

**Subject:** Housing Revenue Account Budget 2014/15 - Extract from the Proceedings of the Housing Committee Meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014

**Date of Meeting:** 30 January 2014

**Report of:** Head of Law

**Contact Officer:** Name: Lisa Johnson Tel: 29-1228  
E-mail: lisa.johnson@brighton-hove.gov.uk

**Wards Affected:** All

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

***Action Required of the Policy & Resources Committee:***

To receive the item referred from the Housing Committee for approval and recommendation to Full Council:

**Recommendation:**

- (1) That the budget for 2014/15 as shown in Appendix 1 to the report according to the final year of rent convergence to be confirmed by the government in its rent restructuring guidance for 2014/15 be approved and recommended to Council;
- (2) That individual rent increases and decreases in line with rent restructuring principles as determined by the Government and detailed in paragraphs 3.12 to 3.16 in the report and according to the final year of rent convergence to be confirmed by government in its rent restructuring guidance for 2014/15 be approved;
- (3) That the changes to fees and charges as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report be approved; and
- (4) That the new service charges outlined in Appendix 2 to the report including the phased implementation of the new Intensive Housing Management charge be approved.

**HOUSING COMMITTEE**

**4.00 pm 15 January 2014  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Randall (Chair); Councillors Peltzer Dunn (Opposition Spokesperson), Barnett, Bowden, Duncan, Farrow, Fitch, Mears, Pissaridou and Rufus

**PART ONE****45. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2014/15**

- 45.1 The Committee considered the joint report of the Executive Director Environment Development and Housing and the Executive Director of Finance & Resources. The report presented the proposed budget for 2014/15 as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The report was presented by the Head of Financial Services.
- 45.2 Councillor Mears asked whether the budget proposals had been signed off by the Chief Finance Officer, and was advised they had.
- 45.3 Councillor Mears noted that both this report and item 48 on the agenda gave different figures for the number of Council properties. The Chair apologised and said the correct figure would be clarified.
- 45.4 Councillor Mears had a number of comments on the report. Paragraph 3.2 referred to a reduction in management costs, but Councillor Mears believed the management costs were actually going up. Paragraph 3.4 referred to the installation of Solar PV being installed and Councillor Mears said the current administration had previously failed to agree such installation which had cost tenants money. The proposed budget allowed for £0.145m being invested for legal, health and safety and human resources to support the delivery of service redesigns and to meet health and safety legislation and said that the proposals should have been considered by Area Panels. Paragraph 3.11 also stated that there would be a contribution of £0.145m to community groups working in and around council estates, and she was concerned that tenant's money was going to the General Fund. Councillor Mears referred to the EIA table and said that the information provided was very poor and, in her view, not acceptable. In particular she referred to page 40, and asked how it was known that there would be 'no disproportionate impact' from the Budget Proposals 4 and 6.
- 45.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn said that he fundamentally disagreed with the new service charges. In particular the charge to store mobility scooters was wrong and was discriminating against the disabled. The Authority should provide safe access to buildings and therefore it was wrong to charge for lighting. Charging for lift maintenance was wrong and it should not be an optional extra to use a lift if you lived on the top floor

of a high rise building. The Chair said that currently all tenants contributed to the cost of lift maintenance, and it was fairer that only those who used lifts contributed to their upkeep. The Chair said that meetings had been held with some residents from the High Rise Action Group (HRAG) who had accepted the charges were necessary. The Chair advised the Committee that the Authority would introduce a compensation scheme if the lifts weren't working. Councillor Mears said that she understood that the HRAG had not agreed to the new service charge, and that if they did have to pay they would expect a certain level of service. The Head of Income, Inclusion and Improvement (Housing), who had attended a meeting with two members of the HRAG and the Council's Principal Accountant, said that the two residents had agreed with the premise of the charge, and had said they felt that it wasn't equitable that some tenants paid for a service they didn't receive. She agreed they discussed tenants' service level expectations, and that they should hold the Authority to account to ensure they were achieved.

45.6 Councillor Barnett said there was sheltered housing in her ward, Churchill House, and they hadn't had a full time warden for a number of weeks. Officers advised that the Authority didn't have the resources to provide a full warden service, and the service redevelopment would be addressing that issue. A report would come to a future meeting of the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee.

45.7 **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That Housing Committee recommend that Policy & Resources Committee:
  - (a) Approves and recommends to Council the budget for 2014/15 as shown in Appendix 1 according to the final year of rent convergence to be confirmed by the government in its rent restructuring guidance for 2014/15.
  - (b) Approves individual rent increases and decreases in line with rent restructuring principles as determined by the Government and detailed in paragraphs 3.12 to 3.16 in the report and according to the final year of rent convergence to be confirmed by government in its rent restructuring guidance for 2014/15.
  - (c) Approves the changes to fees and charges as detailed in Appendix 2.
  - (d) Approves the new service charges outlined in Appendix 2 including the phased implementation of the new Intensive Housing Management charge.
- (2) That Housing Committee agree that officers should begin consultation with tenants on the implementation of new service charges in accordance with the tenancy agreement.