

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Housing Management Sub-Committee	31 January 2013
Subject: Housing Estates - Allocated Members' Report	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report, which is for information, provides an update for the Committee on events and activities on the City of London Corporation's social housing estates.</p> <p>The report is compiled in collaboration with Allocated Members, whose role is to take an active interest in their estate, to champion residents and local staff and to engage with housing issues in order to play an informed part in housing-related debates within the Committee.</p>	

Main Report

Background

- The Allocated Members Scheme was introduced in 2000, when Members of the Community & Children's Services Committee were allocated to different City of London Corporation housing estates. The purpose of the scheme was:
 - To give residents and staff a named Member to 'champion' their estate
 - To allow Members to take an interest in the estate, its residents and staff
 - To develop a group of members with housing knowledge & experience to contribute to the CC&S Committee.
- This report is presented to the Housing Management Sub-Committee twice a year.

Current Position

General Estate Matters

- Seven of our estates now have Estate Plans, and we plan to publish plans for the remaining estates before the new financial year. The process for developing the plans starts with an open meeting on the estate, where residents identify areas they wish to see improved, and prioritise these. Officers then look at resident surveys, comments from estate walkabouts and a range of other feedback, and an action plan is produced for the next 12 months. We report to residents on our progress 2 or 3 times a year so that they know what progress is being made.
- We now have 14 apprentices in the Housing Service. Six are in their second year and are working in roles which give them more responsibility. The other eight have recently joined us and are settling in to their new jobs. We consider that our role is not only to train them while they are with us, but to prepare them for long term employment. Each apprentice has a mentor who is outside their normal team. The mentors work with them to look at future career options and then explore these through shadowing, work experience and meeting with people working in these fields.
- The last year has seen a worrying increase in incidents of aggression and abuse towards our front-line staff. In 2010 and 2011, there was only one reported incident in each year in the Housing Service. In 2012, there were 11 incidents. A group of staff, led by our Health & Safety Manager, has been looking at ways to address this, and a paper is being presented to your Committee with full details.
- We have also seen an increase in complaints about noise nuisance on our estates. A Noise Nuisance Working Group has been established, with input from the City's Environmental Health Team, to develop new guidelines and information for residents.
- Estate staff work hard to generate income for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), through promoting the rental of sheds, garages and parking spaces, and the hire of community facilities. In recognition of this, it has been agreed that each estate will receive 20% of the income raised there each year as an Estate Improvement Pot. It is for residents to decide how this money is to be spent, and each estate is using it differently.
- We welcomed several of our Allocated Members to the Resident Celebration Day, in October, organised by our Resident Involvement

Team. A very successful day saw some 150 residents come together to consider future issues for social housing and to hear a number of presentations. The Chairman of Housing Management Sub-Committee presented the annual Gardening Competition prizes, and the Deputy Chairman presented our Resident Awards.

Avondale Square Estate - Allocated Member, John Chapman

This is a time of unprecedented change at the Avondale Square Estate. The lift refurbishment programme continues apace, and by April 2013, the lifts in all blocks on the estate will have been renewed. Tenders have been received for the replacement of the door entry systems and the statutory consultation process with residents has commenced. This work, which has been eagerly awaited by residents, will commence February 2013 and complete in August 2013.

The most exciting project is for the development of the old Community Centre site. It is proposed to demolish the old centre and build a new community facility, an estate office and 17 new flats. Residents have been heavily involved in developing the proposals with the architects and a detailed application for planning permission has now been submitted to the London Borough of Southwark.

Avondale Square is one of the estates involved in the Our Place project, which aims to encourage residents to work together to care for their estate and to develop a stronger sense of ownership, community and pride in their environment. The project is being run in partnership with Waste Watch and the residents' association and the main elements are the creation of a community garden and a bulb planting scheme across the estate. I am very much looking forward to seeing the results of this project in the Spring.

At Harman Close, tenants joined residents from the City's other sheltered schemes in August on a day trip to Eastbourne. Despite some traffic jams which resulted in a very long journey, everyone who attended had a wonderful time. In September, the Avondale Square Residents' Association (ASRA) joined with sheltered residents to organise 'The World's Biggest Coffee Morning' - a national fundraiser on behalf of Macmillan Cancer Support. It was attended by members of ASRA, the craft club, and Harman Close Residents. Not only were there hot drinks and refreshments, but also bingo. The total raised for Macmillan was a whopping £213 - a great success all round.

Dron House – Allocated Member, Deputy Henry Jones

Dron House residents have had some unfortunate experiences in recent months as youths from outside the estate used it as a gathering place. This resulted in some anti-social behaviour which was distressing to residents. The estate staff formed a multi-agency group with the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer for Tower Hamlets and the police sergeant from the Local Beat Team to try to resolve this situation. The ring leaders were identified, visited by the ASB Officer and served with ABCs. They were instructed to stay away from Dron House or further action would be taken. Benches from the play area had to be removed as the youths were congregating there. After several weeks of the police making repeated calls onto the estate the youths finally left the area, and I am pleased and relieved to report that there have only been isolated incidents since then. However, the local Police are now keen to start a Neighbourhood Watch on the estate which the estate staff will help to facilitate.

Dron House is part of the Our Place project, and Waste Watch has been working with several residents to form a group to look at ways of bringing the community together. There have been a number of drop-in days which have been well attended. A car boot sale was held as part of the project in December and plans are now in hand to look at introducing a film club and book club.

Discussions are taking place with residents on proposals to redevelop the ground floor of 1-9 Dron House. It currently houses a large community hall, an estate office and a large workshop all of which are in great need of modernisation. The proposal is to have a three bedroom flat, a one bedroom flat and an estate office/meeting room in the current area. The present community hall is currently very under used by the residents at Dron House and it is felt that a larger, well equipped meeting room would be far more practical and not so costly to provide. Consultation is continuing with residents following two meetings held on the estate.

Dron House residents agreed that the Estate Improvements Pot this year should be spent on repairing part of the store shed roof. Store sheds are in high demand on the estate, and these repairs have brought more back into use.

Golden Lane – Allocated Members, Gareth Moore, Angela Starling

We are pleased to report that the former nursery on the estate, currently known as the Golden Lane Community Room, remains very popular in terms of community use and provides a much needed additional income stream for the HRA. It will be used as a polling station for this year's Common Council elections on Thursday 21 March 2013. However, to differentiate the facility from the community centre on the estate, a change of name is likely in the near future. It is proposed to call it 'The Sir Ralph Perring Centre'. Once this is

confirmed appropriate signage, conforming to the Listed Building Management Guidelines, will be erected.

Following the appointment of John Robertson Architects a considerable amount of preparatory work has been completed on the recladding of Great Arthur House, not only in terms of design but also with regards to informing and consulting residents. Different types of frames have been examined to see what suits the building and which best meets Listed Building requirements. In December an exhibition was held in the Community Centre so that residents could see the windows for themselves, and this proved very popular.

We are pleased to advise the Committee that additional locations for extra bike racks have been identified. Once Listed Building Consent has been granted, funding will again be provided by Transport for London as part of their Cycle Superhighways programme. In total, approximately 12 additional racks will be installed providing secure storage for up to 24 bikes.

Waste Watch have been working with residents of Golden Lane since July on the 'Our Place' project. As part of this, they have been working alongside the gardening group to set up a new composter and composting workshop. They are also in the process of organising a toy/book swap and working closely with the City of London recycling team on a 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign.

Finally, a Christmas Fayre was organised by residents on the estate on 8 December and was a great success.

Holloway Estate – Allocated Member, Deputy Catherine McGuinness

There are now two permanent Porter/Cleaner/Gardeners working full time at Holloway Estate. I am always impressed by the gardens and lawns on the estate, but since these appointments, standards have been higher than ever. As a result, we have had an approach from Livability Housing Association, who have some properties for people with disabilities adjacent to the estate, to take over the responsibility of maintaining their tenants' gardens. This option is currently being investigated by officers.

Although the estate is very well-kept, there is always room for improvement. Works will shortly be underway to paint some of the garages and to update the road markings. Residents are also being consulted about their priorities for improvements to the children's play area, the lighting on the estate and painting of sheds. Once staff have received the results they will create a plan of action to carry out the works.

The estate includes a football pitch and surrounding land which is no longer used. This may well prove an ideal site for new homes to meet the increasing demand on the Housing waiting list. The costs of such a project would be met by Section 106 development gains, so would have no impact on existing residents and would, in fact, increase income to the estate. I will update Members as these plans unfold.

Isleden House – Allocated Member, Elizabeth Rogula

Residents at Isleden House have had a full schedule in the past few months; they all enjoyed a post-Jubilee barbecue, during which they were able to make use of the new gazebo. The sheltered scheme also boasts a new greenhouse - the old one having been destroyed by an emergency air ambulance landing last year! The greenhouse has already helped to produce some of the many fruit and vegetable plants now growing in the garden. These are all available to residents and are very popular. In August it was unfortunately necessary to remove a lovely Tamarisk tree, but this was replaced with a June berry tree which is flourishing. The new gardener is also making improvements to the overall look and feel of the gardens.

Isleden House's sheltered residents continue to enjoy an active programme of events. In November, a 'Pink Evening' was held and proved very popular. This included a pink-themed quiz, complete with pink decorations and refreshments, and raised £92 for breast cancer awareness. Residents then held a farewell party on 12 December for our Supported Housing Apprentice, who was moving to another scheme. Their Christmas celebrations reached their peak on 15 December, with a good old London knees-up and buffet, enjoyed by all.

Isleden's Movie Club remains popular and runs every other Wednesday evening. Both sheltered and general needs residents gather to watch popular films thanks to the funding provided by the City's Supported Housing Team.

Middlesex Street Estate – Allocated Member, Deputy Henry Jones

I am delighted to tell Members that the Artizan Street Library and Community Centre is now complete and has been officially opened. This has been a major project, which will greatly improve many services to residents on Middlesex Street Estate as well as residents and workers in the Portsoken Ward. The new centre looks magnificent, and will provide a full range of housing, library, community activities and sports facilities, giving a much-needed boost to the east of the City. The opening of the new community hall was marked by a reception for the Three Score & Wingate Golden Oldies Christmas Dinner, to which I was pleased to welcome the Lord Mayor. At the reception we held a

raffle with a number of donated prizes and I am pleased to say that we managed to raise £550, which will be sent to St. Joseph's Hospice in Hackney.

As part of the development, four shop units have been turned into one bedroom properties, all now allocated to delighted tenants. Two flats have been built in the old entrance from Middlesex Street and will shortly be ready for occupation. The new entrance into the estate at Harrow Place/Artizan Street will be open within weeks.

Middlesex Street Residents' Association agreed that the Estate Improvements Pot would be spent on works to the ground floor store sheds in Petticoat Tower and to purchase garden furniture for the Podium. The Association are also in the process of establishing a Garden Club with volunteers from the estate, both young and old, who will be working on the flower beds on the Podium alongside Open Spaces who have offered to give regular training to all interested members of the Garden Club.

This year the award for the Best Communal Garden was awarded to Ted Hall, Chair of the Residents' Association. Ted's wonderful work makes the Podium a pleasant area for young and old to sit in and enjoy.

A new Recycling Area has been completed on the ground floor of the Car Park with more recycling bins, better lighting, improved signage along with a designated area for the shopkeepers at Middlesex Street. This has been a joint venture between the Housing Service and Environmental Services.

We were fortunate to be awarded funding from Transport for London as part of the Cycle Superhighways programme for more cycling racks for the residents at Middlesex Street. These are much needed as cycling is a very popular pursuit with our residents and keeping cycles safe and secure a top priority.

Middlesex Street Residents' Association arranged and paid for some of the youngsters and their parents to attend a Christmas Pantomime at Stratford Theatre along with families from Mansell Street Estate. This is the first time this has happened and a wonderful time was had by all.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that the Housing Service's Good Neighbour Scheme will be launched at Middlesex Street Estate in the New Year. This new project, developed in partnership with Broadway, Adult Social Care and Community Service Volunteers (CSV) supports volunteers to provide a befriending service to existing residents and newcomers to the estate. If successful, it will be rolled out to all the City's estates, but I am proud that Middlesex Street has been chosen to lead this project.

Southwark & William Blake Estates – Allocated Member, Wendy Hyde

I am delighted to be the new Allocated Member for both Southwark Estates and William Blake Estate and I am equally pleased to have visited both estates soon after my appointment. What was very clear to me during my visit was the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff and the pride they take in their work. It was somewhat disconcerting, however, to see my picture already on every notice board!

Residents at Sumner Buildings, Pakeman House and Stopher House have been waiting for works to improve their door entry systems and increase security for some time. Unfortunately there has been a further delay as the Comptroller and City Solicitor advised that some minor changes to the specification meant that Section 20 pre-tender consultation with homeowners had to be repeated. However, I am pleased to say that the work will now commence very soon.

Members will recall from previous reports that residents at William Blake Estate were eagerly awaiting the replacement of some trees which had been a feature of the estate but which were removed on health and safety grounds. New trees have now been planted and we can look forward to seeing them grow and enhance the estate in coming years

Sydenham Hill Estate – Allocated Member, Deputy William Fraser

I am sorry to report that despite the strenuous efforts made by officers, the post of Estate Officer at Sydenham Hill remains vacant. Following the resignation of the previous officer, residents were consulted about their wishes and represented on the panel which carried out interviews. A new Estate Office commenced in post on 29 October, but, disappointingly, resigned after just 3 weeks. The recruitment process has been recommenced and I am hopeful that by the time this report is presented to Members, an appointment will have been made. In the meantime, officers are providing support to the estate from Avondale Square Estate, and residents are being understanding and supportive during this difficult time.

On a happier note, a Christmas fair was held on the estate on 16 December, followed by an evening quiz. Both events were well attended and much enjoyed by all.

I am pleased to say that the Mais House Residents' Association (MHRA) has been very active this year. In addition to a joint trip to Eastbourne with other sheltered residents in August, Mais House residents enjoyed a day trip to

Canterbury in September which was joint funded by the City of London and MHRA. They also organised an Autumn social event in October, which was attended by around 25 residents.

Mais House itself has enjoyed a makeover this year - the old catering kitchen and dining room have been remodelled and a mobility scooter storage room has been installed. This work has enabled the City to establish a fully wheelchair-accessible one bedroom flat as well as a new kitchenette and redecorated dining room for residents to enjoy.

To celebrate Christmas, residents enjoyed a Christmas lunch at Eden Park Carvery on 17 December and an afternoon tea at Mais House – both part-financed by the City's Supported Housing Team.

Windsor House – Allocated Member, Virginia Rounding

Residents at Windsor House were invited to an open meeting in 2012 to discuss with staff and managers any concerns they have and to identify their priorities for improvement in 2013. The result is an estate plan, which has now been distributed to all residents. The biggest concern for residents was the condition of windows on the estate, and officers are working hard to find a way of funding and implementing a window replacement programme earlier than originally planned.

There are some interesting proposals for developing the estate which may come to fruition during 2013. One is the possibility of updating the children's play area. The estate is located next to a local park, with its own play area and football pitch, and so we need to be sure that there is demand for the estate play area before funding is used to upgrade it. Officers are consulting with residents to get their views.

The other possible project is the redevelopment of the existing community hall and surrounding area to provide additional homes and a new community facility. This would be an interesting project that would increase the availability of housing on the estate and could be funded from development gain. Officers are working with the City Surveyor's department to explore this and I will look forward to updating Members in due course.

York Way Estate – Allocated Member, Billy Dove

I had the great pleasure of once again judging the Garden Competition in the summer. Mr Mujib from Kinfold House won the Chairman's Cup for his flower display on his patio which is truly impressive especially within the confines of a stark building. It is truly an oasis and he was a worthy winner.

In November, staff and managers met with residents to discuss their priorities for improvements to be made on the estate during 2013. A number of issues were raised, including difficulties with the refuse collection, and officers took these up with the London Borough of Islington. The feedback from the meeting has been used to create an Estate Plan which has now been sent to residents. One small immediate improvement has been the introduction of a weekly Estate Update. A suggestion from residents, officers are piloting this at York Way and, if it proves valuable and popular with residents, will spread the idea to our other estates.

In October the estate held an evening meeting in association with the London Borough of Islington to explain to residents how best to combat anti-social behaviour in the area. York Way Estate has historically suffered from higher levels of anti-social behaviour than our other estates and requires a greater input from Housing staff and the local police to maintain a safe environment. Residents were given information about correct reporting procedures and how best to record incidents, and this was well received.

Financial and Risk Implications

There are no known financial or risk implications in this report. The costs of all activities and plans referred to in the report will be contained within existing budgets.

HR Implications

There are no known HR implications.

Strategic Implications

Activities on the estates reported on here contribute to delivering the Departmental Priorities: “Supporting and empowering our communities and enabling people to make a positive contribution” and “Improving the health and wellbeing of communities and individuals”.

Consultees

This report was compiled in consultation with the Allocated Members, managers and staff of the CoLC’s housing estates. The Town Clerk, Chamberlain and Comptroller & City Solicitor have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

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