



## Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Department
Subject:	<b>Review of Rents and Allocation of Parks Houses</b>
Date:	15 March 2012
Reporting Officer: Ext.3400	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Jacqui Wilson, Business Support Manager Ken Anderson, Estates Surveyor

1	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>Parks houses are residential properties located on land for which the Parks and Leisure Department have operational responsibility. Parks and Leisure look after allocation of the dwellings to Council employees and have management responsibility for the properties. Property and Projects Department provide advice in relation to reviews of rents and content of Tenancy Agreements. The nature of the Tenancy Agreements for these houses provides less protection for occupiers than equivalent Housing Executive or private rented sector lettings. See 'Legal Basis' set out in Appendix 1 attached.</p> <p>This report sets out proposed revised rents on six properties. A seventh property (at Beechvale) is vacant and awaiting repairs and is not included in the present round. A rent assessment in respect of the Beechvale property will be provided to a future meeting of Committee.</p> <p>The proposed rents contained in this current report will be implemented once approved by full Council.</p>

2	<p><b>Key Issues</b></p>
	<p>Since 1991 Parks Houses rents have been calculated using the Northern Housing Executive Rents Point Scheme. Points are allocated based on the number of rooms and facilities and have then been further adjusted by the Estate Management Unit to take into account the following factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Location of the dwelling</li> <li>2. Access and surrounding environment</li> <li>3. Condition of the dwelling</li> <li>4. Security duty</li> <li>5. Security of tenure</li> </ol> <p><u>Rental Adjustment</u></p> <p>Due to the unique situation of many of the Parks Houses it is considered appropriate to make adjustments for the factors listed above. The rents are adjusted where houses are situated in cemeteries or more out of the way locations. Adjustment is also made where the occupier has a duty, under the tenancy agreement, to investigate any disturbance or unlawful entry occurring at anytime on the adjoining Council property, and report the same immediately to the police. In many cases the tenant will also have the responsibility outside normal park opening hours (e.g. at night) to open, close and lock gates in order to gain access to, or egress from, the dwelling. Adjustments are also made for the absence of parking arrangements where appropriate.</p> <p>Each time rents on these properties are reviewed the condition of each dwelling is considered and account taken of any renovations, improvements as well as any need for repairs.</p> <p><u>Allocation of property to staff</u></p> <p>A number of criteria are applied to allocate the houses including: that the individual must be permanently employed by Belfast City Council and has to be bound by a tenancy agreement which was linked to their continuing employment. The tenancy agreement requires the individual to take on certain responsibilities specific to the property but in general they pertain to opening and closing gates, reporting incidents of ASB to the police and some minor maintenance of the gardens.</p> <p>The property at Stranmillis was previously trawled for an expression of interest to let within the Council staff. The house was allocated to Amanda Haveron 2005 however this was not formally reported to committee at that time.</p>

### Summary of each Property

The attached table (Appendix 2) provides information of the nature of each property as well as the existing and proposed rent. A summary of existing and proposed rents is also provided below for Committee's consideration.

Over the two year period since the last review, Housing Executive rents have risen by approximately 10.6%. While the proposed revised rents take account of this increase the allowances applied to each house in terms of location and condition have also been reviewed. The resultant increased rents while remaining relatively modest, and in some cases nil increases are considered to reflect the relative advantages and disadvantages of their sites, surrounding locations and tenancy constraints.

## **3 Resource Implications**

### **Financial**

Subject to all the dwellings being let for the entire year, the proposed revised rents would increase the total annual rental income from the dwellings referred to in this report, from the current £17,160 to £17,784 per annum. (Figures based on six properties excluding the Beechvale property referred to earlier in this report).

Address	Existing Weekly Rent	Proposed Weekly Rent	Equivalent Monthly Proposed Rent Including Rates
743 Upper Newtownards Road	£48	£48	£276
511 Falls Road	£53	£56	£327
62 Antrim Road	£74	£78	£456
125 Ballygowan Road	£40	£45	£253
2a Stranmillis Road	£60	£60	£339
2 Park Road, Mallusk	£55	£55	£291

### Human Resources

No additional human resources required.

### Asset and Other Implications

Ensures appropriate rental levels for dwellings.

## **5. Recommendations**

Committee is recommended to approve the revised rents set out in the body of this report, subject to further approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 46 (viii) (n). Committee is asked to agree the allocation of 2a Stranmillis Road as detailed above subject to tenancy agreements and the rental rates as agreed previously.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	Director of Parks and Leisure to liaise with Director of Property and Projects with a view to bringing this matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for ratification at the earliest opportunity.

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	None

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents attached</b>
	Appendix One - Legal Basis Appendix Two - Summary of Each Property