

TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM

21 JULY 2009

Chairman: * Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Councillors: * G Chowdhury (1) David Gawn
 * Bob Currie

* Denotes Member present
 (1) Denotes category of Reserve Member

[Note: Councillor Susan Hall also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minutes 209, 210 and 212 below].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL

PART II - MINUTES

Representatives from the following associations were in attendance:

Antoney's Close Tenants' and Residents' Association
 Little Stanmore Tenants' and Residents' Association
 Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Association
 Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents Association
 Harrow Weald Tenants' and Residents' Association
 Leaseholders Support Group
 Pinner Hill Tenants' and Residents' Association
 Woodlands Tenants' and Residents' Association

202. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Yogesh Teli	Councillor Golam Choudhury

203. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that the following interest was declared:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
7. Housing Performance Report 2008-09 and Plans for 2009-10	Councillor Bob Currie	Declared a personal interest in all items of 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.
8. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 2008-09		
9. Three Year Housing Capital Programme 2009-10 to 2011-12		
10. Housing Allocations Scheme		
11. Draft London Housing Strategy – Vision and Priorities		
12. Gas Servicing		

- Proposed Procedure)
- 13. Lean Housing Responsive Repairs Project)
- 14. Follow Up Report on Actions Taken by Officers since the last TLCF meeting)
- 7. Housing Performance Report 2008-09 and Plans for 2009-10)
- 8. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 2008-09)
- 9. Three Year Housing Capital Programme 2009-10 to 2011-12)
- 10. Housing Allocations Scheme)
- 11. Draft London Housing Strategy – Vision and Priorities)
- 12. Gas Servicing Proposed Procedure)
- 13. Lean Housing Responsive Repairs Project)
- 14. Follow Up Report on Actions Taken by Officers since the last TLCF meeting)

HFTRA

The Chairman of HFTRA declared a personal interest in that she was the Chairman of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and a Trustee of Harrow Association of Disabled People (HAD). Accordingly, she remained in the room during the discussion and the decision-making on all items.

204.

Minutes:

RESOLVED: That (1) the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2009, be taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:-

Question 1 to read:

“We have received a letter from the Council withdrawing officer attendance at Executive meetings. Is HFTRA considered to be a working partner or silent partner of the Council?”

(2) the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2009, be taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 209 to include:

A Member of the Forum asked where the £595,000 allocated to repaint the Eastcote Lane Estate in 2007/08 had been spent.

205. **Chairman's Announcement:**

The Chairman announced that:

- Tenants' and Leaseholder Representatives (TRA) could contact the Interim Divisional Director of Housing if they had suggestions for agenda items;
- the agenda would include a standing item for officers to provide an update on follow up actions taken in response to requests and comments received at the previous meeting of the Forum;
- training on the format and language used in financial reports presented to the Forum would be available for TRA representatives and Councillors. The training offered to Councillors should be paid for out of the Member Development budget;
- officers would email TRA representatives with an update on the contractual terms agreed with Kier for existing works;
- the Interim Divisional Director of Housing would present results of the leaseholder survey to the Leaseholder Support Group. A summary of the findings would be presented at the next meeting of TLCF.

RESOLVED: That the announcements be noted.

206. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions, petitions or deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 16, 14 and 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

207. **INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Performance Report 2008/09 and Plans for 2009/10:**

An officer presented a report which provided information on how key services were delivered in 2008/09 and highlighted the initiatives proposed for 2009/10. The officer sought clarification on whether the report in the form of a newsletter appended to the report was presented appropriately. In response to comments by the Forum, the officer confirmed that:

- the newsletter would be included in the next edition of the 'Homing In' magazine;
- jargon and abbreviations would be removed from the text. This principle would be extended to all forms of communication.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

208. **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 2008/09:**

An officer presented a report of the Corporate Director of Finance that outlined the provisional outturn of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2008/09. The report had been reported to Cabinet in 18 June 2009. The officer advised that:

- the provisional year end financial position for the HRA showed an overspend of £1,217,000 against a budgeted overspend of £791,000. This represented an increased overspend of £426,000 for the 2008/09 financial year;
- the interest costs to fund Capital expenditure, including the Decent Homes programme, had exceeded the budget by £164,000. All unspent capital expenditure would be carried forward and contribute to the completion of the Decent Homes programme in 2009/10;
- the repairs budget was the key expenditure variation at the end of 2008/09, where an underspend of £258,000 was reported on external decorations. This partially offset the overspend of total repairs for that period and would be rolled forward to the 2009/10 external decorations programme;

- The Council would review the budget setting process. A lower level of balances for each financial year would significantly shorten the period of time that the Council has a viable HRA.

In response to questions by the Forum, officers confirmed that:

- the Cabinet meeting on 16 July 2009 had approved the additional funding required to complete the Decent Homes programme of works for 2009/10;
- following approval of the HRA budget by Council in February 2009, the annual budget provision for bad debts had been increased from £100,000 to £250,000 in light of the current economic climate;
- officers would monitor the rate of increase in bad debts to ensure that the provisions made were sufficient;
- current legislation required the Council to write off bad debts after 6 years;
- a report on the Council's procedure for recovering debts and the advice given to tenants in arrears would be provided at the next meeting of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum.

RESOLVED: That (1) the revenue outturn position for 2008/9 subject to audit [capital outturn reported to TLCF 29 June 2009 Special] be noted;

(2) the HRA balance at 31 March 2009 be noted;

(3) the implications of the outturn for 2009-10 and future years be noted;

(4) the timetable for the Governance, Audit and Risk Committee meetings and external audit review be noted.

209. **Three Year Housing Capital Programme 2009/10 to 2011/12:**

The Forum were provided with an update on the main areas of spending proposed under the Housing Capital Programme over a 3 year period. An officer reported that:

- the Cabinet at its meeting on 16 July 2009, had approved the additional borrowing for officers to deliver the Capital Programme over the next 2 years;
- the Capital programme outlined details of the schedule of works that would be completed alongside Kier for the rest of the 2009/10 financial year;
- the Housing Capital Programme was the main vehicle for improving all housing stock owned by Harrow Council. It included provisions for the completion of Decent Homes standard works and other significant works that did not fall within that standard;
- a more detailed stock survey would be conducted to facilitate more comprehensive planning for future programmes;
- following consultation, any maintenance or installation costs to the new Digital TV system would be shared amongst leaseholders.

In response to questions raised by the Forum, the officer confirmed that:

- the 2009/10 programme included provisions to complete works on communal boilers in sheltered accommodation. Other communal boilers would be maintained as and when required.
- all gas appliances would be serviced every 12 months;
- any savings generated from the completion of works outlined in the programme would be used to finance overspends elsewhere in the programme.

In response to an allegation that asbestos had been found in the Pinner Hill Community Centre, the Chairman of the Forum and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and

Community Safety requested that the Centre be closed until this had been investigated and appropriate action taken by Kier and council officers. An officer for Major Works and Adaptations undertook to report back on the situation and steps taken.

The representative from Pinner Hill TRA voiced concerns relating to the cancellation of community activities that had been organised throughout the summer period. In response, the Chairman advised that an alternative venue would be arranged and other Council departments would be approached to assist with transportation. The representative from Pinner Hill TRA said that this was not feasible due to the need to issue and collect the appropriate permission slips in time.

Further, the Chairman and Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety emphasised that if any residents suspected asbestos had been exposed in a public place, that they should report it to the Housing Department immediately so that it could be investigated. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety added that the health and safety of residents was of paramount importance.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that an update on the actions taken regarding Pinner Hill Community Centre be provided at the next TLCF meeting.

210.

Housing Allocations Scheme:

An officer presented a report that outlined the Council's plans to consult on and produce a new Lettings and Transfer Policy. The officer advised that:

- the Council was legally obliged to maintain and publish a scheme for allocating accommodation and nominating tenants to residents' associations;
- the report identified issues with the existing policy that had been amended following the TLCF meeting in July 2008;
- the new policy would need to consider changes in housing policy that could possibly give a greater priority to overcrowding and working households on low incomes;
- the Forum were requested to provide comments on the items proposed for change within the scheme and contribute their suggestions regarding the consultation timetable.

Officers clarified that:

- the new Code of guidance to be issued by the Government in the next few weeks, was expected to provide for Councils' to give local people greater priority;
- local partners and interest groups, including the Citizens Advice Bureau, would be consulted during the consultation process;
- the law gave reasonable preference to people that had housing needs;
- homeless applicants would not be given additional priority over and above other categories of tenants seeking housing accommodation;
- empty leasehold properties that the Council were aware of were placed on the Empty Homes programme;
- a framework of consultation would operate between August and October 2009, in addition to the circulation of a questionnaire to be completed by housing applicants and those on the transfer list in January 2010;
- contributions from TRA representatives and tenants within the next few months would be welcome;
- officers intended to provide a progress update at the TLCF meeting in February 2010.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

211. **Draft London Housing Strategy - Vision and Priorities:**

A report that set out the key visions and priorities for the Draft London Housing Strategy was presented to the Forum. An officer advised that the draft had been circulated for consultation before the meeting and any feedback or comments should be received by 14 August 2009.

The Chairman advised that the draft strategy which was available on the GLA website was centred around the Mayor's vision for the three priorities which included:

- raising aspirations, promoting opportunity;
- improving homes, transforming neighbourhoods;
- maximising delivery, optimising value for money.

He added that all responses received would be collated and included in the response from Harrow by the 31 August 2009 deadline.

RESOLVED: That (1) the priorities and actions proposed by the draft strategy be noted;

(2) the consultation response deadline of 31 August 2009 be noted.

212. **Gas Servicing Proposed Procedure:**

A report was presented the Forum which outlined the proposed procedure for the Council to fulfil its obligation to repair gas appliances on an annual basis for all tenants.

The officer reported that the procedure had planned for servicing to be completed after 11 months which would provide time for access arrangements to be made where tenants have not been available at pre-arranged times. He added that a postal survey completed by existing tenants felt that it was a fair process and supported its implementation.

In response to a comment by a TRA, the officer advised that it would be useful to send reminders to leaseholders reminding them of their responsibility to maintain their appliances. He added he would investigate whether this responsibility could be included as a term in all future leases and provide an update at the next TLCF meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

213. **Quorum:**

A Member of the Forum left the room at 9.47 pm making the meeting inquorate. An informal discussion took place on the following items:

- Lean Housing Responsive Repairs Project.
- Follow up Report on Actions Taken by Officers since the last TLCF meeting.
- Suggestions for agenda items for the next meeting.
- Any Other Urgent Business.
- Date of Next Meeting.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.33 pm, closed at 9.47 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BARRY MACLEOD-CULLINANE
Chairman