

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE**
Thursday, 25 September 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub
(Community and Children's Services) Committee held at Committee Rooms, West
Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 25 September 2014 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Virginia Rounding (Chairman)
Revd Dr Martin Dudley (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Billy Dove
Alderman David Graves
Ann Holmes
Deputy Henry Jones
Gareth Moore
Dhruv Patel
Adam Richardson
Deputy John Barker

Officers:

Philippa Sewell	Town Clerk's Department
James Goodsell	Town Clerk's Department
Mark Jarvis	Chamberlain's Department
Chris Keesing	Chamberlain's Department
Sam Cook	Remembrancer's Department
Ade Adetosoye	Director of Community & Children's Services
Jacque Campbell	Community & Children's Services
Paul Jackson	Community & Children's Services
Jacqueline Whitmore	Community & Children's Services

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Deputy the Revd Stephen Haines and Elizabeth Rogula.

2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

Mr Gareth Moore declared an interest in housing matters as a tenant of Golden Lane Estate.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 10 July 2014 be approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Emergency Access to Tower Blocks

Officers reported that the Health and Safety Manager had retired unexpectedly and, although work was still progressing, the anticipated report would be deferred until January 2015.

4. **HOUSING & HEALTH - A REPORT ON HEALTH-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND PLANS IN THE CITY'S SOCIAL HOUSING ESTATES**

The Sub Committee considered the report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which gave an overview of how good quality and well run social housing impacted health outcomes for local communities (e.g. access to green spaces, security, and reducing isolation), and received a presentation highlighting some examples of how the Corporation's housing estates and staff were supporting the health and wellbeing of city tenants (e.g. achieving above Decent Homes standard, prioritising window replacement schemes, and facilitating strong community links).

In response to Members' questions, officers advised that relationships with neighbouring authorities were very good, resulting in joined up care for City residents in other boroughs.

RESOLVED – That:

- (a) The report be noted; and
- (b) Existing work and future opportunities undertaken in the City's estates be endorsed.

5. **SMOKEFREE CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS**

The Sub Committee considered the report of the Director of Community and Children's Services regarding the proposal to implement voluntary no smoking codes within children's playgrounds, for a trial period of six months, in four identified areas in the City: Middlesex Street Estate, Tower Hill Gardens, Portsoken Street and West Smithfield Rotunda Garden.

Officers informed Members that the key aim of smokefree children's playgrounds was to deter children and young people from smoking, but would also reduce child exposure to smoking, decrease cigarette litter, and reduce the risk of children putting toxic cigarette ends into their mouths. Members noted that this report had been approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board, Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee and the Community & Children's Services Committee, and that a consultation exercise had been carried out with the public and Friends of City Gardens, which evidenced support for this initiative.

In response to a query regarding the 'voluntary no smoking zones', Members were informed that there would be no legal enforcement, though through raising awareness and helping to facilitate conversations about the appropriateness of smoking in certain areas, it was hoped attitudes would change over time. Penalties for littering could be enforced, and officers undertook to bring this to the attention of Port Health. The Deputy Chairman advised that smoking was officially in decline, according to the recent Public Health England conference, and particular progress had been seen in reducing the level of smoking for under 15 years olds.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted, and officers speak with Port Health concerning penalties for littering.

6. **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014**

The Sub Committee considered the report of the Remembrancer regarding provisions in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which reformed the powers available to local authorities, the police and other bodies to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Members noted that the main change of relevance to housing was the strengthening of the ability of local authority landlords to recover possession of dwellings from tenants who have been involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, and that the relevant provisions would come into effect in autumn 2014. Members discussed the new provisions, and noted that statutory guidance had been provided which would be important during the drafting of a Corporate Policy setting out how the legislation would be applied. This would be reported to the Sub Committee for decision.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. **SOCIAL HOUSING TENANCY FRAUD, ANTI-FRAUD & PROSECUTION POLICY**

Members received a report of the Chamberlain concerning the development of a Social Housing Tenancy Anti-Fraud & Prosecution Policy, which set out the Corporation's response to tackling social housing fraud.

RESOLVED – That the Community and Children's Services Committee be recommended to approve the Social Housing Tenancy Fraud – Anti-Fraud & Prosecution Policy and the proposed delegation to officers to authorise criminal proceedings where social housing tenancy fraud is identified.

8. **REDUCTION IN EXTERNAL FUNDING TO ALMSHOUSES RESIDENTS**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services regarding a reduction in external funding to Almshouses residents. Members queried how this would be managed if more people needed help in the future and officers advised that Comptroller's had suggested eligibility be reviewed.

RESOLVED – That:

- (a) A discretionary payment to the five residents affected by the financial changes be approved for a period of three years, as set out in paragraph 10 of the report; and
- (b) The Director of Community and Children's Services be asked to carry out a review of the eligibility criteria for the Almshouses and report back to the Sub Committee in November 2014.

9. **CITY OF LONDON ALMSHOUSES UPDATE**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services providing an update on the City of London Almshouses. Members were given a list of hamper ingredients from past years and discussed the best option for the future. Members noted that a significant amount of staff time was taken up when residents were given personalised hampers, and gift vouchers would need to be declared as taxable income. In response to a Member's

query, officers confirmed that separate ready-made hampers were available for vegan, gluten free or diabetic diets.

RESOLVED – That:

- (a) The report be noted; and
- (b) Option A, to continue with traditional hampers purchased via a specialist hamper supplier, be approved.

10. REVIEW OF HOUSING SERVICE'S COMPLAINTS POLICY

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services regarding the Complaints Policy for Housing Services. In response to a Member's question, officers undertook to clarify that complaints must be made within 6 months of the event in question.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and the draft Complaints Policy & Procedure be agreed in principle.

11. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services regarding the findings of Phase 1 of the sheltered housing review and options for further action, including:

- A new focus on the building of 'lifetime' homes as part of the development programme;
- A move to include housing suitable for older people on all estates wherever possible; and
- Changes in how we deliver housing support and ensure that older people are not socially isolated.

Members agreed that Community and Children's Services Committee Members should be encouraged to go on more visits to the sheltered housing developments and estates.

RESOLVED – That:

- (a) A recommendation be made to the Community & Children's Services Committee that the future strategy should be to provide lifetime homes, suitable for older people, on every estate as far as possible;
- (b) Officers be authorised to commission detailed options appraisals for each of the City's existing sheltered housing schemes which take into account the need to fund the development of lifetime homes; and
- (c) A paper identifying opportunities for building lifetime homes on existing estates be brought to this Sub Committee early in 2015.

12. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE

In response to a Member's question concerning the Sumner Building, Officers reported that discussions were ongoing with residents and the local community, and the development was in an early stage.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman informed Members that a request had come via Streets and Walkways Sub Committee for clarification around the delay of the removal of car parking ramps on the Middlesex Street Estate. The Assistant Director,

Housing & Neighbourhoods advised Members that this was being managed by the Department of the Built Environment (DBE) and an issue had arisen at the end of July. Community and Children's Services (CCS) had been informed of this on 31 July, though it remained unclear what that issue had been. CCS sent out a letter on 1 August informing residents of the delay, and work continued with DBE and the Chamberlain's department to address the problem. Confirmation was received by CCS on 25 August that work could recommence, and a letter was sent to residents the subsequent day giving a new start day for the work. Within days of the second letter the DBE issued a detailed newsletter to residents.

The Director of Community and Children's Services confirmed these events, and assured Members of officers' commitment to transparency of information. Members thanked officers for their report and endorsed the actions taken by the Housing officers to communicate with residents on this matter. They encouraged Corporation Departments to work closely together in future to enable Housing officers to inform residents of matters affecting them as early as possible.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

Item	Paragraph
15	3
16	2
17	-

15. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2014 be approved as a correct record.

16. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE

There was one non-public question.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE SUB COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 12.58 pm

Chairman

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