

# TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM MINUTES

## 20 JULY 2010

**Chairman:** \* Councillor Bob Currie

**Councillors:** \* Mano Dharmarajah \* Barry Macleod-Cullinane  
\* Simon Williams

\* Denotes Member present

### 1. Attendance by Reserve Members

**RESOLVED:** To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

**Representatives from the following Associations were in attendance:**

Alexandra Avenue Tenants' and Residents' Association  
Antoney's Close Tenants' and Residents' Association  
Brookside 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' Associations  
Harrow Weald Tenants' and Residents' Association  
Leaseholder Support Group  
Pinner Hill Tenants' and Residents' Association  
Weald Village Tenants' and Residents' Association  
Woodlands Community Association

## 2. Declarations of Interest

**RESOLVED:** To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item: 8. INFORMATION REPORT - Director's Report, 9. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Ambition Plan 2010-2012, 10. INFORMATION REPORT - Asset Management, 11. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn Report 2009/10, 12. INFORMATION REPORT - Increasing Resident Satisfaction and Involvement

Councillor Bob Currie, Chairman of the Forum, declared personal interests on the above items, in that he attended monthly meetings of the Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Association. He would remain in the room whilst the matters were considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item 13. INFORMATION REPORT - Review of Home Owners' Service Charges

Councillor Bob Currie declared a prejudicial interest on item 13, Review of Home Owners' Service Charges, in that he was a home owner on the Eastcote Lane estate. Accordingly he would leave the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item: 8. INFORMATION REPORT - Director's Report, 9. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Ambition Plan 2010-2012, 10. INFORMATION REPORT - Asset Management, 11. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn Report 2009/10, 12. INFORMATION REPORT - Increasing Resident Satisfaction and Involvement 13. INFORMATION REPORT - Review of Home Owners' Service Charges

Councillor Mano Dharmarajah declared personal interests on the substantive items, in that he attended monthly meetings of the Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Association. He would remain in the room whilst the matters were considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item: 8. INFORMATION REPORT - Director's Report, 9. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Ambition Plan 2010-2012, 10. INFORMATION REPORT - Asset Management, 11. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn Report 2009/10, 12. INFORMATION REPORT - Increasing Resident Satisfaction and Involvement 13. INFORMATION REPORT - Review of Home Owners' Service Charges

Councillor Simon Williams declared personal interests on the substantive items, in that his wife was a Community Housing Nurse. He would remain in the room whilst the matters were considered and voted upon.

## 3. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

A Member nominated Councillor Macleod-Cullinane for the position of Vice-Chairman. The Member declined the nomination and proposed that Councillor Dharmarajah be appointed as Vice-Chairman. This was seconded by Councillor Williams.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Councillor Mano Dharmarajah as Vice-Chairman of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum for the 2010/11 Municipal Year.

#### **4. Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2010 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### **5. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions or petitions or deputations were put at this meeting.

#### **6. INFORMATION REPORT - Director's Report**

The Divisional Director, Housing Services introduced a report which outlined movement in National Policies that could potentially affect the Borough.

She advised that potential measures included:

- cutting £4.225 billion from the £17 billion housing benefit bill by 2015;
- a 10% reduction in the amount of housing benefit awarded for claimants who had been in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance for more than one year from April 2013;
- a decrease of 25% in the budget of the Communities and Local Government department.

She advised that these measures would be closely monitored over the summer period, and that a report detailing any significant changes would be provided at the next TLCF meeting on 9 November 2010.

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

#### **7. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Ambition Plan 2010-2012**

The Divisional Director Housing Services introduced a report which set out the ambition of the service to be recognised by its customers as one the best Housing Services in London by 2012.

She added that the plan was part of a two year change programme, designed with the input of the Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Association (HFTRA), the Leaseholder Support Group (LSG) and Repairs Improvement Group. The aim was to provide better services for residents and improve customer satisfaction.

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

- the target to build 219 homes had been agreed with the Mayor of London;
- 270 units had been completed by the end of the financial year, which exceeded the target. These units would comprise of a variety of flats and homes, where some residents could apply for shared ownership;
- the consultation questionnaire was designed to invite feedback on estate based services, and to monitor whether these services were being carried out sufficiently. The format of the questionnaire may be reconsidered;
- those seeking advice from Housing Needs would visit the Civic Centre;
- information relating to performance targets would be made more available.

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

## **8. INFORMATION REPORT - Asset Management**

An officer introduced a report which provided a position statement on the progress in the area of responsive maintenance and planned investment.

He advised that:

- prioritising estates most in need of external decoration was key in order to ensure full value for money;
- digital television aerials would be installed by 2012;
- a survey to locate asbestos on estates before the necessary removal work could be carried out, was being conducted;
- replacing windows on the Francis Road estate would take longer than expected due to how the front of the building was constructed.

In response to questions by Members and TRA representatives, officers advised that:

- properties with defective water tanks had been identified and would be repaired. The replacement of water tanks would not be extended to all properties;
- the condition of fascias and soffits would be examined when replacing windows to eliminate the need to revisit properties unnecessarily.
- replacing timber fascias with UPVC was the preferred and most effective long term solution.

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

## **9. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn Report 2009/10**

An officer introduced a report of the Divisional Director Housing Services, which set out the outturn for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2009/10, that had reported to Cabinet on 23 June 2010.

He advised that:

- the main area of income for Housing Services was rent;
- at 31 March 2010 there were 5,070 tenants and 1,170 leaseholders;
- at 31 March 2010 there was money in reserves of approximately £4.784m. This equated to approximately £950.00 per dwelling;
- the average weekly rent was £84.00 and the average weekly service charge was £4.39;
- the total spend at 31 March 2010 was £25.148m. The income was £24.790m;
- Net spend funded from reserves was £0.358m. This reduced reserves from £5.142m to £4.784m. The planned net spend was £1.056m, which meant that the net spend was under budget by £0.698m.

In response to questions by Members and TRA representatives, officers advised that:

- a three year budget was set in February 2010. A revised rent strategy on how best to manage expenditure in year would be considered;
- proposals for a rent increase had not been considered;
- provisions to provide accessible information on range of issues including finance was being discussed.

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

## **10. INFORMATION REPORT - Increasing Resident Satisfaction and Involvement**

An officer advised that the aim of the report was to encourage residents to become more actively involved with scrutinising the work carried out by the Housing Department. She welcomed Members and TRA representatives to participate in workshop discussion groups.

She advised that the discussion groups would focus on the themes of Performance Information and Communication, and Increasing Resident

Involvement. The groups were requested to suggest ways in which the standards of information and the means of communication could be improved.

Feedback from these groups included:

- targeting existing community events and hosting stalls to provide information on Housing Services;
- hosting 'fun days' as a way of increasing resident involvement;
- approaching residents who would be prepared to participate in formal Council meetings;
- establishing a 'buddying' system for new TRA representatives;
- keeping information as simple as possible;
- establishing a variety of feedback sources including freepost and telephone surveys;
- developing a standardised feedback form for ease of use;
- performance information reported to TLCF should be no more than six pages in length, and presented in a pictorial way where possible.

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

## **11. Continuation of Meeting**

It being noted that the guillotine procedure had not operated in accord with the Constitution, the Forum continued to the end of business on the agenda.

The matters discussed:

- Review of Home Owners' Service Charges
- Suggestions for agenda items for the next meeting
- Any Other Urgent Business

were not subject to any formal decision process.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.16 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BOB CURRIE  
Chairman

