

Minutes 2nd March 2023 – Minor amendment to the minutes for accuracy in relation to the deputation representations.

57. TO CONSIDER REQUESTS TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS/ PETITIONS AND, IF APPROVED, TO RECEIVE THEM

The Deputy Mayor invited Mr Paul Burnham and Mr Jacob Secker to make their representations in relation to the budget and from concerned residents from Broadwater Farm. They were asking the Council, to not agree the Council tenant rent increase of 7% as shown on the budget report.

Mr Burnham raised the following issues:

- The Council's failure to consult with tenants about the 7% rent increase. He contended that 22 other local authorities did not increase rent to the government maximum last year.
- Speculating that the Cabinet's refusal to consult with tenants might be due to their expectation that tenants would oppose the increases during a cost-of-living crisis.
- That he had made a formal objection to the lack of consultation.
- Concerns about the proposal to implement London Affordable Rent for over 870 new homes. The proposed rent for a 2-bed property was £79 per week higher than the average Council rent in Haringey and would have a significant impact on household budgets.
- Housing Charity Shelter had already deemed the proposed Mayor's rent unaffordable, as low-income families would be paying up to 36% of their income on rent and service charges.
- That the economic rationale for LAR rent was poorly explained in the report and the proposed £14 difference from Council rents was unlikely to be critical to the £900M development program's viability.
- That a simplistic approach of charging higher rents across the board was risky and that the proposals should be rejected.
- Parents with existing properties have raised concerns about proposed rent and service charge increases.
- Cabinet suggested a maximum rent increase of 7%, but service charges may increase even more.
- Freedom of Information received indicated that tenant service charges for the current year were £11.7M, and the proposed service charges increase would generate more than £3M, a 23% increase per household from April.

- Specifically, heating and lighting charges may double, and that these charges were not covered by Universal Credit and currently stand at £10 a week. Despite government assistance programs, any increase in charges would cause financial hardship and discontent among residents.
- Referred to page 318 of the pack, which indicated that freezing all tenant heating and lighting charges would cost £2M from the housing revenue account reserve of £20Million and proposed that the report be amended to freeze these charges, alleviating the financial burden on residents.

The Deputation called for change in decision making on the rent increases and for the Council to campaign alongside tenants for a government supported rent freeze without any loss of services or of new build capacity.

In response to the questions from the Councillors: Dunstall, Ovat and Ibrahim, the deputation provided the following responses:

- Government investments were necessary to address social inclusion issues particularly, in Northumberland Park, and that social landlords' reliance on tenant funding was not a sufficient solution. The deputation suggested that Haringey should advocate for government investment in public assets, such as major repairs and fire safety grants, to improve the situation.
- The government had broken a previous agreement with councils by reducing the amount of money they received through self-financing, and this needed to be addressed through the public policy process. The deputation proposed that local authorities should stand together to prevent money from being siphoned out of council housing.
- Additionally, he expressed concern about a £3Million increase in tenant service charges and the lack of information about the pros and cons and consequences in a report.
- Defend Council Housing was a national campaign group that advocated for council housing tenants in Haringey. Mr Secker -clarified that he was part of the Broadwater Farm Residents' Association, but was not representing them at this meeting and the deputation was a member of this group as well as the Broadwater Farm Residents Association.
- The deputation outlined concerns about the potential doubling of the district heating charges, which would have a detrimental impact on residents, particularly those on job seekers' allowance who may struggle to pay their bills and afford food. [It was noted that this was not an issue in the report or on the agenda]

The Cabinet Members for Council Housebuilding, Placemaking, and Development and Housing Services, Private Renters, and Planning responded outlining the following:

- Manifesto pledge is to build 3000 Council homes at by 2030.
- Currently in an economic climate of huge increases in construction costs.

- Need to use the London Affordable Rent on those new homes to be able to progress with the housing delivery programme and ensure financially viable.
- 12500 people on Housing waiting list and need to provide homes
- London affordable rent was not the first option. However, it is a way in which to ensure housing pledge is achieved.
- The London Affordable Rent means that these new homes will be Council homes at council rents for people on the Council is Housing register and they will be secure tenancies. Residents would be on Haringey's housing register and able to be offered a home by the Council.

- The funding came from the Building Council Homes for Londoners programme and to contend that these are not Council homes was not correct.
- There was need to increase the rent and services charge to continue to provide services and repairs.
There was no legal requirement for the Council to specifically consult with tenants on the increase.
- Fire safety, was a high priority and the Council had allocated £30 to £35 million over the next five years to ensure that housing stock continues to meet the constantly evolving statutory requirements and that housing provision is safe.

The Deputy Mayor thanked the deputation for attending and making their representations.