

WDC Public Rent Consultation Meeting,

**Thursday 30 th November 2017, 5.30PM , Committee room 3, Garshake,
Dumbarton.**

Present

Councillor Diane Docherty (Housing Convenor)- chaired meeting
Jim Hendry Risk St + WDTR0
Mary de Wal OTTRA +WDTR0
Craig Edward Dalmuir TRA + WDTR0
Isobel Rankin Dalmuir TRA + WDTR0
Janette Donlin Dalmuir TRA + WDTR0
Jacqueline Wilkie Dalmuir TRA + WDTR0
Frances McGonagle Littleholm TRA and WDTR0
Polly Wheelans Littleholm TRA
June Todd Interested Tenant
George Rowe Interested Tenant
Mary Ronald Westbridgend TRA
Billy Neeson Westbridgend TRA + WDTR0
Hugh O'Donnell Westbridgend TRA + WDTR0
Lorraine Watson CATRA +WDTR0
Peter Barry (Strategic lead, Housing & Employability)
Janice Rainey (Finance Business Partner)
John Kerr (Housing Development and Homelessness Manager)
Jane Mack (Tenant Participation Officer).
Dawn Conner (Tenant Participation Development Officer)

Apologies

Harry McCormack, Paul Moore, Rita Howard and Stefan Kristmanns

1. Welcome and introductions.

Councillor Diane Docherty welcomed everyone to the rent consultation for 2018/19 and everyone around the table introduced themselves.

2. Presentation from Peter Barry (Strategic lead, Housing & Employability)

Copy of presentation available at meeting and additional paper copies available from the Housing Development Team or can be viewed on the Council's website.

Peter Barry advised he was looking for a full discussion and for tenants to give their views on rent options for next year. He gave an overview of key achievements made by Housing Services, updates on new build and housing investment programmes as well as proposed planned maintenance programme.

Janice Rainey gave an update on the review of the HRA Business Plan and projected spending for 2018/19. The HRA Business Plan has projected a £804,000 deficit for 2018/19 so rents will need to increase to meet this.

A copy the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estimates for 2018/19 was available at the meeting and additional paper copies are available from the Housing Development Team or can be viewed on the Council's website.

Peter outlined proposed rent options that he wanted the meeting to consider and come to an agreement on what options should then be put out to a full public survey ahead of the Council meeting in February where the rent level will be finalised.

The main options were outlined as,

Option 1- 2% rent rise to retain current level of service, planned maintenance works, new build and existing tenant priority budget

Option 2 – 2.5% rent rise which includes Option 1 plus additional electrical testing and safety work across West Dunbartonshire

Option 3 – 3% rent rise which includes Option 1 and 2 plus an enhanced Planned Maintenance programme

Option4 – 0% rent increase which would result in a minimum £800,000 cut in services to tenants.

Peter made the point that affordability is an issue and want to keep rents as low as possible but Council also has a duty to future tenants so need to make sure there is sufficient investment in services to ensure they can be maintained.

None of the options are above the current inflation level and the impact on average rent levels for each option was outlined as;

	Option 1 2%	Option 2 2.5%	Option 3 3%	Option 4 current rent
2 apt	£72.61	72.97	73.33	71.19
3 apt	£75.40	75.77	76.14	73.92
4 apt	£80.09	80.48	80.88	78.52
5+ apt	£85.57	85.99	86.41	83.89

3. Open discussion

Question was asked if it was a coincidence that the HRA shortfall is close to the Tenant Priority Budget and Janice Rainey confirmed this was.

Janice also confirmed that the HRA surplus (£240,000) from 2016/17 had already been taken into account in the HRA Business Plan and automatically goes towards loan charges to help reduce them as this is consistent with the Council's current financial strategy.

In terms of the future housing investment, Craig Edward asked if the planned District Heating Systems had been included ? Peter advised that it was still an early stage but the Council is committed to doing a District Heating System for the Queens Quay development and to convert it for Dalmuir will be longer term so too early to include within any current Housing Investment Programme.

Craig Edward asked if the enhanced planned maintenance programme in Option 3 (3% increase) could be explained in more detail within any consultative material and on the website this was agreed. It was further clarified that all information from the public meeting would be made available on the Council's website or be available from the Housing Development Team.

A number of tenants raised concerns with the inclusion of the rent freeze option (Option 4), the consensus view was that this may seem attractive to many but could mean a loss of services to tenants and have implications for future year rent increases. **While the tenant representatives in attendance stopped short of requesting that it was removed they did however request that the potential impacts of the Option be fully assessed prior to including the option in any consultative process.**

Jim Hendry asked if there was any money coming from Scottish Government to help pay for the Enhanced Fire Safety standard and Peter confirmed that he had written to the Housing Minister (Kevin Stewart) who has said 'no' but that the Housing Convenor will be taking it up with the Minister again. Peter agreed to share with the WDTR0 the response from Kevin Stewart.

Billy Neeson asked if the payment of loan charges was having any impact and Janice Rainey confirmed that it was – she also confirmed that there was some older debt at a higher interest rate but a lot of the newer debt was at more attractive rates including that for new build borrowing, which also has the added benefit of receiving rental income which has a net positive impact on the HRA.

Agreed actions :

- The options would include information on what the increase on average rent would be and specify that inflation was 3% to help tenants make informed votes.
- Option 4 would be fully assessed before final inclusion within the consultative process.
- WDTRO to consider if they want to use any of the Tenant Priority Budget to offset any increase in rent.
- Any other option to be considered for the vote could be emailed into housingnews@west-dunbarton.gov.uk Deadline for any other options was agreed to be considered is 4pm on Monday 4/12/17.

Councillor Docherty thanked everyone for their contributions and the meeting was closed.

