

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Monday, 30 November 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub (Community and Children's Services) Committee held at VIRTUAL MEETING – ACCESSIBLE REMOTELY on Monday, 30 November 2020 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Randall Anderson
Mary Durcan (Deputy Chairman)
John Fletcher (Chairman)
Marianne Fredericks
Alderman David Graves
Susan Pearson
William Pimlott
Peter Bennett
The Revd Stephen Haines
Ruby Sayed

Officers:

Paul Murtagh -
Liam Gillespie -

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Jason Pritchard.

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

There were no declaratio

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the public minutes summary of the meeting held on Monday, 30 September 2020, be approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

Presentation from Whyte Constructions

A Member noted that the virtual presentation from Whyte Constructions was listed for today's meeting, but there is no mention of the virtual presentation on the agenda. The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, noted that the presentation had been deferred, and it will be presented to the Committee in the first meeting of 2021.

Estate Inspections Performance

A Member noted that the latest figures of the Estate Inspections Performance are not updated on the City of London's website. The Member asked if the communication's team had updated the website accordingly. The Head of Housing Management noted that the information had been passed onto the Communication team, who responsible for putting up the information on the website. It was noted that the Communication team is slightly behind schedule and the Head of Housing Management agreed to chase this up with the Communication's team and ensure that the information is updated.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, went through the listing and updated the committee.

Tenancy Visits

This was reported to the Committee in March 2020, and a further report will be provided to the Committee in its future sittings.

New Portsoken Community Centre

The Committee was informed that the Members of the Grand Committee had received several reports on the New Portsoken Community Centre. The first report stated that the Department for Community and Children's Services would be responsible for the community center's governance until there are some stability and reliability. The second recommendation to the Grand Committee was that an elected Member from the Court of Common Council would sit on the advisory board for the New Portsoken Community Centre.

The Chairman mentioned that a number of issues are still of concern to the local resident, such as the use of the Green Box. It was agreed that the Community Centre's purpose is not changing, and for the future, the local residents will have a say in how the New Portsoken Community Centre will be run. This should alleviate any community fears.

A report on the governance and staffing structure of the New Portsoken Community Centre will also be presented to the Grand Committee, as well as the Sub-Committee.

Great Arthur House – Cladding Works

The Committee was informed that the City of London has now received a court hearing date for March 2021. A day has been set aside by the court, but the City of London awaits to hear any further updates.

Climate Action Strategy – Funding

A Member asked if there has been any further update on the Climate Action Strategy – Funding available for the Committee, which comes to an end in May 2021. The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, advised the Committee that around £8million worth of funding for housing projects are available. In terms of how the funding can be accessed remains uncertain, and Officers are working with the Chamberlain to address the matter. The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, agreed to return to the Committee on this after the meeting. The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate &

Property Services, also agreed to bring a report to the Grand Committee and the Sub-Committee on the matter.

The Deputy Chairman asked if the Climate Action Strategy should become a standing item for the Committee. The Chairman of the Grand Committee agreed to raise the matter with the Chair of the Policy and Resources and provide a direction to the Committee on a later date.

A Member raised a question on if the Committee was eligible for the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Funds for some of the development works within the estates of the City of London.

The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, responded that there are two approaches to this. In terms of the Climate Action Strategy – Funding, the Corporation is very vested in this. The Community and Children's Services is working with colleagues in the Chamberlains to see if the funding can be accessible. Additionally, Officers are also assessing to see if the City of London can also apply to the revised Green Deal which the Government has announced. The Committee was assured that Officers are exploring both internal and external funding sources. If the City of London cannot access the external funding, the Department can direct residents (leaseholders) to appropriate sources to access the funds.

Another Member noted that the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood funds had been applied by a local community group, which is a rolling program, and there is no deadline for applying. The Member informed the Committee that they had raised a question to the local MP on the Green Homes Grant and whether the City of London can access the Green Deal; the Member agreed to share the MP's communication to the wider Committee.

The Chairman of the Grand Committee noted that the City of London could not apply directly for the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund's and this needs to be driven by the leaseholders themselves.

5. FIRE SAFETY UPDATE - HRA PROPERTIES

The Committee received a report from the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Fire Safety Update – HRA Properties.

The Committee was informed that the sprinklers works are due to go out to the tenders soon. The delay was due to the Great Arthur House being a listed building, which had raised some issues. The Committee was also informed that further fire risk assessments would be carried out as three years have elapsed since the last test. A new contractor, Turner & Townsend, has been appointed to assist with the future fire risks assessments.

It was noted that in March 2020, the Department undertook the installation of a temporary door set at one property in Great Arthur House so that, the original door set could be removed and sent away for destructive testing to assess its level of fire and smoke resistance. The national expectation for a door set of this type and age is 15 to 20 minutes fire resistance; however, in this instance, the door set failed in less than five minutes.

A Member raised serious concerns that the above test failed in less than five minutes and the need to escalate the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, responded that the door tests failed mainly due to the fanlights space above the doors. The intermediary work was carried out on the fanlight space above the doors. The majority of the doors have been replaced to deal with the particular issues; the delay was due to gaining access to some of the properties to carry out the work.

A new fire alarm system has now been installed in Great Arthur House, along with signages being updated and the residents been written to the changes. The Committee was assured that Officers reacted quickly to address the issues raised, rather than ignore the problem. The Member called for an escalation of the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) implementation.

The Member also noted that there was a power outage in Basfield, and residents reported fire sparks; the Member asked if the fire extinguishers can be added in communal areas and if this is not the policy, can the matter be confirmed. The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, agreed to return to the Committee on the matter after the meeting. In terms of the Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), the Committee was assured that a report would be presented to the Committee in its next Committee meeting.

The Chairman of the Grand Committee noted that some of the fire signages are not making any sense in the Barbican. The Chairman of the Grand Committee requested an assurance that this is not the case with the HRA properties. The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, confirmed that the HRA properties' signs are all correct and verified by an independent consultant. The Committee was further reassured that there are no issues with regards to the HRA properties fire signages.

This was followed by another Member who asked if an update on the fire sprinkler installation completions can be provided. The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, advised the Committee that the relevant Department is working towards an installation date by October 2021. The Committee was further reassured that if there are any delays with the work, the Committee will be notified of the reasons for the delays.

RESOLVED – That the Committee noted the report.

6. **HOUSING MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Housing Major Works Programme – Progress Report.

The Committee was informed that the Petticoat Tower - balcony doors and windows work has been progressing; however, due to the announcement of a second lockdown, further completions and were subject to delay. Officers confirmed that the works on the balcony doors and windows would be

completed by the end of the week. The Committee was further informed that the resident satisfaction levels are at 98% to date.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their hard work on the project.

RESOLVED – That the Committee noted the report.

7. **HOUSING UPDATE AND RISK REGISTER**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Housing Update and Risk Register.

The Committee was informed that this is a report which comes to the Committee twice a year, but, due to lockdown measures causing some Committees to be cancelled, one reporting cycle was missed.

The Deputy Chairman asked if there has been an increase in the housing registering since the last reporting. The Head of Housing Management responded that since the last reporting, the housing register's figures have increased. The City of London carries out an annual census, in which the Department sends out an update request to all those on the application list, and the returns are that assessed accordingly. For this year, the department is sending out the request to all the applicants. The current 839 applicants are anticipated to be reduced in numbers by the next cycle of reporting.

This was followed by another Member who asked for future reporting on void properties and turnover time. The Head of Housing Management agreed to have the request included in future reporting.

The Committee was further advised that normal letting activities have resumed back to physicals viewing taking place, although some of the signups have taken place virtually. The new process is COVID-19 secure, and a number of emergency rehousing applications were granted to those who were in desperate need.

RESOLVED – That the Committee noted the report.

8. **HOUSING MANAGEMENT POLICY REVIEW UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Housing Management Policy Review Update.

The Committee was updated that the Department is working towards the review of several policies. The existing policies have been updated where required and submitted to several Committees for its approval.

A Member asked if the Parade Policy can also be included in the reviewing list of policies. The Committee agreed to keep the Parade Policy on the action tracker. Another Member asked when publishing policy documents if the expiry or renewal dates can also be included in the document too.

The Chairman noted that once all the actions so far have been completed, the Committee to look to explore the review period for the policies.

RESOLVED – That the Committee noted the report.

9. **Downsizing (Shift Allowance) Policy Review**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Downsizing (Shift Allowance) Policy Review.

RESOLVED – That the Committee approved the revised Downsizing (Shift Allowance) Policy for use by the Housing Service.

10. **Decants Policy Review**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Decants Policy Review.

RESOLVED – That the Committee approved the Decants Policy for use by the Housing Service.

11. **Housing Delivery Programme - Housing Design Guide**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Housing Delivery Programme – Housing Design Guide.

The Committee was informed that the Housing Delivery Programme – Housing Design Guide will be the new brand for the City of London for its new development in the future.

A Member asked if Officers could confirm that the follows and risk in the summary of the finding are now included in the design guide. The Head of New Developments & Special Projects responded that the design guide is a generic guide and the Department refers to the risks aligned to specific schemes and projects.

RESOLVED – That the Committee authorised the use of the 'Housing Design Guide' to inform the City's housing delivery programme and acknowledged the comprehensive guidance and standards which are contained in the primary guidance document and the supporting appendices

12. **Combined Pre-Gateway 5 Project Closures**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk on the Combined Pre-Gateway 5 Project Closures.

The Committee was informed that this is a process to close projects which have come to an end. The Committee was advised that that the two projects concerning the Department of Community and Children's Services are the Gullies and Drains Cleaning and Windsor House Paths, Water Mains, and Boundary Walls.

RESOLVED – That the Committee considered and approved the two projects submitted by the Department for Community and Children’s Services for closure

13. **DRON HOUSE WINDOW REPLACEMENT AND COMMON PARTS REDECORATIONS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services on the Dron House Window Replacement and Common Parts Redecorations.

The Committee was informed that this the first of the few estates which had its windows were replaced. As this was the first project of its kind which went to tender, lessons were also learned from the process, and the learning will be taken forwarded. The Committee was updated that the costs were inflated as the planning officers had asked that alumni windows framed were added in.

A Member asked what justifications were given by the planners for switching from UPVC to alumni. Officers advised that as some of the worksites became conversation areas and as such, the revision of materials was required. Officers assured the Committee that the planners were challenged on several occasions. The Member (Peter Bennett) agreed to work with the Programme Manager to discuss this outside the meeting for future works.

The Deputy Chairman asked if Alumni will last longer than UPVC. The Programme Manager Responded that where we have metal cases, we are able to repair them easier than UPVC. The Programme Manager agreed to bring a report to the Committee in the future.

RESOLVED – That the Committee appoint AD Construction to deliver the window replacements and estate wide redecorations programme.

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

There were no questions.

15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
Electrical failure Battersfield House

The Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services informed the Committee that there was an incident of a power failure at Battersfield House. The cause of the power failure was due to some sockets being blown out. Operatives were on site for the whole day and carried out several tests. The heating contractors were also on-site, and mobile heaters were provided to residents who had asked for them. Work continued into the weekend, and Officers were on standby to assist residents where possible. Four vulnerable families were identified, and they were offered additional support. One family was put up in a hotel for a few days. Officers continue to work on the site and have been in touch with the leaseholders, too, and had offered advice regarding insurance matters.

One of the lifts is still out of action, as the telephone in the lift is out of order and is being serviced.

The Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services noted that one of the residents has been of immense help to the team and the residents. Officers will be in touch to thank the particular resident.

The Chairman asked if the incident's costs can be claimed from the insurer or the supplier. The Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services responded that the City of London can claim from the insurers and residents who were affected would be supported to cover the costs of their damages. Additionally, the leaseholders will also be able to claim for the damages directly from their insurers.

A Member thanked the resident, Nicola Twin, who has been an excellent support for the residents and Officers. The Member further commented that many appliances were blown out and if there are any opportunities to make a joint claim, as leaseholders will have much more difficulties in making a claim. The Assistant Director of Barbican & Property Services agreed to look into the matter after the meeting.

Housing Safety - Compliance

The Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services informed the Committee that the Community & Children's Services had an internal audit carried out on Housing Safety; it was noted that fire safety was not part of the audit, which will be carried out separately. In terms of the Housing safety audit, it was carried out successfully. One of the audit recommendations was that Members do not have a significant say in terms of housing safety, in general, the auditors took on this recommendation to have more input from Members.

As part of the KPI process, we do see the Department's performance in gas safety, but we do not see the performance in areas such as legionella, asbestos and electrical testing.

The Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services agreed that every six months a report would be provided to this Committee showing more detailed data, which will allow Members to scrutinize the work too.

16. 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
17

Paragraph
3

17. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the non public minutes summary of the meeting held on Monday, 30 September 2020, be approved as a correct record

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

There were no non-public questions.

19. **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 3.11 pm

Chairman

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