

Committee:	Date:
Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee	22 May 2014
Subject: City of London Almshouses Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
Summary	
<p>This report gives Members an information update on the City of London Almshouses, in Lambeth. Some of the information in the report also relates to the eight Gresham Almshouses on the estate.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the report. 	

Main Report

Background

1. In February 2013 the City of London Almshouses Trustees (CoLAT) Committee was merged with the Housing Management Sub-Committee to form the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee. This report is presented to alternate meetings of the Sub-Committee. It updates Members on operational matters relating to the Almshouses and their residents, and highlights any issues of concern, particularly where funding is required for which is not included in the current year's budget.

Social events

2. Residents enjoyed a trip to a shopping outlet in November in time for Christmas shopping.
3. Residents expressed thanks to the Trustees for the Social Fund which continues to support building a community spirit. At the next scheme meeting residents will discuss summer activities/places they would like to visit. One suggestion already mentioned is a visit to the Poppy Factory as part of the World War 1 commemoration events.

Christmas hampers

4. The Christmas hampers were delivered by Trustees in December. Residents are thankful for the gift; however some have asked if we could review the contents of the hamper if they are fortunate to receive them again in 2014. They felt more everyday items would be more useful than some of the luxury goods usually in a gift hamper. This option will be investigated in good time for this year's delivery.

Garden work

5. The last visit from the company treating the Japanese Knotweed problem has taken place. Unfortunately, we have discovered one new small growth which has been treated but in the main the garden is clear.
6. The trees will have a light pollard this year once permission is received from the Tree Conservation Officer (Lambeth).

Community Facility & Office

7. The planning application submitted to the London Borough of Lambeth, to change the former Deputy Matron's flat to an office and community meeting place was agreed at the end of April. Residents have been consulted about the layout and options for use of the hall. Now permission is granted the builders are ready to start the work within the next few weeks. Residents will then be consulted on soft furnishings and décor. They look forward to inviting Members to an opening celebration soon.

Supporting People funding

8. After the withdrawal of the Supporting People grant from London Borough of Lambeth in April, the funding lost has been recouped by transferring these costs to Housing Benefit funding. Matron is also monitoring the payments of Housing Benefit to ensure residents are not adversely affected financially by these changes. It appears there are four residents, who are in employment and therefore not receiving Housing Benefit, who fall in to this category. Matron is negotiating with Lambeth officers regarding discretionary payments which may be available to these residents (at the rate of £16 per week for the next 3 years). We will update Trustees when Lambeth officers have indicated they are able to make the discretionary payments or not.

Essential works to Rogers properties

9. Following work to identify the source of damp problems and water ingress to the 'Rogers Cottages', our Property Services Team have started work with a "pilot" property for the essential repairs. The resident who volunteered to be the test property has vacated her home for a period of two weeks. Her belongings have been packed and stored by a removal company for the duration of the works. It is anticipated the work required will take less time for subsequent properties once the true nature of the works is established. This work once complete will make a considerable difference to energy costs for the residents.

Staffing

10. As previously reported we have now increased the gardening support on the estate. Since April our gardener is working full time at the Almshouses. He was previously on site for 3 days per week, but due to changes in staff duties on other estates he is now undertaking his duties solely at the Almshouses and Gresham Almshouses.

Road repairs and lighting

11. The surface of the roadway on the estate has been deteriorating for several years. Over the winter months it has been further damaged due to subsidence near the root barriers and raised tree roots. This is causing concern as the tarmacadam is disintegrating which is a trip/fall hazard as well as causing damage to vehicles using the estate. Our Health and Safety Advisor has prepared a report outlining concerns to residents and visitors. As a result of the report, the Property Services team will commission a survey of the damage and repairs required. It is anticipated the road surface may have to be replaced which would include work to manage the tree roots to prevent damage in the future. One eighth of the cost of this survey will be met by the Gresham Trust, but the remaining seven eighths will come from CoLAT funds.
12. Depending upon the level of repair, this may be an ideal opportunity to consider installing some low level lighting to the estate paths/roadways. Lighting is currently supplied by outside lights on the buildings and there is no path/road lighting. Subsequently during the winter months the estate is very dark; with the current deteriorating state of the roadway this forms a greater hazard to residents' safety.

Vacancies and applications

13. There is currently one vacant property which is due to be occupied shortly. There are 4 applicants on the Waiting List, all of whom have been approved, and 3 other applicants in the assessment process.

Financial implications

14. The cost of the survey referred to in paragraph 11 has not yet been established. If the cost is likely to exceed the allocated budget for 2014/15, officers will consult with the Chairman of the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee and may bring a further paper, requesting additional funds, to Members.

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