ashton

Councillors: * Don Billson
* Bob Currie

Phillip O'Dell

* Denotes Member present

Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives:

Representatives from the following Associations were in attendance:-

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
 Miscellaneous Properties Residents' Association
 Woodlands Community Association

(In total, 17 representatives were in attendance.)

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**1. **Appointment of Chairman:****RESOLVED:** To note the appointment at the Cabinet meeting held on 8 June 2006 of Councillor Marilyn Ashton as Chairman of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum for the Municipal Year 2006/2007.2. **Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.3. **Declarations of Interest:****RESOLVED:** To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.4. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:****RESOLVED:** That Councillor Bob Currie be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum for the Municipal Year 2006/2007.5. **Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That all items be considered with the press and public present.6. **Minutes:****RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2006, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.7. **Matters Arising from the Last Meeting:**

The Forum received a report of the Housing Services Manager, which outlined issues arising from the meeting of 2 March 2006, and subsequent actions taken by officers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.8. **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).

9. **Petitions:**

The Forum received a Petition, under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of the Constitution), containing 58 signatures from a representative of Berridge Estate Tenants' and Residents' Association. The terms of the petition cited the adverse effects of the recent removal of CCTV from the area, and requested the reinstatement of CCTV cameras to Bransgrove Road.

In response, the Chairman of the Forum remarked that whilst the cameras had been withdrawn on police advice, they were to be restored imminently. It was added that incidents of the type described in the terms of the petition should be reported to the Portfolio Holder or the Interim Head of Housing Services for prompt resolution.

RESOLVED: That the petition and the reinstallation of the CCTV cameras be noted.

10. **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).

11. **Terms of Reference:**

RESOLVED: That the Forum's terms of reference be noted.

12. **Performance of the Housing Service for the Year Ended 31 March 2006:**

The Forum received a report of the Interim Head of Housing Services, which presented an overview of the performance of the Housing Service in the previous Municipal Year, as well as outlining some aims of the service in the current Municipal Year. The following points were also raised:

Performance in 2005/2006

- 299 properties were let whilst 282 became empty (void);
- £20 million was collected in rent, a figure comprising almost 98% of that owed in total;
- 35 projects had been completed using the Minor Estate Improvement (MEI) budget after TRA input.

Service aims for 2006/2007

- To proceed with 'de-pooling', or the separation of service charges from rent;
- to review the tenancy agreement to ensure compliance with current legislation;
- to proceed with revisions to the repairs and improvement service, including bringing a number of properties to the Decent Homes Standard and to examine options for regeneration on Mill Farm and Grange Farm estates;
- to review the Tenant Compact and to examine the appointment of an Independent Tenant Adviser (ITA) to ensure satisfactory tenant and leaseholder participation;
- to conduct a tenant satisfaction survey.

In response to a query, it was clarified that of the tenants who owed rent, 15% of these owed more than 7 weeks.

It was added that the Housing Service would try and ensure some flexibility in line with tenant and leaseholder requirements when modernising properties, and that the Service would be honest with residents about which repairs or requests it would be able to deal with.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

13. **Open discussion with the Chairman of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum:**

The Chairman of the Forum introduced this item by explaining that it was an opportunity for representatives to ask either herself or the Head of Housing Services, questions on any subject within the Forum's remit. The following issues were raised by TRA representatives:

<u>TRA</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Response</u>
Antoney's Close	Estate inspections – unaddressed suggestions for improvement.	Requests will remain on log, but limited funds with which to conduct improvements.
	Damage to properties by council maintenance equipment, such as grass-cutting machines.	Officers to report back.
	Problems with waiting times when trying to contact housing officers by phone.	Problems with transition to Access Harrow system; action currently being taken.
Berridge	Need to open up school-playing fields out of school hours for use by residents.	Officers will investigate and respond.
Cottesmore	Recycling bins not being emptied and subsequent sanitation problems.	Any problems such as rats should be reported to Environmental Health. Problems with transition to recycling system noted – officers to ask staff for more lenient approach.
	Recycling bags for waste disposal not available.	Bags now available.
	No facilities for dog-fouling.	Will respond at next estate liaison meeting.
	Local play area run-down – possibility for improvement?	Raise at next estate liaison meeting as suggestion for funding under MEI budget.
Harrow Weald	Will all HRA funds be allocated to housing issues?	Funds are ringfenced, and cannot be used elsewhere.
Kings Road, South Harrow	How often should green bins be changed?	Green bins emptied once a fortnight; brown bins emptied once a week.
	Street sweepers not collecting cans/bottles.	Officers to ensure a response.

In addition, residents raised queries regarding contractors calling without identification. An officer responded that resident should not let unidentified contractors into their households, and if they had any doubts, to contact the housing service.

An issue was raised concerning road markings near Harrow Bus Station, as recent re-surfacing had reduced the distinction between the pavement and the road. Officers resolved to speak to highway officers on this point.

The presence of vicious dogs on one estate had meant that residents needed to erect fencing, and it was queried whether compensation would be offered. Officers responded that they would look into this request.

A Member queried the availability of a complete contacts list for residents, so that relevant officers could be reached. An officer responded that a more complete list would be provided, but that in addition Access Harrow would soon be providing a system where all calls could be monitored and allocated to relevant departments.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

14. **Appointment of Independent Advisor:**
The Forum received a report of the Interim Head of Housing Services, which outlined the proposed appointment of an Independent Tenant Adviser (ITA). It was explained that the adviser's role would be to review and strengthen the structure of resident participation, and to ensure the involvement of commonly excluded groups. The ITA would also assist in organising training programmes to enable residents to participate in the review.

The Forum heard that the proposal had also been discussed with the Residents Empowerment Working Group.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

15. **Leasehold Services:**

The Head of Housing Services presented a report updating the Forum on the issue of Leasehold Services. It was explained that the report provided current information, and superseded that presented at the last meeting of the Forum.

The Forum heard that it was proposed to increase charges in line with the cost of providing leasehold services and carrying out work on leaseholder properties, as set out in the officer report. Whilst progress on implementing the revised system was currently behind schedule, measures were being taken to address this.

It was reported that there was currently £352,507.68 of debt to be recovered, a figure which was said to represent progress on the amount outstanding at the same time last year. The Forum was informed that £37,000 had been written off as bad debt. Debt reviews would now be conducted at the end of every financial year.

A resident queried what actions the Council took when a leaseholder sold a property to recover charges. It was explained that the charges incurred were estimated, and funding to that amount was held back.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

16. **Date of Next Meeting:**

RESOLVED: To note that the next meeting of the Forum was scheduled for 30 October 2006 at 7.30 pm.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.15 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MARILYN ASHTON
Chairman