

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 27 November 2018

Minutes of the meeting held at Golden Lane Community Centre at 2.00 pm

Present

Members:

John Fletcher (Chairman)
Randall Anderson (Deputy Chairman)
Mary Durcan
Barbara Newman
Dhruv Patel OBE
Susan Pearson
William Pimlott
Peter Bennett

Officers:

Paul Murtagh	- Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services – Community and Children's Services
Laim Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Dean Robinson	- Community and Children's Services
Christine Vanhorn-Payne	- Community and Children's Services
Wendy Giaccaglia	- Community and Children's Services
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Alderman David Graves and Marianne Fredericks.

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

The Chairman, Mr John Fletcher, declared a pecuniary interest in respect of item 11 on the agenda (Guest Room Policy) as he is a resident of Mansell Street. The Deputy Chairman would therefore take the Chair for this item and the Chairman would neither speak nor vote thereon.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 24 September 2018 be approved as a correct record, subject to correcting an error on page 4 which should read '*do not use*' and not '*to not use*'

Matters arising:

1. The Assistant Director, Barbican Property Services advised that work has been done to disaggregate the window replacement programme into more manageable smaller projects. This means that some of the less complex estates can be progressed more quickly than originally anticipated. The work on the overall programme will be completed shortly and reported to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.
2. The Chamberlain agreed to provide a breakdown of the income streams, further to the discussion in respect of the 2017/18 Housing Revenue Account Outturn Report.
3. Members noted that a review of car parking charges, including specific provisions for the disabled is due to begin early in the new calendar year. It is expected that a subsequent policy report will be presented to the Grand Committee in the Spring/Summer next year.

Order of business on today's agenda

Members noted that a discussion on the cover report in respect of Agenda Item 18 (Installation of Sprinklers in Social Housing Tower Blocks) would be held in public but any comments or questions in respect of the appendix to this report (containing the exempt information) would need to remain in the closed part of the agenda.

4. MAJOR WORKS PROGRESS REPORT

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an update on progress with the Housing Major Works Programme and advised Members on issues affecting the progress of individual schemes.

Members noted that, due to backlogs in fire door testing in the UK, officers had sourced an alternative testing facility in Poland, which was both quicker and cheaper; potentially doing the testing within a period of 4-6 weeks as opposed to 4-6 months. In relation to the doors at Great Arthur House and the listed building aspects, planning officers are content with the Department's approach and a business case was being prepared for approval. The Assistant Director was confident that Great Arthur House's fire doors would be tested early in the new year and Members noted that they would be replaced in a complementary design, subject to any upgrades. Future fireproofing measures relate to the entire door set and empty flats would be used for prototypes wherever possible. The Assistant Director advised that residents were receiving updates via monthly emails and flyers.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

5. ALLOCATED MEMBERS REPORT

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an update on events and activities on the City

Corporation's social housing estates. The report had been compiled in collaboration with the Allocated Members, who champion residents and local staff.

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

- Members noted that all Members of the Grand Committee have been invited to a Workshop on 14 December, to consider the latest financial information relating to the 30-year Business Plan and the implications for the Major Works Programme, Fire Safety Improvements and the Housing Delivery programme. A subsequent report will be prepared and presented to the Community and Children's Services and Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committees.
- The Chairman advised that the Estate Walkabouts would start later for Golden Lane and Middlesex Street in order to include more residents. An updated programme would be circulated, with the next one taking place on 29th November.
- Superfast broadband installation had commenced on Avondale Estate. The Assistant Director advised that initial concerns about compartmentation had been overcome, by using existing trunking, and this method would be rolled out to the other estates. Members noted that some of the existing trunking would need to be upgraded and the Deputy Chairman confirmed that he will attend the next progress meeting with officers in relation to this project.

In concluding, the Chairman thanked the Officers and Members for their input to the Allocated Members' Scheme. He also commended the new more open consultation method that had led to one of ward members in the London Borough of Lewisham commenting favourably in the press about our Sydenham Hill consultation.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

6. **FIRE SAFETY UPDATE - HRA PROPERTIES**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which sought to update Members on progress made in relation to fire safety matters since the last update report submitted to Committee on 24 September 2018.

Members noted that a number of compartmentation surveys had commenced in response to the risk assessment findings. Two have been completed and these were being analysed although, the results appear to be as expected. The Assistant Director advised that we are currently awaiting the outcome of a detailed signage survey carried out on all our estates.

In respect of the reference to the new 18th Edition of the Electrical Regulations in previous reports, Members noted that, although the 18th Edition has not yet come into force, all new consumer units that are fitted will be fully compliant with the 18th Edition.

There have been concerns about the high sensitivity levels of the new fire alarm installation in Great Arthur House. The Assistant Director advised that the sensors in the flats have now been re-programmed to 'heat-only' to cope with the actual living conditions within the flats. Whilst the Assistant Director regretted the inconvenience caused to residents by false alarms, he stressed the importance of installing a robust and reliable alarm system. Members noted that residents were contacted regularly about the need to respond to all evacuations and would be advised again now the sensors have been re-programmed. The Assistant Director agreed to forward the alarm and evacuation protocol to the Ward Member for the Golden Lane Estate. Members noted that although the Fire Brigade must always respond to the activation of the fire alarm, it could decide to charge the City Corporation for accidental activations and false alarms. Finally, Members noted that the risk assessments had advised that existing fire extinguishers be removed from flat blocks.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

7. ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY REVIEW

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which sought approval of an Estate Management Policy for use by the Housing Service. In response to a question as to which policy dealt with service charges for leaseholders, the officer advised that this would be addressed in a Leasehold Management Policy, which was planned for early 2019. The final title of the Policy was subject to change and would clearly set out what is and what is not recoverable under service charges.

RESOLVED, that – the Estate Management Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

8. 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 that this was working well and had provided some very good intelligence. Pre-advertising of the visits had worked well as there had been very few cases of non-co-operation. Members noted that, once the Leaseholder visits had been trialled, they would receive a full report on the outcome of the visits in the Spring of 2019. Officers advised that, as of today, there had been 2,200 door knocks and 869 completed visits. Members asked to see a programme of the visits and noted that, if entry could not be gained after leaving a calling card and 2 letters, an appointment was offered. Members were reminded that City Corporation tenants were obliged to allow access to officers for scheduled visits/inspections. In concluding, the Chairman commended officers on their excellent customer service skills.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

9. **GAS SAFETY POLICY**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which sought approval of a Gas Safety Policy for use by the Housing Service. The Policy outlined how the City Corporation would meet its obligations as a Landlord under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (as amended) and what action would be taken when tenants refuse or fail to allow access for annual gas safety checks.

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

There would be a publicity drive early next year in respect of Leaseholders' obligations when they become landlords and the Environmental Services Team would take enforcement action in the event of any violations.

Any switch in service providers was entirely up to the resident and, whilst there were no obligations in respect of smart meters, Members noted that many suppliers were strongly urging customers to install them. However, there had been issues with customer access to them in some blocks and their installation was not part of the new Policy.

RESOLVED, THAT – The Gas Safety Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

10. **INSURANCE COVER AND CLAIMS POLICY**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which sought approval of an Insurance Claims Policy for use by the Housing Service. The officer clarified that residents were advised to get contents insurance but not necessarily obliged to do so.

RESOLVED, That – The Insurance Claims Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

11. **GUEST ROOMS POLICY**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which sought approval of a Guest Room Policy for use by the Housing Service. During the discussion, Members asked about expanding access to Middlesex Street to Mansell Street, the maximum duration of each stay, Leaseholder charges and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The officer advised that these factors had either already been covered in the Policy or could be looked at separately.

RESOLVED, THAT – The Guest Room Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

12. **ISSUES REPORT - MIDDLESEX STREET ESTATE LIFT REFURBISHMENT**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Middlesex Street lift refurbishment. The Assistant

Director advised that officers had missed an opportunity to increase the estimated costs at an earlier 'Gateway' in the City Corporations Project Procedure and would be more vigilant of this in future. Members noted that the lift's control mechanism was now out of production, the new installation would stop at all floors and the feedback from the Section 20 Consultation had been supportive of the replacement.

The Assistant Director then explained the Section 20 Consultation process and Members were reminded that, whilst the City Corporation was not obliged to go back to residents in respect of cost increases, it had adapted the process to enable more engagement, including meeting with the Chairman of the Pettitcoat Lane Leaseholder Association or their representative. Members also noted that Leaseholders would be advised of the availability of interest free loans.

RESOLVED, THAT:

1. An increase to the estimated project budget of £522,500.00 be approved, taking this to a new total of £1,555.00, comprising of £1,382.500 for the tendered refurbishment works and £172,400.00 to cover fees and staff costs; and
2. A Gateway 5 – Authority to Start Work report be submitted for Chief Officer approval in accordance with the regular approval track.

13. **GATEWAY 1-4 PROJECT PROPOSAL & OPTIONS APPRAISALS REPORT: INSTALLATION OF SPRINKLERS IN SOCIAL HOUSING TOWER BLOCKS**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the installation of sprinklers in Social Housing Tower Blocks. Members were reminded that, following Counsel's opinion, the City Corporation had decided not to charge leaseholders to install sprinklers and were monitoring the outcomes at those Boroughs who had decided to attempt to recover the cost from leaseholders. Members noted that future reports would contain more information on the cost of the installations on a block-by-block basis.

The Assistant Director advised that Leaseholders would be liable for the future maintenance of the sprinkler systems. The Assistant Director advised that the City Corporation would make good any disturbances during installation of the sprinklers but were not obliged to undertake full scale redecorations.

RESOLVED, that –

1. The contents of the report, including the total estimated project cost of £3.2 million(including staff costs of £40,000) be noted.
2. Option 1 in the report be approved as follows:
Undertake a compliant procurement exercise for the installation of sprinklers in our five social housing high rise tower blocks.

Committee approval be sought at Gateway 5 for a contractor to be appointed to carry out the installation of sprinklers in our five social housing high rise tower blocks.

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

In response to a question about ParkGuard Ltd, officers agreed that, as the contract had just been renewed, Members would receive a report at a future meeting.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business.

16. 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
16	1 and 3
17	3

17. FORMER TENANT ARREARS

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

18. GATEWAY 2 REPORT - HOUSING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPGRADE

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

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

There was one question while the public was excluded.

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

The Chairman expressed thanks to the Club Cook and Butler and staff at the Community Centre for enabling the meeting to take place at the Centre today. There was a general consensus that an off site meeting had worked very well and Members were encouraged to give feedback to the Chairman after the meeting.

The meeting ended at 4pm.

Chairman

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