



'Move out if you can't afford it'

Picture: RUVAN BOSHOFF

SQUABBLE IN THE SUBURBS: Sandi Britz is a Llandudno resident who opposes the levy increase to pay for the hi-tech security plan and says she was verbally abused at a town meeting called to discuss it

Some Llandudno folk say the rich are squeezing them out with security levy

BOBBY JORDAN

THE problem with paradise is moral compass," fumed Glyn Ruck, one of several objectors to a levy — approved this week by the City of Cape Town — which will add up to R2 000 to rates bills that average around R6 000.

That's according to a group of residents of Llandudno, on Cape Town's Atlantic seaboard, where soaring property prices and rates bills have sparked an ugly class war between the well-off and the extremely well-off.

Whereas some longtime residents claim to be held hostage by spiralling costs, others say those who can't afford to live there should leave.

Matters have come to a head over a plan to raise millions by a special levy for a hi-tech security upgrade involving thermal cameras and fingerprint checks for contract workers entering the area.

A meeting at the village primary school, armed into a shouting match, highlighting divisions in the once-close-knit community. Fervid for their laid-back lifestyle of beach strolls and sunbathers, fencing residents now trade threats and

insults on social media.

"The community has lost its moral compass," fumed Glyn Ruck, one of several objectors to a levy — approved this week by the City of Cape Town — which will add up to R2 000 to rates bills that average around R6 000.

Property prices in Llandudno

The process gives those with valuable properties more votes

can reach R40-million, and the area's 316 residential properties have a combined value of more than R4-billion.

"The pensioners and pioneers of Llandudno that built this place into the desirable location it is today are being shoved out," Ruck said.

Although most support the setting up of a special rating area in order to raise the additional funds to bolster secu-

rity, objectors feel it was done under false pretences — with no mention of the minimum 400% increase in the levy.

As with normal rates, the more expensive the property, the more special levy you pay. The problem for some residents, particularly the elderly, is that their income has not kept pace with property price increases.

Objectors are also furious about the SRA voting process, which gives those with more valuable properties more votes — one vote per R5-million of property value — on issues related to neighbourhood affairs.

In effect, some residents get one vote whereas others have as many as seven or eight. "It means those with expensive houses and excessive votes can decide what I have to pay," said one longtime resident who wished to remain anonymous.

Community tensions erupted at an April meeting where the security plan was put to the vote. Those objecting to the plan were told to "do without your DSTV" and "move out if you can't

Welcome to Fortress Llandudno



An e-mail circulated to Llandudno residents earlier this year outlined the security plan:

- Thermal cameras surrounding Llandudno;
- A tactical team of two trained armed officers on 24-hour patrol;
- A dedicated trained tracker dog with each team on 24-hour patrol;
- Fingerprinting of all contractors on building sites to check for criminal records; and
- A 24-hour security guard at Llandudno's only entrance.

afford it". Heated exchanges prompted the chairman to end the debate.

In a letter to the City of Cape Town, objectors complained that a pro-SRA member also used "swart gear" (black dan-

dozing the security plan"

In a letter to the city council, Britz said: "There is a serious lack of transparency with the SRA's current security proposal and, when questioned, we are attacked and bullied and shouted down. Why? Is there something to hide?"

Llandudno property owners include property developer Jody Ahrlich. "Sun King, Sol Kenner owes a large chunk of the adjoining mountainside.

But proponents of the SRA insist the new levy is not only fair but has the support of most residents. They say the voting process is mandated by a bylaw that gives effect to numerous SRAs across the city — 39 at the last count.

The system allows municipal wards to set up their own non-profit organisation to raise funds to be used exclusively for their neighbourhood, unlike normal rates, which are pooled and used mainly to uplift underprivileged areas.

Llandudno councillor Rob Quintas confirmed that the new Llandudno SRA business plan was passed at a council meeting this week, giving effect to the security upgrade.

"It wasn't necessarily a popular decision by the SRA man-

agement structure," he said.

SRA chairwoman Kiki Bond-Smith said that to allow residents to see the numbers behind the valuation-based SRA voting system, an additional one-to-one peer-to-peer poll was agreed to — and produced a near-identical result.

Bond-Smith denied any animosity towards residents concerned about the financial zone.

The need for a 'militarised zone' questioned in a low-crime area

On the contrary, the SRA board had asked the city council to see if any financial relief mechanisms were possible.

"What has emerged during this process is that we have many residents, especially longtime residents of Llandudno, as a result of significant rates increases over the last number of years, causing many residents to fear that they will be taxed out of their homes."

"This to us is the real challenge facing our community," Bond-Smith said.

Another bone of contention is the statistics, with objectors questioning the need for a "militarised zone" when the area has one of the country's lowest crime rates.

Their point, to Crime Watch statistics, showing just a handful of break-ins this year.

But SRA directors insist the need for action. A foreigner who was held hostage in their home earlier this year, causing widespread fears, said fingerprint security was nothing new, they had it at a security estate in the road — and didn't bother them.

A work-team manager said crime appeared to have increased, and one of his clients had been robbed five times. SRA But objectors said the SRA was using scare tactics to justify the rate increases.

"This whole [levy] jump is uncalculated — we don't live in a high crime area," said Britz. "I bought here because I wanted to be close to nature. Now you have people being pushed out of their homes because rich people are taking over."

journalists@times.co.za