

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 27 November 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub (Community and Children's Services) Committee held at Committee Rooms, West Wing, Guildhall on Wednesday, 27 November 2013 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Deputy Billy Dove (Chairman)
Virginia Rounding (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy the Revd Stephen Haines
Deputy Henry Jones
Gareth Moore
Elizabeth Rogula
Revd Dr Martin Dudley (Ex-Officio Member)
Angela Starling (Ex-Officio Member)

Officers:

Philippa Sewell	- Town Clerk's Department
Eddie Stevens	- Community & Children's Services
Jacquie Campbell	- Community & Children's Services
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Karen Tarbox	- Community & Children's Services
Kirsty Leitch	- Community & Children's Services

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman David Graves.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Mr Gareth Moore declared an interest in housing matters, as a tenant of Golden Lane Estate, and Deputy Henry Jones declared an interest in matters relating to the Middlesex Street Estate as he was a residential and business lease holder.

3. MINUTES

In response to a query from the Deputy Chairman with regards to the Assaults on Staff Update and Lone Working Policy, officers undertook to follow up why pre-agreed phone triggers were included in the policy document.

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 26 September 2013 be approved as a correct record.

4. **HOUSING UPDATE**

The Sub Committee received a report from the Director of Community and Children's Services which gave an update on Housing Service performance and management.

In response to Members' questions, officers reported that difficulty with the texting system used to gather data had prevented an update on satisfaction with repairs, but that this would be available for the next report. Members asked why only one sale had resulted from 28 Right to Buy applications received last year; officers responded that some applications were submitted to value the property, and that discounts had been raised for this year which had resulted in 4 sales so far.

With regards to the waiting list, officers informed Members that numbers had gone up in recent years but were now decreasing. The Sub Committee noted that the policy was being rewritten which would lead to unsuitable applicants being removed from the list. A Member queried a noise complaint in Golden Lane, officers reported that the license was not revoked but conditions had been put upon it which had improved the situation.

5. **WELFARE BENEFITS UPDATE**

The Sub Committee received a report from the Director of Community and Children's Services which gave an update on national changes to the welfare benefits system and outlined measures being taken to support residents.

Officers reported that since the report had been written the number of households affected had reduced to 59, 39 of which were in arrears. With regards to a query concerning figures it was noted that 21 households had been supported and were no longer affected and 21 households had been helped through intermediary payments (though these households might still be affected). Members noted that a new member of staff had been recruited who would be rewording the existing rent policy which would be finalised in April. Members agreed that this report should go to the Grand Committee for approval, as the Sub Committee was not due to meet that month.

Officers advised that demand for discretionary housing payments might surpass the amount of money available, but the situation was being monitored closely and funds being distributed conservatively. Other measures were available such as training staff to identify illegal money lending on estates, and a money management programme for residents. Members noted a proposal to enable tenants to earn a credit rating for consistent rent payments, and were pleased that officers continued to work closely with credit unions.

RESOLVED – that the rent policy be sent to Community and Children's Services Committee in April for approval.

6. **CITY OF LONDON ALMSHOUSES UPDATE**

The Sub Committee received a report from the Director of Community and Children's Services relating to an update on the City of London Almshouses. The Chairman asked that references to Allocated Members' visits be made in

future reports, and Members were reminded that the City of London Gresham & Almshouses Annual Hamper Visit was taking place on 10 December 2013.

7. COMMUNITY PROJECTS ON ESTATES

The Sub Committee received a report from the Director of Community and Children's Services. Members agreed that work on fostering community spirit was important to maintain, and congratulated officers on a positive result. Members welcomed Kirsty Leitch who had recently been appointed as Community Development Manager.

Members discussed some of the considerations in projects, and agreed that both time and accessibility of community spaces were key. Members agreed that the details concerning the schemes in Golden Lane be forwarded to the Health and Wellbeing Board for information.

8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2014/15

The Sub Committee received a report from the Chamberlain and the Director of Community and Children's Service in relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Budgets 2013/14.

Members discussed the Asset Management Plans and Capital Receipts, and noted that 30 year plans focussed on aims, objectives and cyclical events rather than practical details which were included in a 5 year plan. In response to a Member's question, the Chamberlain reported that the City of London Corporation was not one of the Councils drawing funds from tenant rent accounts to support the general fund.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) The proposed budget be approved for submission to the Finance Committee;
- b) The Draft Capital Budget be approved; and
- c) Authorisation be given to the Chamberlain to revise these budgets to allow for further implications arising from departmental reorganisations and other reviews.

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 were no urgent items.

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.

12. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 26 September 2013 be approved as a correct record.

13. **SUMNER BUILDINGS AND STOPHER AND PAKEMAN HOUSES -
INSTALLATION OF NEW DOOR ENTRY SYSTEMS - AUTHORITY TO
START WORK - GATEWAY 5**

The Sub Committee received a late report from the Director of Community and Children's Services.

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

A question was raised in respect of the removal Japanese knotweed at the Almshouses.

15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT
AND WHICH THE SUB COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED
WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 2.25 pm

Chairman

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