

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE**
Monday, 20 January 2020

Minutes of the meeting held at Guildhall at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Mary Durcan (Deputy Chairman)
John Fletcher (Chairman)
Randall Anderson
Marianne Fredericks
Alderman David Graves
Barbara Newman
Susan Pearson
William Pimlott
Peter Bennett
Deputy the Revd Stephen Haines

Officers:

Paul Murtagh	- Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, Community and Children's Services
Julie Mayer	Town Clerks
Sonia Marquis	Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	Community and Children's Services

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from 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 20th November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Members received the Sub Committee's outstanding actions list and an updated version was tabled, showing updates since the despatch of the agenda.

The Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, was heard in respect of a recent meeting with the Deputy Commander of the London Fire Brigade. Members noted that, post Grenfell, the 'stay put' advice remained, with more emphasis on the Fire Brigade, service providers, the City of London Corporation and its residents working together to ensure our premises are as

safe as possible. The Deputy Commander was aware of and satisfied with the work of the City Corporation is doing in keeping fire safety at the forefront.

The sprinkler installation project was underway, and a Design Consultant had been appointed. The Community and Children's Services and Housing and Almshouses Sub Committees would receive a fire safety update report at their respective March meetings. Members noted that no fire safety concerns had been raised in respect of the ventilation ducts in the City's HRA properties.

5. 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 progress on the Housing Major Works Programme and advised Members on issues affecting progress on individual schemes.

There was some discussion on planning delays, noting that resourcing for dealing with planning applications was an issue generally in local authorities. Members suggested that timescales should take into account the likely delays in the planning process, so as not to show regular unavoidable slippage. Officers explained that they have tried to assist the planning process by arranging pre-planning meeting. Tenders were sent out very quickly once the approval notice was received.

Officers now kept a comprehensive 'Issues Log' which documented all stages in the programme for each project, including details on delays and slippage and why they had occurred. The Assistant Director advised that, currently, only 2 planning applications were awaiting decision; one from Islington (Holloway Estate) and one from Lewisham (Sydenham Hill). Members were reminded that the Housing Major Works Programme, by its very nature, will continue to generate a large number of Planning and Building Regulations applications, particularly in respect of the fire safety improvement works such as sprinklers and fire doors. Members noted that, in some cases, developers were able to assist with resourcing in local planning authorities, to get large applications through quicker. However, this could be problematic if, as in the City's case, multiple boroughs were involved.

In response to a question about window replacement at Crescent House, Members noted that this would be a separate stream of work, running parallel with the wider window replacement programme on the Golden Lane Estate.

In concluding, the Chairman suggested, and Members agreed, that future estimates should come with a health warning that they might be subject to planning delays in other authorities. Given that poor resourcing in planning departments and subsequent delays was a London-wide issue, the Chairman of the Community and Children's Services Committee agreed to speak to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee about the possibility of raising this at the Local Authority Leaders' Committee.

RESOLVED, That – the report be noted.

6. **UPDATE ON MIDDLESEX STREET GARAGES**

The Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services was heard in respect of the Middlesex Street garages project. Members noted that completion of the City of London Police project in the basement of the car park had now slipped from the beginning of February 2020 to the first week in April. Officers were working with residents in respect of their necessary relocation and had found them very co-operative. The Assistant Director advised that the Memorandum of Understanding would be presented to the March meeting of the Sub Committee.

The next meeting of the Middlesex Street Development Working Group would involve a presentation from 'Studio Weave', who had been commissioned to research the best use of the ground floor car parking space, alongside the Petticoat Lane Markets. Members noted that the top floor had limited access and Montague Evans, who has also worked on the Islington Arts Factory, had been commissioned in respect of commercial advertising. The Director agreed to investigate a leak to the Podium, which had just come to his attention.

In concluding, the Chairman thanked the Assistant Director for this update and welcomed the opportunity this project provided to maximise a City Corporation asset. The Chairman and Members were keen for this project to progress within the next 15 months.

7. **GREAT ARTHUR HOUSE RECLADDING SERVICE CHARGE FIGURES**

The Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services was heard in respect of service charge figures for Great Arthur House recladding works. Members noted that the outturn figure for the project, as of today, was £11.1m (£10m negotiated settlement for works). Members would receive a report of the City Surveyor at their next meeting, formally closing the project.

The Assistant Director advised that most residents had been visited in respect of the end of defects liability survey and there would be a further inspection on the external façade over the next two weeks. If Members were aware of any residents who had not been visited, they were asked to let the Assistant Director know as soon as possible.

Members noted that the City Corporation had lost its appeal against the decision of the First Tier Tribunal's; i.e. - that leaseholders were not liable to contribute towards the cost of the recladding works. The City has applied to seek Leave to Appeal further. Members noted that Counsel's opinion was that the City had strong grounds to appeal. There was some discussion about the level of legal fees, should the matter be escalated to the Supreme Court, and Members noted that it was unusual for these to be fully indemnified. Members were concerned at the impact on Leaseholders but, accepted that this was an aspect of Right to Buy Leases which had never been properly addressed.

Members were reminded that, given its wider significant impact, this matter was a responsibility of the Community and Children's Services Committee (the Grand Committee of this Sub Committee). The Chairman and Deputy Chairman (of the Grand Committee) had been sighted on Counsel's opinion and supported the decision to appeal. Members would receive a report as soon as possible on the next stages in the legal process, the legal costs to date and, Counsel's estimate for potential future legal costs.

In the interim, Members noted that the service charge was being invoiced and collected but no action was being taken for non-payment. The City Solicitor had advised that it was a legal requirement to continue to collect service charges for this work, despite the legal proceedings, otherwise the City Corporation would forfeit the right to do so. The Assistant Director was not aware of how many residents had taken up the City's offer of a loan but agreed to check (***Post Meeting Note – 5 leaseholders had taken out a loan with the City***). Furthermore, as the final cost of the works had only just been finalised, the final bill to Leaseholders could now be confirmed.

8. **HOUSING MANAGEMENT POLICIES - PROGRESS UPDATE**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in response to a Member's request for a review of those policies which had been completed, those in progress and/or those due to be started. In respect of the outstanding reviews, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, the Chairman suggested, and Members agreed, that every effort should be made to complete all outstanding reviews by the end of 2020. Officers agreed to confirm whether this would be achievable at the next meeting. Members also suggested that it would be helpful to see a table showing existing policies, with their renewal dates, on a more regular basis, so that progress could be monitored. As previously advised to Members, the Pets Policy was due for review and, in light of findings from the recent work on social isolation, it would be given priority.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

9. **TENANCY POLICY REVIEW**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Tenancy Policy, which was first approved in 2017 and was now due for review. Member noted that the Policy had been modified to clarify the City of London Corporation's approach to joint tenancies following a relationship breakdown. No other material changes had been made to the Policy.

Members expressed some concerns in that, in its current form, the draft policy might not give residents enough protection against them becoming 'voluntarily homeless'. Whilst residents were advised to seek legal advice and officers worked with them to ensure this would not happen, Members suggested that it should be more visible in the Policy and the City Solicitor should be asked for his input. Members also suggested that 'significant period' and 'appropriate action' should be more specific and all references to legislation and available assistance should have a web page link.

RESOLVED, that – the Draft Tenancy Policy for use by the Housing Service be amended, in accordance with the suggestions set out above, and presented to Members at the March meeting of the Sub Committee for approval.

10. **DECENT HOMES KITCHEN AND BATHROOM CONTINGENCY 2: GATEWAY 6 - OUTCOME REPORT**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of compliance with the Decent Homes Criteria. Members noted that the Projects Sub Committee had granted an amnesty to ensure that all long-outstanding completed projects were closed properly. This was one of those reports and, whilst the project had been completed within budget, there was a concern expressed about the records kept. The Assistant Director advised that this project had been completed several years ago and there was now an asset management database in place, which had considerably improved record keeping and project management tools.

RESOLVED, that – the project be closed.

11. **DECENT HOMES - CENTRAL HEATING INSTALLATION PROGRAMME (CHIP) - VARIOUS 2010/11, 2011/12 AND 2012/13: GATEWAY 6 - OUTCOME REPORT**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of bringing heating systems up to the Decent Homes Criteria. As with the previous report, Members noted that the Projects Sub Committee had granted an amnesty to ensure that all long-outstanding projects were closed properly.

RESOLVED, that – the project be closed.

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

There were no questions.

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

Members noted that the Community and Children's Services Committee would receive a presentation on the repairs service at its March meeting. The Assistant Director advised that this was timely, as the repairs service had recently been re-tendered and there had been a recent dip in performance. Members were asked to speak to the Assistant Director in respect of any specific concerns. The Chairman agreed to meet with the Assistant Director in respect of emerging trends concerning mould, damp and slow progress by some sub-contractors. Any other Members of the sub committee, who felt that could make a contribution, were also invited to attend this meeting.

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
15

Paragraph
3

15. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**
RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2019 be approved as a correct record.
16. **NON- PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE**
There were no non-public questions.
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 3.20 pm

Chairman

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