

TENANTS', LEASEHOLDERS' AND RESIDENTS' CONSULTATIVE FORUM MINUTES

8 NOVEMBER 2011

Chairman: * Councillor Bob Currie

Councillors: * Mrs Camilla Bath * Mano Dharmarajah
† Kam Chana

* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

Minutes Silence

The Forum observed a minutes silence as a token of respect for Mrs Anandappa who recently departed. Members paid tributes, expressing her dedication to help those within the community.

Representatives from the following Associations were in attendance:

Antoney's Close Tenants' and Residents' Association
Churchill Place 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
Woodlands Community Association

69. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance.

70. Declarations of Interest

Agenda Item: 7. INFORMATION REPORT – Feedback from Other Council Led Resident Involvement Activities; 8. INFORMATION REPORT – Asset Management Update; 9. INFORMATION REPORT – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Forecast Outturn 2011-12; 10. INFORMATION REPORT – Resident Services Managers Report

Councillor Bob Currie and Councillor Mano Dharmarajah declared personal interests on the above items in that they both attended monthly meetings of the Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Associations. They would remain in the room whilst the matters were considered and voted upon.

71. Minutes

RESOLVED: That (i) the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2011 be taken as read and signed as a correct record;

(ii) the minutes of the special meeting on 28 September 2011 be taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to the removal at minute item 2 of the following :

'Councillor Camilla Bath declared a personal interest on the above item in that she attended monthly meetings of the Eastcote Lane Tenants' and Residents' Associations. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon'

72. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

73. INFORMATION REPORT - Feedback from Other Council led Resident Involvement Activities

An officer introduced a report which highlighted a range of resident involvement activities. The officer advised that:

- The review of Resident Involvement being conducted by Damian Roche, an external consultant, was ongoing and would lead to an action plan to take improvements forward;
- A review of Asset Management was due to take place in November 2011 being led by Members of the Forum;

- Concerns raised by members of the Estate Steering Group surrounding the quality of Grounds Maintenance during the summer of 2011 had been noted. The Portfolio Holder for Housing was involved in setting up a meeting with Senior Officers and Grounds Maintenance staff to address these concerns;
- The inspection of caretaking duties was set to be expanded, with eighteen of Harrow's estates being visited and inspected by five other landlords from other London Boroughs. The Homing In publication would welcome the involvement of additional tenants;
- The apprenticeship scheme for the caretaking service was going well, with two new apprentices being appointed. Training would start shortly with a view to start working by 28 November 2011.

In response to a question, the officer advised that work was continuing to ensure that consultation was being conducted with all areas of the community not solely tenants, residents or leaseholders.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

74. INFORMATION REPORT - Asset Management Update

An officer introduced a report which provided an update on the progress made within the Asset Management Team and reviewed current performance. The officer advised that:

- Overall performance was good. An area that needed addressing was reducing the cost of void properties;
- The contract with Kier was due to expire in June 2012. It was anticipated that the delivery of the service would be moved to smaller networks of contractors to deliver a more responsive service to tenants and leaseholders at more competitive rates.

In response to questions, the officer advised that:

- A priority was to re-gain the trust of the residents at the Francis Road Estate. The project was now being led by the Head of Asset Management to ensure the successful delivery of the programme of works;
- 138 void properties had been identified, with an average cost of £2,400;
- Inspections were conducted on properties when the tenant provided notice of departure. When no notice was provided, no inspection of the property could take place. It was intended to introduce a re-charging policy in 2012 which would seek to reclaim the cost of any damage to properties vacated by the tenant;
- The average of the time taken to refurbish void properties was 24 days;

- Members of the Forum were invited to attend a meeting which was being held at the Sangat Centre on 24 November 2011 to explore ways in which the Asset Management Service could improve in the future.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

75. INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Forecast Outturn 2011-12

An officer introduced a report which provided a projected outturn for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2011-12 as at the close of September 2011, Quarter 2. He advised that:

- At 1 April 2011, there were 4,966 dwellings and 1,170 leaseholders;
- There was £3.78 million in reserves;
- The average weekly rent was £95.57. The average weekly service charge was £2.54 which totalled an average of £98.11 per week;
- Spend was estimated at £28.593 million. Income was estimated £27.250 million equalling a projected deficit of £1.343;
- The overall revenue position for 2011-12 was a net budget of £1.343 million including rental income. Estimated income and expenditure based on available data was £1.247 million, resulting in a lower spend of approximately £96,000.

In response to questions, officers advised that:

- £522,000 not spent last year was included as a budgeted spend. This sum would now be used to contribute to the programme of works;
- The settlement on the loan agreement from Government had not yet been established. Officers anticipated a draft by late November 2011. The duration of the agreement was subject to a decision being made by Cabinet in 2012;
- The method of presenting finance reports at future meetings would be considered. Members and TRA Representatives were requested to assist in providing suggestions on how to improve report delivery.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

76. INFORMATION REPORT - Resident Services Manager Report

An officer introduced a report which addressed a range of information items in response to discussions with TRA Representatives and points raised at previous meetings of the Forum. She advised that:

- Officers had agreed with the Government consultation to introduce a mandatory ground for possession of property when Council tenants were found guilty of anti-social behaviour. Members would be fully consulted on any developments;
- The contribution of TRA's on the Housing Annual Report to the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), which was sent in October 2011, was appreciated. Officers were working on a summary for inclusion in the November 2011 'Homing In' publication;
- Officers achieved an early distribution of bills for leasehold services, sent out in August 2011. Feedback from leaseholders was that queries regarding billing were being dealt with more successfully.

In response to questions, the officer advised that:

- Letters regarding the progress of the project to re-vamp Sinclair Fields would be despatched by mid November 2011;
- Erroneous letters despatched to some leaseholders were due to a technical issue with the Council's IT supplier.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

77. Suggestions for Agenda Items for Next Meeting

RESOLVED: That no items were raised.

78. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED: The Forum were next due to meet on 11 January 2012.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.13 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BOB CURRIE
Chairman