

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Gresham (City Side) Committee	13 February 2015
<b>Subject:</b> City of London Gresham Almshouses Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community & Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Summary</b></p> <p>This report gives Trustees and Members an information update on the City of London Gresham Almshouses, in Lambeth.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the report.</li> <li>• Consider a funding request noted at point 5 of the report</li> <li>• Note the recommendation made by officers to Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee regarding eligibility criteria for applicants to City of London Almshouses Trust properties, points 18-21 (and Appendix 1) and consider adopting similar criteria for Gresham Almshouse applicants.</li> </ul>	

### **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.

#### **Office & Community Facility**

2. We are delighted to inform Trustees that the new office and community facility, converted from the former Assistant Matron's flat, was completed in early December, in time for the presentation of the Christmas hampers. The office has provided an appropriate place for the Matron and other staff to work and see residents. The Communal Hall was much needed, and has provided residents with a lovely, bright, spacious place to hold social gatherings, as well as an area with a cosy, lounge-like ambiance.

3. Rather than rushing into buying furniture, we brought some chairs and tables from Isleden House to begin with, so that residents could get the feel of the new space and decide what would be the best type of furniture. They have now chosen a mixture of armchairs, tables and upright chairs.
4. Residents are now busy organising new social activities to make the most of their new Communal Hall. Activity ideas so far include coffee mornings, a book club, a chair exercise class, a gardening club and a craft club. Residents are very much enjoying their new facility.
5. As City of London Almshouses Trust have funded the creation of the hall, Gresham Trustees are asked to consider if funds could be made available for furniture and other items for residents use in the new facility, ie fridge, dishwasher and kitchen equipment. It is anticipated this would be approximately £7,000; which would also include equipment for the activities residents have expressed an interest in (ie TV, DVD player, sewing machine for craft club). The cost of the creation of the hall is approximately £70,000.

### **Christmas hampers**

6. Residents enjoyed their hampers and would like to thank the Trustees for their generosity. As always there are a few items in the hampers not to individual residents taste, however Matron placed a "swap box" in the Hall for residents to bring their goods and swap them for items they preferred. There were a few items left which Matron took to the local food bank.
7. Due to the unexpected death of a resident there was a spare hamper which officers decided to raffle for residents in other sheltered housing managed by the City (Isleden House, Mais House and Harman Close). The tickets were £1 each and proceeds were given to The Royal British Legion as housing staff have adopted this charity in the centenary year of World War 1.

### **Garden work**

8. A recent review of Health & Safety issues on all estates identified a need for training on the proper use of garden equipment. Our gardener undertook this training in December, so we can now be confident that all equipment used at the Almshouses is done so in accordance with manufacturers' instructions and H&S regulations. The gardener has a dedicated day to work on the Gresham gardens.

### **Road repairs and lighting**

9. 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.

10. Due to the remedial work at the Rogers Cottages and the communal hall project, the survey was delayed. However, quotes have now been received for the installation of lighting around the inner path of the garden. The lighting quote is to provide a power source from the office building, across the internal road, with ducting buried in the garden encasing power cables for 22 low level lights over 320 metres at a cost of £24,000.
11. In discussions with several residents, concerns were expressed regarding the height of the lights and how brightly they might shine in resident's homes. After a review of options with the contractors, officers decided that low level lighting would be the most effective and appropriate and we will proceed on this basis.
12. The cost of the road repairs work will be approximately £30,000. This work will involve removing the current road surface, regulating lower areas and repairing potholes, adjusting any ironworks in the roadway and then laying a new surface.
13. It is considered prudent to undertake both lighting and road repairs at the same time which will minimise disruption to the estate. Extra care will be taken to seek advice regarding any issues over the tree roots which are part of the cause of the degradation to the current road surface.
14. The total cost of improving lighting and repairing the roads, then, will be £54k. This will be incorporated into the City of London Almshouses Trust budget for 2015/16.

### **Networking Group**

15. The Sheltered Housing Manager has joined the East London Almshouses Group and attended their last meeting in October. Staff members from The Mercers Company provide the administration function for the Group, arranging meetings at different Almshouses and inviting external speakers each quarter.
16. The meeting was held at Edward Edward's House, one of Southwark Charities properties. These flats were remodelled and refurbished from bedsits into one bed properties several years ago and have since been maintained to a high standard. Residents were very happy to show us round their homes which were spacious and light. There were about 20 other Almshouses officers present and all participated in lively discussions regarding common issues, such as managing residents with deteriorating health, and maintenance of buildings. There were also two outside speakers at the meeting from the Alzheimer's Society and a company detailing how to manage building maintenance for Legionella issues.

### **Performance Information**

17. No formal complaints have been received since this was last reported.

### **Eligibility criteria and vacancies**

18. The current eligibility criteria for people wishing to apply to the waiting list for City of London Almshouses, was set at a time when the Almshouses properties were in low demand. This basic criteria has also been used for Gresham Almshouses applicants (with the added requirement of the financial position of the prospective resident, as indicated in the terms of Sir Thomas Gresham's Will).
19. Officers recommended a change to the eligibility criteria due to excessive demand from applicants not requiring the support of sheltered housing, see Appendix 1.
20. At the Committee meeting on 12 January 2015, Members resolved that all applicants to the waiting list must:
  - i. **Be aged 66 years old or over;**
  - ii. **Be living in Greater London OR have worked in the City for a period of 5 years or the 12 months prior to the application OR have a child or sibling living in the City or in the London Borough of Lambeth.**
- **Members further agreed that Trustees should retain the ability to waive the criteria in exceptional circumstances.**

**These changes are to take immediate effect subject to there being no questions raised by the Charity Commission.**

21. Gresham Trustees are requested to review Appendix 1 and resolution of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee with consideration of adopting these criteria for the Gresham Almshouses (with the added proviso of the financial requirements of Sir Thomas Gresham's Will and a requirement for officers to seek applicants from within the City in the first instance).
22. There has been one vacant Gresham property which was advertised in the City at the request of the Gresham Trustees. Unfortunately officers did not receive any applications from City residents and the property will be offered to an Almshouse resident who has previously expressed an interest in moving into a Gresham bungalow. Remedial and repair work on the property took longer than expected due to the dry rot issues found upon void inspection, however this has been treated and a new kitchen and wet room have been installed, as well as full decoration throughout the bungalow.
23. There are currently 9 applicants currently living at the City of London Almshouses on the waiting list, which is held on a contingency basis should no eligible applicants apply from the City when a vacancy is notified.

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