

TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM MINUTES

21 JANUARY 2010

Chairman: * Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Councillors: * Bob Currie Ashok Kulkarni (2)
* Phillip O'Dell † Yogesh Teli

- * Denotes Member present
- (2) Denotes category of Reserve Member
- † Denotes apologies received

[Note: Councillor Susan Hall also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 240.]

Representatives from the following Associations were in attendance:

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

231 Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Yogesh Teli

Councillor Ashok Kulkarni

232 Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
7. Information Report - Asset Management Report) Councillor Bob Currie	Declared a personal interest on 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 on all items.
8. Information Report - Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2010-11 to 2012-12)	
9. Stakeholder Presentation on Council Budget 2010-11)	
10. Information Report - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Forecast Outturn 2009-10)	
11. Suggestions for Agenda Items for Next Meeting)	
12. Any Other Urgent Business)	

233 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2009 be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Representatives from the following Associations were in attendance:

Harrow Weald Tenants' and Residents' Association;
Antoney's Close Tenants' and Residents' Association.

234 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 and Consultative Forum Procedure Rules 16, 14 and 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution)

RECOMMENDED ITEM

235 INFORMATION REPORT - Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2010-11 to 2012-13

An officer introduced a report of the Corporate Director Finance. She advised the Forum that the Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2010-11 to 2012-13, had been reported to Cabinet on 17 December 2009. She added that the report had included working assumptions for income, expenditure and Government subsidy and rent, and that these assumptions would be reviewed and the final budget would be reported to Cabinet on 11 February 2010, and Council on 18 February 2010.

The officer also advised that:

- it was being recommended that service charges for leaseholders' be frozen for 2010-11, pending a review of the services and charging methodology;
- there was a declining level of balances across the HRA, touching balances below £750,000. The revised rent increase, following the HRA Subsidy Determination, would result in balances of approximately £2.7 million at the end of 2012-13;
- following the subsidy determination, a rent increase of 2.85% was proposed for 2010-11. This was lower than originally estimated, and resulted in an average rent of £86.60;

In response to a number of questions, the officers stated that:

- balances were being monitored on a continuous basis;
- tenant service charges were calculated using a government formula;
- the review contained detailed information. With the involvement of the Interim Head of Home Ownership, the Leaseholder Service Review process could move forward more quickly;
- the Interim Head of Home Ownership would be attending meetings of the Tenants' and Residents' Association (TRA), to provide information;
- there was a 28 day target to refurbish void properties;
- a report on the process for garage letting would be provided at a future meeting;

- colleagues in Adults and Housing would be contacted to determine the capacity for activities in community halls.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet)

That the Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2010-11 to 2012-13 be approved.

Reason: To publish the Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2010-11 to 2012-13.

RESOLVED ITEMS

236 INFORMATION REPORT - Asset Management Report

An officer introduced a report of the Interim Divisional Director Housing, which gave a position statement of the progress and issues arising in the area of responsive maintenance and planned investment. The report also set out the proposed Capital Programme for 2010/11, with an indication of the likely programme for future years.

Detailing the proposed Housing Capital Programme 2010/11, the officer stated that:

- he was confident Harrow Council properties would meet the Decent Homes standard in 2010;
- a renewal process on lifts would be managed over a number of years;
- maintenance on Warden call alarm units in sheltered accommodation was becoming increasingly difficult as spare parts were not available;

In response to questions, the officer advised that:

- officers were working in partnership with Adults Services to address the prospect of enabling Wardens to get internet connections and extending this to the common rooms;
- officers would contact a Member at a later date regarding the document that was used to raise questions about the Capital Programme;

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

237 Stakeholder Presentation on Council Budget 2010-11

An officer introduced a presentation of the Corporate Director Finance. The Stakeholder Presentation on the Council Budget, 2010-11 detailed the following:

- the cost to Harrow for the settlement of concessionary fares for London 2010-11 would be an additional £1 million;
- the difference between planned spending and anticipated income, were: 2010-11, £1 million, 2011-12, £15.4 million and 2012-13, £13.8 million;
- analysis of funding gaps 2010-11 showed: Inflation, £1 million, Investment in services, £4.5 million, Capital Financing Costs, £2.7 million, General Grant increase, £1 million, Council Tax increase, Nil;
- the Local Government Settlement, a three year settlement announced in 2007, detailed a general grant increase of 2% in 2008-09, 1.75% in 2009-10 and 1.5% in 2010-11. In monetary terms, this would equate to approximately £1 million a year;
- the draft Budget was based upon Council Tax increases of 0% in 2010-11, and 2.5% in 2011-12 and 2012-13;
- the Council Tax Strategy would prove to be particularly challenging this year due to the economic climate and the need to achieve the right balance between Tax levels, service levels and risk;
- an investment in services of £4.5 million were included in the Draft Budget. Key areas were, Social Care for Children and Adults, £3 million, and Waste disposal £1 million;
- the efficiencies and savings identified for 2010-11 totalled £7.3 million. They included a detailed review of spending within all departments last year, which included better procurement, service reviews and West London and pan-London initiatives. This would ensure that contracted arrangements were being sought for the best possible prices. The officer advised that the emphasis was on efficiency, and trying to minimise the impact on front line services;
- the Greater London Authority (GLA) Precept, based on draft Harrow Budget and Mayor's consultation budget, showed combined Council Tax figures at Band D in 2008-09, £1,462.37, 2009-10, £1,496.37 and 2010-11, £1,496.37;
- reserves were forecast to exceed £6 million at the end of the financial year. From 2010-11, any underspend at the end of the year would be contributed to general balances. The value of the underspend could be up to £0.5 million and would be determined with regard to the size of the underspend, the underlying strength of the balance sheet and any other priorities;
- in relation to Schools, there would be an estimated funding increase of 4.1% in 2010-11. The key issues included, change of age of transfer and school improvement initiatives. Finances would be managed to

deal with changes in pupil numbers and needs during the year. The Schools Forum would consider allocation of funds to individual schools;

- the draft budget of Housing Revenue Account (HRA), reflected agreed strategy and the 30 year business plan, which included, Investment to achieve Decent Homes standard by 2010;
- investments in the region of £46 million in 2010-11 Capital Programme included:
 - the Housing Improvement Programme;
 - improvements to schools and social care establishments;
 - highways;
 - lighting;
 - transportation;
 - parks and public conveniences.
- The Capital Programme was funded by a number of sources, which included:
 - external funding of approximately £11 million;
 - Major Repairs Allowance,
 - Capital receipts (£5 million was anticipated next year);
 - borrowing.
- the 'Have Your Say' consultation on priorities would be by way of Residents' Panel, and would include standing scrutiny review of the budget, Stakeholder information meetings throughout January, and the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP) summit on 28 January 2010, looked at total place and medium term options;
- the final decision would include Council Tax level, rent and service charges for 2010-11.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

238 INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Forecast Outturn 2009-10

An officer introduced a presentation of the Corporate Director Finance, which detailed the latest projected outturn for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2009-10, at the close of November 2009 (Period 8).

The officer advised that:

- at 1 April 2009 there were 5,070 dwellings and 1,170 leaseholders;
- the money in balances was £5.142 million;

- the average weekly rent was £84 and the average Service Charge was £4.39;
- the planned annual spend was £26.05 million and planned annual income was £24.995 million. The projected reduction in balances was £1.056 million;
- a reduced income of £139,000. The officer advised that ways of minimising costs were being looked at;
- planned final balances of £4.087 million were down £139,000 to £3.948 million;
- planned expenditure included, Charges for Capital, £6.945 million, Repairs, £5.163 million, Estates, £1.957 million, Employees, Central Charges, £1.883 million;
- planned income included, Dwelling Rents, £22 million, Service Charges, £1.53 million, Non Dwelling Rents, £0.870 million, Facility Charges, £0.487 million, Charges for Amenities, £0.083 million;
- in summary, reduced income and increased spend resulted in £139,000 additional use of balances. Balances were expected total £3.948 million, compared with the planned £4.087 million.

In response to questions, the officer stated that:

- 'plan' referred to budgeted expenditure and 'forecast' was the best assumption;
- the actual balance would be available after 31 March 2010, and the Statement of Accounts would be published on 30 June 2010;

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

239 Suggestions for agenda items for next meeting

A TRA representative requested that the item at Minute 219 be discussed at the next meeting of the Forum. The Chairman advised that reports on anti-social behaviour, dangerous dogs and parking enforcement would be provided at the next TLCF meeting.

The Chairman also advised that questions put by a representative from the Leaseholders Support Group (LSG), relating to the cost of contractual repairs carried out by Kier, would be addressed at a normal meeting of the Forum and not at a special meeting as otherwise stated.

RESOLVED: To note the suggestions made for the next meeting.

240 Any Other Urgent Business

The Chairman stated that in recognition of the work being carried out by the TRA's, a feature article in a future edition in the 'Homing In' publication should be considered.

A representative from the Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Association suggested that 'Your Right To Repair' guidelines, be included in a future edition of 'Homing In' to benefit tenants' and Leaseholders'.

In response to questions, the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment Services and Community Safety advised that 250 completed applications for Neighbourhood Champions had been received, 190 of those would be attending training sessions. She added that Neighbourhood Champions would not have the right to gain access to properties within the borough.

The Chairman stated that the Interim Divisional Director Housing would provide a proposed future list of agenda items for the Forum at the next TLCF meeting.

RESOLVED: That the items be noted.

241 Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED: To note that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday 25 February 2010 at 7.30 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.36 pm, closed at 9.46 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BARRY MACLEOD-CULLINANE
Chairman