

Committees: Barbican Residential Consultative Committee – For information Barbican Residential Committee – For decision Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee – For decision Community and Children’s Services Committee – For decision Policy and Resources Committee – for decision	Dated: 17 th January 2023 22 nd January 2023 30 th January 2023 25 th January 2023 22 nd February 2023
Subject: Housing Governance Arrangements	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 4, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Decision
Report author: Gerri Scott, Housing Consultant	

Summary

The City of London Corporation is responsible for the oversight and management of the Barbican Residential Estate and 12 other estates in six London boroughs funded by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This report considers the current governance arrangements and recommends how these should be provided in the future.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- a. Agree that there should be no immediate change to the current governance arrangements because of the dedicated focus on improving operational performance with new management arrangements for the Barbican Residential Estate and the HRA.
- b. Delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair, to consider any changes to the Terms of Reference arising from the discussion.
- c. Agree that consideration should be given to options for the establishment of a separate forum for HRA residents, including proposals for a body comparable

to the Barbican Residential Consultative Committee.

- d. Note that Terms of Reference are routinely reviewed on an annual basis, and that there should be a further, more comprehensive, review of housing governance arrangements in two years' time, on the understanding that the dedicated focus on both the Barbican Residential Estate and HRA should have delivered significant improvements to performance and the customer experience.

Main Report

Background

1. During 2020 and 2021, the City Corporation considered the findings of a review into its Governance arrangements, undertaken by Lord Lisvane. The recommendations of his review were extensive and Members resolved to work through the proposals in a methodical way, taking the various sections of the Review in turn.
2. One significant element of this was Housing, where the City has responsibility for the management of thirteen Estates, three of which (Barbican, Golden Lane, and Middlesex Street) are in the City itself, with the rest located across six London Boroughs.
3. Responsibility for Housing matters in general terms is currently spread across the Community & Children's Services (C&CS) Committee and its Housing Management & Almshouses (HM&A) Sub-Committee (for social housing estates), and the Barbican Residential Committee (for the Barbican estate).
4. Lord Lisvane's review itself did not propose changes to either the C&CS Committee or the H&MA Sub-Committee, although it did propose the abolition of the Barbican Residential Committee, with Lord Lisvane minded that its functions could be discharged through officers. Members were not supportive of this recommendation; however, emerging from the consequential discussions was tentative support for the potential creation of a standalone committee, incorporating both the housing-related responsibilities of the Community & Children's Services Committee (including those overseen by its Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee) together with those of the Barbican Residential Committee. It was considered that this might give greater prominence and co-ordinated consideration to the increasingly important area of housing. This suggestion arose as a consequence not only of discussion of Lord Lisvane's proposals, but following representations made from residents and from Members around the historic and embedded shortfalls within the current set-up.
5. For example, a submission from the Barbican Association echoed both Lord Lisvane and many Members' disappointment with the state of relations between the City Corporation and Barbican residents as a collective, and wider concerns around the need for the Corporation to review the way in which it engaged with all residents (not just those of the Barbican Estate) were also prevalent.

6. However, the Court of Common Council (in December 2021) ultimately determined not to make changes to existing structures, as it felt that further activity was necessary to understand the root cause of issues and the optimal way to address these, prior to any changes to the committee structure relating to Housing.
7. Following the City-wide elections in March 2022, a number of reviews were undertaken to identify any underlying issues with the City Corporation's housing service provision and assess the optimal solutions to these, including whether any changes to committee structures would be beneficial.
8. Housing has had three external reviews, Altair (Barbican Residential Estate May 2023), Pennington (HRA Estates February 2023 and Savills (Housing Investment January 2023).
9. The reviews identified poor customer focus, poor contract and performance management, and a need for a new housing strategy and asset management plan. There is resident dissatisfaction and a high volume of complaints and concerns, most significantly from the Barbican Residential Estate, focusing on repairs and maintenance and transparency of associated costs. The Lisvane Review also recommended reviewing the mechanisms for engagement with residents.
10. In response, action plans are being implemented and new housing divisions proposed for the Barbican Residential Estate and the HRA. Permanent recruitment is underway for Assistant Director Barbican and Assistant Director HRA roles.
11. There is also the context of the wider regulatory environment which has been strengthened through the introduction of tenant satisfaction measures and consumer standards. The Regulator of Social Housing is introducing a new inspection regime, with all landlords required to publicly report against the new standards from April 2024. Although this regulation only applies to residents of social housing, this provides the context for landlords to act as stronger custodians of the customer experience.

Current Position

12. The key issue for residents is operational delivery and ensuring the timely delivery of quality repairs, maintenance, and major projects. Excellent communication is a core part of that responsibility.
13. It is not recommended that the existing governance arrangements are changed because the Barbican Residential Estate and HRA both require significant operational improvement and governance changes may divert from that focus.
14. The BRC is operating effectively and there is sufficient business for both the BRC and Housing and Almshouses Sub-Committee. However, all committees

need to have sufficient oversight and assurance to complement the new regulatory regime, and to ensure that there is proper focus on operational performance and customer satisfaction.

15. It is proposed that:

- a) The annual work plan for Housing and Almshouses Sub-Committee and the BRC should be reviewed to ensure that meetings focus on performance management, financial information and cost control, complaints, risk mapping and monitoring, programme oversight, health and safety compliance and focus on customer experience.
- b) A resident consultative body is established for the HRA to ensure that the resident voice is fully heard (Lisvane recommendation). Subject to approval, this proposals would need to be subject to a further report, detailing the terms of reference, composition etc. and may require approval by the Policy & Resources Committee.
- c) A further review of governance arrangements is scheduled to take place in two years' time to review whether the arrangements remain fit for purpose following a period of concerted and dedicated focus on the performance of the Barbican Residential Estate and the HRA.

16. Members may, however, wish to make comments on their respective Committee Terms of Reference.

17. Corporate & Strategic Implications

There are no strategic implications directly related to this report

- Financial implications – See Resource implications.
- Resource implications – Should a further HRA Consultative Committee be established as a result of a future report, this will have staffing resource implications. It will take time to develop and set-up, with ongoing demands for the meetings themselves. The cost of this would largely be determined by the frequency of the meetings and terms of reference of the body, which are yet to be determined.
- Legal implications – Proposals sufficiently cover the new regulatory
- Risk implications – N/A
- Equalities implications – N/A
- Climate implications – N/A
- Security implications – N/A

Conclusion

17. The current governance arrangements for the various bodies responsible for the City Corporation's housing estates sufficiently covers the statutory

responsibilities. However, the respective terms of reference need to be supplemented via the annual workplans of committees to ensure officers are reporting on the relevant and necessary information enabling dedicated focus on performance, improving the resident experience.

18. A further, more detailed, review should be scheduled to take place in two years' time to assess whether the governance arrangements remain sufficient to oversee the housing service, considering the dedicated focus on the Barbican residential estate and the HRA.

Background reports

Lisvane Review 2021/2022

Appendices (as agreed at the Court of Common Council 2023 – noting that the annual reviews are now underway)

1. Barbican Residential Committee Terms of Reference
2. Barbican Residents Consultation Committee Terms of Reference (agreed in February 2023 and subject to further review at the AGM in February 2024)
3. Community and Children's Services Terms of Reference
4. Housing Management and Almshouses Terms of Reference

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