

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE**

Monday, 24 September 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Randall Anderson (Deputy Chairman)
John Fletcher (Chairman)
Mary Durcan
Marianne Fredericks
Barbara Newman
Susan Pearson
William Pimlott
Peter Bennett

Officers:

Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains
Mona Lewis	- Chamberlain's (Procurement
Jacquie Campbell	- Community and Children's Services
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Marcus Roberts	- Community and Children's Services
Eileen Cunningham	- Community and Children's Services
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks
Gregory Moore	- Town Clerks

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dhruv Patel and Alderman David Graves.

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

The following Members, who are also residents of the Barbican Estate, had not been granted dispensations to speak or vote in respect of today's item of urgent business in respect of the Housing Governance Review:

- Randall Anderson
- Mary Durcan
- Barbara Newman

Susan Pearson had not been granted a dispensation to speak or vote in respect of Golden Lane Reports at items 5, 12 and 14. Mr William Pimlott would therefore speak for Mrs Pearson on these items.

Mrs Pearson expressed her dissatisfaction at this decision as, being the only Golden Lane resident Member of the Sub Committee, she felt that her constituents would be disenfranchised.

William Pimlott, also a Barbican Resident, did not feel that he had a disclosable pecuniary interest as the legislation was silent in respect of his circumstances but he would not be speaking or voting on the Housing Governance Review report.

The Town Clerk explained the rationale behind the above decision as follows:

After consultation with the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Standards Committee, the Town Clerk rejected the request for a dispensation, under urgency provisions, to speak in connection with the Housing Governance Review at the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee.

At its meeting on Monday 10/9, the Dispensations Sub (Standards) Committee considered a number of dispensation requests, the vast majority of which related to the Housing Governance Review. In summary, having taken account of all relevant matters, Members considered that applications to speak at the Barbican Residential Committee on the Housing Governance Review should be granted in view of the strong resident representation included in that Committee's Constitution, the requirement for 'local democracy to be seen to be being done' on such a fundamental issue, and also as the final decision on the review itself would not rest with that Committee.

Members were not persuaded that requests to speak at other committees on the Housing Governance Review made as strong a case and considered that these should be rejected. The Sub Committee also noted that Members, with a disclosable pecuniary interest, could communicate their views on a matter to a Committee or Chairman in writing, or request an alternate Member of that Committee to put forward their views.

Members noted that the Policy & Resources Committee expressed a desire to consult with, and receive the views of, those Committees which would be affected by any change. Potential options included the disbandment of the Housing Sub Committee, as it currently exists. However, because only half the Members of the Sub-Committee were allowed to speak on this, a proper and complete view could not be formulated by the Sub-Committee, on its own future, for a report to Policy and Resources. The Chairman therefore intended to seek the permission of the Chairman (of the Policy and Resources Committee) to address the Committee when they took the decision on Housing Governance; reflecting the views of those Members who were not granted a dispensation to speak at today's meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee.

The Chairman expressed his concern at what he perceived to be an over-zealous interpretation of the Localism Act, unique to the City Corporation, resulting in only half of the Members of the Committee being able to speak, and potentially disenfranchising residents.

Members strongly endorsed this view and asked for their comments to go on record and for it to be RESOLVED, that – these views be reported to the next meeting of the Standards Committee

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 23rd July 2018 be approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

- Officers had checked with the City Solicitor in respect of making the Anti-Social Behaviour procedure visible on the Internet. The officer advised that, in the interests of transparency for both officers and residents, a summary would be available and he agreed to share the City Solicitor's advice with Members.
- The Chairman had attended 2 Estate walkabouts, both during the day, with a 3rd planned for this Wednesday, 26th September at 10 am. Given the low turnout at the first 2 walkabouts, the Chairman had suggested holding them at 6pm, when residents were likely to be available, and this would be fed into the Estate Review.

4. **HOUSING MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an update on the Major Works Programme. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- In respect of the window works, the Assistant Director had met with City Procurement to discuss splitting the works, given the complexities at Golden Lane. By November, Members would be advised of the estimated programme; which would show some projects being bought forward.
- The tender process included a quality component in respect of successful delivery of previous projects and there was provision, within the Procurement Regulations, to extend contracts for competent contractors.
- The experiences of other boroughs would be researched as part of the new framework.
- Portable appliance testing was a legal requirement in care homes only but the City Corporation had carried them out as a matter of course, post Grenfell. Unsafe appliances were condemned and marked; 'dangerous'.

do not use' but the City Corporation were not able to remove them. Officers worked with residents to source replacements at the best rates and they had been able to assist some vulnerable clients. If an issue came to light with a particular make or model of appliance, this would be shared with the Fire Brigade.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

5. **2017/18 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT OUTTURN REPORT**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the 2017/18 Housing Revenue Account Outturn Report. Members noted that the overspend on reactive repair and maintenance works would reduce as part of the cyclical works programme and stock condition survey. The Chamberlain offered to provide a breakdown of the income streams.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

6. **ESTATE PARKING & STORAGE SHEDS POLICY**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Estate Parking and Storage Sheds Policy. Members noted that officers were looking into the possibility of renewing parking permits annually, along with checking of documents. Management of storage would also be enhanced to manage hazardous substances.

Members asked for further information setting out the different charges across the estates, take up rates, the number of empty spaces, the number of disabled spaces available close by and other elements charged for; i.e. cleaning and any sources for recouping funding.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The Estate Parking & Storage Sheds Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved
2. The current arrangements for disabled parking charges in paragraph 9 of the report be subject to a further detailed report, as set out above.

7. **LETTINGS AND TRANSFERS POLICY**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Lettings and Transfer Policy. Members suggested that the Policy document should include links to legislation and noted the enhanced communications plan in respect of repairs.

RESOLVED, that – the Lettings & Transfers Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

8. **DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Domestic Abuse Policy, which was housing and

safeguarding specific and sought to protect tenants fleeing domestic abuse. Members noted that the Policy document would include links to the legislation and provide enhanced information, with the assurance of confidentiality. Given the importance of staff awareness, Members noted that they would receive a briefing before a future meeting on the Housing Professional Training Programme which has been in place for some years. Members were reminded that they are welcome to attend appropriate staff training sessions.

RESOLVED, that - the Domestic Abuse Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

9. TENANCY VISITS PROGRAMME

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the tenancy visits programme. Members were pleased to note the success of the programme with 432 successful visits so far (25%) and tenant confidence rising with the number of completed visits. Follow up visits had been arranged where necessary. Members asked for their thanks to the Chamberlain to go on record for his support in this project.

In response to a question, Members noted that staff were very experienced in assisting with hoarding and worked with specialists and environmental health colleagues where necessary. Members were pleased to note this outcome as the visits were helping to raise awareness of a potentially serious condition which had mental and physical health implications.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

10. FILMING AND PHOTOGRAPHY ON ESTATES POLICY

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Filming and Photography on Estates Policy.

Members noted that contact numbers were available on the website in the event of any concerns about disruptions, however, officers were likely to reject requests that might result in largescale disruptions. Officers agreed to review income from the filming projects, which goes into the HRA for the benefit of all the City's social housing estates, and whether it might be used to contribute to community centres, for example.

RESOLVED, that the Filming and Photography on Estates Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

11. HOUSING STRATEGY

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the draft Housing Strategy and made the following suggestions:

- Include a reference to the cost of building in central London.
- Provide more narrative around Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and debt management.
- Include the number of vacant units and the speed of re-letting.

RESOLVED, that -

- The report be noted.
- The consultation draft of a new Housing Strategy be approved.

12. REWIRE THE LANDLORD'S ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AT SOUTHWARK ESTATE (PARTIAL) AND THE SYDENHAM HILL ESTATE

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the electricity supply at Southwark Estate. Whilst Members accepted that this and other 'Project Gateway' reports need to be presented to the Projects Sub Committee before the spending Committee, they asked why there had been a considerable delay in this case.

RESOLVED, that:

1. Approval be given for the necessary repairs to Lammas Green (flats) and Pakeman House communal electricity supplies are removed from this project and undertaken instead under response repairs using the minor works framework.
2. Otto Close communal electrics be removed from this project and instead inspected under the Phase Four Electrical contract;
3. Approval be given for Middlesex Street Estate to be included within this project.
4. The emergency repairs already carried out at Middlesex Street be noted.
5. A approval be given to seek two separate tenders for works at Middlesex Street as follows:
 - i) Works that do not require section 20 Long Leasehold consultation at an estimated cost of £393,750 including staff costs and fees;
 - ii) Works which require section 20 Long Leasehold consultation at estimated cost of £337,500 including staff costs and fees.
6. Estimated staff costs of £3,000 and estimated fees of £13,000 (2% of works costs) are approved to develop the specification and seek procurement;
7. The Project be renamed Middlesex Street Non-Emergency Electrical Works.

13. REFURBISHMENT WORKS TO LIFTS ON THE GOLDEN LANE ESTATE, SOUTHWARK ESTATE (COLLINSON COURT) AND WILLIAM BLAKE ESTATE (LYNTON MANSIONS & ST JAMES MANSIONS)

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of refurbishment works to lifts, which had also been presented to the Projects Sub Committee. A member noted that the chairman of the Projects Sub Committee had written to commend the excellent work on the project. The Committee also praised the good result. Members asked if future reports could include any outcomes from the Projects Sub Committee.

RESOLVED, that - the lessons learnt be noted and the project be closed.

14. DECENT HOMES UPGRADE WORKS TO AVONDALE SQUARE ESTATE, HOLLOWAY ESTATE AND WILLIAM BLAKE ESTATE.

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the decent homes upgrade works.

RESOLVED, that - the lessons learnt be noted and the project be closed.

15. FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of fire safety measures in place post Grenfell. Members noted that the Waking Watch at Great Arthur House was being phased out to evenings and weekends and smoke alarms had been de-sensitised to detect heat, and not smoke, which was more likely to result in false alarms. Officers were confident that, in reducing the number of false alarms, residents would be more co-operative in the event of evacuations.

Members noted that, in common with other authorities, the estate office was not responsible for evacuations. Once the Fire Brigade has attended, they advised residents on staying put, evacuation and returning.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

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

There were no questions.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman had agreed to admit the following item of urgent business in respect of the Housing Governance Review.

Members considered a report of the Town Clerk in respect of Housing Governance and noted the comments raised at previous Committees, who would also be affected by the review. The Chairman advised that he would be seeking the views of those Members who had not been granted dispensations, and would ask the Chairman (of the Policy and Resources Committee) if he could address the Committee and share their views.

The following comments were made in respect of options (i) and (v) as set out in the report:

- I. The debate warranted further exploration by all Members, at the Informal Meeting of the Court of Common Council in November, before a final decision could be taken.
- II. The Barbican Estate needed separate representation from the HRA Committee/Sub Committee. Whilst it was accepted that the BRC might

need some re-organisation, subject to further debate, it would not require a merger with another Committee. Members noted the City Corporation's undertaking to Barbican Residents that they would always have their own Committee.

- III. Under the BRC's current Constitution, resident Members can be granted dispensations to speak but not vote. However, their right to speak could affect decisions taken by non-resident Members with voting rights. The recent outcome of dispensation requests had resulted in Members not being able to speak and concerns that this could potentially disenfranchise residents.
- IV. It was suggested that the report could have been more detailed in respect of the work undertaken by each of the Committees, drawing out the differences and similarities. Members noted the main difference in that the HRA Committee/Sub Committees were mainly concerned with policies affecting the wellbeing of residents; whereby the BRC, being almost entirely Leaseholders, was more property focussed.
- V. The Chairman felt strongly, and Members agreed, that any change should not decrease the quality or level of social and welfare services to the City Corporation's Social Housing Tenants; it should have either a neutral or improved outcome.
- VI. Whilst noting a potential advantage on the property side, which might arise from linking the Committees, Members agreed that there would be no discernible advantage in breaking the link between the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee and the synergy offered by the Community and Children's Services Committee.

RESOLVED, that – the above views be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee, noting particularly:

- 1. Any outcome to the Housing Governance Review should not compromise the social and welfare services available to the City Corporation's housing tenants.
- 2. The need to retain separate Committees for Barbican and HRA/Social tenancy matters; whilst accepting that the BRC might need some re-organisation.
- 3. The Sub Committees suggestion to continue this debate at the Informal Meeting of the Court of Common Council in November, before the Policy and Resources Committee take a final decision.
- 4. The Chairman to seek the permission of the Chairman (of the Policy and Resources Committee) to address the Committee when they take a decision on Housing Governance; reflecting the views of those Members who were not granted a dispensation to speak at today's meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee.

Other items

- Members noted that the Annual Christmas Hamper visit to the Almshouses would be on either 7th or 14th December, to be confirmed by the Town Clerk.
- The next meeting of the Sub Committee would be held at the Golden Lane Community Centre, subject to its availability on 27th November at 2pm.

18. 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
19

Paragraph
1 & 2

19. FORMER TENANT ARREARS (PROPOSAL TO WRITE OFF UNRECOVERABLE DEBTS)

Members considered and approved a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.

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

There were no non-public questions.

21. 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 1pm

Chairman

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