

Committee:	Date:
Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee	2 November 2015
Subject:	Public
Housing Estates - Allocated Members' Report	
Report of:	For Information
Director of Community & Children's Services	
<u>Summary</u>	
<p>This report, which is for information, provides an update for the Committee on events and activities on the City of London Corporation's social housing estates.</p> <p>The report is compiled in collaboration with Allocated Members, whose role is to take an active interest in their estate, to champion residents and local staff and to engage with housing issues in order to play an informed part in housing-related debates within the Committee.</p>	

Main Report

Background

- The Allocated Members Scheme was introduced in 2000, when Members of the Community & Children's Services Committee were allocated to different City of London Corporation housing estates. The purpose of the scheme was:
 - To give residents and staff a named Member to 'champion' their estate
 - To allow Members to take an interest in the estate, its residents and staff
 - To develop a group of members with housing knowledge & experience to contribute to the CC&S Committee.
- This report is presented to the Housing Management Sub-Committee twice a year.
- Housing & Neighbourhoods officers would like to thank all Allocated Members for their commitment and support to our estates in the last year. It is very much appreciated, by staff and residents.

General Estate Matters

- Many of the Allocated Members have taken part in the annual Garden Competition this year. Members have visited their estate(s) to choose the garden or display that they think is the most impressive. The Chairman of the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee then selected the Chairman's Cup winner from those. All the winners were given their cups and certificates at Residents' Celebration Day.



The winner of the Chairman's Cup in the Garden Competition – a garden on Avondale Square Estate

- We have continued with the Photography Competition for the second year running, and again we received some truly stunning pictures of our estates from residents and staff. This year, the theme was 'Summer in the City' and the competition was judged by the Deputy Chairman of your Sub-Committee. Prizes were presented with their photo at Residents' Celebration Day



The winning picture in the Photography Competition, from York Way Estate

- This year's Residents' Celebration Day was held on the 17th October 2015 at the Livery Hall, and we were delighted to have several Allocated Members with us. Once again, it was good to see so many of our residents, their children and staff attending this yearly event. A full programme of events took place, along with several workshops, information stands, stalls and awards ceremonies. The theme for this year was 'Healthy Homes, Happy People' which was reflected in the day's events.
- We continue to improve our communications and engagement with residents on each of our estates. Regular Residents' Meetings are being held on each estate, many of which are very well attended. Quarterly newsletters are sent to all residents, weekly bulletins with very local news placed on noticeboards. All estates now have their own Facebook pages and some a Twitter account
- To improve our facilities at a local level, Chip and Pin machines have been introduced in all our estate offices. This will allow residents to pay for car parking, sheds, guest flats and use of community facilities using their bank card, making it more convenient for them and reducing the amount of cash which has to be handled and banked by staff.

Avondale Square Estate - Allocated Member, Virginia Rounding

I have met with Wendy Giaccaglia, the Estate Manager and we have kept in touch by email on several occasions over the past few months to discuss issues facing the residents at Avondale Estate.

The Avondale Square Estate Twitter account (@AvondaleSq) now has over 200 followers. It has been a very useful way of sending out information and signposting residents to other sites for information. The Facebook page has been slower to take hold, but it is being promoted more and more.

We have developed a thriving community of gardeners on the estate as part of the 'Edible Avondale' project, with more residents taking part in growing their own produce. There has also been an expansion of the 'Secret Garden' with residents meeting regularly to tend the plants. Alongside this, eight new planting containers have been sited around the estate. On an estate fun day in September, residents helped to fill them with plants to enhance and bring colour to the entrance areas.

Residents' Meetings at Avondale continue to be very successful, with a lot of new faces attending and contributing to meetings. Osborne, the contractors undertaking the construction of the new flats, Community Centre and Estate Office, have attended these meetings to update residents on the works and will do so until the end of the project. At the July meeting, residents expressed their satisfaction with how the project has gone so far, with the area being kept clean and disturbance at a minimum.

Decent Homes works are now underway, with the contractors on site. New kitchens, bathrooms and gas central heating systems are being installed where these are needed. Residents have been kept informed of the progress of these projects through newsletters, weekly bulletins, Residents' Meetings, Facebook and Twitter. The works have had a positive effect on many of our tenants who have waited a long time for these improvements.



The framework of the new block almost complete at Avondale Square Estate

Small Estates (Dron House, Isleden House and Windsor House) – Allocated Member, Elizabeth Rogula

I have met with Angela Smith, the Estate Manager and her team, and have visited all three estates to discuss issues relating to them.

As part of the Decent Homes works surveys have been carried out to identify homes that need to be fitted with new kitchens and bathrooms at Windsor House.

The refurbishment project at Dron House which will produce a new estate office, a new community facility and a one bedroom property has now commenced. The Estate Office has been temporarily relocated to flat 16 Dron House, where the contractors and the Estate staff will be situated and operating a full housing management service until the completion of the new facilities. It is anticipated that the works should be completed by December 2015.

The Estate staff along with the residents at Dron House held a summer community barbeque in July. This was well attended by residents who all had an enjoyable day.

At Isleden House we are still awaiting planning permission from the London Borough of Islington for the proposed conversion of a workshop into three flats programme.

Residents continue to be informed of the progress of all these projects through newsletters, weekly bulletins, Open Meetings, and the Estate Managers' weekly surgeries on each Estate

I hope to attend further Residents' Meetings at Windsor House, Isleden House and Dron House arranged in November and December 2015.

Golden Lane – Allocated Members, Gareth Moore and Deputy John Barker

We communicate on a regular basis with Laurence Jones, the Estate Manager and aim to be a very visible presence on the estate.

Residents' Meetings are well-attended, Repairs and maintenance along with the major repairs needed to the fabric of the buildings continue to be the main discussion points. The technical service teams are fully engaged with residents on the various projects across the estate. October's meeting will take the form of an afternoon and evening drop-in session, where residents can come and speak to officers individually about any developments, queries and issues. We have found that this style of meeting attracts a wider audience and can be more constructive than traditional meetings.

We are very disappointed to inform Members that the recladding project at Great Arthur House has not yet commenced after all, despite hopes that it would be underway by now. The stringent testing on the windows highlighted areas where further attention was required. These complex technical issues are being dealt with as speedily as possible. At time of writing, we await the results of final tests and very much hope that these will be positive, and we will be able to report better news at your meeting. Residents continue to be kept informed through regular bulletins and newsletters. Once work commences, we will ensure that residents are given our full support.

The Community Centre Committee has given us notice of their intention to close. This is primarily due to a fall in membership and, as a consequence, a reduction in income needed to run the centre. The estate manager has been working closely with the management of the club to ensure a smooth hand back of the building and to ensure that those community groups who currently use the facility can continue to do so whilst we look into alternative usage. Proposals are being drawn up for the refurbishment of the building to provide wider community uses, and officers are consulting with residents on these plans.

Members of the Sub-committee will recall that we have a new Neighbourhood Patrol Service. This is a pilot project, working with the City Police, Community Safety Team and Parkguard, to tackle low level nuisance on our estates. Their work is to support that which is done by the estate office and the City Police and will also provide an extra layer of security for residents. Patrols started on 1st August 2015 and we have had very positive feedback on this service from residents, staff and the COL police.

Holloway & York Way Estates – Allocated Members, Deputy Catherine McGuinness, Deputy Michael Welbeck and Barbara Newman

We have met with Michelle Warman, the Estate Manager, on a number of occasions over the past few months to discuss issues relating to Holloway and York Way Estate, and have attended walkabouts on each of the estates.

Residents' Meetings were held on both estates in September and were well attended. These meetings were to update residents on the issues and concerns raised at previous meetings and give further updates on forthcoming improvements for the Estates. The meetings focused on supporting residents to prepare for the forthcoming introduction of Universal Credit so guest speakers were invited from Credit Union, Toynbee Hall and Islington's Law Centre.

A trial arrangement was set up earlier this year with an external car company, Europcar, to bring income to the estate by using vacant parts of York Way Car Park. However, after a few weeks it became apparent a residential estate was not suitable for the company's

needs. Due to a high number of complaints and concerns, the Estate Manager prioritised the wellbeing and wishes of residents over income and dissolved the agreement.

To assist with some of the concerns raised on York Way Estate & Holloway Estate regarding on-going anti-social behaviour, the Estate Manager has been working with the London Borough of Islington local police and three other social landlords - Southern Housing, Hyde and Circle 33 Housing Group. The four landlords are sharing the cost of neighbourhood patrols by Parkguard, who already work in other parts of Islington to tackle low level nuisance. They have some powers to assist Police and also have the flexibility to build a rapport with residents on the estates as well as assist in combating anti-social behaviour. This pilot commenced in June 2015 and the feedback so far has been very positive. They have attended resident meetings to update and answer queries..

In July we were pleased to visit the estates to judge the Garden Competition. We were extremely impressed with the care and effort with which residents attend their gardens and the standard of work by our own staff. We decided to give residents at each estate our own small token of thanks for their efforts and hard work. These were presented at the Residents' Celebration Day.

Communication with the residents has continued with the review of the quarterly newsletters, regular correspondence and weekly bulletins in the notice boards. Holloway Estate is still developing their Resident Group, and there has been some workshops organised to encourage the two residents groups to sign up to time credits and advise on external funding. Facebook has recently been introduced on both Estates. This is a very new way of sending information to residents and has so far been well received although it still has a limited audience at present. After some negative feedback about customer service in a previous resident survey, staff have worked hard to improve this aspect of work and have organised a number of events and competitions for residents, including a Halloween event.



Whitby Court at Holloway Estate

As part of the Asset Management Programme there are planned improvements for both estates, such as new windows for Holloway, new security intercoms on both estates and external/internal decoration. Whilst waiting for these works to commence York Way has had all lift floors renewed and Holloway Estate Porters have painted the palisade fencing and painted the strips on the external steps to freshen up the look of the Estate.

Middlesex Street Estate – Allocated Member, Deputy Henry Jones

I maintain regular contact with the Estate Manager, Paul Richardson and discuss any issues with him as and when they arise.

Following the retirement of Terry O'Donnell I would like to welcome Greg Nott to the estate team. Greg is the new Estate Officer for Middlesex Street Estate. Previously Greg was the Estate Officer at Sumner Buildings (in Southwark Estates) and has also worked at Golden Lane Estate. I wish him well in his new post.

The estate had a Residents' Meeting on Wednesday 29th July. Subjects covered included an update from the police, highlighting the low level of crime on the estate, a presentation on the planned landscaping to the entrance of the estate and updates on major projects. The meeting was attended by Parkguard, to introduce the new Neighbourhood Patrol Service, and this was greeted very positively by residents. Subsequent feedback about the service has been extremely favourable.

Two drop-in sessions were held on Wednesday 9th September for residents to discuss the proposal to install some outdoor gym equipment on the estate for the exclusive use of residents. This proposal has been greeted with great enthusiasm by younger residents, although some older residents have expressed concern about noise and other issues. At these sessions residents were invited to give their views and ask any questions. Air quality concerns were also discussed. Colleagues from Fusion, who manage Golden Lane Leisure Centre, are leading on this project. A decision on the proposals has yet to be made but resident swill be kept fully informed.

The estate staff held a MacMillan Coffee Morning on Friday 25th September in the community hall. Many residents attended and much needed funds for cancer research were raised. Cakes, biscuits and other nibbles were baked or provided by residents.

The estate recycling area provides a much needed and well used facility for the estate as recycling is important to the City of London Corporation. However, this particular area has attracted unwelcome attention from some rough sleepers recently. To combat this anyone found to be in this area are reported to our rough sleeper team to ensure that they receive the assistance required. Parkguard are also paying particular attention to this issue as part of their patrols. The recycle bins have also been moved inside the car park thus enabling ease of access for residents, and reducing the opportunity for rough sleeping. The area where the bins were located is being fenced off which provides a cleaner look for the estate and a safer environment.

Southbank Estates – Allocated Member, Randall Anderson

I have recently been appointed as the Allocated Member for the Southbank Estate and look forward to meeting with the estate staff and to visiting the estates themselves in the near future.

A residents meeting was held in July at Queensborough Community Centre. A representative from The Bridge Centre in Southwark Bridge Road addressed the meeting to encourage our residents to use the facilities available. The Bridge Centre is close to our resident's home and offers a gym, health and wellbeing programmes a café and spaces to hire for local residents and businesses.

A representative from the Living Streets Charity also spoke to residents about their work in campaigning for safer pedestrian environments and promoting walking for improved health.

As a result of this a community street audit walkabout was arranged at William Blake Estate and the surrounding streets in July. It was well attended by local residents and staff. The Officer from Living Streets Charity led a tour of the local area looking at the roads, traffic and pedestrian issues. Careful note was taken of residents' views on positive and negative aspects of the walking environment. A report with recommendations has been compiled and sent to Department of the Built Environment who will liaise with Transport for London and other agencies to implement the recommendations where feasible.

The new Estate Officer at William Blake Estate is continuing to have a very positive influence on the Estate. Regular meetings are held with residents and the local beat police to tackle low level incidents of anti-social behaviour. William Blake is also to be the subject of a CCTV pilot. Consultants were on site in September to confirm the intended position of cameras around the estate.

The residents of Horace Jones House have now settled into their new home. There have been a number of building defects that staff are addressing with the developers and contractors. A drop in session for residents was arranged in early October on the roof garden for residents to discuss various topics with a variety of officers such as Rents, Housing Benefits, Repairs and the local staff. This was very well attended and was an opportunity for residents to meet each other.

Sydenham Hill Estate – Allocated Member, Mark Wheatley

I have been in communication with the Estate Manager, Sonia Marquis and hope to be meeting up with her shortly.

Sydenham Hill Estate had their second residents meeting for the year in July, which was very well attended. There were lively discussions around the parking contract and managing unauthorised parking around the Estate. The local police and community support officers sent information on crime prevention and gave assurances that they would visit residents at home if they were concerned about crime in the area. The residents discussed starting up an association again and the Estate Manager will explore this further with tenants on the estate. The Community Development Officer gave advice about developing more community and social events on the estates.

The Estate Manager gave an update on the Estate Plan and advised residents on the process for participating in the next plan due in 2016. A meeting will be arranged for residents early in the New Year for those interested in contributing to the next estate plan.

The Community Tea events continue every fortnight in the community hall.

The residents celebrated Lammas Day in August 2015. The event was enjoyed by the whole estate and culminated in a magicians show in the hall which was the highlight of the day.

Sheltered Housing – Allocated Members, Ann Holmes and Mark Wheatley

We have spoken with Jacqueline Whitmore on several occasions recently to discuss matters relating to all the sheltered schemes, and to arrange visits.

Each sheltered estate enjoyed trips out to the seaside throughout the summer and all were fortunate to enjoy good weather each time, even when it was raining in London.

As previously reported, City of London Officers are currently engaging with the residents at Mais House, as their homes have been identified as requiring the most improvement as part of the Sheltered Housing Review. Since March there have been four meetings with residents, some attended by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of your Sub-Committee. The most recent meeting was a drop-in session for residents to look at the possible options for the Mais House building and site. Residents have been given many assurances about the care and support which will be available to them, whatever option is chosen for the future of Mais House. In addition to the meetings, Jacqueline Whitmore and Elizabeth Donnelly hold regular surgeries at Mais House so that residents have at least two opportunities to speak with one of them privately about any questions or concerns. A number of people have taken the opportunity to move out of Mais House now because they wish to relocate, and any vacated flats have been left empty to give maximum flexibility once a decision is made about the works to take place.

Residents at Mais House have had a few evening parties throughout the summer organised by different individuals, for which their neighbours were very appreciative.

Harman Close residents have been getting to know their new Scheme Manager, Carl Newbold over the summer and we have received good feedback about his friendly helpful manner. Carl has arranged several crime prevention and safety talks specifically aimed at older people from the local community police officers which residents found very helpful. They very much enjoyed their summer trip and are now looking forward to Christmas events.

Several sheltered scheme residents were successful in receiving prizes at the Residents Celebration Day for their garden and planted pots. They thoroughly enjoyed their day and to receive prizes and certificates recognising their hard work in gardens on the estates made it more special for them.

Consultees

This report was compiled in consultation with the Allocated Members, managers and staff of the City of London's housing estates.

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