

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

**Monday, 22 March 2021**

Minutes of the virtual meeting streamed to

<https://youtu.be/1W0UIBx-AYA> at 11.00 am

(the recording will be available on the above link for 1 year after the date of the meeting)

**Present**

**Members:**

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

**Officers:**

Paul Murtagh	- Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services

**1. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

**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 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

**4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Sub Committee received the Outstanding Actions list and noted updates in respect of the following:

**New Portsoken Community Centre.** The Community and Children's Services Committee would be receiving a report on Governance on 30th April 2021 and, as this would now fall within the remit of the Grand Committee, it could be removed from the Sub Committee's actions list.

**Fire Safety.** The Sub Committee had received a report in November 2020. A further Fire Safety Update report would be on the Agenda for the next meeting and include progress on major works, including the sprinkler project.

**Climate Action Strategy.** The Grand Committee had received a report at its last meeting (5.3.21) in respect of the housing aspects of the Climate Action Strategy. Members (of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee) agreed that the Sub Committee should receive a regular update report, bringing together the various strands of work which were contributing to de-carbonising the City Corporation's housing stock. The Assistant Director advised that work was underway with colleagues in City Surveyors, and a Consultant had been appointed to collate energy information in respect of the City's housing stock. This work would result in an action plan, fulfilling many of the Strategy's objectives, and Members would receive a progress report at their next meeting in May.

#### 5. **DEBT RECOVERY POLICY**

The Sub Committee considered the first of three reports of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of Housing Management Policies, which were nearing the end of a review programme. Members noted that debt recovery concerned mainly former tenants, or service users with no on-going relationship with the City Corporation; i.e. - those who might have hired a community hall but not paid.

In response to a question, it was noted that more sophisticated hall hiring systems were coming on-line for the new Portsoken Community Centre and lessons had been learnt from the Golden Lane Community Centre. The officer explained that deposits were taken, but if halls were then left in an unsatisfactory condition, the service user would be pursued to cover cleaning costs, for example. The officer also advised that the IT infrastructure would need to be updated in order to take non-cash deposits.

RESOLVED, that – the Debt Recovery Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

#### 6. **INCOME RECOVERY POLICY**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of a new Income Recovery Policy. Members noted that this Policy governed the City Corporation's approach to recovering income from current tenants and leaseholders; i.e. - rent and service charges and dealing with arrears, and would only affect commercial users if they were to have a parking space, for example. Members commended an excellent, joined up approach.

In response to questions about the speed of recovery action, the officer advised that contact was made very soon after tenants fell into arrears and would increase if they accrued. The officer further advised that Income Recovery Officers worked to a specific patch of properties. Tenants with arrears were encouraged to seek support with their finances generally, and were referred to City Advice if necessary. Members noted that the responsibility for collecting

and monitoring service charges fell within the remit of both the Department of Community and Children's Services and Chamberlains, who produced regular reports on the status of accounts.

RESOLVED, that – Income Recovery Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

**7. SAFEGUARDING POLICY REVIEW**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of a new Safeguarding Policy. The Sub Committee noted that this report sought agreement to a policy review, not a new policy.

RESOLVED, that – the Safeguarding Policy for use by the Housing Service be approved.

**8. CONCRETE TESTING & REPAIRS TO GOLDEN LANE AND MIDDLESEX STREET ESTATES - GATEWAY 6 - OUTCOME REPORT**

The Sub Committee considered a Gateway 6 Outcome Report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of concrete testing & repairs to Golden Lane and Middlesex Street Estates.

Members noted that, whilst this project had been delivered successfully and under budget, lessons learnt in respect of grouping projects together under one contract would be applied to similar projects in the future. The officer advised that, whilst this process was more labour intensive in the earlier stages of a procurement exercise, it saved time further ahead when dealing with multiple contractors and their sub-contractors etc.

In response to a further question about poor contractor performance, Members noted that monitoring and quality control were very resource intensive. The Assistant Director advised that, unless there was a failure during the actual contract period, there were limited options for redress and this included the ability to exclude contractors from future tendering. The Procurement Team had been looking into how this might be mitigated, given the City Corporation's bad experiences in respect of poor performance, contractors withdrawing at a very late stage and the limits on taking legal action. Members noted that the economy was a factor in sourcing suitable contractors, and were pleased that the work of this Sub Committee had raised awareness about the challenges.

Members also noted that the Projects Sub Committee (of the Policy and Resources Committee) pooled all lessons learnt, in order for them to be shared across the whole of the City Corporation via the 'Project Academy'.

RESOLVED, that – the content of the report and the lessons learnt be noted, and the closure of the project be approved.

9. **DECENT HOMES WORKS TO PROPERTIES PREVIOUSLY OMITTED FROM PROGRAMMES (CALL-BACKS 2017-2020): GATEWAY 6 - OUTCOME REPORT**

The Sub Committee considered a Gateway 6 Outcome Report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of works to properties previously omitted from programmes.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director advised that the target for achieving the Decent Homes Standard, which included replacement kitchens and bathrooms, had been set for 2010. Members noted that, when Saville's had carried out a stock condition survey a couple of years ago, the City of London Corporation's housing stock was 96% compliant with the Decent Homes Standard, with the remaining 4% failing mainly due to tenants refusing access. The Assistant Director also advised that, over the next 4-5 years, 25% more of our homes would be likely to fail the Decent Homes Standard if the current Major Works Programme was not completed.

RESOLVED, that – the content of the report and the lessons learn be noted, and the closure of the project be approved.

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

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which advised Members on issues affecting progress on individual schemes.

The Assistant Director advised that the bar chart reflected slippage from when the programme was first developed and, in response to a Member's request, agreed to consider how it could be more transparent in terms of the slippage over the last few years, and any additional costs incurred as a result. Members noted that the Major Works Programme would not lose budgets as a result of underspends year-on-year. However, one of the outcomes of project slippage was that the loan required to complete the Major Works Programme would not be drawn down until the next financial year. In response to a question about pressures on the capital programme, due to delays and inflation, the Assistant Director advised that inflation rates had been low over the past few years and some of the cost increases from inflation would have been offset by competition in the market. Members noted that, once the position was clearer, officers would be able to provide a year-on-year analysis of the impact of slippage on costs.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

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

There were three questions, as follows:

**1. Progress on the provision of vehicle charging points on Middlesex St and Golden Lane.** *The Chairman asked this question on behalf of Jason Pritchard, a former Member of the Sub Committee.*

The Assistant Director advised that the Department had, for some time, been participating in the Corporate Electric Vehicle Charging Project, in order to access funding for electric vehicle charging points across all of its housing estates. Recently, however, it had been prudent for the Department to make its own bid for funding, without reliance on the Corporate project. This approach had enabled the Department to make a successful bid for funding for the Barbican Estate. Officers were now working with the same, highly experienced Consultant to put together similar funding bids for all of the City Corporation's residential estates, including those out of the City with parking facilities. Members noted that it would still be possible to apply for funding this year, and the next meeting of the Sub Committee would receive a progress report.

Whilst accepting that there had been some initial problems on the Barbican Estate, the Assistant Director stressed that technology moved very quickly in this area. Members noted that the lessons learnt on the Barbican Estate would be taken forward on the HRA Estates, and the Consultant would be able to advise on the best use of available technologies. The Chairman asked if these points could be captured in the report presented to the Sub Committee.

## **2. The small strip of HRA land on the COLPAI development.**

The Chairman (of the Grand Committee) advised that a Planning Condition, in respect of deliveries and refuse removal, would need to be discharged by the London Borough of Islington and the City of London Corporation, before the building could be occupied. Members noted that the decision could only be implemented if a Licence were in place, and this had been the subject of a report to the Grand Committee on 5th March 2021. The Grand Committee Chairman further advised that, in order to avoid undue delay, authority to grant the Licence has been delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman (of the Grand Committee).

The Assistant Director advised that full consultation with residents, on those planning conditions that the City Corporation had agreed to consult on, had taken place over a couple of months last year, and the responses issued to all residents. The City Corporation and London Borough of Islington Planning Departments had agreed to allow residents until the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to make any further comments. Members noted that, at this stage, it was not known whether the planning decisions would be taken under Officer Delegation or by full Committees.

## **3. Updates on major new build schemes.**

The Chairman advised that this fell within the remit of the Grand Committee, with the Sub-committee being consulted on individual projects. The Assistant Director offered to advise Members on queries relating to the wider capital programme outside of the meeting.

## **12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

The Chairman advised that he would not be seeking re-election in April 2021, having served 3 years, and wanted to express how privileged he felt at having

served a Committee which worked so hard for the City of London's Residents. The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their hard work, with particular tributes to the following:

- Mary Durcan, for being an excellent Deputy Chairman and having invaluable proof-reading skills.
- Randall Anderson, the Chairman of the Grand Committee for having such extensive knowledge.
- Paul Murtagh (Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services) and the team for their support to both Residents and Members, particularly over the past year, and for coping with such complex tasks.
- Town Clerks for their support to all of the City of London Corporation's Committees.

In response, the Deputy Chairman and Members thanked John Fletcher for his excellent Chairmanship.

**13. 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**  
1,2 & 4

**14. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

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

There were no non-public questions.

**16. 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 whilst the public were excluded.

**17. REVIEW OF INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT FUNCTIONS**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which had been agreed by the Grand Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**The meeting ended at 12:10 am**

