

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 5 June 2018

Minutes of the meeting held at Guildhall, EC2 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Randall Anderson
Peter Bennett
Mary Durcan
John Fletcher
Marianne Fredericks
Alderman David Graves (*in the Chair until agenda item 4*)
Barbara Newman
Dhruv Patel
Susan Pearson
William Pimlott

Officers:

Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains
Mona Lewis	- Chamberlains (Procurement)
Chris Keesing	- Chamberlains (Internal Audit)
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's
Jacquie Campbell	- Community and Children's Services
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Jacqueline Whitmore	- Sheltered Housing Manager (C&CS)
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1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes of the meeting held on 16 April be approved as a correct record.

4. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN OF THE SUB COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 29

Members proceeded to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order 29.

RESOLVED, that – being the only Member willing to serve, Mr John Fletcher be elected as Chairman of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee for 2018/19.

5. TO ELECT A DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE SUB COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 30

In accordance with Standing Order 30, the immediate past Chairman, Mr Randall Anderson, exercised his right to serve as Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

RESOLVED, that – Mr Randall Anderson serve as Deputy Chairman of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee for 2018/19.

The Chairman welcomed William Pimlott and Peter Bennett to the Sub Committee and gave thanks to retiring members, Henry Jones and Deputy Elizabeth Rogula for many years of service to the Sub Committee. Members were pleased to note that Deputy Henry Jones would continue to serve as the allocated Member for Middlesex Street. Peter Bennett volunteered to be the new Allocated Member for Isledon, in the vacancy of Elizabeth Rogula.

6. MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of progress made with the Housing Major Works Programme.

During the discussion and questions, the following points were noted:

- Middlesex Street and York Way had been combined to achieve economies of scale and they would be subject to a short, 1 month delay.
- Under legislation (Section 20 Notice), the City Corporation is not obliged to provide estimates of the cost of the works at Stage 1 of the process, which is intended to be solely a 'Notice of Intention'. In accordance with statute, details of the tenders submitted are provided at Stage 2, with the proportions which each resident should expect to pay. The suggestion of an 'estimate stage' was noted although, the Assistant Director explained that this could be an issue if final calculations differed and may not be supported by the Comptroller.
- It was accepted that some residents might not fully understand Section 20 Legislation. The Assistant Director had been working with the City Solicitor to make communications jargon free/ plain English and the position was improving. A Member commented that plain English communications, which accompanied consultation letters to Barbican residents, had been welcomed.
- In accordance with Members' wishes, every other meeting (of the Sub Committee) would receive a fuller report, showing cumulative slippage, and this would enable year-on-year comparisons.

- The Assistant Director shared Members concerns about works delayed due to Committee cycles and expected his team to factor this into their forward planning. The Town Clerk reminded Members that, in extreme circumstances, an urgent decision could be taken and there was an option to consult with Members, ahead of a decision being signed off by the Town Clerk (in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Sub Committee/Grand Committee).

RESOLVED, that -the report be noted.

- **FIRE SAFETY REVIEW - HRA PROPERTIES**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which advised them of work done in respect of potential improvements to enhance the safety of the City Corporation's social housing residents, in the event of fire.

Members noted that Dame Judith Hackitt's independent report into the Grenfell Tower tragedy had been published shortly after the last meeting of the Community and Children's Services Committee. The report, which concluded that the current processes and procedures relating to fire safety are not 'fit for purpose', did not recommend retrospective measures such as the fitting of sprinklers in high-rise tower blocks. Members also noted that the Fire Risk Assessments would be published tomorrow (6th June 2018).

The Assistant Director advised that the final 3 properties in Great Arthur House, where access had not been achieved to install the fire alarm system, had been booked in for this week. Once completed, the LFB will be asked to approve the release of the Waking Watch. Members congratulated officers on gaining access to the remaining properties.

Members noted that, following Counsel's opinion, a report on the implications of recharging for retrospective fire enhancements would be presented to the next meetings of the Sub and Grand Committees. The Assistant Director explained that, as the substance of this report and proposed actions were likely to stray into paragraph 3 of the Local Government Act; i.e. commercial sensitivities, then it would be an exempt report.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

8. **INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES POLICY**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of an Introductory Tenancies Policy. Members commended a clear and comprehensive report and noted that forthcoming policy reports had been factored into the Sub Committee's work plan. Officers agreed to bring a report to the next Committee, setting out when existing Policies were due for renewal. Members also noted that any procedures within the new policy would not substitute the actions taken by income collection officers.

RESOLVED, that – the Introductory Tenancies Policy be approved for use by the Housing Division.

9. SOCIAL HOUSING TENANCY FRAUD - ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Anti-Fraud Team to tackle social housing tenancy fraud during the 2017/18 reporting year.

During questions on this report, the following points were noted:

- The forthcoming comprehensive audit of all social housing in the City would provide further intelligence on potential and suspected fraud, as would membership of the London Fraud Hub. The officer advised that a return of 16 properties was fair, based on the current level of resources within the team.
- All long-term tenants were visited on a 3-yearly cycle and the above mentioned social housing audit would commence shortly and last for a 6 month period. The Assistant Director introduced the new manager who would be overseeing the audit. Members noted that, in addition to fraud, the audit would seek to detect concerns in respect of fire safety, safeguarding, vulnerability and benefit entitlements. The findings of this audit, together with recommendations and monitoring information would be reported back to the Sub Committee.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

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

In response to a question about early consultation and engagement with residents on the future housing programme, the Assistant Director advised that a new communications strategy would ensure consultation at an earlier stage. The Housing Delivery Programme would be reported to the Grand Committee every 6 months, with the next update due in September. Should anything significant arise in the interim, Members and Allocated Members would receive a briefing.

• ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman advised that he would be frequently attending forthcoming housing inspections and all Members, particularly the Allocated Members, were invited to join him.

12. 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
13 - 16	2 & 3

13. STOCK CONDITION SURVEY

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

14. MAIS HOUSE DECANT UPDATE

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

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

There were no non-public questions.

16. 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 12.50 pm

Chairman

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