

Committee	Date:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee	2 November 2015
Subject: City of London Almshouses Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information

Summary

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.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

In February 2013 the City of London Almshouses Trustees 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.

General Repairs & Maintenance

Following some concerns about the quality of repairs, a Property Services Manager has been visiting the Almshouses each month to post-inspect repairs and for residents to how him and discuss with him any maintenance issues they have. This has been very successful so far and has resulted in an improvement in general standards.

Consultants have been commissioned to survey the condition of the almshouses and to produce proposals for a refurbishment programme. This will form the basis of an Asset Management Plan which will set out plans for cyclical maintenance and improvements over the long-term.

Resident Engagement

Members will recall that there have been some tensions at the Almshouses regarding the activities of a small group of individuals calling themselves the

'Residents' Action Group' (RAG). The services of Southwark Mediation Centre (SMC) were solicited by officers in order to try and achieve a better understanding of the wishes of the broader community and to ensure that everyone on the estate has the opportunity to express their views.

The Manager of SMC has met with residents and facilitated discussions, as well as helping to address some concerns. Several residents have expressed positive views about this course of action and we hope that it will continue to provide a basis for constructive dialogue. The RAG has also now made it clear that they do not aim to represent other residents, only their own personal views, which is helpful.

We will be asking SMC to run a workshop to explore with residents the results of the most recent satisfaction survey so that an action plan can be agreed with staff.

Office & Community Facility

This facility is now fully furnished including comfortable lounge furniture, tables and chairs. There is a new TV, as well as a sewing machine chosen by the craft group.

Residents can book the hall through the Almshouses Manager and have been using it for various meetings. As well as the regular craft group, there is a games afternoon and residents have recently enjoyed quiz nights and a fish and chip lunch.



The new furniture at the Almshouses

Road repairs and lighting

Work to replace the damaged roadway and install low level lighting along the Almshouses roadway was undertaken in September to good effect. A meeting was held with residents before works started to discuss access and safety arrangements

and to address any queries. The lighting was planned carefully so that it does not reflect light into homes but makes the estate safer to walk around at night.

Tree pruning

A survey by London Borough of Islington contract staff was undertaken of all trees on the estate. This survey outlines the condition of the trees on the estate and has recommendations for care and pollarding of each individual tree. The survey will be used by London Borough of Islington contractors when submitting an application to London Borough Lambeth for permission to pollard selected trees and carry out any other recommended maintenance. Officers were introduced to the services of LB Islington through a Gresham Committee Member and are very grateful for the contact information which has proved very useful.

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