

**CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS**  
**7th January, 2013**

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); Councillors Goulty and Kaye (Policy Advisors).

**J52. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved: - That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended 2006 - information relates to finance and business affairs).

**J53. HOUSING RENT INCREASE 2013/14**

Consideration was given to a joint report of the Finance Manager (Neighbourhoods and Adult Services) and Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, setting out the proposed housing rent, new build rents, garage rent and communal facilities increases for 2013/14.

The report set out in detail the proposed housing rent, new build rents, garage rent and communal facilities increases for 2013/14. The rents had been calculated in accordance with the national rent setting regime requiring all authorities to use the prescribed formula and apply annual increases to actual rents to achieve the Formula Rent. The Government expected that all similar properties in the same local area would have similar rent levels even if owned by different landlords (rent convergence). Rotherham was expected to achieve rent convergence by 2015/16.

2013/14 was a 53 week year and, therefore, the average rent required amending to reflect this. The revised rent would be payable over 49 weeks thereby maintaining the policy of 4 weeks during the year when rent was not collected.

The building of 132 new Council properties had been completed in 2011/12. The funding model assumed that rents would be aligned to the Council's existing rent structure based on them having a higher property value than existing stock and already fully converged.

The report also contained at Appendix A the 2013/14 draft Housing Revenue Account budget for consideration.

In anticipation of a Self Regulation Select Commission Scrutiny Review recommendation on District Heating being accepted by Cabinet, the proposed changes for District Heating were contained within a separate report (Minute No. 57 refers).

It was noted that this report was to be considered by the Self Regulation Select Commission on 10<sup>th</sup> January and by the Cabinet at its meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2013.

Discussion ensued on the report with the following issues raised/highlighted:-

- Tenants on Direct Debit pay over 53 weeks and their charge was adjusted to incorporate the 4 weeks where rent was not normally collected
- Consideration should be given to renaming "new build" properties after a period of time e.g. "energy efficient properties"
- Garage Improvement Programme
- Discussions to be held with regard to cooking gas

Resolved:- That Cabinet be requested to recommend to Council:-

(1) An average rent increase of 6.19% based on the DCLG rent formula which results in an average weekly increase of £4.30 when collected over 48 weeks.

(2) An average rent of £98.39 on new build Council properties.

(3) In line with the Retail Price Index, Garage Rents, Communal Facility charges (including where there were applicable laundry charges and cooking gas charge) be increased by 2.60%.

(4) That the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2013/14 be noted.

#### **J54. DISTRICT HEATING SCHEME CHARGES 2013-14**

Consideration was given to a joint report of the Finance Manager (Neighbourhoods and Adult Services) and Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, setting out the proposed increases for District Heating for 2013/14.

In general, District Heating charges were made up of 2 components i.e. a weekly charge and a metered charge per kilowatt hour of heating used. It was proposed that there be no increase in the weekly charges (with the exception of St. Ann's) but an increase in kilowatt hour charges to more accurately reflect true costs.

Pooled metered schemes had a weekly pre-payment flat rate charge collected through the rent system applied to all properties dependant upon the size of the property. The actual costs of each property's heating was determined by meter readings of the amount of kilowatt hours of heating actually used. St. Ann's was added to the pooled scheme in 2011/12 and agreed to bring their charges into line with the other pooled metered schemes over a 3 year period, 2013-14 being the final year.

Resolved:- That Cabinet be requested to recommend to Council:-

(1) That weekly district heating charges be not increased with the exception of St. Ann's which will follow the formula agreed in 2010/11.

(2) That the various proposed increases to the kilowatt hour charges, as outlined in the report submitted, be approved as a means of achieving full cost recovery.

(3) That to assist tenants, increases in the kilowatt hour charge be phased over a period of up to 5 years.

**J55. STAGE 3 COMPLAINT PANEL**

It was noted that a Complaints Panel meeting had been held on 20th December, 2012, comprising Councillors Atkin (in the Chair), Beaumont and Ellis. The Panel heard a complaint received from Mr. M.A.S. relating alleged errors made by the Licensing Section which had a detrimental effect on his business.

The Hearing had ended with the agreement of both parties without a resolution being reached. The Panel decided the Council Complaints Procedure had been exhausted in terms of this particular complaint. The complainant was to pursue the matter by other means.

Resolved: - That the report be noted.