

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE

Monday, 16 September 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the meeting held at Guildhall at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

John Fletcher (Chairman)
Mary Durcan (Deputy Chairman)
Randall Anderson
Marianne Fredericks
Barbara Newman
William Pimlott
Jason Pritchard

Officers:

Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains
Michael Harrington	- Chamberlains (Procurement)
Nicholas Richmond-Smith	- Chamberlains (Procurement)
Liam Gillespie	- Community & Children's Services
Jacqueline Whitmore	- Community & Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community & Children's Services
Mike Kettle	- Community & Children's Services
Carol Boswarthack	- Community & Children's Services
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman David Graves, Dhruv Patel, Susan Pearson, Peter Bennett, Deputy the Reverend Stephen Haines and Ruby Sayed.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 22 July 2019 be approved as a correct record.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LIST

Members received the Sub Committee's Outstanding Actions list and noted those items which would be discharged on this and future agenda.

Tendering Process/Contractor Behaviour

Members welcomed two senior procurement officers to the meeting, in response to their concerns expressed at the last meeting about the behaviour of some contractors who had withdrawn at pre-contract stage or sought to omit elements of the specification.

The officers advised that a Housing Working Group had been set up in February 2019, following a decision of the Community and Children's Services Committee. Members noted that this group identified issues at tender stage; i.e. - in respect of terms and conditions and insurance, and conducted deep dives into those projects with issues and lessons learnt. Officers were now reviewing tender returns more robustly; interrogating price and eliminations up front, so as to avoid coming back to Committee at a later stage seeking additional funding.

Whilst Members accepted that some negotiations might be reasonable, they also stressed that contractors were bound by the Terms and Conditions of the Contract. Officers explained that, from previous experience, it was difficult to penalise Contractors, as it could be time consuming and expensive for both sides and with minimal prospects of success.

Members noted that a framework had been set up; i.e. a pool of pre-qualified suppliers, and processes were now in place to enable officers to gauge reliability. Furthermore, poor performance or a lack of engagement could result in a contractor being removed from the framework. Queries on terms and conditions were also being raised with the City Solicitor at an earlier stage. Whilst the majority of variations were now being rejected, due diligence and precise cost management allowed for balancing if any essential variations.

Whilst the unacceptable behaviour of some contractors could not be totally eradicated, Members noted that improvements were becoming evident; i.e. the balconies, windows and doors contract and the two Gateway 6 projects reported on today's agenda, which had come in under budget.

Members accepted that the above approach may take a little longer in the earlier stages of a contract, but was invaluable in terms of protecting the interests of both the City Corporation and its residents.

Parking Charges Review

Members noted that officers had written a project brief to appoint a consultant and were seeking to appoint someone experienced in HRA parking. Disabled drivers had been advised that they would stop paying charges on 1st October 2019.

Revised Rent Targets

In response to Members' request for a more ambitious target, officers had revised the current target and this was due to be taken to the Director for approval.

5. HOUSING MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which updated Members on progress with the Housing Major Works Programme and issues affecting progress on individual schemes. Members noted that the first planning permission had been granted in respect of the windows replacement programme.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

6. FIRE SAFETY UPDATE - HRA PROPERTIES

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an update on fire safety to HRA Properties. The Chairman advised that a Member, who had submitted their apologies, had asked a series of questions, which had also been put to the Community and Children's Services Committee the previous week. The Chairman had asked for the Member to receive written responses.

Officers agreed to investigate a recent spate of false alarms at Middlesex Street and advised Members that they would be increasing the specification of the alarms. Furthermore, the generator for the fire fighters' lift had been fitted with a sim card which would notify on activation. Members asked for a breakdown of the recent false alarms and whether the Fire Brigade had charged for the call-outs.

Members noted that the City Corporation is committed to providing 60 minute rated fire doors, as a standard across all of the estates, and the doors had been tested with a maximum burn time of 75 minutes. Where this would not be possible, i.e. the block has restriction such as a listed status, there would be a minimum rating of 30 minutes, with the expectation that the door would be tested to a maximum burn time of 45 minutes.

Members were reminded of the Fire Brigade's 'Stay Put' advice, except for common areas, and this would be reiterated to residents once the new doors had been installed. Furthermore, the installation of sprinklers next year would have an immediate impact.

Officers explained that the free swing powered doors would close until the alarm was activated and Members noted that new technologies indicate whether door closers and smoke alarms had been removed. Officers were fully aware of the dangers associated with rapidly closing doors; i.e. trapping fingers. Members asked for an update on the sprinkler installation project in February 2020.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

7. FIRE SAFETY DOORS - GREAT ARTHUR HOUSE

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the installation of Fire Safety Doors at Great Arthur

House. Members noted that fire separation might need to be increased around the gas pipes and corridor ventilation and, long term, it would be desirable to remove gas entirely.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The above timelines be noted as estimates, based on the assumption that the works will be considered as improvements and there will be no recharge to leaseholders;
2. Authority to proceed be given (unless told otherwise) on the assumption that the works, as per advice from Counsel, are considered as improvements and cannot be recharged to long leaseholders;
3. The increased scope of works be approved;
4. The appointment of a design team and fire safety consultant be approved, to assess the increased scope of works required to achieve full compartmentation and fire stopping;
5. The additional budget of £119,000 to reach next Gateway stage be approved, noting that this covers additional design stage testing related to the increased scope, design fees, and works associated with temporary installations to reach the next Gateway;
6. The revised project budget (works) of £1,856,000 (excluding risk) be noted;
7. The total estimated cost of the project at £1,993,000 be noted (including spend to date, additional consultancy fees & staff costs / risk not included);
8. **Option 1 be approved;** i.e. - Replacement of front door sets and frames, fanlights, all panel compartmentation, internal and external common area fire doors, as well as internal fire escape doors within the individual properties.

8. **DECENT HOMES WORKS TO AVONDALE SQUARE ESTATE, SE1 - PHASE 2**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Decent Homes Works to Avondale Square Estate, SE1. Members noted that the Asset Management System recorded replacement dates, and these would be captured by the next round of Decent Homes Inspections. In the case of older boilers, which were becoming obsolete and potentially dangerous, they would be covered by annual servicing and age of replacement.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The content of this report be noted.
2. The lessons learnt be noted.
3. The project be closed.

9. **LETTING/SALES POLICY FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of a letting/sales policy for new developments. Officers specifically asked Members for a steer on a policy in respect of absentee lease

holders and noted that the London Boroughs of Southwark and Hackney initiated CPOs in such cases. Member discussed this at length and were mindful that some absentee Landlords might be short term; i.e. working away from home and not making a profit. In concluding, Members asked for a further report, following consultation with the Comptroller and City Solicitor and other Local Authorities.

RESOLVED,

1. A Local Lettings Plan be agreed for each development;
2. A Tenants Charter be implemented for each development;
3. Studio flats, classified as small one-bedroom flats at Sydenham, be eligible for existing applicants on our waiting list who qualify for studio flats;
4. Long leaseholders, **who occupy their flat as their only or principal home**, be offered a new flat if their existing flat is subject to demolition as part of a new development on terms to be agreed;
5. Members receive a further report in respect of absentee Long leaseholders, as set out above.
6. Views of the Comptroller and City Solicitor be sought in relation to shared ownership terms and the purchase of existing sold properties and a further paper is bought to this Committee to finalise/agree such terms.

10. **NEW PORTSOKEN COMMUNITY CENTRE UPDATE**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the new Portsoken Community Centre. The Community and Children's Services Committee, at their meeting last Friday, had requested the installations of a double door. Members noted that the lift was very large, to accommodate buggies and wheelchairs, and officers agreed to consider the accommodation of a buggy park, similar to those provided for 'stay and play' and similar events within the libraries.

Officers were considering the best funding terms and more detail would emerge in forthcoming 'Gateway' reports. The annual running cost is yet to be confirmed once the annual rental cost was known. Members noted that the current hire charges were very competitive and a good income stream from private hires would bring down running costs, enabling preferential rates to be passed on to residents and charitable groups. Members noted that, at some stage, governance might need to be considered in more detail.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted and the Community and Children's Services and Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committees receive a report at a future meeting, setting out governance options.

11. **ALMSHOUSES UPDATE** Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided a regular update on the Almshouses. Members commended the new money advisory service and noted that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman were sighted on the background of all new residents. Members were reminded that new residents were required to meet a set criteria, applications can be received via Lambeth Council and local community groups. The Sheltered Housing Manager is also a member of the East London Almshouses Association, which met twice a year

to consider issues affecting Almshouses estate management. The Almshouses Association also offers a free vacancy section on their website via which officers have received requests for accommodation. Officers advised that the standards of occupancy were reviewed regularly, in line with the HRA allocations scheme.

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

There were no questions.

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

Members noted that the Estate visits would take place on the following dates:

- South Estates – 31 October – 1-5 pm
- North Estates - 27 November – 1-5 pm

NB: Annual Hamper visit to the City of London and Gresham Almshouses – 6 December approximately 10 am to 1 pm.

- The 20 November, 2019 Meeting (2pm) would take place at the Golden Lane Community Centre
- The 20 January, 2020 Meeting (2pm) would take place at Artizan Street Library and Community Centre.

The Town Clerk would confirm these arrangements with outlook invitations to Members.

14. **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
15-17

Paragraph
3

15. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November be approved as a correct record.

16. **TENANTS AND LANDLORDS ELECTRICAL SERVICES TESTING AND SMOKE DETECTOR INSTALLATION - PHASE 4**

Members considered and approved a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.

17. **CITY OF LONDON PRIMARY ACADEMY ISLINGTON (COLPAI) - GATEWAY 5 ISSUES REPORT**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.

18. **REQUEST FOR TRUSTEES PERMISSION TO WITHDRAW A LICENCE TO OCCUPY AN ALMSHOUSE**
Members considered and approved a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.
19. **REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN**
Members received a report of the Town Clerk in respect of an urgent decision taken since the last meeting of the Sub Committee.
20. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE**
There were no non-public questions.
21. **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.

The meeting ended at 12.50 pm

Chairman

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