

**EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 18TH JULY 2002**

**27 SINGLETREE SERVICE CHARGES**

Mrs Ledger, a resident of Singletree, addressed the Committee. She said that in September 2001 the final service charges bill for the preceding year had been sent to the leaseholders. They had been given no reason for the more than doubling of the charges. She said that leaseholders should be consulted if it was proposed to increase charges but this had not happened. She added that the leaseholders did not yet know the level of the service charges for 2001/02 nor for the current year. With delays in levying the charges, it was difficult for the leaseholders to organise their personal finances. She also referred to the 10% administration charge (about £2 per property per month). She expressed concern that leaseholders had received unsigned letters. She also expressed concern about the telephone manner of some of the housing employees but added that some employees provided a good service. The leaseholders did not consider that they were getting value for money: the outside doors had been painted once in 14 years, some repairs were shoddy and the outside lighting was not always working. She added that the leaseholders paid for gardening services (some grass cutting was undertaken) but the work was undertaken by residents. The caretaking service was less than that provided in the main house. She suggested that the current level of service charges was too high and should be reviewed. She said that leaseholders would prefer to know at the beginning of the financial year what the level of the service charges would be. She also said that contributions to the sinking fund were unfair if a leaseholder was in the property for a long time.

Mr Gibson said that he would consider the points raised.

The Vice-Chair (Councillor Turner) suggested that a review should be undertaken and should include: services provided, contributions to the sinking fund particularly for leaseholders who had lived in their properties for a long period, the fire systems and whether a lift had been needed. Mrs Ledger suggested that the terms of the lease should be considered and in particular the contributions to services.

Councillor Rundle expressed concern about the problems with communication for example the lack of/unhelpful communications and suggested that communication should be reviewed.

Mr Gibson said that the housing employees were under pressure with the volume of work but agreed that improvements in communication were needed. He said that the issues raised would be considered and included in the housing management work programme which would be discussed at the business planning stage.

Resolved: to ASK the Executive Board to review existing policies on charges and services provided to leaseholders and to ask the Strategic Director (Housing, Health and Community) to report on this to the Executive Board.