

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

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub (Community and Children's Services) Committee held at VIRTUAL MEETING – ACCESSIBLE REMOTELY on Monday, 20 July 2020 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

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

Officers:

Rofikul Islam	- Town Clerk
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk
Gemma Stokley	- Town Clerk
Leanne Murphy	- Town Clerk
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Jacqueline Whitmore	- Community and Children's Services
Michael Gwyther-Jones	- Community and Children's Services
Lochlan MacDonald	- Community and Children's Services

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies received.

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 Monday, 20 January 2020 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 dispatch of the agenda.

Tenancy Visits

Members were advised that a report will be presented to the Sub-Committee about the Tenancy visits in the Sub-Committee's next sitting after the recess in September 2020.

Housing Risk Register

The Sub-Committee was informed that a report of the risk register will be presented to the Sub-Committee in September 2020.

New Portsoken Community Centre – Governance options

The Sub-Committee was advised that the developers have accepted responsibilities and the handover of the building is likely to be delayed due to COVID-19.

Housing Revenue

The Sub-Committee was updated on the department appointing an external consultant to review the report. The report of the external consultant to be presented to the Sub-Committee towards the end of the year.

Fire safety

The Sub-Committee was updated that a report will be presented to the Sub-Committee in September 2020, on the additional funding for the sprinklers.

Visit to the north and south estates

The Chairman advised that the visit to the north and south estates would be delayed to 2021 in light of COVID-19, however, should Members wish to make individual visits to the estates they are welcome to do so. Officers can arrange the visits at individual Members request.

Great Arthur House – Recladding Works

The Sub-Committee was informed that as this has now been approved by the Grand Committee, this can now come off the outstanding list. This will now go to the Grand Committee.

Housing Policies Renewal Timetable

The Sub-Committee was advised that the important policies will be reviewed first and as such some of the policies will be presented to the Sub-Committee in 2021. A revised timetable will be presented to the Sub-Committee.

Draft Parades Policy

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Draft Parades Policy date will be reviewed and presented to the Sub-Committee.

Housing Major Works Programme

Members agreed that the Housing Major Works Programme can now come off the outstanding action.

Middlesex Street Garage

The Sub-Committee was advised by the Director that the leak to the podium will be updated with further work being carried out.

5. HOUSING MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Housing Major Works Programme – Progress Report.

The Sub-Committee was advised that the purpose of the report is to update Members on the progress which had been made with the Housing Major Works Programme and to advise the Sub-Committee on issues affecting progress on individual schemes.

The Sub-Committee was informed that Officers have been working around the design stages and ensuring that work with consultants and external stakeholders continues. The Sub-Committee was further advised that various stages of works within the houses will start again in September to coincide with children being back to school and cause minimum disruptions to the residents.

A Member asked about the consultation taking place before the work restarting. Officers advised that before the internal work commences a survey will be carried out with the residents and ensure that the Department feeds into the views amplified in the survey.

Officers advise the Sub-Committee that some external doors are being replaced within Middlesex Street Estate. Although this is outside of the scope of the current project, the doors are in need of replacement. A Member asked that the Central Government has announced a £5000 Sustainable Energy Projects grants for individual households and if the City of London can tap into this. Officers assured the Sub-Committee to provide a detailed paper to the Sub-Committee at its next meeting, as the information around the Sustainable Energy Project grants needs further clarification.

RESOLVED – That the Sub-Committee notes the report.

6. RENT ARREARS DURING COVID-19

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Rent Arrears During COVID-19.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the rent arrears have increased due to many tenants being furloughed, made redundant or having their working reduced hours. The current rent arrears for the City of London stand at £329,053. The Sub-Committee was assured that Officers continue to engage with residents and are offering practical support to families who are struggling.

Members were informed that at present there is a "rent holiday" for commercial tenants of the City of London due to COVID-19. A Member asked if the City of London is keeping a track on how much commercial rent it has waived so far. At this point the Chairman mentioned that this will be discussed in detail at the

Grand Committee (Community and Children's Services) on Friday 24 July 2020.

The Sub-Committee was further advised that there are three scheduled eviction cases which pre-date COVID-19, however no legal sanctions are currently being taken on in cases of arrears accrued since COVID-19. Officers informed Members that the City of London applies for very few evictions in general and always works with residents to overcome any difficulties. Eviction proceedings are only issued as a very last resort.

RESOLVED – That the Sub-Committee notes the report.

7. **CITY OF LONDON ALMSHOUSES UPDATE**

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the City of London Almshouses Update. The Sheltered Housing Manager informed the Sub-Committee on the resident's welfare. At present there are three residents the Almshouses Manager is particularly concerned about.

A Member asked if the residents are allowed to sit outside in the garden. The Sheltered Housing Manager mentioned that although the garden is open to the residents it remains unused. In terms of the welfare of the residents the Sub-Committee was informed that conversations have taken place with the resident's families and GP to ensure that adequate level of care are being given to the residents where there are extra concerns about their welfare due to lockdown isolation.

A Member asked if the City of London intends to start the repairs work as planned in August 2020. The Sheltered Housing Manager informed the Sub-Committee, that a survey was carried out with the residents and the majority of the residents are content with the work starting in August 2020, several have agreed to kitchen and bathroom works to commence in their homes.

This was followed by another Member asking, if the Almshouses can be a social bubble itself, therefore allowing the residents to have communal activities. The Sheltered Housing Manager advised that the current residents often do not have shared interests thus to form a bubble may not be helpful as several have already formed their bubbles with families and friends. Additionally, some residents have bubbles with their care support from the local authority and as such staff must be careful about how the bubbles overlap.

RESOLVED – That the Sub-Committee notes the report.

8. **HOUSING DELIVERY PROGRAMME - HOUSING DESIGN GUIDE**

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the on the Housing Delivery Programme – Housing Design Guide.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the City of London's social housing projects are undertaking in compliance with a consistent and comprehensive Housing Design Guide (HDG).

A Member has requested that the Sub-Committee be provided with a presentation on the methods of construction. Another Member commented about the new developments in Woolwich about the 100 new homes on Goldsmith Street being smart, modern and most energy-efficient houses ever built in the UK.

Officer advised the Sub-Committee that the City of London is exceeding regulations in England and going beyond the requirements, as well as ensuring that all our buildings are installed with sprinklers since the Grenfell incident.

RESOLVED – That the Sub-Committee notes the report.

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

There were no questions.

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.

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm

Chairman

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