

TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS PANEL

To: Councillors Alison Butler, Sean Fitzsimons, Tony Harris, Patricia Hay-Justice, Michael Neal, Tony Pearson and Sue Winborn

A meeting of the **TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS PANEL** will be held on **Wednesday 5th February 2014 at 6:30pm**, in **Council Chamber, The Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**.

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28 January 2014

AGENDA - PART A

1. Disclosure of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that it is a requirement to register disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) and gifts and hospitality in excess of £50. In addition, Members and co-opted Members are reminded that unless their disclosable pecuniary interest is registered on the register of interests or is the subject of a pending notification to the Monitoring Officer, they are required to disclose those disclosable pecuniary interests at the meeting. This should be done by completing the Disclosure of Interest form and handing it to the Business Manager at the start of the meeting. The Chairman will then invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3. Completed disclosure forms will be provided to the Monitoring Officer for inclusion on the Register of Members' Interests.

2. Welcome and Introductions

3. Apologies for absence

4. Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8th October 2013 (page 3)

To approve the minutes as a true and correct record.

5. Introducing our new repairs contractor Axis

A presentation by Judy Pevan (Service Manager Stock Investment) and the new contractors

6. HRA – Income & expenditure 2013-14 and Budget Setting 2014-15 (page 15)

Keith Robbins (Finance Manager) - report attached

7. Tenant Scrutiny Report on Income

A verbal report will be presented by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel members.

8. Estate Inspection update

A verbal report to be given by Dave Sutherland (Managing Director Croydon Landlord Services)

9. Revisions to Housing Services Fora (page 33)

Tim Nash (Resident Involvement Co-ordinator) - report attached

10. Feedback

- a) London Tenants' Federation – Michael Hewlett
- b) Mayor's Housing Forum - Michael Hewlett
- c) ARCH – Michael Hewlett
- d) Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance (CVSA) – Guy Pile-Grey
- e) Croydon Congress – Marilyn Smithies
- f) All Ages Inter-generational Conference – Sian Foley
- g) Resident Involvement Champions – Chris Stock

11. Resident Involvement Activity Report (page 41)

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

12. Dates of Future Meetings

all in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Croydon at 6.30pm:
1 April 2014
22 July 2014

TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS PANEL

Notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8 October 2013 at 6:30pm in The Council Chamber, The Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

Present: Michael Hewlett (Joint Chair), Marilyn Smithies (Joint Chair), Syed Ahmed, Marion Burchell, Mark Burrell, James Cassidy, Ken Coates, Peter Cooper, Chris Crossdale, Bernard Daws, Bob Dean, Sylvia Fletcher, James Fraser, Jim Mansell, Peter Mason, David Palmer, Paul Phillips, Guy Pile-Grey, John Piper, Stephen Pollard, Maureen Symes, Kim Wakely, Eric Webb and Colin Wood.

Councillors: Tony Harris, Patricia Hay-Justice, Michael Neal, Tony Pearson

Observers: Leonard Asamoah (Head of Housing Solutions), Dave Sutherland (Director of Housing Management Services), Katie Edland (Engagement & Insight Officer), Sian Foley (Head of Safe & Sustainable Communities), Ian Gray (Tenancy Manager), Malcolm Kendall (Head of Environmental & Leisure Services), Yvonne Murray (Head of Landlord Services), Tim Nash (Resident Involvement Co-ordinator), Margaret Padmore (Tenancy Manager), Judy Pevan (Stock Investment Manager), Bob Richardson (Head of Planned Maintenance & Improvements), George Simms (Energy Use Reduction Officer), Chris Stock (Resident Involvement & Scrutiny Manager), Karen Sullivan (Head of Customer Contact)

Note taker: Margot Rohan (Senior Members' Services Manager)

A44/13 Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

A45/13 Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

A46/13 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Alison Butler, Sean Fitzsimons and Sue Winborn, Aishnine Benjamin, Julian Paine and Laurence Taylor.

A47/13 Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 23rd July 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 23 July 2013 were agreed as a true record of the proceedings.

A48/13 Matters Arising

Peter Cooper was in attendance on 23 July but had erroneously been omitted from the list of those present.

A49/13 On line rent accounts

Katie Edland (Engagement & Insight Officer) gave a verbal report about new online procedures available:

- Can create account
- Rents and repairs
- Rents – view statements
- Make payments
- Contact income officer
- Report repair
- Encourage to use
- Will send email in a couple of weeks for feedback
- Set up online testing group in the future
- Please share information
- To create an account, go to: www.croydon.gov.uk – click on 'My account', register and add rent number

Karen Sullivan (Head of Customer Contact) gave a further update on usage:

- 3 months – signed up 903 tenants
- Contacted 4,500 via web
- £453,000 taken in rent payments
- Next phase will include leaseholders

The following comments were made:

- Using it every week and thoroughly recommend it.
- 'Add to basket' – not clear that things have been added.

Karen Sullivan: We will add an 'i' for information.

A50/13 Recycling on council estates

Malcolm Kendall (Head of Environmental & Leisure Services) gave a verbal report:

- Recycling 44.3% - 6% increase from last year
- Please encourage non-recyclers
- Happy to come out and talk to residents
- Not complacent – need to increase recycling rates
- Looking at further items that could be recycled

The following issues were raised:

- Do you take in green waste?

Malcolm Kendall: Limited number of flats have this service.

- It is still not clear what can be recycled and in which bag. Can you re-leaflet tenants?

Malcolm Kendall: We are extending the number of bags for green waste – up to 10 bags – not sealed – can be any type of bag. We will re-leaflet Longfield Gardens.

- Near Norwood Junction – 3 blocks of flats – 5 large bins outside each but no recycling.

Malcolm Kendall: Officers will be round in next few days to see if there is space for recycling bins.

- Heathfield Gardens estate – people take away a lot of wooden furniture, cardboard boxes etc, which could be recycled. It goes to landfill.

Dave Sutherland: This is not one of Malcolm's services. We will investigate.

- Tins, paper, cardboard etc – can it all be put in same box?

Malcolm Kendall: All items go into one bin – except food waste – it is sorted electronically.

- In tower block - Tonbridge House. Asked for big bins to be fitted with long opening – when weather bad, we want to tip in the whole bag.

Malcolm Kendall: We will sort it out.

- Big plastic bottles – could a note be put on bins to ensure they are squashed before putting them in?

Malcolm Kendall: We will refresh the literature.

- Food waste – is there any way to get the bins cleaned regularly?

Dave Sutherland: It was decided that caretakers should do it. Started on Heathfield successfully – and Church Road. If it is not happening, let us know and we will ensure caretakers are reminded.

- When will it be done in our area?

Yvonne Murray: It has not rolled out borough wide yet.

- Caretaking – In New Addington & Coulsdon there are lots of flats and the caretakers are seen regularly. In isolated blocks they are hardly ever seen.

Dave Sutherland: We have a very vigorous monitoring regime for all blocks. High rise every day, others weekly. We will look at your block tomorrow.

- The caretaker needs a special screwdriver for changing the light bulbs. We have been without lights for several weeks – Kestrel Way.

Dave Sutherland: We will investigate.

- When does green waste finish this year?

Malcolm Kendall: Last 2 weeks of November.

- Need to ensure Veolia pick up rubbish they drop on pathways.

Malcolm Kendall: We will investigate.

- People who do not have recycling bin come and deposit in our recycling bins.

Chris Stock: Neighbourhood Voice is for residents to give feedback. If more want to sign up, please get in touch with the Resident Involvement Team. We will look at forms tomorrow and get caretaking staff to give feedback about why things are not done. Everything should be dealt with.

- Only real way of increasing recycling is a major programme of education – letters, door-knocking. Residents still do not understand what they can and cannot recycle.
- In 2011 or 2012, a team went door-to-door. Are they not still doing it?

Malcolm Kendall: Figures show significant increases but we still have a long way to go. Everyone has a part to play. Those who recycle should encourage others. We need to refresh to ensure people are reminded. We had a team over the last 3 years. As the programme bedded in, the team was reduced. 2 officers are dedicated to engagement work with residents. Where there are roads with low participation, they do door-knocking. If made aware of specific issues, we knock on doors.

Cllr Neal: We must commend Malcolm - increasing recycling from 16% to 44% is a considerable achievement. Residents are responsible for ensuring cardboard is torn up and bottles squashed. If you see something, please report it so the council can take action.

It was also noted that there was a young person attending the meeting and it was hoped that he would spread the word in his school.

A51/13

Street Lighting

George Simms (Energy Use Reduction Officer) gave a verbal report:

- Upgrading lighting in blocks of flats
- Existing not as efficient as could be
- Energy costs likely to go up average of 5% pa
- Will replace lighting to generate energy savings of up to 20%
- Funding in place
- Will appoint contractor by summer 2014
- Part of larger project to improve lighting throughout the borough
- Will begin with 14 large blocks in South Norwood and Waddon – if successful will roll out
- Will take 2-3 days – contractor to keep residents informed
- Maintenance for new lighting will be lower
- Fittings will have longer life
- Contractor will monitor performance of lighting

The following issues were raised:

- What's the point if the lights are the same?

- Will communal areas be included?
- How much will all this cost?
- Will there be a cost for leaseholders?
- Will the cost be self-funded?
- What is the lifecycle of the new bulbs?

George Simms: They have the same power but are less expensive to run. Contractor will carry out proper survey of lighting levels.

All communal areas will be looked at. Will look to provide minimum lighting standards. Will have flexibility of controls.

Cost estimate is £1-2,000 each block. Total about £130,000. Savings over time will be greater than the cost.

There will be no cost to leaseholders.

We have funds set aside specifically and it will be paid for through energy bill savings. Lighting will be more efficient, including better controls.

It is up to the contractor to select the most efficient. Typically LED bulb – several thousand more hours of duration than a general light bulb.

- In the car parks, will the external lights be improved?

George Simms: The contract will be very flexible.

- Do you intend to consult?

George Simms: Letters will be delivered to blocks concerned and it will also be mentioned in newsletters. Works will start on the first blocks by August 2014.

- Will there be co-ordination of removal and replacement? Parts of some roads are in complete darkness due to removal of old lights and new lights not being switched on.

George Simms: The contract will be set up to ensure the system is working at the end of each day.

A52/13

Sheltered Housing Declassification update

Leonard Asamoah (Head of Housing Solutions), gave a verbal report:

- A public meeting was held
- General desire to move to alternative accommodation
- Shortly will be moving tenants across to adjacent block
- Will continue to address issues
- Charged to commence fairer consultation with tenants in Tonbridge House – meeting tomorrow (9 October) – 2 sessions at 4pm and 6pm
- Local ward councillors being informed
- Consultation will end 8 November
- Middle of January 2014 decision will be made

The following concerns were raised:

- Impact on elderly and vulnerable residents
- What is % of homeless tenants moving?

Leonard Asamoah: The Gillett Rd block consists of 66 flats. There are 7 vacancies at the moment. Cabinet decision made clear that no one will be forced out. Families will move in as vacancies arise.

A53/13

Repairs Re-procurement

Dave Sutherland (Managing Director of Croydon Landlord Services) gave a verbal update:

- Lengthy process to select repairs partner
- Final tenders received 23 August
- Evaluated – concentrating on quality 60%
- Final outcome notified to those who tendered
- Number of governance arrangements to be agreed and committees to approve
- Contract worth £100million
- Successful bidder will be announced end of November
- 3-4 month mobilisation period – start running in April
- Will bring successful bidder to Tenants' & Leaseholders' Panel in February

A question was raised about weeds in common parts of estates. Dave Sutherland confirmed that weeds should be removed by Veolia. There have been some issues with Veolia around the contract details and they have not been carrying it out consistently.

A54/13

Estate Inspections

Dave Sutherland gave a verbal update:

- High degree of criticism at a previous meeting about not consistent reporting and following up
- Tenancy managers will be attending the next few meetings

The Tenancy Managers reported on progress in their areas. Margaret Padmore:

- From July – South Central team – 12 inspections
- All gone smoothly
- Kept to timeframes
- Everyone received invites in time
- Inspections carried out
- 8 week reviews
- Only one problem at Parker Knoll – action repair plan not on time
- Moving to BWH – delayed
- Score sheets not coming back as well as expected – to look at issues and make more user-friendly
- Use score sheets to monitor and improve service

Margaret also reported on Sonia Isaacs team (North):

- 1st cycle – 20 inspections all to plan
- Number of repairs all sorted out
- 2nd cycle – 5 inspections
- Action plans & review dates sent out
- Feedback positive
- No major concerns apart from one where the last inspection was rushed (Sonia to investigate)

Ian Gray (East):

- Fieldway inspection late – apologies given
- Next phase – Longheath went well
- Fieldway was covered with Marilyn Smithies
- Feedback positive
- Mid-way through cycle

The following comments were made:

- Work of Estate Inspection team and principle of inspections were commended but unfortunately there is lack of follow up:
 - Mears needed to carry out repair to external wall – 6 months later nothing happened.
 - Garden clearance – still a jungle.

(Margaret Padmore to feedback to Sonia Isaacs)

- Last 2 or 3 times one of the panel members had not been able to attend as it coincided with another meeting. Unable to get through when tried to make contact

Ian Gray: We do sometimes have clashes. We try to run consecutive weeks. Please suggest dates/particular days in the week. We try to avoid Monday and Friday.

- Can I have a contact number to ring?

Margaret Padmore: Extensions 88131 or 88132 go direct to the duty line.

- What is the specification of what an area inspection officer is supposed to do?

(Ian Gray will follow up)

- Councillors are invited but only a few turn up.
- A councillor has not been seen on Fieldway for a very long time.

Cllr Tony Pearson: Unfortunately, because they take place during the day, often councillors cannot make them as they work.

- Do not understand the procedure: estate inspection is inspection of exterior of flats or flats & houses but not the streets. Areas of houses served by footpaths, such as those in Fieldway, do need to be inspected but they are not. Why is this not adhered to?
- The Fieldway inspection needs to be broken into sections as the area is too big.

Ian Gray: We primarily inspect areas for which the council is responsible. If we come across something, we will note it and follow up.

Dave Sutherland: We should be checking those parts of Fieldway. We need to make sure they are scheduled in.

We have to plan inspections – perhaps we could break Fieldway into chunks and even invite Highways. It is an unusually large estate.

- Repairs – 4 outstanding repairs not completed since last inspection.

Yvonne Murray: We are aware of the problem. We are meeting with Lorraine Smout to sort it out.

- Is the score sheet routine for each inspection?
- Some new tenancy officers have not given out the score sheets.

Margaret Padmore: It should be handed out every time but some are not handed back. The issue will be taken up with individual officers.

- The score sheets are sent in after the follow up, 8 weeks later.

Tim Nash: Split score sheets – residents do at the time on written sheet – how inspection was run. Any returned sheets, team follow up by phone. Issue of completing form and then keeping it safe for 8 weeks.

- Are all tenants and leaseholders advised?

Dave Sutherland: No – only those who join the inspection – those who express an interest.

We are determined to get this right. Good news – new repairs partner – dedicated team to do communal external repairs. Will come out on estate inspections – real accountability.

A55/13

Housing Complaints Panel

Chris Stock (Resident Involvement & Scrutiny Manager) summarised the report:

- Discussed options – residents decided to set up Tenant Panel for Croydon
- A number of Tenants' & Leaseholders' Panel members have joined working group to develop this proposal
- Pete Ward is the Council's Complaint Manager
- Panel – recruitment through self-assessment and interview process
- No powers but can make recommendations
- Felt that tenants would prefer other tenants to look at complaints
- Role of panel – to meet quarterly and look at complaints performance
- Meet in groups of 3 to review any complaint
- Proper training to investigate complaints
- Seeking approval to set up panel and recruit over next few weeks
- Will publicise the panel in the new year

The following questions were raised:

- Are leaseholders included?
- How will it be advertised?
- What if a complainee is on the panel?
- How quickly will complaints be resolved?

Chris Stock: If you have a complaint about housing it can be from anyone.

It will be advertised on the job page of the council website and in the Open House newsletter.

Conflict of interest is covered under the constitution.

There will be timescales for resolving complaints. So far this year only 2 complaints have been to the ombudsman.

All complaints have to go through the council's formal complaints procedure – they cannot go direct to the Tenant Panel.

The Panel confirmed approval to set up the Tenant Panel as proposed in the report.

A56/13

Tenant & Leaseholder Panel Constitution

Chris Stock (Resident Involvement & Scrutiny Manager) explained the report:

- Re-organisation of panels
- They have been in place since 1990
- Everyone on each panel has been elected through nominations from other panels
- The aim is to open them up to anyone who wants to participate
- Applicants need to demonstrate they have commitment, time and energy
- Self assessment form – looking for skills
- Will provide training as needed
- Will advertise membership and encourage more people to get involved
- Maximum membership? Around 30?
- Existing members can remain as members
- New members to be recruited

The following concerns were raised:

- Will new people have to be trained before they join the panel?

Chris Stock: There will be an induction process – training where needed.

- Is there a youth panel?

Sian Foley: Depending on where you live, you can join through a local youth club. We will find a way of getting you more involved.

Chris Stock: Mystery shopping – young people can participate.

Marion Burchell: Youth Council.

- For new members - will there be a requirement that they attend a number of meetings before they can vote?

Chris Stock: Members can vote at 2nd meeting.

The Panel agreed approval of the constitution.

Competencies for involvement options

Tim Nash highlighted the key points of the report:

- Some of the activities are more complex - introducing competency assessment for these:
 - Level 1 – entry level
 - Level 2 – not highly skilled but level of commitment
 - Level 3 – eg mystery shopping, member of TLP – more skills required – need understanding how organisation works or system operates – complete self assessment form – council commitment to provide training
 - Level 4 – people undertaking involved work such as Scrutiny Panel – significant commitment and understanding of how system operates – self assessment, short-listing and interview

The following queries were raised:

- Any commitment to panels should be seen as a life skill, for including on CV - as a qualification for getting future jobs

Tim Nash: Recruitment will be treated as job vacancies. We are considering some form of academy-based training programme so people can use it as a qualification.

- Concerned with regard to no mention of taking into account people's disabilities and illnesses.

Tim Nash: We would need to consider this on an application basis. Special needs requirement – we will add in a line to cover this.

Scrutiny update

Chris Crossdale gave a verbal update:

- In-depth scrutiny on Income Team
- Changes in benefits system
- Impact since implementation
- Preparing a report based on findings
- Report will be presented next year
- Panel started process of selecting next topic
- Recruited another member and have an interview later this week

Chris Stock: Report will go out to any members of Tenants' & Leaseholders' Panel as soon as available – 22-23 recommendations in the report. Still have spaces on the Scrutiny Panel.

A request was made to suggest any parts of service for the next topic.

London Tenants' Federation (LTF) – Michael Hewlett

- 3 September AGM – 6 directors re-elected
- Agreed Federation must try to address London housing crisis – affordable rents should mean that
- Will keep pressing for more rental accommodation

Mayor's Housing Forum – Michael Hewlett

- Not met since last meeting so nothing to report

ARCH – Michael Hewlett

- 19 Sep Annual Conference in Great Yarmouth
- Kim Wakely, Michael Hewlett and others attended
- Event of the day was a question time forum
- 2 workshops –
 - Reflection on 1st year of self-financing
 - Impact of Welfare Reform – very lively!

Marilyn Smithies commented that she was disappointed as the topics were very controversial. She would have liked to see more engagement.

Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance – Guy Pile-Grey

- Not able to attend last meeting
- Long meeting with Steve Phaure:
 - Concerned with health matters, clinical commissioning
 - Relationship needs to be forged and unified
 - Information available about Clinical Commissioning Group
 - Strategy work in progress
 - People with particular issues for Healthwatch or CCG

Croydon Congress – Marilyn Smithies

- No meeting – one next month

All Ages Inter-generational Conference – Sian Foley

- Next steering group 31 October
- Family club – progressing well on estates – Tollers, Longheath, New Addington, Croftleigh and Handcroft
- More areas will be established by the next meeting
- Working on Strategy
- Date for next event – April 2014
- 2014-17 commissioning certain lots through board
- Panel to include adult resident and young person – with steering group
- Funds of £445,000 over next 3 years – around youth clubs, sports, healthy lifestyles and holiday provision

Resident Involvement – Chris Stock

- Resident Involvement awards – annual event in December
- Nominate local residents
- Repairs reprocurement – a lot gone into this with tenants – want to share with others across country – invited to workshop in London in December
- Sandra O'Connor – communications officer – has moved into Resident Involvement Team as a Resident Liaison Officer – working on Open House and digital engagement (social media, Facebook, phone apps etc)

A60/13 Any Other Business

A couple of questions were raised:

- How can council can ensure absent landlords are responsible for tenants, when they do not leave addresses with letting agents?

Dave Sutherland: Landlords are responsible for paying service charges. It is very uncommon not to have a contract. If a person in a property – leaseholder or tenant – causes a nuisance, the council can take action.

- Neighbourhood Wardens – lot of training to issue FPNs – now they have been taken away? What has happened to them?

Dave Sutherland: We are currently using colleagues in Planning & Environment who already issue FPNs. Now unilaterally changed how they want to do it – but not consulted. Our processes are no longer valid – have to change whole process or administer it ourselves, so we are doing the latter. We are in the process of setting up our own internal processes, appeal system.

Cllr Tony Pearson: Environmental enforcement officers are sub-contracted. There is a pilot scheme in the town centre. The results of the pilot will be and a decision made whether to roll it out or scrap it.

A61/13 Dates of Future Meetings

all in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Croydon at 6.30pm:
5 February 2014
1 April 2014

The meeting ended at 8:50pm.

Lead Officer(s): Directors of Housing Management and Resources

Wards: All

Agenda Item:- 6

Subject: HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT: RENT, SERVICE CHARGE,
GARAGE RENT - 2013/14 AND BUDGET SETTING - 2014/15

1. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel are asked to comment on:

- 1.1 Rent increases for all Council tenants for 2013/14, in line with the National formula for social housing rents. The average rent increase will be 4.9%;
- 1.2 That the full cost of services provided to those tenants who receive caretaking, grounds maintenance and bulk refuse collection services are recovered via tenants service charges, this being achieved with a 3.7% increase;
- 1.3 Charges for garage and parking space rents increase by 4.9%;
- 1.4 Heating charges for Council tenants remain unchanged, see detailed in **Appendix 2**;
- 1.5 The proposal that for the first two weeks of April 2014, all tenants' rent will be met by the Council unless their liability for rent is otherwise being met;
- 1.6 The proposed budget for the Housing Revenue and Capital Accounts for 2014/15.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report provides information on the proposed rent increase for Council housing tenants for the financial year 2014/15 and other charges for tenants for 2014/15.
- 2.2 The report also provides information on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for the financial year 2014/15 (**Appendix 1**), a breakdown of the draft Housing Investment Programme (**Appendix 3**), and graphs showing a breakdown of income and expenditure (**Appendix 4**).

3. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

- 3.1 The HRA is the main business account for the housing service. It continues to be a ring-fenced account, funded primarily from tenants' rents. The services provided to tenants, for example: responsive repairs, management services and caretaking, are paid for from this account.
- 3.2 Long term financial planning is based on the HRA 30 year business plan which is updated annually to reflect actual expenditure, changes in stock numbers and financial projections.

HRA Self-Financing

- 3.3 The Localism Act received Royal Assent in November 2011 and included the replacement of the national HRA subsidy system with a system of self financing from 1 April 2012.
- 3.4 As a consequence Croydon's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) took on an additional debt of **£223.126m** which will need to repaid over 30 years by the HRA.
- 3.5 The 'valuation' was based on 30 year subsidy calculations for Croydon, discounted to a current value. The Council borrowed money to make a one off payment to Government. This loan is financed and repaid from the HRA.
- 3.6 The following assumptions have been included within the latest HRA business plan:
- The Government has recently consulted local authorities on its proposal for changes to social rent policy. They are intending that 2014/15 will be that final year where rents will continue to rise in line with the National Social Rents policy (Government's Rent Restructuring guidelines). This will mean that that convergence with formula rents (i.e. the same rents as would be paid by Housing Association tenants for a similar property) will not be achieved in 2015/16.
 - From 2015/16 onwards, rents will continue to rise at **CPI plus 1%**.
 - Continued investment in new council homes of **£6m** per annum from 2014/15 to 2018/19.
 - All homes to be maintained to the decent home standard over time.

4. HRA Budget – 2014/15

- 4.1 The attached Appendix 1 provides a draft budget for the HRA for 2014/15 based on the proposed rent and service charge increases.
- 4.2 The main changes proposed to the HRA for 2014/15 are identified below. The budget will ensure that existing services are maintained and allow for an increased level of investment in the repair and improvement of homes.

4.3 **Increases in Rent**

As in previous years the rent increase for Council Tenants has been set in accordance with the National Social Rents policy. The Self-Financing settlement assumed that the Rent Restructuring guidelines are followed.

Although the Government has indicated that rent restructuring will end in 2014/15, the rent increase for 2014/15 will be based on the current rent restructuring guidance. Both rent and service charges are covered by housing benefit, although a small number of tenants (large families) will have been affected by the introduction of the benefit cap which limits total weekly benefit payments to £500.

The proposed rent increase for 2014/15 has therefore been applied according to Rent Restructuring Guidelines. Rent and service charge increases are limited to retail price index (RPI) at September 2013 + 0.5% + £2. The September 2011 RPI was 3.2%.

The proposal is that the Council increases rents by 4.9% from April 2014 will ensure that the long term sustainability of the HRA remains, together with the ability to repay the Self-Financing loan. However, it is also recognised that existing tenants should have the opportunity to benefit from the efficiencies achieved to date. The Council is committed to helping those who are not fully supported by Housing Benefit to maintain their accommodation, minimise debt and avoid short term pressures. In order to do this it is also proposed that for the first two weeks of April 2014, all tenants' rent will be met by the Council unless their liability for rent is otherwise being met.

4.4 **Service Charges**

The unpooled service charge for caretaking, grounds maintenance and bulk refuse collection will increase in line with the rent restructuring guidelines (excluding the additional £2). It is proposed that the charges for 2014/15 will therefore be:

- Caretaking – £9.77pw (an increase of £0.63)
- Grounds maintenance and refuse collection - £2.01pw (an increase of £0.06)

4.5 **Heating Charges**

Only a small number of tenants use communal heating systems and are charged a fixed weekly amount for the gas they use. Apart from the Handcroft Road Estate all other schemes are retirement housing schemes for older people. The way in which Croydon purchases energy changed in 2009 by entering a bulk purchasing consortium and as a result it is proposed that heating charges will not be changed from 2013/14. See Appendix 2 for details on weekly heating charges.

4.6 **Garages and Parking Spaces**

It is proposed that the rents for garages and parking spaces in 2014/15 will increase in line with dwellings rents by 4.9%.

5 Draft housing investment programme

- 5.1 The table below sets out the summary of proposed expenditure in 2014/15 compared with 2013/14. In total, the resources for all purposes – responsive repairs, major repairs and improvements, and measures to increase housing supply, have increased by £1.168m to £48.980m. The increase in repairs and improvements is due to the savings achieved following the reprocurement of the responsive and cyclical repairs service. The new contract commences in April 2014.

Table 1

Housing Supply	2012/13 £000	2013/14 £000
Assisted Private Purchase Scheme (APPS)	500	500
Special Transfer Payments	250	250
Larger Homes	100	200
New Build Council Housing	6,000	6,000
Sub-Total	6,850	6,950
Repair and Improvements	27,771	29,771
Total capital expenditure	34,621	36,721
Responsive and Cyclical Repairs Budgets	13,191	12,259
Grand Total	47,812	48,980

6 Draft Planned Maintenance and Improvement Programme

- 6.1 It is proposed that the annual planned maintenance and improvement budget, which is used for maintaining homes at the decent home standard and for other major works to our stock such as external decorations, will be £29.771m, an increase of £15.551m since 2011/12. The Government's decent homes target – that 100% of social homes should meet the standard by 31 March 2011 – was met on time for the council's stock. We will continue to invest in our properties to ensure they are maintained at this standard over time. A breakdown of the repairs and improvements and cyclical budgets is shown in Appendix 3.
- 6.2 The proposed resources for responsive and cyclical repairs will be £12.259m. This is a reduction on the total for 2013/14 and is as a direct result of the savings achieved in the reprocurement of the repairs contract which is due to commence in April 2014. The proposed level of funding will continue to meet the ongoing repairs requirements.

7 Housing Supply

- 7.1 The Housing Revenue Account has traditionally been used to fund a number of supply initiatives to increase the council's housing stock or make better use of the existing stock. These supply measures will enable the council to address local housing need and help tenants who need to move because of overcrowding or other reasons.

7.2 The Assisted Private Purchase Scheme budget will remain at the current £0.5m. This scheme assists qualifying council tenants to purchase a home in the private sector. The special transfer payments scheme, which provides financial help to under-occupying tenants who move to smaller homes, will remain at £0.25m.

8. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Revenue consequences of report recommendations

	Medium Term Financial Strategy			
	2013/14 £,000	2014/15 £,000	2015/16 £,000	2016/17 £,000
HRA Budget				
Current Budget	85,640	88,412		
Effect of Decision	85,640	88,412	Not known	Not known
	0	0		

8.2 The financial considerations are contained in the main body of the report and a high-level summary of the Housing Revenue Account for 2014/15 is provided at Appendix 1.

8.3 Although the council borrowed an additional £223.126m, the loan is at a fixed low rate of interest, meaning the HRA will not be susceptible to changes in interest rates. The main risk area in the Housing Revenue Account is the programmed works budgets. A well-established monthly monitoring process is in place to assist in the management of expenditure in this areas. There is also a risk that there will be an increase in the level of arrears as a result of the rent increase, combined with the changes in the housing benefit under the government's welfare reforms. Mitigation of this impact is dealt with in section 12.2 below.

8.4 The development of financial plans for the Housing Revenue Account has involved the consideration of a range of options for investment in Council homes including further investment in existing stock as well as the building of new homes.

8.5 The Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan Model has been updated to reflect the self-financing settlement and the proposed changes in Government rent policy and will be reviewed and updated every 12 months. The HRA is now directly included in the Council's overall financial strategy to ensure alignment of financial governance with other council services.

(Approved by Paul Heynes, Head of Finance - Head of Finance, DASHH on behalf of the Director of Finance)

9. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

9.1 The Solicitor to the Council comments that under section 25 of the Housing Act 1985 (the Act) the Council has the power to determine reasonable charges for its tenancies and leases, and is required by the Act to review these from time to time and to make such changes as circumstances may require. In addition, the housing authority is required, in exercising its functions under these provisions, to have regard to any relevant standards set under section 193 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008

9.2 In accordance with the Act the process for varying the rent and charges for secure tenancies and leases is determined by the terms of the tenancy agreement or lease, while for non-secure tenancies section 25 specifies the procedure to be followed. The Council is required to give tenants' written notice of the proposed changes to their rental.

(Approved by:- Gabriel MacGregor Head of Corporate Law on behalf of the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer)

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

10.1 There are no immediate Human Resource considerations that arise from the recommendations of this report for LBC staff.

10.2 (Approved by: Michael Pichamuthu, Strategic HR Business Partner DASHH, on behalf of Heather Daley, Acting Director of Workforce)

11. CUSTOMER IMPACT

11.1 The proposed HRA budget for 2014/15 includes a rent increase of 4.9%, and increases in service charges of 3.7%. Charges for rent and service charges are eligible for Housing Benefit.

12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

12.1 The increase in rent of 4.9% will have an impact on current tenants. The increase is in line with the National Social Rent Policy which was introduced to keep rents affordable and comparable across the social housing sector. By adhering to the National Social Rent Policy tenants are protected from excessive rent increase by the limits and caps imposed by those guidelines. The full increase is eligible for housing benefit, although a small number of tenants are subject to the benefit cap introduced in April 2013. Large families in all rented tenures who are not in receipt of working tax credit are affected by the benefit cap and this will make renting anywhere in London unaffordable to most large families even based on current rent levels. This rent increase will ensure the HRA is properly funded in 2014/15.

- 12.2 Mitigation of the impact of the rent increase on tenants who are not in receipt of housing benefit will be in the form of advice on welfare benefits (from income officers and the four welfare rights advisers dedicated to advising council tenants), referrals to specialist debt counselling, and help with money management. Income officers will continue with the programme of visits to all households affected by the benefit changes in 2013, which includes those affected by the benefit cap, and will explain options and refer people to specialist help or to advice sessions where appropriate. The council has also developing a money management campaign, with advice for all residents and money management sessions specifically for council tenants.
- 12.3 The effect of self-financing and the rent increase is a higher level of investment in new housing supply measures and in improving the council's existing stock which will have a positive impact on many groups with protected characteristics because they are more dependent than average on social housing. One of the areas of expenditure which people struggle with is heating costs and this is particularly true for those living in homes which are hard to heat because of their construction or design. The capital programme, next year and in the longer term, will include investment in homes with solid wall construction and other hard-to-heat properties so will be of particular benefit to tenants with the highest heating bills.

13. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 13.1 New homes funded by the council are subject to regulatory requirements in terms of scheme design and protection for the environment. All new council homes will be built to Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- 13.2 Energy efficiency measures (upgrading boilers, central heating systems and insulation; double-glazing, and the kind of measure referred to above for hard-to-heat homes such as external cladding) are a key investment priority within the repair and improvement programme. These measures will contribute to a reduction in CO₂ emissions as well as reduce heating bills and ensure that keeping the home warm is affordable.

14 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 14.1 There are a range of measures within the council's repair and improvement programme that support the council's wider objective to improve community safety. These include installation of security entry door systems to flats, environmental improvements improved lighting, and a targeted security door programme.

15 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

- 15.1 There are no human rights considerations arising from this report.

16 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

16.1 The information contained in this report will be accessible as part of the Council's Publication Scheme maintained under the Freedom of Information Act, while information held by the Council supporting the report may also be accessible under that Act subject to consideration of any relevant exemptions.

Report author: Keith Robbins, HRA Finance Manager, DASHH, Ext 65750

Contact Officer: Keith Robbins, HRA Finance Manager, DASHH, Ext 65750

Background Documents: None

Housing Revenue Account 2013/14**Appendix 1**

	Original Budget 2013-14 £,000	Draft Budget 2014-15 £,000	Increase/ (decrease) £,000
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>			
Management - General	20,901	22,788	1,887
Management - Special	12,972	13,285	313
Maintenance and Repairs	13,486	12,259	(1,227)
Major Repairs Allowance	16,457	16,983	526
Capital Financing	12,638	11,911	(727)
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	8,186	10,186	2,000
Provision for Doubtful Debts	1,000	1,000	0
	85,640	88,412	4,253
<u>INCOME</u>			
Dwelling rents and Service Charges	76,376	78,595	2219
Garage rents	1,324	1,312	(12)
Other Charges	7,932	8,501	569
Interest on Council Mortgages	8	4	(4)
	85,640	88,412	4,253
DEFICIT / (SURPLUS) B/F	(5,359)	(10,406)	(5,047)
DEFICIT / (SURPLUS) C/F	(10,406)	(10,095)	311
Average Rent (50 Week year) including unpooled Service Charges	£104.07	£109.26	£5.19
Average Garage Rent	£11.65	£12.22	£0.57
Numbers of properties	14,075	14,021	(54)

Heating Charges From April 2014

Scheme	Accommodation	2013/14	2014/15	Change
Allington Court	1 Bed	£10.96	£10.96	£0.00
Arthur Court	Bedsit	£7.84	£7.84	£0.00
	1 Bed	£11.57	£11.57	£0.00
Arun Court	1 Bed	£10.38	£10.38	£0.00
Bell Court	1 Bed	£10.00	£10.00	£0.00
Borough Grange	1 Bed	£10.66	£10.66	£0.00
Brookhurst Court	Small 1 Bed	£10.59	£10.59	£0.00
	Large 1 Bed	£11.28	£11.28	£0.00
Creed Court	1 Bed	£10.17	£10.17	£0.00
Freemans Court	Small 1 Bed	£10.66	£10.66	£0.00
	Large 1 Bed	£11.28	£11.28	£0.00
Frylands Court	Small 1 Bed	£9.70	£9.70	£0.00
	Large 1 Bed	£10.56	£10.56	£0.00
Handcroft Road	1 Bed	£10.17	£10.17	£0.00
	2 Bed	£18.14	£18.14	£0.00
Kuala Gardens	Bedsit	£6.79	£6.79	£0.00
	1 Bed	£10.37	£10.37	£0.00
Laxton Court	Bedsit	£6.93	£6.93	£0.00
	1 Bed	£11.49	£11.49	£0.00
Purvis House	1 Bed	£11.14	£11.14	£0.00
Southlands	1 Bed	£10.66	£10.66	£0.00
Southsea Court	Small 1 Bed	£10.33	£10.33	£0.00
	Large 1 Bed	£10.73	£10.73	£0.00
Toldene	1 Bed	£9.87	£9.87	£0.00
	2 Bed	£16.41	£16.41	£0.00
Truscott	Small 1 Bed	£11.26	£11.26	£0.00
	Large 1 Bed	£11.42	£11.42	£0.00

Stock Investment - Asset Management**Appendix 3**

Main Programmes	2014/15
Capital Budget Resources Available £000s	29,771
Capital Budget Set Total	29,771
Capital (Deficit) / Surplus	0
Revenue Budget Resources Available £000s	975
Revenue Budget Set Total	975
Revenue (Deficit) / Surplus	0

Capital Budget Headings

Central Heating / Energy Efficiency Programmes £000s	2014/15
Carbon Monoxide Detectors	10
Central Heating - Repairs Replacements	470
Change from Storage to Gas Central Heating	30
Central Heating Programmed Replacements	3,600
Communal Boiler Replacement	150
Pump replacements	62
Energy Performance Certificates	40
Thermal Imaging	250
Overcladding & Associated Measures	200
Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency	45
Central Heating / Energy Efficiency Sub-Total	4,857

Kitchen and Bathroom Programmes £000s	2014/15
Kitchen and Bathroom Extensions	400
Installation of Wet Rooms (Special Sheltered Homes)	100
Kitchen and Bathroom Refurbishment	6,100
Kitchen and Bathrooms Sub-Total	6,600

Security Programmes £000s	2014/15
Door Entry Installation to Blocks	750
Individual Security Doors Installation	350
Security Sub-Total	1,100

Other Programmes £000s	2014/15
Asbestos Strategy – Removal	300
Major External Block Works - Auckland Road	300
Decent Homes Standard - Key Components - Windows	1,850
Decent Homes Standard - Key Components - Roofs	250
External Painting	3,500
Supported Decorations Scheme	250
Communal Flooring	250
Garages - Refurbishment and Demolition	115
Lift Refurbishment	330
Major Adaptations	1,000
Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety)	2,000
Rewiring	1,800
Smoke alarm replacement	500
Stock Option Appraisals	200
Subsidence - Expenditure	215
Support Costs	2,150
Supply solutions	400
Other Programmes Sub-Total	15,410

Miscellaneous Programmes £000s	2014/15
Apex Development	55
Cold Water Tanks Renewal	25
Door Entry Replacements	25
Health and Safety Works	100
Inspection & Maintenance of Playgrounds & Equipment	19
New Playgrounds	30
Lift Motor Room Improvements	30
Major Ad Hoc Works (incl Major Works Voids)	350
Minor Ad Hoc Adaptations - New Tenants	10
Minor Estate Improvements	95
PAC Testing	15
Pest Control	120
New and replacement of Emergency Lighting	50
Replacement of Fire Alarm Systems	120
Replacement of Warden Alarm Systems	40
Retirement Homes Health & Safety & Minor Works (inc. CCTV)	300
Sprinklers - Special Sheltered	420
Miscellaneous Programmes Sub-Total	1,804

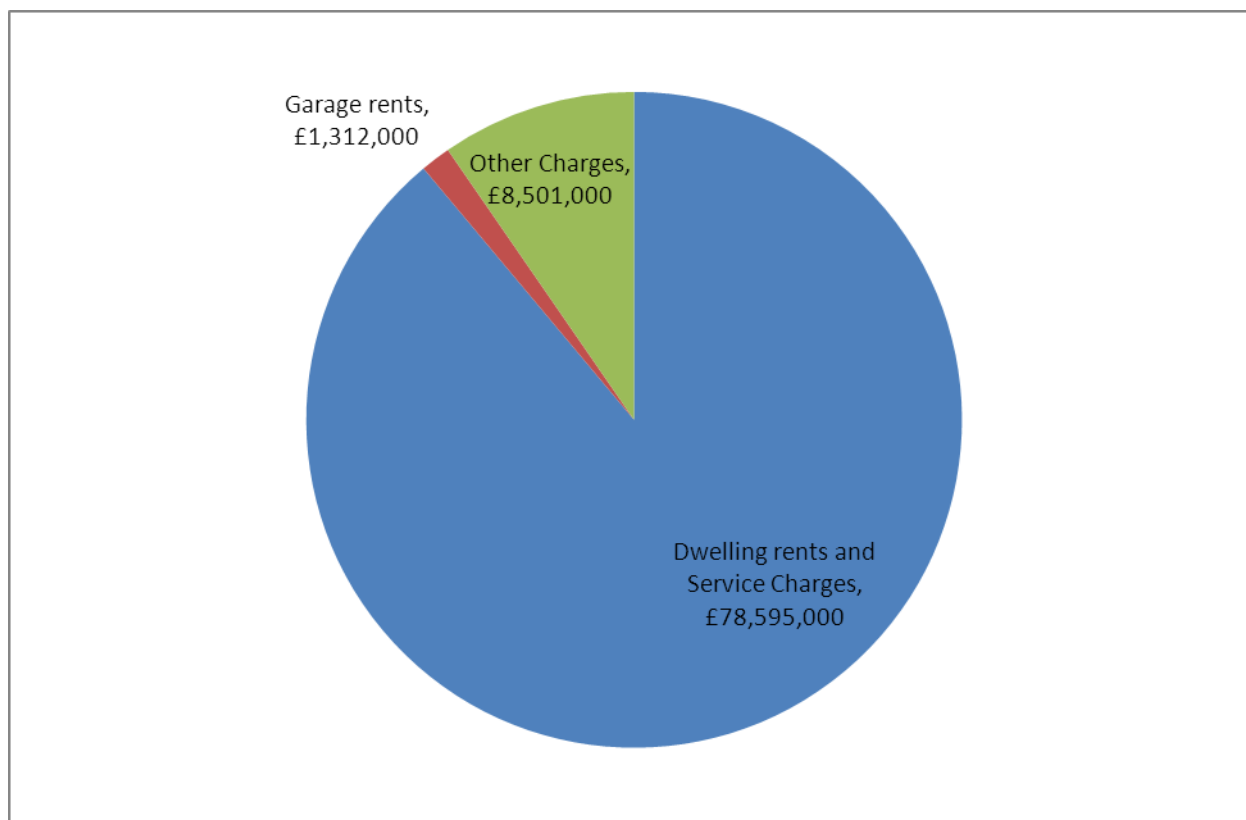
Revenue Programme

Cyclical Works £000s	2014/15
Booster Pump Servicing	5
Regular Maintenance of Door Entry IT Equipment & Software.	12
Cladding Cleaning - Wates Blocks	19
Fire Protection	86
PV & Solar panel maintenance	10
Legionella Assessments & Risk Assessments	82
Repair & Maintenance of Lifts	65
Servicing of Communal Boilers & Plant	38
Servicing of Disabled Adaptations	10
Servicing of Gas Appliances & Gas Soundness Testing	468
Test & Inspect Communal Areas to Blocks	65
Test & Inspect Electrical Circuits	80
Test & Inspect Lightening Conductors	10
Warden alarms	25
Cyclical Works Programmes Sub-Total	975

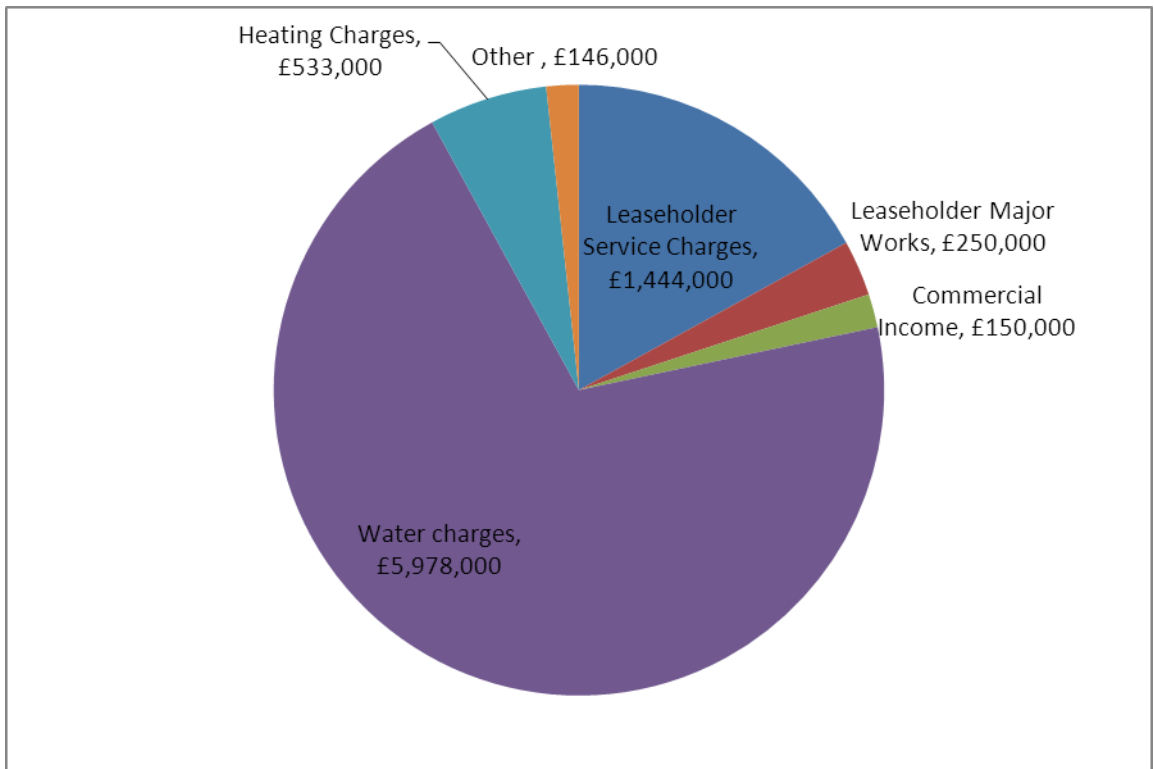
Appendix 4

Graphs breaking down estimated income and expenditure for 2014/15 are shown below.

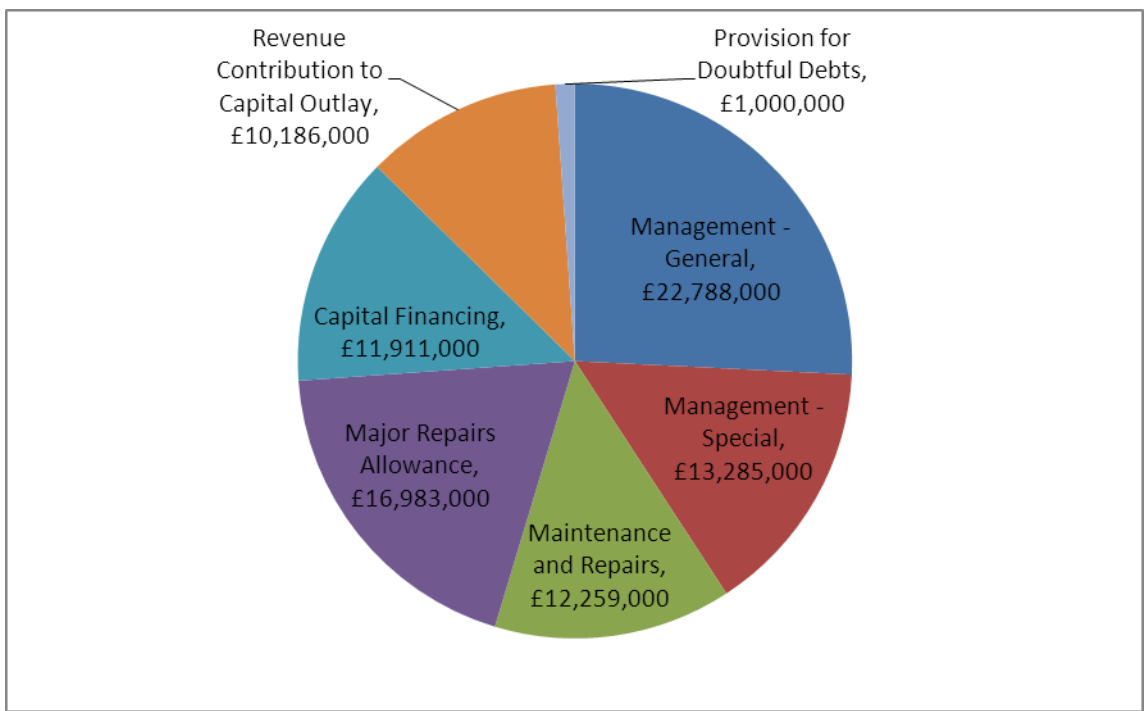
Graph 1 – HRA Income breakdown



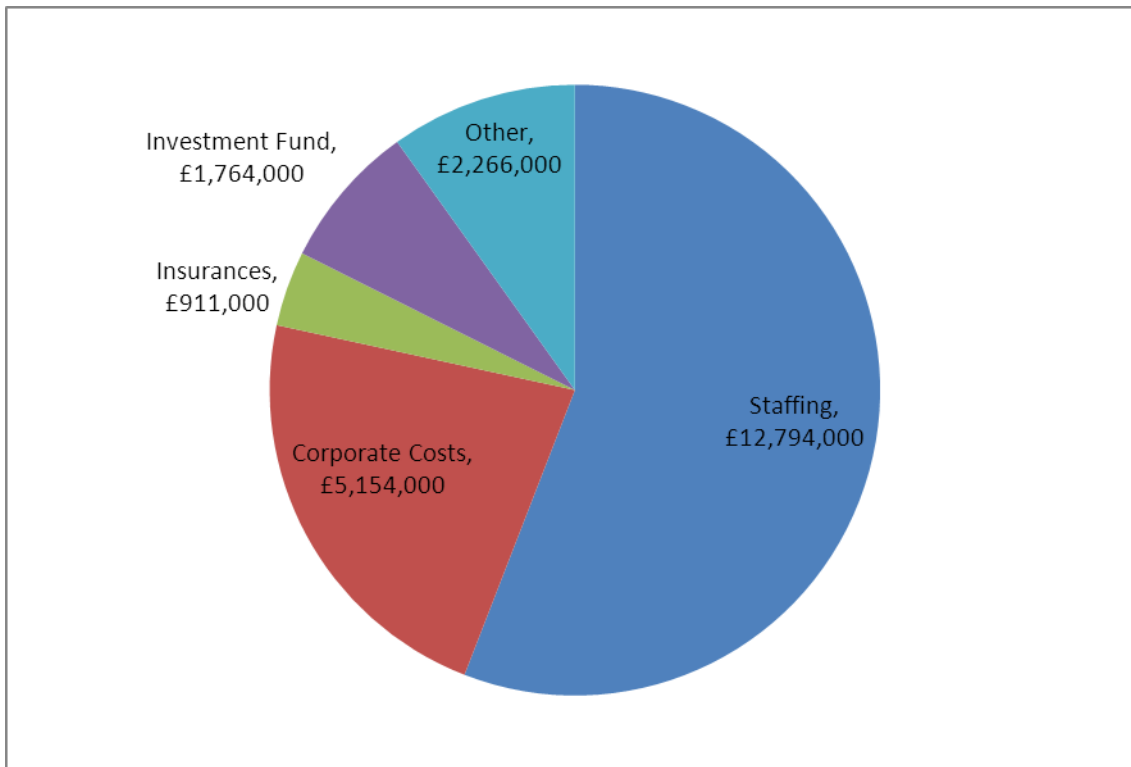
Graph 2 – Breakdown of Other Charges in Graph 1



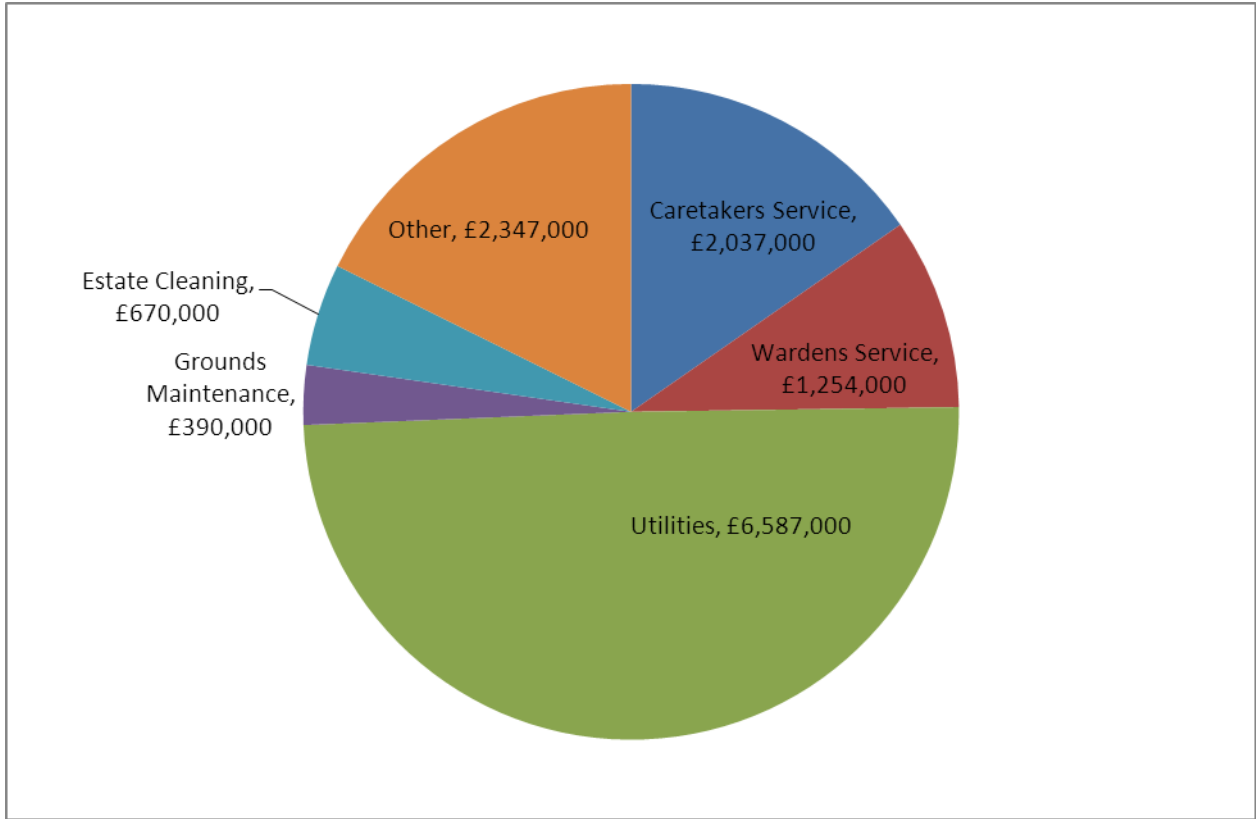
Graph 3 – HRA expenditure breakdown



Graph 4 – Breakdown of Management General



Graph 5 – Breakdown of Management Special



Lead Officer: Executive director of adult services, health and housing

Wards: All

Agenda Item: 9

Subject: - PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSING SERVICES FORUMS

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to agree this proposal.
-

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report summarises a proposal, developed in partnership with members of the resident involvement group, for the existing two housing services forums to be merged into a single, borough wide body.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Currently, there are two housing services forums, one to serve residents living in properties in the North of Croydon and the other for those living in the South of the borough. Meetings are arranged on a quarterly basis and are open to any Croydon Council tenant or leaseholder.
- 3.2 Membership is available to council residents living in the relevant geographic area. Each of these two forums has met twice, since their inception a year ago and meetings have been reasonably well attended.
- 3.3 The forum meetings provide residents with an opportunity to engage in an open dialogue with officers about the services they receive and presentations etc., are kept to a minimum.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1 As noted above, 2 meetings have taken place of each of the 2 forums, i.e. a total of 4. Attendance is shown below for each meeting. Figures include all resident attendees but not councilors, staff etc.:

Forum Name	Round 1	Round 2	Total
North	39	22	61
South	19	12	31

- 4.2 It should be noted that both the meetings for the North area were also attended by residents from the South area; 5 in the first round and 3 in the second. These residents are included in the table in each case.
- 4.3 All 4 meetings were well publicised, using the website, e.news bulletin, Open House and comprehensive use of posters in the relevant areas. It is generally agreed that the North / South split has created some degree of confusion – both for the officers and residents, resulting in posters not being displayed in the correct locations and possibly impacting on overall attendance.
- 4.4 Officers have also found the current split problematic as the forum areas do not accurately reflect existing housing management service areas. For example, some senior tenancy officers areas are split across both forums, as are income officer patches.
- 4.4 In addition, it is already proving difficult to identify specific agenda items that relate to each area (North or South) and that are of sufficient interest to residents. The majority of discussions and issues raised at the two forums have been very similar.
- 4.4 At the first two meetings, presentations were provided to attendees about the work of the housing management service and the procurement of the repairs contract, with time to ask questions after each presentation. At the end of each of these meetings, residents were asked to suggest agenda items for the next meeting. The suggestions for the main topics for both round 2 meetings were very similar and officers found they were repeating much of the same information. In addition, both residents and officers commented that the majority of information provided at each meeting would be of interest to all residents.
- 4.5 When the responsive repairs contract goes over to a single borough wide provider, in April 2014, all routine housing repairs services will be delivered under a borough wide contract. Tenancy, income and other teams already deliver services that are consistent across the borough, where any issues relating to those services are the responsibility of the whole service. It is therefore felt to be more productive to invite residents to discuss service delivery on a borough wide basis.

5. PROPOSAL

- 5.1 It is therefore proposed to merge the two housing services forums into one single forum, covering the whole borough.
- 5.2 The new single forum will meet 6 times each year, i.e. bi monthly and for the time being, all meetings will be held in a central Croydon venue. The meetings will continue to take place in the evening.
- 5.3 Each meeting will run for approximately 2 hours with a pre meeting surgery lasting one hour which will be attended by staff from all key housing management service areas: Tenancy and neighbourhood services, responsive repairs, planned maintenance / stock investment and leaseholder service charges. These will enable residents to speak face to face with officers about issues that relate to them or their property as opposed to an area of service.
- 5.4 The constitution (appendix A) has been revised to reflect the key changes relating to the geographic area covered by the housing services forum and the revised number of meetings each year. However, the meetings will otherwise operate in very much the same way as the previous two area based forums.
- 5.5. The meetings will continue to be chaired by a resident, selected annually from the membership. The chair and vice chair will meet with officers to agree the agenda and arrangements for forthcoming forum meetings. The agenda will vary for each meeting but the agenda will always focus on the delivery of housing management services. Members of the forum will be invited to suggest agenda items.
- 5.6 To align the housing services forum to the other borough wide panels, the constitution now provides that 5 local councilors be nominated (3 from the majority and 2 from the minority group) to act as non voting members. Their key role will be to feed back residents' concerns to their groups and provide advice to aid discussions of the forum.
- 5.7 Minor amendments were also made relating to the representation of the forum to other bodies. Previously, resident members were elected to the tenant and leaseholder panel (TLP) from each forum. The TLP is now open to anyone who is eligible and can demonstrate they have the capacity to participate, so selection of representatives in this way is no longer valid.

Report Author: Tim Nash, Resident Involvement Co-ordinator, Ext. 62954
Contact Person: As above

Croydon Housing Services Forum

Constitution

1. Name

- 1.1 The group shall be known as the Croydon Housing Services Forum.

2. Geographic area represented

- 2.1 The forum shall represent all residents living in properties and on estates managed by Croydon Council and located in the borough of Croydon.

3. Aims

- 3.1 To enable members of the forum and other residents living in properties managed by the council, to make their views known to the council, about new proposals and existing housing management services in Croydon.
- 3.2 To promote and improve working relationships with residents and other partners from within Croydon, in order to work towards improving the local environment and general quality of life on housing estates managed by the council.
- 3.3 To consider issues raised by residents (other than those relating to individual residents) regarding housing management services and the local environment, to discuss proposals for improving services, or to suggest new ways of solving problems.
- 3.4 To receive and discuss reports such as performance reports on services and other information provided by housing management staff, and to make recommendations about these where appropriate.

4. Equalities

- 4.1 The forum shall positively promote equal opportunities and diversity within the community and will treat all people with dignity and respect, recognising the value of each individual. The forum shall work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons on grounds of race, gender, marital status, age, sexuality, disability and religion.
- 4.2 Members of the forum are responsible for representing the best interests of all residents in their area/estate. They should try to reflect and understand the views of the local community, not just their own.

5. Attendance and membership of the forum

- 5.1 To ensure transparency, the meetings of the forum are open to the public and therefore anyone is welcome to attend as an observer.
- 5.2 Residents living on estates or in properties managed by the council are encouraged to attend forum meetings, in order to share ideas and raise issues of common concern to residents.
- 5.3 As far as possible, meetings of the forum should be attended by proportions of tenants, leaseholders and freeholders that reflects the general tenure of properties managed by the council.
- 5.4 Three councillors (two majority & one minority) will be nominated by their respective parties to attend forum meetings as non-voting members.
- 5.5 In order to improve continuity and establish reliable links with local communities, attendees will be invited to commit themselves to becoming a member of the forum. Anyone who is interested in doing so, may become a member of the forum, provided they meet the criteria as shown in 5.6 below.
- 5.6 All members of the forum must be either
 - a tenant or leaseholder of Croydon Council or,
 - a freeholder who pays a service charge to Croydon Council.
- 5.7 Members will be expected to confirm their membership in writing by completing a simple membership form. Members wishing to do so, will be required to renew their membership each year, in a similar manner.
- 5.8 New members will be required to register their details on the housing involvement database. This system enables the council to provide involved residents with the information and support they require and allows the monitoring of resident involvement activity. Personal details are held securely and are not released to third parties. (for more information contact a member of the resident involvement team)
- 5.9 All members of the forum will be required to attend an introductory training session within three months of registering as a member, or show a good understanding of how the forum and the housing service works.
- 5.10 Members will sign an undertaking to abide by this Constitution and the Resident Involvement Code of Conduct (see also 12.1 below).
- 5.11 Any member who is absent from two consecutive meetings without good reason, will be deemed to have resigned, unless otherwise agreed by the members of the forum.

6. Meetings

- 6.1 The forum will meet six times each year and the meetings will be arranged and administered by council officers, in partnership with members.
- 6.2 Council officers will agree times and locations of meetings with members of the forum but these must be convenient to the majority of resident members and venues must be fully accessible.
- 6.3 Officers and representatives from the council and other relevant service providers will be invited and expected to attend meetings to inform discussions and to respond to residents queries.
- 6.4 The forum may also invite speakers from external organisations to its meetings, as required and agreed by members.
- 6.5 Any item to be included on the agenda must be notified to the council or the Chair at least 15 working days before the date of the meeting. Additional agenda items may be included at a later date at the discretion of the Chair.
- 6.6 Agendas for each meeting will be distributed in writing, or via email, to members 10 working days in advance of the meeting by council officers. The agenda will also be displayed on the council website. General promotional materials will be displayed at suitable locations, in advance of meetings.
- 6.7 All those present will be reminded of their obligation to abide by the Resident Involvement Code of Conduct at the start of each meeting.
- 6.8 Only members of the forum may automatically take part in discussions at the meeting, or take part in any voting that takes place.
- 6.9 Those attending as observers may only speak when invited to do so by the Chair. However, the Chair must provide reasonable and appropriate opportunity for observers to speak, particularly if they wish to raise an issue that is relevant to the meeting or the general aims of the forum.
- 6.10 The Chair will ensure the business of the meeting is managed appropriately and run in an organised manner.
- 6.11 The Chair will have the power to require any one to leave a meeting who is using inappropriate language or behaviour, or otherwise being disruptive. Council officers will provide support in such instances.
- 6.12 Should the individual refuse to leave, the Chair is entitled to close the meeting, with the agreement of other members and the council officers present.

- 6.13 A record of meetings will be prepared by council officers and will be circulated to members in writing, or via email, within 10 working days of a meeting and displayed on the council website.

7. Voting

- 7.1 In order to be eligible to vote, residents must be bona fide members of the forum, in accordance with paragraph 5.7 above. New members must have previously attended one full meeting and existing members must not have allowed their membership to lapse, as detailed in paragraph 5.11 above.
- 7.2 When a decision is required by a vote, each resident member present at the meeting, including the Chair, will have one vote. Voting by proxy will not be accepted.
- 7.3 In the event of a tie, the Chair will not have a second, or casting vote and the forum will need to carry out a second vote or find agreement in another way, such as through a consensus decision.
- 7.4 Where voting is taking place for the selection of individuals to take up any of the positions of office, (e.g. Chair or representatives to other bodies) the nominees are also entitled to cast a vote.
- 7.5 If required, voting by secret ballot can be arranged and administered by the officers from the council.

8. The role of Chair and Vice Chair

- 8.1 The person appointed as Chair will set the agenda for the forthcoming meeting, in conjunction with the officer(s) from the council. The Chair will guide the business of meetings of the forum.
- 8.2 Should the Chair be unable to attend a meeting, that meeting will be chaired by the Vice Chair.
- 8.3 The position of Chair or Vice Chair may not be held by the same individual for more than three consecutive years. After three years, the individual must stand down and not put themselves forward for re-election to the same position for a period of one year.

9. Representation of the views of the forum

- 9.1 Every year, members of the forum may also select representatives to sit on other bodies or organisations to represent the views of the forum on that body. These representatives will also be responsible for feeding back to the forum about the activities and decisions of that body.

9.2 In order to be eligible for such positions, the individuals must be eligible to vote, as detailed in 7.1 above and be present at the meeting at which selection takes place.

10. Election of officers of the forum

10.1 Every year, the Chair, Vice Chair and elected representatives to other bodies, will stand down and voting will take place to select to these appointments for the next year, as detailed in section 7 of this constitution.

10.2 Members of the forum will approve the selection of individuals who will take on the roles of Chair, Vice Chair and representatives to any other bodies as may be relevant. In order to be eligible for any of these positions the individual must be eligible to vote, as detailed in 7.1 above and be present at the meeting at which voting takes place.

10.3 Members who wish to stand for these positions may not nominate themselves but must be nominated by another member of the forum.

10.4 Where a position is contested, voting will be carried out by a secret ballot, which will be administered by officers from the Council.

11. Quorum

11.1 Attendance by one third of the total number of members or 10 members of the forum (whichever is smaller) will constitute a quorum. This is the minimum number of members required to enable voting to take place and resultant decisions to be recorded.

11.2 If the meeting of the forum is not quorate, the meeting may proceed but no decisions can be made.

12. Code of Conduct

12.1 All members of the forum should familiarise themselves with and will abide by, the Resident Involvement Code of Conduct. (this is available separately from the resident involvement team)

13. Alterations to the Constitution

13.1 Amendments to this Constitution must receive the approval of a minimum of two-thirds of all members of the forum, and must also receive the endorsement of the Tenants' & Leaseholders' Panel before it can take effect.



Resident involvement & scrutiny team activity sheet:

October - December 2013



Activity	What has happened?
Housing services forums	<p>Both north and south forums met in the autumn and were attended by 22 and 13 residents respectively. Agenda items included estate inspections, dog fouling and control issues, recycling, street lighting, services provided by Veolia, role of the neighbourhood wardens and other ways for residents to get involved.</p> <p>86% of those who completed a feedback form said they felt welcome and able to take part and 100% that the event was very, or quite informative.</p> <p>The decision has been taken, after consultation with the resident involvement group, to combine the forums, meeting bi-monthly instead of quarterly. The first combined meeting will be held on 29 January.</p>
Your housing, your questions	<p>An event took place on 26 November with a theme of allocations and welfare reform. Presentations were given, followed by residents' questions. 22 residents attended and of those who completed exit surveys 90% felt welcome and able to take part and 76% considered the event very, or quite informative.</p> <p>The next meeting date has been set for 19 March. A revised format is planned for this event with round table discussions enabling residents to talk directly with officers in smaller groups.</p>
Sheltered housing panel	<p>This panel met in November. Agenda items included: The proposal for reclassification of a block from sheltered housing to general needs, and a presentation on the Life Stories project from the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.</p> <p>17 residents attended and of those who completed exit surveys all felt welcome and able to take part and 90% considered the event very, or quite informative.</p>

	The next meeting is on March 25.
Housing disability panel	The meeting scheduled in November was postponed due to lack of agenda items. The next meeting is on March 12. We are carrying out publicity and recruitment to encourage more tenants with disabilities to get involved through both correspondence and attending meetings.
Resident involvement group (RIG)	This group meets to discuss all aspects of resident involvement in Croydon. The last meeting considered revised arrangements for housing services forums and your housing, your questions events as well as training for residents. The next meeting will look at expenses and rewards for residents who are involved and mystery shopping.
Housing Sounding board	Membership at 434. Members invited to take part in: complaints panel, Christmas buffet and award ceremony for those regularly involved.
Adult social services involvement	Croydon adult social services user panel (CASSUP) met in October and December. Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported back on taking part in the 'making it real' consultation on self-directed support • Heard about the new housing adaptations information flyer published after they met with the team managers • Gave feedback from the working group looking at issues regarding domiciliary care. A recruitment drive for new panel members will start in January. The November Inclusive Forum meeting has been postponed to early in the new year.
Surveys	Quarterly repairs satisfaction Anti- social behaviour Allocations survey Motorised scooters in sheltered/retirement housing Tonbridge House declassification consultation Larger families welfare reform survey
Scrutiny panel	The scrutiny exercise of the housing income service is complete. The report and action plan are being presented to Tenant & Leaseholder panel in February. The report can be downloaded from our website. The next scrutiny exercise will be focussing on the neighbourhood wardens' service; this will be starting in early 2014. A follow up review of the contact centre scrutiny exercise will also take place this year and arrangements are being made for ongoing monitoring of past exercises.

Neighbourhood voice (NV)	<p>86 forms completed by 44 residents.</p> <p>NV newsletter is being planned and is due to be sent out in February.</p> <p>We are planning a recruitment drive in the new year, focussing on estates with no representation.</p>
Mystery shoppers	<p>Planning is taking place for the next round which will be run early in 2014. The subject will be in relation to adult social care.</p> <p>A follow up to the contact centre mystery shopping exercise is also being considered.</p>
Housing services inspectors	<p>No activity this quarter but inspectors will be assisting in the neighbourhood wardens' scrutiny exercise.</p>
Residents' training	<p>A new training programme is being developed, which will focus on basic training for residents who have not previously been involved and to update those who are taking on roles such as Chair, or are involved in activities such as mystery shopping etc. In particular, we are also planning a session to go through the new estate inspection procedure – this will be delivered to residents and officers.</p>
Complaints working group	<p>The group has been meeting regularly with 6 residents attending. The format for the complaints panel has been agreed and recruitment of members has been taking place. 8 applications have been received so far and the applicants will all be interviewed on January 9. Training will take place later in January.</p>
Involve e-newsletter	<p>An issue was sent out in October covering adverts for the complaints panel and residents' awards, training opportunities for tenants, financial information for leaseholders and feedback from various events. Another issue is being prepared and is due to be sent out in January.</p>
Other activities:	<p>The latest resident involvement performance report (October 13) was presented to RIG and is also available to download from the website.</p> <p>The annual buffet and awards event was held in December to celebrate the hard work and achievements of residents throughout the year. Awards, in four categories, were presented by the Mayor. More information is available on our website.</p>