

Committee: Community and Children's Services Committee	Dated: 01/05/2024
Subject: Member Engagement – Housing Estates	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 4
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	
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 Discussion
Report author: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management, Department of Community and Children's Services	

Summary

The City Corporation has 12 social housing estates in the Square Mile and six surrounding Boroughs, with a total of 2,900 homes. Increased legal and regulatory requirements, plus the volume of major works and development activity on these estates, means that Member involvement and oversight is more important than ever.

An Allocated Members Scheme has been in place since 2000, which aims to ensure that Members are aware of the issues on each estate. This scheme requires a refresh and nominations are required to fill two existing vacancies at Avondale Square Estate and the South Bank Estates.

For Members' benefit, officers have prepared a guide to the estates, and we invite comments on this document before it is finalised.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report
- Comment on the current Allocated Members Scheme Guidelines
- Note the current Allocated Member vacancies at South Bank Estates and Avondale Square Estate, and appoint Members to act for these locations
- Comment on the draft estate guide for Members.

Main Report

Background

1. The City Corporation's Housing Division manages 12 estates in the City of London and the surrounding Boroughs of Hackney, Islington, Tower Hamlets, Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham.
2. A total of 2,900 homes are located on these estates and Members are aware that a further 270 homes for social rent are being developed, mainly on existing estates at Sydenham Hill and York Way.
3. The effective management and governance of social housing has a growing profile nationally, and new regulatory regimes for building safety and consumer standards are now in force.
4. Additionally, Members will be aware of the amount of activity taking place in relation to improving City Corporation housing stock, building new homes and improving services delivered to residents on our estates. Active Member involvement in housing matters has therefore never been as important as it is now.

Current Position

Draft Estate Guide for Members

5. Officers have produced a guide to the City Corporation's social housing estates (**Appendix 1**), which gives Members a concise overview of each estate under our management.
6. It is intended that this document will be reviewed at least annually and circulated to Members. Officers invite Members to indicate what kind of additional information they would like to see in the document, so that the first edition can be finalised.

Allocated Members Scheme

7. The Allocated Members Scheme, which has been in operation since 2000, matches Members of the Community and Children's Services Committee with one or more of the housing estates in our portfolio. The scheme is particularly valuable for estates outside the City of London, given that they do not have direct elected Member representation within the City Corporation in the same way as Golden Lane and Middlesex Street Estates.
8. The scheme is intended to:
 - give residents and staff a named Member to 'champion' their estate
 - allow Members to take an interest in the estate, its residents, and staff

- develop a group of Members with housing knowledge and experience to contribute to the Community and Children's Services Committee.
9. Further details about the Allocated Members Scheme can be found at **Appendix 2**, with the latest list of Allocated Members at **Appendix 3**.
 10. The expectation is that Allocated Members will carry out an initial familiarisation visit to their estate, followed by two visits annually. Allocated Members will work with the local Area Manager and other officers to keep abreast of the issues affecting each estate. Area Managers will update Members at regular intervals.
 11. The Allocated Member Guidelines require an update, as they have not been examined for several years. Some of the provisions of the scheme have been discontinued or have not been carried out regularly. Members are asked to give their comments on this document and the Allocated Member scheme generally.
 12. Officers will provide a renewed commitment to ensuring that the guidelines are adhered to and will support Members in fulfilling their duties as Allocated Members.
 13. There are currently vacancies for Allocated Members at Avondale Square Estate and the South Bank Estate, both located in Southwark. These vacancies arose due to a change in Committee membership. Officers welcome any expressions of interest from current Members of this Committee to take on the role of Allocated Member at these two sites. This would ideally be one Member for each location.

Current Issues

14. Members are aware of the scale and variety of activity taking place on our estates, particularly in relation to major works projects and new developments. These initiatives have a significant impact on current residents. Effective engagement with residents and Members is vital to ensure the smooth running of these projects. Allocated Members have been playing an integral part in monitoring and delivering projects on several sites, for example, the development of new homes at Sydenham Hill Estate.
15. Members will also be aware of recent reports from Allocated Members for Middlesex Street and Golden Lane Estates, highlighting areas of concern and tracking remedial actions to address the issues raised. Officers continue to work on resolving these matters. A selection of current issues on several estates is shown below.

Avondale Square Estate

16. Several significant projects are being completed at Avondale Square, including sprinkler installation in the three Point tower blocks. The contractor appointed to complete the installation of new fire doors is now also on site.
17. Officers are also working to resolve some antisocial behaviour issues which have presented problems on the estate, largely related to unauthorised use of communal areas and instances of criminal damage to property. Staff are working with the local

Police team and are taking action under our antisocial behaviour procedures where perpetrators can be identified. Consideration is being given to commissioning a patrols service along similar lines to that provided by ParkGuard at several of our other estates.

Golden Lane Estate

18. At Members' invitation, the Chairman of Policy and Resources visited Golden Lane Estate on 4 April, with officers in attendance. In common with other locations, repairs and maintenance issues remain a concern. The issue of service charges for planned major works projects was also discussed. Following this visit, officers are preparing an action plan, and Members will receive updates on progress.

19. A report is due to be submitted to this Committee in July on the options for additional support for leaseholders with major works costs, as previously agreed.

York Way Estate

20. The development of an additional 91 new homes continues at York Way, which is due to complete in the spring of 2025. Several other projects have been carried out to upgrade existing facilities, such as installing new fire doors throughout the estate, and replacement of the communal heating system.

21. Officers from the Housing Division met recently with several Councillors from the London Borough of Islington, along with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Community and Children's Services Committee, to discuss issues raised by estate residents during a canvassing exercise carried out by the Islington Councillors. The issues raised by residents were:

- **gardening service charge:** whether this is payable when gardens are inaccessible during development works
- **communal door security:** several door frames and locks were broken, leading to misuse of communal areas and security concerns
- **communal areas:** general cleaning issues; the condition of communal areas requiring improvement; unfinished ceiling work and some inoperative lighting
- **drainage:** drainage problems leading to large puddles in the grounds
- **windows:** windows need replacing
- **damp:** several residents reported damp and mould

22. Officers are responding to these issues and will ensure that residents and Members are updated on progress as soon as possible.

Proposals

23. It is proposed that the Allocated Members Scheme is refreshed and relaunched, with officers committing to provide the required support to Members to fulfil the functions of Allocated Members. In accordance with the current guidance, officers suggest that the scheme is reviewed annually, with Members being appointed annually for each estate.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

24. Strategic implications – the Allocated Members Scheme supports good governance of our housing management functions. The scheme also helps to achieve Corporate Plan outcomes relating to the proper management of our spaces and supporting residents' wellbeing.
25. Financial implications – none.
26. Resource implications – none.
27. Legal implications – none.
28. Risk implications – none.
29. Equalities implications – none.
30. Climate implications – none.
31. Security implications – none.

Conclusion

32. The effective management and governance of social housing has a growing profile nationally and new regulatory regimes for building safety and consumer standards are now in force. Member oversight of housing management activity is therefore more important than ever. To support this work, officers propose that the long-standing Allocated Member scheme is refreshed and relaunched. Two current vacancies at Avondale Square Estate and the South Bank Estates need to be filled.
33. Officers have produced a draft guide to the City Corporation's housing estates for Members. Members' views are sought on the contents of this document before it is finalised.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – City of London Corporation Housing Estates – A Guide for Members
- Appendix 2 – Guidelines for Allocated Members
- Appendix 3 – List of Allocated Members

Liam Gillespie

Head of Housing Management
Department of Community and Children's Services

T: 020 7332 3785

E: liam.gillespie@cityoflondon.gov.uk