

## Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting held on Tuesday, 20 December 2022 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

**Present:** Yaw Boateng (Chair);  
Leslie Parry (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Adele Benson, Lara Fish (Online), Lynne Hale and Ellily Ponnuthurai (Online)

**Also**

**Present:** Verna Francis (Senior Resident Involvement Officer), Katherine Monk (Resident Involvement Manager), Orlagh Guarnori (Acting Head of Finance), Susmita Sen (Corporate Director of Housing), Mary Larby (Interim Director of Tenancy Services), Tariq Aniemeka-Bailey (Democratic Services Officer), David Palmer, Jill Arboine, Monica Binns, Dave Mundy, Stephen Pollard, Marilyn Smithies, Kim Wakely, Sharon Swaby, Jamil Tarik, Ishia Beckford

**Apologies:** Councillor Clive Fraser and Chrisdni Reshekaron

### PART A

23/22 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Panel Members, Councillors and officers in attendance introduced themselves.

24/22 **Disclosure of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

25/22 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 11 October 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

Councillor Ponnuthurai stated that the Panel had not received a copy of the Capital Works Program that officers had agreed to circulate after the previous meeting.

26/22 **Recap of the Government Consultation/ Proposed Rent & Service**

## **Charges Increase for 2023-24/ Impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2023-24 Onwards/ Average Rents Increase £/per week/ Average Service Charge Increase £/per week/ Support Council Available to Tenants/ Next Steps**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Finance Manager to provide the Panel with a Recap of the Government Consultation, Proposed Rent & Service Charges Increase for 2023-24, Impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2023-24 Onwards, Average Rents Increase £/per week, Average Service Charge Increase £/per week, Support Council Available to Tenants and the Next Steps.

The Finance Manager conducted a presentation to the Panel, which can be found via the following link:

<https://civico.net/croydon/17179-Tenant-Leaseholder-Panel>

In response to questions from members, officers informed the Committee that:

- The proposed 7% increase in rent was the maximum increase that was allowed following a directive from the government in September 2022.
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was comprised of all the money that had been collected from rent and service charges. The HRA was separate from the general fund which had been affected by the Councils financial pressures as it was ringfenced money for estates and Council housing.
- The cost-of-living crisis had affected the costs covered by the Council and the rent had been increased to cover rising costs of utilities.
- The Council had not been spending enough on maintenance for their housing stock. The money generated from the 7% rent increase would be invested in the maintenance of the Councils housing stock.
- Officers would report back to the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel about how the money from the rent increase would be spent.
- They would reach out to residents who would not benefit from the increase to see if there was a way for the Council to provide them with support.
- Officer had data which would enable them to target the correct residents and they would circulate leaflets and conduct visits to residents.
- The Council had bid for financial support from the government to improve the insulation in its housing stock.
- The 7% service charge increase was specifically for tenants, leaseholders would be charged for the services that they use and receive.
- Tenants service charges were part of a pooling system, the money received was pooled and allocated against the spend for the different services they were provided with. Leaseholders were charged specifically for the usage in the blocks that they lived in and there was a separate team which calculated the leaseholder charges.

- Most of the leaseholder charges were covered by their rent with the exception being the charges for electricity, gas and grounds maintenance.
- There had been an increase of £1.8 million on the Councils utilities bills which had been covered by the current year's budget. The money from the 7% rent increase would be put towards future budgets to help cover these costs.
- The meeting had been convened to keep the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel informed and to ensure there was smooth communication between officers and residents.
- Significant sums of money would need to be invested in Councils housing stock over the next decade in order to bring those properties up to standard.
- Officers wanted to hear from residents about the maintenance work that they wanted to be prioritised, and they were willing to conduct an online survey to receive feedback from residents.
- Officers would look to target the following areas: anti-social behaviour, CCTV, caretaking, cleaning, grounds maintenance, lighting, repairs for garages and playgrounds.
- There was a transformation program, which had helped to restructure the housing department but it would take a number of years before the program was completed.
- Garages were not included in the proposed 7% rent increase.
- The Council would review the use of garages, they needed to determine the number of garages they had, where was the demand for garages and how to deal with the demand for garages.
- The increase in cost for the repairs contract and utilities had been factored into the £5.3 million of the Councils' known pressures.
- The Council had also factored in the costs associated with Regina Road in the £5.3 million of the Councils know pressures. This included the consultation and the four business cases they currently had, and each stage contained a course profile.
- The HRA would not be able to cover the costs required for investments if the Council were to rebuild some of their housing stock, therefore they would need to look for other ways to generate income.
- Officers would go to Cabinet on 25 January and pass on the feedback they had received from the Tenant Leaseholder Panel and residents' surveys on the proposed 7% rent increase.
- Officers went for the maximum rent increase after they modelled the various options available and assessed the impact on the HRA over the next 30 years.
- Officers would arrange for printed copies of the survey to be made available so that they could be handed out to residents.

The Chair informed the Panel that there would be a Leaseholder meeting taking place in January 2023 and encouraged for members of the Panel to join.

The Chair reminded officers to make their communication with residents timely, this would enable residents to take time for consideration before responding.

Officers agreed to present a rough draft capital works program to the Panel prior to the next Tenant and Leaseholder Panel meeting on the 7 February 2023.

The online survey would go live soon, and the feedback would be assessed by January 10. Officers would also enable residents who did not have access to computers to contact officers to go through the survey with them.

**27/22 Any Other Business**

There was none.

**28/22 Date of next meeting**

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 7 February 2023 at 6:30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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