

**TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS'
CONSULTATIVE FORUM SPECIAL****29 JUNE 2009**

Chairman: * Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Councillors: * Bob Currie * Yogesh Teli
* David Gawn

* Denotes Member present

Tenants' and Leaseholders' Representatives

Representatives from the following associations were in attendance:

Antoneys Close Tenants' and Residents Association
Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents Association
Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Association
Leaseholders Support Group
Little Stanmore (formerly known as Berridge Estate) Tenants' and Residents Association
Pinner Hill Tenants' and Residents' Association
Weald Tenants' and Residents' Association
Weald Village Tenants' and Residents' Association
Woodlands Community Association

In total, 14 representatives attended the meeting.

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 - Housing Capital Programme**

An officer presented a report that provided a summary of the Housing Capital Programme 2008/09 and an outline of proposals for the Housing Capital Programme 2009/10. The officer advised that £500,000 had been set aside to meet the high demand for capital works including adaptation works in Council homes only. He added that in order to meet the decent homes standard for the 2009/10 programme, a proposal to increase funding by £4.5 million for 2009/10 and 2010/11 would be presented to Cabinet on 16 July 2009. He added that the cost of borrowing these additional funds would result in a reduced revenue contribution to the Capital programme and the allocation of £500,000 to support the responsive repairs account.

In response to comments by representatives on the Forum, officers advised that:

- as part of the statutory consultation, a Section 20 Notice would be issued if leaseholders were required to contribute to the cost of works;
- all leaseholders would be consulted for all future works completed by the Council;
- concerns relating to the amount charged to leaseholders' for completing works to communal areas would be investigated by officers;
- leaseholders could spread the cost of paying for significant works over an agreed period of time to ensure that all costs were recovered.

The Forum indicated their support for the Housing Capital Programme for 2009/10 and the recommendations in the report for the Cabinet meeting on 16 July 2009.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet)

That (1) the Housing Capital Programme for 2009/10 be approved;

(2) the recommendations set out in the report to Cabinet on 16 July 2009 relating to increasing funding available for Housing Capital Works during 2009/10 and 2010/11 be approved.

Reason for Recommendation: To enable TLCF to be consulted on the principal of increasing the funding available for housing capital works and to provide comments on the proposed programme of works for 2009/10.

PART II - MINUTES197. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
4. Proposals for the reduction of Tenants rents in 2009/10	Councillor Bob Currie	Declared a personal interest on all items in 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.
5. Housing Capital Programme		
6. Housing Responsive Repairs and External Decorations Programme		

198. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting.

199. **Proposals for the Reduction of Tenants Rents in 2009/10:**

The Forum received a report of the Divisional Director of Housing outlining proposals for the revised Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2009/10 to 2011/12 and the revised Medium Term Strategy for the HRA. These had been considered by Cabinet on 18 June 2009. The Chairman advised that:

- the Medium Term Strategy 2009/10 to 2011/12 approved by Council on 19 February 2009 had provided for an increase in average rents by 6.15%. The rental increase proposed by Harrow had been calculated in accordance with Government guidance and was related to the Retail Price Index (RPI) as at 30 September 2008;
- this increase however, had been revised to 3% by Government on 6 March 2009 following proposals from the Housing Minister, Margaret Beckett to halve the national average rent increase;
- the revised increase would mean that the average weekly rent paid by tenants would be £84 for 2009/10;
- having issued rental invoices to tenants' for 2009-10 on 27 February 2009, the Council would face an expensive re-billing programme;
- subject to ratification at the Council meeting on 9 July 2009, the revised rent changes implemented on 31 August 2009 would be backdated to 6 April 2009;
- reducing the amount of rent charged to tenants would result in an additional cost of £10,705 to the HRA. In addition to this cost, it was estimated that there would be a cost of £7,740 for implementing the rental reduction and additional costs of £9,940 to the general fund for the review of the housing benefit entitlement;
- the reduction in rental income received by the Council would be offset by a decreased amount of HRA subsidy payable to Central Government for 2009/10.

In response to questions raised by the Forum, the Chairman confirmed that the Council would seek to reclaim any additional costs incurred in implementing the revised rent increase from the Government. Members of the Forum expressed their support for the proposed course of action. The Chairman added that if the Government did not agree with the proposals, the expenditure cost of implementing changes to rent charges to tenants' would be deducted from General funds or incurred by tenants and leaseholders. Additionally, the proposals outlined in the report would be approved at the Council meeting scheduled for 9 July 2009.

RESOLVED: That (1) the recommendation considered by Cabinet on 18 June 2009;

(2) Medium Term Strategy for the HRA set out in Appendix 1 of the report be endorsed.

Reason for Recommendation: To enable TLCF to be consulted on the principal of reduction in the rental increase in 2009/10 following consideration by Cabinet on 18 June 2009 and prior to consideration by Council on 9 July 2009.

200. **Housing Capital Programme:**
(See Recommendation 1)

Further to Recommendation 1 the Forum

RESOLVED: That the Housing Capital Programme work that had been undertaken during 2008/09 be noted.

201. **Housing Responsive Repairs and External Decorations Programme:**

A report by the Divisional Director of Community and Environment on the reinstatement of non-urgent repairs and on the proposed external decorations programme was presented to the Forum. An officer explained that:

- as a result of a projected overspend of £1.24 million, non-urgent repairs had been suspended from 1 October 2008;
- non-urgent K4 repairs reported to Access Harrow had been assessed by Property Services for possible inclusion within a planned programme of works in 2009/10;
- it was now proposed that non-urgent repairs would be reinstated on a planned basis in accordance with Housing Policy within a budget of approx. £170,000;
- following reinstatement Property Services will identify responsive repairs which could be managed on a planned basis and consider which schemes had been programmed for completion in the 3 year asset management plan. Repairs reported by residents will either be completed within 28 days if there is risk of further property damage, undertaken as part of the programme of planned works, or deferred to future years;
- residents would be notified of the proposals endorsed by Cabinet in the "Homing In" magazine;
- Phase 1 of the 2008/9 External Decorations Programme on the Kingsfield Estate had been completed;
- approximately £470,000 would be required to complete Phase 2 during 2009/10;
- the proposed external decorations programme would be subject to the issue of a Section 20 Notice as part of the statutory consultation process;
- the 2009/10 programme of external decorations would focus on dwellings;
- the underspend on Phase 2 of the 2008-09 external decorations programme would be carried forward to 2009-10;

In response to questions raised by representatives of the Forum, the officer advised that:

- responsive repairs had been suspended to stabilise the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and manage the cost of repairs;
- approximately £30,000 non-urgent repairs had been completed where vulnerability or health and safety issues were considered to apply;
- all responsive repairs that had been suspended had been assessed by surveyors and reviewed individually on a monthly basis;
- the programme of works completed had been assessed on a priority basis from the information available to officers;

- a report on the proposed external decorations programme and the revised HRA Medium Term Budget Strategy would be presented to Cabinet on 16 July 2009;
- subject to Cabinet endorsement, non-urgent repairs would be reinstated with effect from 29 July 2009;
- officers would provide an update to the matters raised during the discussion at the next ordinary meeting of the TLCF.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.55 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BARRY MACLEOD-CULLINANE
Chairman