

EXECUTIVE

28th JANUARY 2002

ITEM A2: BUDGET CONSULTATION FEEDBACK AND FINAL BUDGET RECOMMENDATION

(i)(d) CONSULTATION WITH COUNCIL TENANTS ON PROPOSED RENT PLAN

- Following the Executive decision on 17th December 2001 to go out to wide-scale consultation with the Council's tenants on the long-term rent plan [set out in report FM 2001/02 No.103 (amended)], a four page leaflet explaining the proposals was sent to all c.7,200 current tenants shortly after Christmas.
- The leaflet incorporated a tear-off reply slip and 'freepost' return envelope for tenants to make comments.
- By the deadline return date of 21st January 2002 a total of 768 replies had been received, representing a return rate of 10.7%.
- In response to the three questions posed, the responses were as follows:

	<u>YES</u> ^{*1}	<u>NO</u> ^{*1}	<u>Response</u> ^{*2}
1. Do you understand what the Council is trying to do with rents?	88%	12%	100%
2. If so do you agree?	70%	30%	100%
3. Have you got enough information to decide?	79%	21%	100%

Notes:

*1: Expressed as a proportion of all those who answered this question.

*2: Number answering this question as a proportion of all respondents [768].

- The response return invited tenants to make further comments particularly where they had answered "No" to any of the questions above. A total of 221 chose to do so - 28% of all respondents. In the list below these responses have been grouped into the seven most popular (5%+) topic areas, covering 80% of all the answers received:

	<u>Response</u> ^{*1}
• Concern/Confusion over service charge proposals.	19%
• Do not understand/Require further information.	16%
• Concerned about future affordability of Council rents.	14%
• Object in principle to new regime.	12%
• Concerned about impact on HB eligibility.	07%
• Associate rise with LSVT proposals.	07%
• Presume this amounts to cross-subsidising 'bad' areas.	05%

*1: Expressed as a proportion of all those who made comments [221].

- In addition to the above a review of the minutes of those tenants'/residents' groups that have met since the proposals were published plus written representation from Carlisle & Rural Tenants' Federation indicates that the question of the proposed introduction of service charges is the most concerning to tenants.

Conclusions

- The overall response rate while disappointing is far from surprising when one considers the complexity of the issue being aired.
- To the extent that the results can be statistically relied upon, there was a clear indication of general support for the Council's overall proposals but also a perhaps understandable smaller element of concern and doubt.
- From the comments submitted the most common causes of concern to tenants appear to be those of the extension of service charges, affordability of rents and the need for more information.

Recommendations

1. That the Executive sticks with the content of the December 2001 rent plan proposal that it went out to consultation on.
2. That in response to the apparent concerns of tenants and tenants'/residents' groups on the questions of service charges, affordability and the need for more/better information, that the Council prepares further explanatory information and opportunities for consultation in the run-up to the 2003/04 rent-setting decision.

Tony Bramley
Director of Housing

21st January 2002