

Statement: CS05.01

Cabinet – 3 February 2021

Re: Agenda item 5: Housing Revenue Account Budget Proposals 2021-2022

Statement submitted by: Councillor Jo Sergeant

(In the Budget Report considered on 26th January) Section 11.3 of the Mayor's Recommendations states:

'Although the Rent Policy and Rent Standard allows Local Authorities to increase rents by up to CPI plus 1% for 2021/22, considering the current economic conditions, the impact of pandemic and the hardship suffered by people in need, it is proposed that the Council will freeze rents for existing tenants for the coming year, effective from April 2021. Therefore, to maintain the existing level of service this will require an accelerated use of HRA reserve and an increase in borrowing requirement from 2024/25 onwards.'

We need more information about how this accelerated use of the HRA reserve and, what could be argued as the unsustainable practice of borrowing against future budgets, will work in practice and their longer term consequences.

By not implementing this small increase in rent (that will not impact anyone who has applied for CT reduction as a result of the Pandemic), we lose the increase in funding from the housing benefit/Universal Credit that many of our tenants use to pay their rent.

I would like to see the evidence that our council house-building and maintenance programmes will not be harmed by the loss of funding, due what is effectively a cut in rental income.

I have many residents in my ward waiting to be housed/rehoused. There are 13,000 Bristol families waiting for a decent home. Those who are not currently council tenants pay more rent to private landlords and won't get the benefit of a rent freeze. I hope this is being taken into account.

Councillor Jo Sergeant
Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston Ward
(Includes Shirehampton, Coombe Dingle & Upper Sea Mills)