

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 20 November 2019

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

Present

Members:

Mary Durcan (Deputy Chairman - in the Chair)
Randall Anderson
Marianne Fredericks
Alderman David Graves
Barbara Newman
Susan Pearson
Peter Bennett
Ruby Sayed

In attendance

Deputy John Tomlinson – Ward Member, Cripplegate

Officers:

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|------------------|---|
| Paul Murtagh | - Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, Community and Children's Services |
| Liam Gillespie | - Community and Children's Services |
| Jason Hayes | - Community and Children's Services |
| Nicholas Welland | - City Surveyors |
| Julie Mayer | - Town Clerks |

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from John Fletcher (Chairman), Deputy the Reverend Stephen Haines and Jason Pritchard.

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 and non-public summary of the meeting held on 16th September 2019 be approved as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Members noted that the brief for the Housing Revenue Account Parking Consultant had been drafted and advice would be taken with colleagues in the Commissioning Team, with a view to engaging someone to carry out an initial review. Members would receive an update report in Spring 2020.

In respect of the Fire Brigade's 'Stay Put' Policy, the Directors and Members were due to meet the Fire Brigade at the end of this month and Members would receive an update on this and other fire related issues at the next meeting of the Sub Committee in January 2020.

Member visits to the Estates scheduled for 31st October and 27th November 2019 had been cancelled. Members suggested that they be rescheduled for Spring 2020, split across 3 visits, possibly before or after a scheduled meeting of the Sub Committee.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LIST

Members received the Sub Committee's Outstanding Actions List and noted those items which would be discharged on this and future agendas.

5. HOUSING 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. Members commended excellent results in respect of the door entry systems at Dron House and William Blake Estate; in addition to the Petticoat Tower balcony windows and doors project, which had achieved a £200,000 saving. As there was some commercially sensitive information linked to this project, Members would receive a further update in the non-public part of today's agenda, at item 18. Members also noted that completion of the installation of sprinklers (multi-estate programme) was now expected in March 2021.

In response to questions, officers agreed to provide more information on in respect of slippages beyond the City Corporation's control. In respect of ball game areas, Members were reminded that they had approved the Playground Policy earlier in the year and, once the programme had been finalised, works to the various estates could be identified separately.

There was some discussion about challenges faced by officers in gaining access to some properties and officers explained that due process had to be followed in terms of arranging appointments.

Members noted that, in respect of Great Arthur House, the door sets were continuing to be tested in Poland, which was quicker and cheaper than in the UK, but the building's Listed status was a further consideration. The recladding works were complete and there had been no change in expenditure since the last report. The Assistant Director was now in receipt of the final service charge figures and they would be circulated with the minutes of this meeting.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

6. RENTS POLICY

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of a draft Rents Policy, which set out the City Corporation's approach to rent setting and the management of rent accounts. Members noted that, whilst this was a new Policy, the approaches in the document were

taken from established practice, current rent regulations and the City Corporation's Tenants' Agreement and Handbook.

In response to a question about rent restructuring, Members noted a Government Directive 10 years ago which had sought to align Council and Housing Association Rents in order to be fairer. However, it was only possible to change rent levels when a tenancy changed and the Government had issued a further Directive to reduce rents across a 4 year period. Despite this, targets were being met and the gaps were closing. Members also noted that service charges fell due in October every year and they asked if the breakdown between rent and other factors, such as service charges, could be clearer in future reports. Officers explained that the majority of Housing policies had now been reviewed and agreed to provide a review timetable to the next meeting.

RESOLVED, that – the draft Rents Policy be approved for use by the Housing Service.

7. HOUSING ESTATES - 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. Members noted that the report had been compiled with Allocated Members, who were residents' 'champions' on particular estates.

In respect of the Golden Lane Estate, officers advised that the Estate Inspection Results should be ready in early December. The Allocated Member advised that some of the contractors had provided donations to the roof gardens and asked for this to be acknowledged. The bi-annual residents magazine was available on line for residents at the following link: https://issuu.com/cityoflondon2/docs/home_issue_1. Members asked if a printed copy could be placed in the Members' reading room at Guildhall and this was done after the meeting,

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

8. LETTINGS/SALES POLICIES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which summarised the context for the consideration of leaseholder arrangements in relation to proposals for estate regeneration, by advising on the legal framework for securing vacant possession of leasehold properties.

Members noted that the policies were broadly in line with other local authorities and officers had worked extensively with the Comptroller and City Solicitor. Members noted that the report was seeking an 'In Principle' decision and the finer detail in respect of mortgages, shared equity schemes, the definition of 'principal' homes and valuations (with clarity as to any benefits or loss to the City of London Corporation) would be contained in the next report to Members. The Assistant Director advised that, when the report is presented to the Grand Committee, it would include an appendix responding to the points raised at this meeting. Whilst noting that a clear policy was required at the outset, Members

were mindful of hardship cases. Officers explained that, whilst they would be looked at on a case by case basis, the Policy could not cover all eventualities.

RESOLVED, that - noting the comments of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee, the following be recommended to the Community and Children's Services Committee:

Leaseholders

- Long leaseholders who occupy their flat as their only or principal home and, who wish to remain on the estate will, if their existing flat is subject to demolition, be offered a new flat on a shared-equity basis. NB If, however, they are able and wish to purchase 100% of the equity, then they will be able to do so.
- Any long leaseholder taking up a shared-equity offer will be expected to invest funds from the purchase of their old property and a proportion of any Home Loss payment (plus a potential voluntary contribution from savings). Any value gap will be met by the City Corporation retaining an equity share in the property.
- The shared-equity terms will not require the leaseholder to pay rental on the equity that they do not own but, they will be liable for 100% of the service charge.
- The shared-equity opportunity will not be available to long leaseholders who do not occupy their flat as their only or principal home. Instead, they will be offered market value plus compensation if, their flat is subject to demolition as part of the new development.

Secure Tenants

- Reaffirm that secure tenants must be offered alternative accommodation and that, in line with the previously adopted Local Lettings Plan, if their flat is subject to demolition, they will be offered a new flat within the new development and will only need to move once.

Windsor House

- The Long Leaseholder policy proposed above to be communicated to long leaseholders in an Information Bulletin.
- Long Leaseholders to be asked to register interest in the shared-equity opportunity, so that an assessment of likely project viability can be undertaken.

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

1. **In response to a question about the voids process**, Members noted that the current re-let target was 25 days and 30 days had been achieved in the last quarter. Officers accepted that the process required improvement and Members noted that voids work was complex and covered many City Corporation teams. The officer explained that there

was a voids standard for staff and this would be enhanced and made public, in order to be more transparent.

The officer advised that a public facing letting policy had been drafted, entitled; '*What to expect when you move into your City of London Corporation home*'. Members were assured that no homes were handed over in poor condition, but some were let with a decorating allowance to enable residents to decorate their homes to their personal taste. However, a different process applied to disabled residents, or those in sheltered accommodation, who were unable to undertake their own decorations. Whilst it was suggested that handovers to a high decorative standard might reduce the voids period, it was accepted that this would have a significant impact on the Housing Revenue Account.

2. **In response to a further question about the recent Bolton Fire**, which had a different type of cladding to that used in Grenfell Tower, the Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, explained that, post Grenfell, all City Corporation properties had been checked for ACM cladding and none was found. Furthermore, the Government also imposed a duty on local authorities in respect private dwellings in Local Authorities and a further inspection, funded by the Government, was undertaken on 100 properties in the City. Since then, the Government had asked for a further inspection for other forms of cladding in and again, none had been found.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other business.

11. **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 |
|-------------|------------------|
| 12 | 1 and 2 |
| 13-18 | 3 |

12. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2019 be approved as a correct record.

13. **HRA COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PERFORMANCE - SEPTEMBER QUARTER 2019**

Members received a report of the City Surveyor.

14. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) COMMERCIAL PROPERTY - MIDDLESEX STREET COMPENSATION CLAIMS

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

15. MIDDLESEX STREET ESTATE NON-EMERGENCY ELECTRICAL WORKS (LANDLORD'S) - PHASE 2 - GATEWAY 5 - ISSUES REPORT

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

16. RENEWAL OF FLAT ROOF COVERINGS AT PETTICOAT SQUARE, MIDDLESEX STREET - GATEWAY 1-4 PROJECT PROPOSAL & OPTIONS APPRAISALS

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

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

There were no questions.

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

Two items were considered whilst the public were excluded.

The meeting ended at 3.55 pm

Chairman

**Contact Officer: Julie Mayer: 020 7 332 1426
julie.mayer@cityoflondon.gov.uk**