

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE**
Monday, 15 November 2021

Minutes of the meeting held at 11.00 am

A recording of the public part of this meeting will be available for one year from the date of the meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqXDcr_luXE

Present

Members:

John Fletcher (Deputy Chairman)
Mary Durcan (Chairman)
Randall Anderson
Marianne Fredericks
Susan Pearson
William Pimlott
Peter Bennett
Ruby Sayed
Caroline Haines
Deputy Jamie Ingham Clark

Officers:

Paul Murtagh	- Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, Community and Children's Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Jacqueline Whitmore	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Anne Pietsch	- Comptroller and City Solicitors
Julie Pridham	- Comptroller and City Solicitors
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Caroline Haines and Alderman Prem Goyal.

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 20th September be approved as a correct record.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Members noted an updated version of the outstanding actions list, which had been circulated after the main agenda despatch. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

1. Given that the Membership of the Sub Committee was likely to change after the Common Councillor all-out Elections in March 2022, the estate visits had been postponed for the time being.
2. There had been no further correspondence from the Supreme Court in respect of Great Arthur House.
3. The Climate Action Strategy funding bid had been submitted, as part of Phase 1 of the Government's Social Housing Fund, and officers were expecting a response by the end of the calendar year. The grant would be used to partly fund the windows programmes in Southwark and William Blake House, thereby reducing the burden on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and leaseholders.
4. In respect of the Major Works Programme, the Community and Children's Committees would receive an initial report in December, covering HRA revenue costs and budget estimates. The Assistant Director advised that future reports to Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee would set out the current programme and phase 2, to give Members insight as to which programmes are funded (and which are not) and where some might dovetail.
5. A feasibility study in respect of the electric vehicle charging points at Middlesex Street and Golden Lane was underway, with a report expected in December. The Assistant Director advised that this meet the funding deadline, of the end of March, and Members would receive an update outside of the Committee cycle.

5. HOUSING MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which provided Members with an update on the Housing Major Works Programme and advised Members of issues affecting progress on individual schemes.

During the discussion and questions, the following points were noted:

1. The Assistant Director agreed to work with IT in terms of presenting a breakdown of costs per estate, whilst retaining historic information. A breakdown of expenditure on sprinklers would be provided in the Major Works Programme Update report.
2. There had been some resourcing issues over the past 6-7 months, but a replacement project manager had recently been appointed to support projects on the Golden Lane Estate. A further appointment was imminent, to support the wider windows programme. Whilst the appointment of consultants is an option, this is still very resource intensive as they require additional support whilst being brought up to and managing internally. There had been some respite following the relaxation of restrictions relating to the recruitment moratorium on making permanent appointments, and

officers were looking at the possibility of sharing resources with the City Surveyor. Members would be notified if similar problems arose in the future.

3. Following some issues with the Section 20 Consultations, letters were due to go out to residents of Lammas Green and Otto Close this week, with work due to start in the New Year.
4. Refurbishment works at Harman Close had been delayed by access issues, as a number of the residents are vulnerable and had been shielding, but the additional fire stopping works were now underway, together with adaptations to door handles to make them easier to use. The works were expected to complete at the end of calendar year.
5. York Way was on target and would coincide with the fire doors and works to the corridors, once the first elements had been completed.
6. The costs in respect of Crescent House were being revisited and a planning application would be submitted early next year.
7. The communal heating works at Middlesex Street would require a decision by the Planning Committee in December, due to the works to the road and street side elevations requiring approval. Whilst this option would avoid considerable disturbance to the internal areas to the flats, a small number of residents had objected to the external pipework. Whilst this matter is now being resolved, there has been a lot of time lost due to the project stopping and re-starting. Members noted that a building in Aldermanbury had offered a waste heat supply to the Middlesex Street Estate. This proposal would also be presented to the Planning Committee and the pipework and end-user equipment would be provided free of charge. The Assistant Director confirmed that all heating systems would be future proofed, to incorporate renewable technology.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

6. **REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE - OVERVIEW**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided Members an overview of the current repairs and maintenance service and the performance of the contractors delivering these services. The report covered the repairs and maintenance service to all the City of London Corporation's (the Corporation) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estates including, the Almshouses and commercial properties

Members were concerned at the performance in respect of responses within 3 and 20 working days and during the discussion the following points were noted:

1. The next report to Members, in January 2022, would cover complaints handling and set out recent high profile case studies, including the action taken and lessons learnt. Members noted that the number of these cases

is relatively low and the report on this agenda is intended to set a performance marker.

2. The Assistant Director and his team meet regularly with contractors in order to resolve any difficulties and, if areas continue to fail, appropriate action can be taken under the terms of the contract. Members noted the national issues in terms of resourcing, material shortages and attracting suitable skilled workers.
3. The completion of the Major Works Programme will reduce the need for reactive works and, when the Repairs & Maintenance Contract is next retendered, it will provide an opportunity for the current contract terms and conditions to be updated and modernised. The Assistant Director emphasised that, once the Major Works Programme has been completed, there is a need for a more comprehensive planned/reactive maintenance programme, which had recently been achieved with the inspection and maintenance procedures for drainage.
4. In terms of gas servicing, Members noted that this is subject to, and regulated by legislation and failure to comply can result in criminal proceedings.
5. Property Services Inspectors check 10% of repair works and all works over £500 are checked, as is standard practice for most local authorities and housing associations. Members received a report on the complaints procedure earlier in the year.
6. The City's insurance covers any structural damage to its homes including, leasehold properties, as had been the case with the recent water damaged properties that Members had been made aware of. All tenants are strongly advised to take out contents insurance, and this is set out in the tenancy handbook. The Head of Housing Management agreed to check with City Surveyors in respect of the requirements and provisions for commercial tenants.
7. Whilst emergency callouts are more expensive, performance is best measured and more relevant in terms of a job being completed properly. Most of our repairs are completed on the first visit however, there are occasions when this cannot be achieved. Examples include particularly large or complex repairs or, repairs that require non-standard replacement parts. The team is considering whether to introduce a 'Right First Time' KPI, as is the case with some local authorities and housing associations.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

7. **FIRE SAFETY UPDATE - HRA PROPERTIES**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which updated members on the progress made in relation to fire safety matters since the last update report submitted to Committee in May 2021.

During the discussion on this item, the following points were noted:

1. The team continue to make progress with the fire safety improvement works. Government guidance is still awaited on elements of the Fire Safety Act 2021.
2. The Sub Committee would receive a report on the EWS1 forms in January. Members noted that, whilst there is currently no legal obligation on the City Corporation to provide these, they are sometimes required by mortgage providers. The government is seeking to train up 1000 new assessors but there are currently very few of them. As the cost is likely to be significant, the report will include implications, options and recommendations. It was noted that the EWS1 forms apply to a block, not an individual dwelling and, in the future, they might be required for all blocks regardless of their height.
3. There will be a new action plan arising from the outcome of the current round of fire risk assessments.
4. The level of compartmentation works at Great Arthur House (GAH) could be reduced, as sprinklers will be installed, but the sprinkler heads might need to come through some of the compartmentation, if this work precedes the sprinklers. There was also a fully functioning alarm and evacuation procedure in place at GAH. There had been a number of compartmentation surveys and, when the final reports are received by March 2022, any further remedial works will be included in the action plan. Members asked for officers to be mindful of unnecessary disruptions to flats.
5. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans for residents were in hand, with initial telephone assessments being undertaken by Christmas. Members asked if this could be added to the outstanding actions list to ensure they receive regular updates.
6. The London Fire Brigade had undertaken a number of inspections across London, with the most recent having taken place earlier this year. Whilst the Fire Brigade had suggested that the fire doors were not of a modern standard, they are still fully compliant. There had also been works to signage, to ensure it meets the required standard. The London Fire Brigade is happy with the working relationship with the City Corporation, and the Community and Children's Services Department has a dedicated Fire Officer. All deficiency notices are actioned immediately, with details provided in the regular Fire Update reports to Members. Work is expected to start over the next couple of weeks to the fire doors on Holloway Estate and York Close.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

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

There were 3 questions in respect of the following:

1. Members were concerned about access needs for the increasing number of residents using mobility aids. The Assistant Director advised that a procurement exercise would be underway shortly, to appoint a specialist consultant to conduct a disability access survey across the City's housing estates. Whilst the outcome would be reported to Members, any access issues are actioned promptly. The Assistant Director agreed to work with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman in respect of historic issues with the Middlesex Street lift and automatic entrance. Members noted that some of the City Corporation's housing stock is 60 years old and might need extensive works to bring it up to a modern standard. The last survey was conducted in 2014 and, as the recent DDA legislation had been primarily focussed on public buildings, the new survey was timely. Members noted that the allocations scheme captures current and incoming tenants, noting that their needs are likely to change throughout their tenancy. Members asked if the report on the survey outcome and recommendations could include the City Corporation's legal obligations.
 2. Residents of Tudor Rose Court had experienced some issues recently in respect of delayed repairs and accountability. Members noted that Tudor Rose Court is managed by a private housing association and the City Corporation only has limited regulatory authority over serious defects in the block. The Deputy Chair of the Community and Children's Services Committee and the Director were due to meet with tenants at Tudor Rose Court to discuss their concerns. A tenant at Tudor Rose Court, also a Member of this Sub Committee, agreed to act as liaison and feed back to Members.
 3. Members noted that there had been some disturbance caused by alarms going off on the Middlesex Estate early in the year, which had since been resolved. However, there had been 3 more disturbances over 6 days in early November. The Assistant Director advised that they were not related to the premises occupied by the City of London Police, nor the previous problems. Two of the issues had since been resolved and a third was under investigation, as it was showing as a missing unit. Prior to this there had been no problems for the past 7 or 8 months and officers would monitor the situation.
9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
Members were reminded of the Annual Almshouses Visit on 6th December and were asked to advise the Town Clerk if they were attending and if they required transport. The cars would leave Guildhall at approximately 10.30 am, returning at approximately 1.15 pm.
10. **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	Paragraph
12-13	3
15	2,3

11. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

12. CHARITIES REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - THE CITY OF LONDON ALMSHOUSES

The Sub Committee received a report of the Comptroller and City Solicitor and the Director of Community and Children’s Services.

13. TENANTS’ ELECTRICAL SERVICES TESTING AND SMOKE DETECTOR INSTALLATION - PHASE 5.

The Sub Committee considered an approved a report of the Director of Community and Children’s Services.

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

There were no non-public questions.

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

One item was discussed whilst the public were excluded.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm

Chairman

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