

Committee:	Date:
Gresham (City Side) Committee	10 October 2014
Subject: City of London Gresham Almshouses Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
<p style="text-align: center;">Summary</p> <p>This report gives Trustees and Members an information update on the City of London Gresham Almshouses, in Lambeth.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the report. 	

Main Report

Background

1. This report is presented half yearly to Trustees of the Gresham Almshouses. It updates Trustees on operational matters relating to the Gresham 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 coach trip to Margate on 19 June. The weather was good and a relaxing seaside visit was enjoyed by all who attended. A new transport company provided a comfortable coach which was much appreciated by the residents.

Christmas hampers

3. At the request of the Trustees after the last Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee meeting, officers have been investigating an alternative option for the provision of hampers this year. After investigation of options, including purchasing gift vouchers, it was considered that officers would purchase the hamper gifts as in previous years due to the disadvantage the gift voucher option may give some residents (declaration to HMRC as taxable income). Trustees of the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee requested officers ensure suitability of the contents of the hampers for residents. The hampers will

be delivered to residents of the morning of the 10 December and Trustees will be invited to attend.

Garden work

4. Since April 2014 the estate gardener has been working at the Almshouses on a full time basis. He had previously worked part week on another estate. This has enabled a review of his work allocation allowing him one day per week to work solely on the Gresham garden. This has ensured continuity of care to the grounds.
5. The increased gardener's hours overall have shown an improvement in the regular maintenance of the lawns and rose beds on which the residents have commented favourably.
6. The only small area of Japanese knotweed appears to be responding to treatment and the garden remains clear.

Community Facility & Office

7. The work to create a new hall and office commenced on 11 August. The office will be the last area in the development to be complete; in the meantime Matron is working from her home at East Lodge. It is anticipated the hall and office will be complete by the end of October. Officers are planning a celebratory opening event in November which Trustees will cordially be invited to attend.

Road repairs and lighting

8. Officers previously reported deterioration in the roadway on the estate, as well as a proposal to improve the lighting for residents' safety and security at the same time as repairs could be effected. Due to the remedial work at the Rogers Cottages and the communal hall project, the survey has not yet been undertaken, however it will be commissioned shortly and officers will present the findings at the next meeting/when the report is available.
9. As the lighting is poor on the estate, particularly as the winter draws in, a request has been made to investigate some low level temporary lighting as a contingency until the full survey findings are available.

Networking Group

10. The Sheltered Housing Manager Jacqueline Whitmore has been invited to join the East London Almshouses Group; the next meeting is on 9 October 2014. This is a quarterly meeting of Almshouse managers where topics of interest to Almshouse providers and good practices are shared. Other attendees include representatives of City Livery Companies who provide Almshouse accommodation and other benevolent associations. Jacqueline will provide an update on the activities of the Group for the next Committee meeting.

Vacancies and remedial work on empty property

11. There is currently one vacant property 4 Gresham, due to the death of a resident Mr Lau. Unfortunately upon inspection, it became apparent that the property is in need of considerable repair work due to an outbreak of dry rot to the skirting boards in the kitchen, rear hallway, bedroom and wet room. The cost of this work will be absorbed by the maintenance and void budget if not excessive.
12. The problem may have spread into neighbouring properties and a full survey of the extent of the dry rot will be undertaken whilst the remedial work is underway in 4 Gresham. However, if the report indicates a greater problem, officers will obtain full costs of the work and report immediately to Trustees as this work will require separate funding. We have had no indication from the neighbouring properties of any issues; officers anticipate they are being cautious in raising Trustees awareness at the point.
13. Once the repair work is complete to the property, officers will advertise the Almshouse vacancy in the Square Mile in accordance with the terms of Sir Thomas Gresham's Will. If a suitable candidate is not found through advertising, a candidate from the Almshouses who has previously requested a move to Gresham bungalow will be considered.
14. As a general point of note, officers have become aware of an increase in new enquiries with regard to availability of properties at the Almshouses, due to rising rents in the private sector.

Sheltered Housing Review

15. Officers have undertaken a review of the existing provision of sheltered housing by City of London. The purpose of the review is to consider what changes might be needed to reflect national policy and the changing needs and aspirations of people regarding their accommodation for their later years. The review is attached at Appendix 1.
16. The review and proposals to adopt a strategy of building homes for older people on all City estates is being taken to Community & Children's Services Committee in November. The next phase of the review will be to identify options for upgrading existing homes for older people; officers will be bringing a report to the Gresham Committee early next year to set out any identified options for Gresham Almshouses.

Jacqueline Whitmore
Sheltered Housing Manager

T: 020 7332 3582
E: jacqueline.whitmore@cityoflondon.gov.uk