

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Thursday, 30 January 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub (Community and Children's Services) Committee held at Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 30 January 2014 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Deputy Billy Dove (Chairman)
Virginia Rounding (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Henry Jones
Gareth Moore
Adam Richardson
Revd Dr Martin Dudley (Ex-Officio Member)

Officers:

Ade Adetosoye	-	Director of Community & Children's Services
Eddie Stevens	-	Community & Children's Services
Jacque Campbell	-	Community & Children's Services
Mike Saunders	-	Community & Children's Services
Mark Jarvis	-	Chamberlain's Department
Simon Cribbens	-	Town Clerk's Department
James Goodsell	-	Town Clerk's Department
Philippa Sewell	-	Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Deputy the Revd Stephen Haines, Elizabeth Rogula and Angela Starling.

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 matter relating to the Middlesex Street Estate as he was a residential and business lease holder.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 27 November 2013 be approved as a correct record.

4. DETAILED OPTIONS APPRAISAL - BOILER REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME 2013-14 AND 2014-15

The Sub Committee received a report from the Director of Community and Children's Services which outlined the boiler replacement programme. In response to Members' queries officers reported that the costs of the works included repairs and replacements, and that a variety of quotes would be obtained to ensure the contract was value for money. In terms of governance,

Members noted that the progress of the project would be monitored by this Sub Committee.

RESOLVED – That Option 1, a structured approach to replacing the boiler units, be approved.

5. **REVENUE BUDGETS 2013/14 AND 2014/15**

Members received a joint report of the Chamberlain and the Director of Community and Children's Services which sought approval for the City of London Almshouses revenue budget for 2014/15.

The Chamberlain reported that the budget indicated a deficit of £26,000 owing to an increase in repairs and maintenance projects and, in response to a Member's query, he confirmed that the Almshouses funds were held separately. A Member requested a longer term programme of works be put together for future reports, and officers confirmed that one was being developed alongside the Asset Management Strategy.

RESOLVED – That the 2014/15 revenue budget be approved.

6. **TENANCY STRATEGY**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services seeking approval for the draft Tenancy Strategy, which had been developed as required by the Localism Act 2011. Officers reported that, amongst other changes, reforms introduced through the Act had allowed for shorter fixed-term tenancies, although the Strategy before Members proposed that more secure lifetime tenancies remained the predominant offer for new tenants.

In response to a Member's question it was established that an existing lifetime tenant would retain that lifetime tenancy if they moved house, and Members were advised that fixed term tenancies would not affect a tenant's Right to Buy. Officers also highlighted the Equality Impact Assessment and the benefits fixed term tenancies could have for tenants from violent or overcrowded households.

Members discussed the wording of the report, and asked for clarification to be made concerning the intention and some implications of the reforms. Members also discussed the rent levels set by other social housing providers in the area, and that the Localism Act required them to give regard to the City Corporation's Strategy.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) subject to agreement by the Community and Children's Services Committee, the draft Tenancy Strategy be approved for consultation with social housing providers in the City of London; and
- (2) authority be delegated to the Director of Community and Children's Services in consultation with the Chairman to approve minor changes arising from the consultation, and produce a final version.

7. HOUSING STRATEGY 2014-2019

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services introducing the five-year draft Housing Strategy which had been approved for consultation by the Community and Children's Services Committee in December 2013 and which would be monitored by this Sub Committee.

Members discussed the strategy in detail, and raised a number of points including:

- **The use of the private rented sector** – officers advised that the Strategy was about all types of housing across the City, including high cost private rental properties, which meet the housing needs of high income residents and workers who would not qualify for social rented properties. The Strategy makes reference to ensuring there is an adequate supply of this type of housing to meet the needs, for example, of City workers whose main home is elsewhere.

Officers also reported that the use of the private rented sector (PRS) can be used as an alternative to social rented. This was always an option for people waiting to be housed and would be covered in housing advice. Members noted that the Central Government now allowed (and actively encouraged) Local Authorities to use the PRS to house homeless people. Currently the City Corporation made little use of private rented properties, except as temporary accommodation whilst waiting for one of our own properties to become available. Officers stated that the Strategy envisioned carrying on in this way, building homes with a view to housing people ourselves, though this depended on the amount of homeless applications received in the future. If these increased there might be little choice but to make greater use of the PRS. For this reason the City Corporation was interested in making sure that the PRS is regulated, through schemes like the Real Lettings Scheme, to ensure that private rented accommodation for vulnerable homeless people meets high standards.

- **What the full range of housing options available were** – Officers advised that they were: home ownership, shared ownership, social rented, 'affordable' rented (i.e. lower than market rent but higher than social rent) and private rent. It was noted that there were variations of these, which would be explored with anyone seeking housing advice to find what best met their needs.
- **Whether the Housing Asset Management Strategy was complete, and for more detail to be provided concerning the schedule of work for Golden Lane Estate** – Officers reported that the Asset Management Strategy was being drafted and would be brought to the next meeting of the Sub Committee.

Officers advised that Golden Lane presented more challenges than any other estate; the complexities (and high cost) of meeting listed building guidelines was one issue, another was the high percentage of leasehold properties on Golden Lane which can make it difficult (and time consuming) to get agreement on projects as homeowners were, naturally, concerned about the cost to themselves.

A 5-year major projects programme was in place and millions of pounds are being spent on Golden Lane on Great Arthur House and the replacement of concrete panels at Cullum Welch. This would be shared with residents at the first Open Meeting in February 2014. With regard to a specific point about windows, officers were waiting for a specification for Great Arthur House which meets listed building guidelines; once this was in place it could be used to replace windows on the rest of the estate.

- **Governance of the Strategy** – Officers advised that, as this was a strategy that covers more than just existing housing stock, it has to be owned by Community & Children’s Services Committee, but Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee would be the main Committee for monitoring purposes.
- **Nomination agreements** – Officers reported that when the City built homes in another Borough (e.g. the new homes being built on Avondale, in Southwark) the host Borough has the right to be able to ‘nominate’ people from their waiting list to have a certain number of tenancies, and the City negotiates the number of homes to which they have nomination rights. Once nominated the tenants are ours and all their rent comes to us.
- **What is meant by use of “innovative public and private sector working”?** Officers reported that this was not PFI or anything similar. Instead it referred to development agreements that allow the City to improve existing properties and build new ones by working with private developers on mixed development. Existing stock was aging and the City Corporation was unable to fund renovations as quickly as they were needed. New ways were therefore needed to find ways of leveraging in funding, using the advantage of land value in the City.
- **Order of priority for works** – Officers advised that Portsoken gets the profile because of its demographics, but there should not be a focus on one ward to the detriment of others. The Head of Barbican and Estates advised that work was underway to look at how the One Portsoken model might be rolled out to other wards. In the meantime, it was suggested a reference be added in to Cripplegate as the City’s other most residential ward.
- **Who attended the meeting about housing strategy mentioned and what were the outcomes?** Officers reported that this was a seminar hosted by the Chairman of the Policy Committee and involving the GLA

to discuss how the City might take a lead in encouraging more private rented homes to be built across London by investment. Community & Children's Service Officers were in attendance, but the seminar was not about social housing at all. Some further work was discussed but in the end it was felt that there was insufficient benefit to the City to take it any further.

Officers reported that amendments would now be made to the report to reflect Members' views before being circulated for more general consultation.

8. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE

A Member asked a question regarding emergency access to tower block residences in the event of a fire, and the Director of Community and Children's Services replied that this was a known issue and a number of meetings had been set up with the Borough Commander to agree a plan of action. It was also noted that as properties became void, additional fire safety measures were being installed to gradually upgrade the entire housing stock.

Another Member asked a question regarding interaction with tenants and local Councillors in other Boroughs, and officers responded that quarterly residents meetings were held on each estate and that Local Councillors were invited to attend Allocated Member visits and an on-going dialogue was being facilitated.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were no urgent items.

10. 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.

Item

11-14

Paragraph

3

11. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 27 November 2013 be approved as a correct record.

12. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW UPDATE

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services on the sheltered housing review currently being undertaken.

13. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

14. **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 urgent items.

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm

Chairman

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