

## Appendix 3

### REPORT OF CONSULTATION ON RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES FOR 2019-2020

As part of Council's commitment to involving tenants and other service users in the management of housing services, Wolverhampton Homes was asked to lead on undertaking formal consultation with tenants and leaseholders for 2019-2020. We also repeated the successful Facebook live streaming, enabling those unable to attend a Get-Together event, to watch and subsequently comment. The consultation also included a presentation to Wolverhampton Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Association (WFTRA) and a further presentation to the managing agents delivering services on behalf of CWC.

During consultations, tenants and leaseholder were reminded that, when making decisions about future rent strategy, the Council needs to ensure that it accurately forecasts the cost of managing and maintaining the Council housing stock, including maintaining decent homes, delivering capital repairs or improvements, undertaking major estate renewal schemes, as well as achieving the maximum number of new build Council homes. This year, attention to fire safety compliance, High rise infra structure works and the need to prepare for the outcome of the Housing Green Paper featured more prominently.

#### Dates of consultations and venues

- 17 October 2018                      Wednesfield GT
- 25 October 2018                      Bilston GT – Including Facebook live.
- 5 November 2018                      Management agent meeting
- 19 November 2018                      Wolverhampton Federation of Tenants Association
- 12 December 2018                      Leaseholder Forum

The consultation by way of presentation took account of:

- Demonstrable transparency on cost and value for money.
- Highlighting Capital Programmes delivered through 2018-2019
- Final year of 1% rent reduction
- Service Charges
- Five year Capital expenditure plans
- The main topics within the Housing Green Paper
- Opportunity for audiences to feedback any observations or comments in relation to the presentation for consideration by the Council and subsequent inclusion in the paper to be presented to Cabinet 2019.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Get Togethers and wider consultations**

Areas of consultation or discussion - The government rent freeze policy ending March 2020 was explained and there was a discussion about Capital Programmes both in progress and planned within 5-year expenditure plans. Services charges were presented with little or no challenge. Exercise undertaken in relation to the topics contained within the Housing Green Paper, with each table presenting back thoughts and observations which were then included in Wolverhampton Homes response to Government.

### **Comments / Feedback Received**

Wednesfield GT – only point of significance related to Universal Credit and how it was felt to be unfair and placed tenants in financial hardship.

Bilston GT – Questions raised related to Heating Improvement charges – Gas and Electric. Elec storage heaters in place for many years, never serviced or replaced, and felt that charge had more than covered the original expense.

Rent should cover gas and electric heating systems and not be met by service charges.

Management Agents – no views expressed in terms of the detail within the presentation

WFTA – Universal credit and the challenges it places upon those in receipt, expressed dissatisfaction with the reliance some families now place upon foodbanks.

Heating Improvement Charges – the charge for Electric storage heaters was challenged as paid charge for number of years and probably paid for them many times over.

No concern about rent reduction but commented upon, subsequent rises in the years ahead and felt likely that the 5 years of rent reduction would soon be recouped in future rent setting calculations.

Observation relating to increasing Homelessness and the affordability of new affordable homes that aim to reduce homelessness in the City

Leaseholder Forum – scheduled for Wednesday 12 December 2018.

### **Conclusion**

The meetings were well attended, and tenants gave the impression they were generally pleased that there were no proposals to increase service charges, other than the previously consulted increase linked to the central heating service charge to achieve full recovery. Accepted and recognised that there are going to be some challenges ahead, particularly around Welfare Reform and Homelessness, whilst welcoming the support that Wolverhampton Homes and the Council were providing.

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