

Tenants Council Minutes

Rent Setting

Lambeth Town Hall, room 8

Thursday 8 December 2005

7:00 – 9:00PM

<p>1.0 Attendance Nominated Delegates and Deputies Rashmi Agrawal Bill Alison Roberto Ballardini Cathy Butler Susan DeSwarte Ray Farrow Rita Fitzgerald, Vice Chair Jean Haley David Hart Edna Jarvis Jean Kerrigan, Chair Ella Lewis Joan Light Barry McCalla Ros Munday, Vice Chair Graham Nicholls, Ex-Chair Ray Pucky Pat Scahill Matthias Toussaint Bill Willingham Joyce Wilson</p>	<p>Brixton – Delegate Clapham and Stockwell – Deputy North Lambeth – Delegate Norwood – Delegate Norwood – Delegate Norwood – Delegate North Lambeth – Delegate Norwood – Delegate Clapham and Stockwell – Deputy North Lambeth – Delegate Brixton – Delegate Clapham & Stockwell – Delegate Cottington Close TMO – Delegate North Lambeth – Delegate Clapham and Stockwell – Delegate Streatham North Lambeth – Delegate Clapham and Stockwell – Delegate Brixton – Delegate Clapham and Stockwell – Deputy Brixton – Delegate</p>
<p>Elected Members Cllr Donatus Anyanwu Cllr Jeremy Clyne Cllr Bernard Gentry Cllr John Kazantzis Cllr Keith Fitchett Cllr Robert McConnell</p>	<p>Labour Leaseholders Champion Conservative Labour Executive Member for Housing Liberal Democrat</p>
<p>Officers Gerard Caulker Kevin Creed Will Manning Ian McIntosh Bernard Ofori-Atta Marilyn Proctor Jackie Thomas</p>	<p>Resident Involvement Manager Resident Participation Officer Head of Housing Property Services Responsive Repairs Manager Division Director Housing Finance and IT Resident Participation Manager Area Housing Manager, Norwood</p>
<p>Apologies Roger Roach</p>	<p>Brixton – Delegate</p>

<p>Mandy Schofield Chris Vaughan Molly Wallis</p>	<p>Clapham and Stockwell – Deputy Leaseholders Council Chair Division Director Housing Management</p>
<p>2.0 Welcome and introductions</p> <p>2.1 The chair welcomed everyone</p> <p>2.2 Cllr Gentry informed TC that there has been a new committee formed, an Executive working group for Housing responsible for policy on housing, service procurement, leaseholders and financial matters. This stems from suggestions made by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. Councillor Gentry will chair this group. Members of this Executive include the Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive for Finance. The first meeting will be on Monday, 12 December 2005.</p> <p>2.3 The agenda was agreed.</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>3.0 Managing the repairs budget</p> <p>3.1 Will Manning delivered his report</p> <p>3.2 The repairs service has been dealing with a backlog of repairs. This has resulted in an 11% increase in volume of repairs calls. There is a forecast overspend of £1.55m by 31 March 2006.</p> <p>3.3 It was acknowledged that a certain number of repairs that should have been paid for from the Capital Budget had been paid for from the Responsive Repairs Budget.</p> <p>3.4 Repairs that are residents' responsibilities have been done by the council in the past; this is being curtailed; however, this will not affect any vulnerable tenants.</p> <p>3.5 Questions were raised about what definition of vulnerable was being used.</p> <p>3.6 ACTION: Cllr Gentry asked that in the future officers produce more robust reports (e.g. the definition of vulnerable, definition of poor standards, how much is being clawed back) not just general statements. He requested a clear and concise definition of vulnerable tenants by the February meeting.</p> <p>3.7 Delegates were concerned that too many jobs were initially raised under priority one when in fact they should have been raised under a lower priority.</p> <p>3.8 ACTION: Delegates want more information on the training being undertaken by caretakers and what qualifications they will have as handymen. Officers agreed to prepare this report and to provide the list of repairs handymen are allowed to do for the February meeting.</p> <p>3.9 Delegates had queries about Section20 notices in Clapham and Stockwell area; officers agreed to look into this.</p> <p>3.10 ACTION: Delegates requested that officers come back with a report addressing the following points: the definition of 'necessary' communal repairs in light of the cut backs taking place between now and the end of the financial year; are residents told what priority their job is when registering a call through the service centre; what is the service centre doing to ensure double payments are not made; the service centre should explain to residents why certain jobs are not covered; and finally a list of business units and who reports to whom for scrutiny and monitoring purposes.</p> <p>3.11 Delegates wanted to make sure that there wasn't any 'creative accounting'</p>	<p>WM</p> <p>WM</p> <p>WM & BO</p>

going on with this budget overspend forecast.

4.0 Rent consultation paper 2006/07

- 4.1 The paper presented is based on the draft determination from Government. The final determination will be issued in late December.
- 4.2 The average rent increase, based on the draft determination, is proposed to be 3.78%, which is about a £2 per week increase.
- 4.3 Rents on garages have been at £5 per week for a few years. It is proposed that rents be brought in line with neighbouring boroughs over the next two years. For next year it is proposed they would go up by about 30%.
- 4.4 Service charge increases are proposed to be 4.87%.
- 4.5 Delegates had strong opinions on raising the garage rents. They asked why they should pay an increase just to be paying the same as neighbouring boroughs where there has been no investment in the garages. Lambeth doesn't even know their full stock of garages or who is using them.
- 4.6 Delegates want to know why officers chose the boroughs they did to compare garage rents.
- 4.7 Officers stated that there is an audit being conducted. The council will continue to respect any local agreements.
- 4.8 Individual's rent increases will be calculated after the final determination is received. Officers reminded TC that regulations prevent increases over 5% and highlighted the fact that changes have occurred which no longer prevent how much rents can be reduced, in very specific and limited types of properties.
- 4.9 Officers also acknowledged that to date, the council has recently only raised service charges by the rate of inflation. This is not keeping up with increases in the cost of maintaining and replacing things such as CCTV. That is why it is proposed to be higher than the inflation rate next year.
- 4.10 Delegates argued that service charges should only cover the cost of the services provided.

Proposed 05/06	Rebate in 05/06	Actual 05/06
£70.70	0.73	£69.97
£73.37	Proposed average rent for next year	
103.78%		104.86%

- 4.11 The above table is to demonstrate why the proposed rent increase is only 3.78% versus the service charge increase of 4.86% (it is due to the rebate of 73p applied to rents in 2005/06).
- 4.12 Officers again suggested that they are considering de-pooling service charge costs in the near future. Delegates warned that there needs to be a very robust way of refunding everyone who then claims back for things not provided to them.
- 4.13 Officers confirmed that the amount of revenue is not enough to replace or maintain things like CCTV.
- 4.14 Officers stated that there is currently a £9m surplus in the HRA. Government

