

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE**  
**Tuesday, 16 May 2017**

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub  
(Community and Children's Services) Committee held at Guildhall,  
Tuesday, 16 May 2017 at 2.00 pm

**Present**

**Members:**

Randall Anderson (Chairman)  
John Fletcher (Deputy Chairman)  
Mary Durcan  
Marianne Fredericks  
Deputy Henry Jones  
Dhruv Patel  
Susan Pearson  
Deputy Elizabeth Rogula  
Deputy John Tomlinson

**Officers:**

Julie Mayer	-	Town Clerk's
Philippa Sewell	-	Town Clerk's
Wendy Giaccaglia	-	Community and Children's Services
Jacque Campbell	-	Community and Children's Services
Amy Carter	-	Community and Children's Services
Paul Murtagh	-	Community and Children's Services
Bayo Igoh	-	Community and Children's Services
Paul Jackson	-	Community and Children's Services
Adam Johnstone	-	Community and Children's Services
Chris Keesing	-	Chamberlain's Department

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Alderman David Graves and Barbara Newman.

**2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN  
RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

**3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Being the only Member willing to serve, Mr Randall Anderson was elected as Chairman for the ensuing year.

**4. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

Follow a ballot, in which Mr John Fletcher received 5 votes and Alderman David Graves received 4 votes, Mr John Fletcher was elected as Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

5. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 16 January 2017 be approved as a correct record.

6. **SUB COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERS ALLOCATED TO ESTATES**

Members noted the Terms of Reference of the Sub Committee, which had been approved by the Community and Children's Services Committee on 11 May 2017. Members noted the following amendment to the printed copy, following the meeting of the Community and Children's Services Committee:

*'It is convention for the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Grand Committee to be appointed to this subcommittee'. ~~as ex-officio members~~*

In respect of Allocated Members, officers advised that, whilst the City's estates within the Square Mile have Ward Members to represent them, the only Member involvement in the 11 estates outside the City's boundaries is via the Allocated Member role and therefore, for these estates, the Allocated Member is a vital link to the City. Allocated Members for the out of City estates have, in the past, been able to liaise with councillors from the local authorities to the benefit of our tenants, and this work is much-valued by our residents and officers.

It was also accepted that some Ward Members have specific knowledge of City Estates and would therefore serve well as Allocated Members, as had been the case previously. Members noted that new Members representing Cripplegate had expressed a particular interest in the Golden Lane Estate. Members suggested that the Allocated Member Guidelines for Cripplegate might benefit from some amendment and the Chairman agreed to discuss this with the Cripplegate Members on the Sub Committee, outside of this meeting. Officers advised that currently, quarterly meetings were held with Cripplegate Estate officers, chaired by the Director of Community and Children's Services and Cripplegate Members were invited.

In concluding, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman suggested that interest be canvassed from the Community and Children's Services Committee, via email. Two Members in attendance, who were also Allocated Members, expressed a wish to remain as such.

**RESOLVED**, that – the Sub Committee's Terms of reference and Guidelines for Members Allocated to Estates be received, subject to the comments above.

7. **TACKLING SOCIAL HOUSING TENANCY FRAUD**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Chamberlain's Anti-Fraud team to tackle social housing tenancy fraud during the 2016/17 reporting year. Members commended an excellent report and the work of the team which benefitted the City of London Corporation financially

and the morale of the vast majority of honest tenants. Members asked if they could receive case studies in between reports to the Sub Committee.

In respect of a question about short term lets, officers explained that this would constitute a breach of tenancy but enforcement action was challenging, given that it could be very difficult to gather admissible evidence. However officers always acted on local intelligence and worked closely with the National Fraud Office.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

**8. HOUSING ESTATES - ALLOCATED MEMBERS' REPORT**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an update on events and activities on the City of London Corporation's social housing estates. In response to a question, Members noted that the windows on the west elevation of Great Arthur House were complete but there was still finishing to be done on the balconies.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

**9. CITY OF LONDON ALMSHOUSES UPDATE**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an update on the City of London's Almshouses in Lambeth and the eight Gresham Almshouses on the Estate. Officers advised on the outcome of a recent survey about allowing house cats for Almshouses residents. Members noted that 17 out of 50 residents responded, with only 8 being in favour and therefore the Policy had not changed.

In response to a question about the Trustee status of Members of this Sub Committee, the Town Clerk advised that the City of London acted as Trustee, as was the case with the City Bridge Trust, and therefore each Member of the City of London Corporation was a 1/125<sup>th</sup> Trustee. Members were reminded that the Town Clerk had circulated advice on decision making for trustees and offered to forward this again, given there were new Members on the Sub Committee.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

**10. MAIS HOUSE DECANT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Mais House Decant Programme. A later version of this report had been circulated after the agenda despatch for this meeting and was tabled for Members.

RESOLVED – that Option 2, as set out in the report, be approved and officers be delegated authority to offer financial assistance to residents receiving offers of accommodation from other providers, up to a maximum of £45 per week, where charges for that accommodation exceed current charges at Mais House.

**11. PETS POLICY**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the City of London Housing Service Pets Policy. In response to questions, Members noted that there were currently no emotional assistance schemes in the UK and therefore any exceptions would be strictly limited and considered on a case by case basis. In respect of the small number of properties with self-contained gardens, where dogs are permitted, officers advised that there were no size restrictions on animals but residents would be directed to RSPCA guidance. All such dogs would need to be kept on leashes and irresponsible ownership would be dealt with under the enforcement policy. Members generally accepted the Policy and noted that pets were important to the wellbeing of some residents but asked that it be balanced with amenity of all residents and for exceptions to be managed very carefully.

RESOLVED, that – the pets Policy for use by the Housing and Neighbourhoods Division be approved as part of Estate Management Practice.

**12. COMPLAINTS POLICY**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which outlined the review of the City of London Housing Service Complaints Policy. Members noted that the Policy was of the standard recommended by the Ombudsman and officers outlined how the process was administered; from informal to Stage 3, which was referred to the Town Clerk. Officers advised that the informal stage was a chance for resolution and that a manager would suggest escalating an informal complaint to formal, if they felt it could not be resolved informally. Finally, a Member suggested that it would be helpful if the Policy included a link to the websites of both the Ombudsmen and Southwark Mediation.

RESOLVED, that – the revised Complaints Policy be approved for immediate implementation.

**13. HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME 2017**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which presented the proposed City of London Corporation Housing Allocations Scheme for 2017, ahead of public consultation.

In response to questions, Members noted that the scheme was set up for the National Living Wage and not London Living Wage. Officers advised that the London Living Wage was a voluntary standard and, if adopted for this policy, the threshold would move to £40,000, which would effectively crowd the lower end of the income spectrum. However, genuine need would qualify for a priority under different criteria. Members noted the City's strong support for the London Living wage and suggested that, in order to protect the City's position, this argument be put forward more clearly in the Policy.

Members also noted that, under government legislation, social housing tenancies were now fixed term and new guidance was due to be released. However, officers advised that the City of London Corporation would always seek to provide the longest tenancies possible as this gave tenants stability,

particularly those with families and built strong communities and frequent turnovers attracted a charge to the HRA account. Finally, Members noted that there was likely to be a new government policy which would place a levy on local authorities with high value social housing but, so far, this had not been enacted.

RESOLVED, that the draft Housing Allocations Scheme for 2017 be approved for public consultation.

**14. DECENT HOMES WORKS TO PROPERTIES PREVIOUSLY OMITTED FROM PROGRAMMES (CALL-BACKS 2017-2020) - GATEWAY 3/4**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of decent homes works to properties (previously omitted from call-back programmes). Members noted that the report had been approved by the Projects Sub Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> May.

RESOLVED, that :

1. Option 1 be approved for proceeding to procurement and Gateway 5 (of the City of London Corporation Projects Procedure).
2. The estimated total project budget of £575,000 be noted.
3. A budget of £5,000 be approved to reach the next Gateway.

**15. DECENT HOMES WORKS TO AVONDALE SQUARE ESTATE (PHASE II) - GATEWAY 3/4**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of decent homes works to Avondale Square Estate (Phase 11). Members noted that the report had been approved by the Projects Sub Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> May.

RESOLVED, that :

1. Option 1, a structure programme of Decent Homes works to 74 flats on the Avondale Square Estate be approved for proceeding to procurement and Gateway 5.
2. The estimated total projected budget of £1,035,000 be noted.
3. A budget of £7,000 be approved to reach the next Gateway.

**16. CONCRETE REPAIRS TO CULLUM WELCH HOUSE - GATEWAY 4**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of concrete repairs to Cullum Welch House. Members noted that the report had been approved by the Projects Sub Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> May.

Members noted that there had been some leaseholder challenge in respect of the concrete testing works and this was being progressed with the Comptroller and City Solicitor.

In response to questions about the timing of reports, the Town Clerk advised that, generally, reports would go to the Housing Management and Almshouses

Sub Committee before the Projects Sub Committee. However, there had been a protracted recess period between the end of February and the end of April 2017, due to the 2017 City Elections and no meetings has been scheduled during this time. Members were reminded that the Sub Committee reserved the right to reject reports and both the Grand and Sub Committee had already approved the major works programme. Officers also assured Members that Committee timings would not hold up works unnecessarily and, in such cases, decisions would be sought under delegated or urgency provision. A Member suggested that future reports include links to previous reports as this would provide background knowledge for new Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED, that :

1. Option 2, replacement of the concrete balustrades to the north elevation, patch repairs to concrete staircases, beams, slab ends and patch repair and recoating of the pre-cast concrete planters and pot holders on the south elevation, be approved for proceeding to procurement and Gateway 5.
2. The estimated total project budget range of £1,100,000 - £1,200,000 be noted.
3. A budget of £25,000 be approved to reach the next Gateway.
4. The project be transferred from the complex approval track to the regular approval track.

**17. OPTIONS APPRAISAL - PETTICOAT TOWER STAIRWELL PANELS - GATEWAY 3/4**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of Petticoat Tower stairwell panels. Members noted that the report had been approved by the Projects Sub Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Whilst the report was welcomed, Members suggested that, given the timescale between the meetings, this report might have benefited from being processed under urgency. Officers advised that Option 3, as set out in the report, had been fully consulted on and would replicate what was already in place. Members were offered a visit, should they require further clarity.

RESOLVED, that –

1. The budget of £429,000 be noted.
2. Option 3 be approved for proceeding to procurement and Gateway 5.
3. £35,839 be approved, as detailed in section 20 of the options appraisal, which includes:
4. £18,000 resources required to reach the next Gateway.
5. Retrospective approval of the £13,354 associated with the installation of the scaffolding and debris netting under Health and Safety requirements
6. The on-going costs for the hire of scaffolding up to Gateway 5.

18. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE**

A Member asked the following question in advance of the meeting:

*'Middlesex Street residents have been informed that we are in the process of appointing expert consultants to look at the both the Heating (and hot water) and the ventilation so that we may develop detailed options appraisal report.*

*However in a letter to the Chair of the leaseholders association, an officer wrote that rather than a fully independent report looking at all options there was a preferred option that we are looking to keep the estate on a communal heating system rather than seek to install individual systems in each dwelling.*

*The communal system is unpopular with many tenants and leaseholders. As we are going to spend money on experts can we please make sure they look objectively at all options and take into account environmental considerations and the relative nuisance of different types of installation to residents'.*

Officers responded as follows:

The City has appointed Phoenix Compliancy Management, a specialist mechanical and electrical consultant, to carry out a detailed condition survey of the communal and district heating, hot water and ventilation systems at:

- York Way;
- Cullum Welch/Crescent House on the Golden Lane Estate;
- Middlesex Street.

The survey will provide us with detailed and robust information on the condition of the existing heating systems, their serviceability and their expected remaining life span.

The survey will also provide us with a detailed options appraisal on the future maintenance, improvement and/or replacement of the existing systems taking into account a number of relevant factors including:

- Current condition;
- Costs (future maintenance and replacement costs);
- Reliability;
- Available technology;
- Environmental considerations;
- Connectivity;
- Sustainability.

At this stage, we have made no decisions as to the future maintenance, improvement and/or replacement of the communal heating system at Middlesex Street and will not do so until we have received, considered and analysed all

the options presented to us by our specialist consultant. The report is expected to be submitted to us in the Autumn.

In response to a supplementary question, Members noted there would be Estate wide consultation once an options appraisal was ready but there might be limited options in this case. Officers also advised that a new Communications Manager and communications strategy were in place.

In response to another question about Rogue Landlords and the comprehensive enforcement policy in place in the London Borough of Newham, officers advised that there were no private landlord initiatives in the City as there were so few of them. However, the Environmental Health Team played a key intervention and enforcement role in cases of houses in multiple occupations. The Housing Team worked very closely with Environmental Health colleagues but the number of cases was very low. Officers also advised of a project that the Housing Team were working on with the London Borough of Hackney, in respect of Safeguarding, which would raise awareness amongst private landlords.

19. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other business.

20. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** – That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

**Item**

22 - 24

**Paragraph**

3

21. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2017 be approved as a correct record.

22. **REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS**

Members noted an urgent report of the Town Clerk which had been taken since the last meeting of the Sub Committee in respect of rewiring works on the Holloway Estate.

23. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE**

There were no non-public questions.

24. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE SUB COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no other business.