

## ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet **Date:** 27 July 2010  
**Subject:** Housing Portfolio **Item:** 6(e)  
**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor David Stallan

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### **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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### **New Licence Conditions for Park Home Sites**

At its meeting on 12 July 2010, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a call-in of a decision of the Cabinet to issue new licence conditions, based on Model Conditions produced by Communities and Local Government, for all of the Park Home (Mobile Home) Sites in the District.

Around 220 park home residents attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, and 6 lead petitioners addressed the meeting.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to refer the matter back to the Cabinet on 10 September 2010, but also agreed my suggestion that, in the meantime, the Housing Scrutiny Panel be asked to consider the proposed new licence conditions and to make recommendations to the Cabinet on any changes to the proposed conditions that it considers appropriate.

### **National Comparison of Tenant Satisfaction Levels**

Communities and Local Government (CLG) has recently published a national comparison of all the tenant satisfaction results for 2008. It provides details of the satisfaction levels, in relation to the 9 main subject areas surveyed, for all 182 stock-retaining councils in England.

For 8 of the 9 subject areas, the Council was within the top 25% of all council landlords. For 5 of the subject areas, the Council was within the top 15% of councils (with 3 within the top 6%).

The Council's overall satisfaction levels, across the 9 subject areas, was within the top 10% of all councils

The detailed results of the comparisons were reported in a recent issue of the Council Bulletin, and will be considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.

## **Housing Service Standards, Housing Charter and “Local Offer to Tenants”**

At its meeting on 29 July 2010, the Housing Scrutiny Panel will be considering a report on the Housing Directorate’s performance against the 106 Housing Service Standards, and considering proposed changes, additions and deletions to the Service Standards in the light of that performance and current circumstances, as well as undertaking a review of the Housing Charter.

In April 2010, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) introduced its new Housing Regulatory Framework. In addition to setting out National Standards, with which the Council must comply, the Regulatory Framework also requires Registered Providers of Housing (including the Council) to consult with tenants and publish, by April 2011, a “Local Offer”, setting out the service that tenants can expect, and explain how the Council will meet the TSA’s National Standards.

The nature of the Local Offer is very much left to local discretion but, crucially, must be based on what the Council’s tenants expect.

At its meeting to be held on 20 July 2010, the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation will be considering the methodology to be adopted for considering and formulating the Local Offer.

It has been suggested to the Federation that the Federation forms a small Local Offer Sub-Group to work with senior housing officers to discuss and develop the Local Offer, and to put forward, in the first instance, a draft Local Offer to the Federation and myself for consideration.

It has also been suggested that, once the draft Offer has been agreed by the Federation and myself, all the Council’s tenants be consulted on the Local Offer - through the “Housing News” – with an invitation to comment on the Draft Local Offer, before the final Local Offer is agreed before the deadline of 1 April 2011.

## **Proposed Reduction of Heating Charges - Ninefields, Waltham Abbey**

The communal heating systems in many of the Council-owned blocks of flats on the Ninefields Estate still date from the 1960’s and have now become costly to run. As a result, in 2010/11 the Council has had to make a £22.19 per week heating charge to tenants and leaseholders just to cover costs, a charge that is clearly disproportionate for a one-bedroom flat.

The Council is undertaking a programme of work to replace the boilers in the 216 affected properties, but this work will not be fully completed until 2011/12. Until each occupier has their new system installed they will have to continue to pay these high charges which, in my view, is unreasonable. Therefore, I am proposing to the Cabinet on 19 July 2010 that the charge be reduced to £16.69 a week, which is the amount paid by these tenants and leaseholders in 2009/10, until they each have their own boiler installed. If the Cabinet agree this proposal, a request for a Supplementary Estimate of £57,000 will be reported to this meeting of the Council.

The ward members were consulted on this proposal; one response was received which supported the proposal.