

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Monday, 22 July 2019**

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

Present

Members:

John Fletcher (Chairman)
Mary Durcan (Deputy Chairman)
Randall Anderson
Marianne Fredericks
Dhruv Patel
Susan Pearson
Peter Bennett
Jason Pritchard
Ruby Sayed

Officers:

Paul Murtagh	- Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, Community and Children's Services
Wendy Giaccaglia	- Community and Children's Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Dean Robinson	- Community and Children's Services
Sonia Marquis	- Community and Children's Services
Lee Collins	- Chamberlains

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Barbara Newman and William Pimlott.

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 16th May 2019 be approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment recording Ruby Sayed as having been present.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Members received the Sub Committee's Outstanding Actions list and noted the following updates:

Consultation Strategy for the City of London Primary Academy, Islington (COLPAI) – the Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services had asked the City Surveyor for an update and would provide a report to the September meeting of the Sub Committee.

Major Works Programme - at the end of the 2019 calendar year, Members would receive a report combining the end of the current Major Works Programme and the new 5 Year Programme (2020-25), based on the Savills Stock Condition Survey report and future planned maintenance programmes.

5. **SOCIAL HOUSING TENANCY FRAUD - 2018/19 ANNUAL REPORT**

Members received a report of the Chamberlain, which provided an update on Social Housing Tenancy Fraud activity during the 2018/19 reporting year. Members noted that the Anti-Fraud Team had worked with officers on the Tenancy Visits (at item 8 on today's agenda). The Fraud Investigator was sighted on all right-to-buy applications but levels of fraud were very low in this area. Members commended a good report, with some insightful case studies.

RESOLVED, That – the report be noted.

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

Members noted a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of progress made with the Major Works Programme. Members noted a further setback in respect of the Petticoat Tower balcony doors and windows project in that both the first, and now the second best tenderer, had withdrawn. As City Procurement had advised against selecting the third best tenderer (of 3 bids) Members noted a possible 6-9 month delay to the works.

There was a consensus in that such behaviour by contractors was wholly unacceptable. Members raised concerns as to why it seems to take so long to get the contracts signed. A comparison was made with the Corporate Catering Contract where, the contract had not been signed one year after the supplier had commenced providing the service. Following the 16th May 2019 Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee (HMASC), Members had submitted a resolution to the Procurement Sub Committee, asking whether there was any recourse available to the City Corporation as a result of the lowest tenderer having withdrawn its tender at a late stage. The Procurement Sub Committee advised that there was no scope for altering the process in order to penalise contractors.

Members continued to challenge this weakness and suggested that the City Corporation should, at least, be able to keep a record of Contractor's behaviour and performance and use this when deciding to award future contracts. They also queried as to whether other authorities had faced similar predicaments and, if so, was UK Law itself flawed in this area?

In summing up, the Chairman asked the Town Clerk to invite a Senior Procurement Officer to the next meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee. The Assistant Director assured Members that, in the interim period, his staff were doing their utmost to get the project back on track and the new procurement process would be instigated as soon as possible.

In respect of other items on this report, Members noted the following updates since the agenda had been published:

- York Way and Middlesex Street Communal Heating - A good tender submission had been received, within the estimate, and the project was progressing to Stage 2 of the consultation process with leaseholders.
- Despite the project's challenges, Great Arthur House had won an award for cladding.
- The re-roofing works at Blake House had been nominated for a roofing industry award.

Members asked if slippage from previous reports, as set out in the appendix, could be clearer in future as the arrows could be missed.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

7. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) COMMUNITY CENTRES STRATEGY 2019-24**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which set out a 5-Year Strategy, in response to an Audit in 2018.

During the discussion, Members noted that officers were seeking to improve engagement with residents, noting that increased use would minimise costs. In response to comments on the draft Strategy, the language had been tweaked to ensure there could be no perception of placing income above the importance of community engagement and, whilst there was no requirement for the Community Centres to make a profit, they would continue to be managed as efficiently as possible.

Members also noted that the action plan was a live document and welcomed further input from Members, including the following suggestions made during the meeting:

- Members noted a shortage of supported family contact centres and officers agreed to investigate availability of space in the community centres.
- Work was underway to support moving to cashless systems and the Chairman of the Digital Services Sub Committee offered support, if required.
- Some Members had experienced difficulties in making bookings and noted that some activities had multiple classes.
- Green projects could be more visible in the Strategy.

RESOLVED, that - the Community Centres Strategy for 2019-24 be adopted, noting that the Strategy and Action Plans were evolving documents and would incorporate suggestions made today, and any further suggestions from Members, if possible.

8. **TENANCY VISITS - FINAL REPORT**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which advised them of the completion of the Tenancy Visits Project. Members noted that officers were now analysing the data.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The information gained from the visits will be invaluable when planning future services and meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The survey captured useful data on household characteristics, which will be useful when carrying out Equalities Impact Assessments (EIAs).
- The work with the Anti-Fraud Team had assisted by reminding tenants of their responsibility to inform the Housing Service of any changes to their circumstances.
- Members would have liked to see more evidence of improvements in previously poor conditions and unauthorised alterations.
- All issues in respect of Safeguarding and Fire Safety were acted on immediately.

Members asked to receive a themed report, early in 2020, setting out how the data was being used and where improvements had been made.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

9. **PARKING CHARGES REVIEW**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, further to their approval of the Estate Parking and Storage Sheds Policy in September 2018. At this meeting, Members had asked for more information about current estate parking arrangements, to enable them to decide on the level of discount to be awarded to disabled parking users.

It was noted that the majority of London Boroughs did not charge disabled drivers and, if they did, the charges were comparatively lower. Members were assured of due diligence to ensure that this scheme was protected from fraud. There was a view expressed in that the City Corporation should seek to maximise income from its assets and, if there was some 40% of voids, should other uses be considered, as had been the case with the Barbican Estate, by introducing more storage facilities. Further suggestions included space for use by car share schemes and electric cycle docking. In respect of gradually harmonising charges across different locations, Members agreed that this would need further work before being presented to the Sub Committee for a decision. The officer would provide Members with an update on the plans for this review at the September meeting.

On being put to a vote, whereby 7 voted for and 1 against, it was

RESOLVED, That – Option 3 in the report be implemented; i.e. the discount be increased to 100%, at a further cost of £16,407.67 annually to the HRA (a total cost of £32,815.35); thereby eliminating parking charges for disabled (blue badge) holders.

10. HOUSING UPDATE AND RISK REGISTER REPORT

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided a six monthly update on Housing Service performance and management information, from September 2018 to March 2019. Members noted that a new regime was being piloted on 2 estates and would be introduced on all estates later this year. Members would receive a report and briefing session at the September Sub Committee meeting.

Officers advised that the process for routine and non-routine re-lets was being revised to be more straightforward. Members noted that the new lone working procedures were working well and, whilst there was no time frame on fire risk assessments, they were conducted every 3 years at the City Corporation. Members asked if future reports could have more breakdown in respect of anti-social behaviour, by location, including trends from previous years.

RESOLVED, That – the report be noted.

11. REVISED RENT COLLECTION PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in response to an internal audit recommendation to review the targets for both current and former tenants' rent arrears. Members suggested that the target of 2% could be more ambitious and officers agreed to review this. Members also commended officers for coping well in light of recent benefit reforms. In response to a question, Members noted that there was some discrepancy in the actual number of rented properties; i.e. if guest flats were included, but there were approximately 2,000 in the City of London Corporation.

RESOLVED, That – the report be noted.

12. SOUTHWARK ESTATE CONCRETE TESTING & REPAIR - GATEWAY 2 - PROJECT PROPOSAL

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which had been approved by the Project Sub Committee, proposing an initial comprehensive programme of intrusive concrete condition and structural surveys, to inform a subsequent repair contract for the residential buildings comprising the Southwark Housing Estate.

RESOLVED, That:-

1. The project be approved for progression to Gateway 3/4 (Options Appraisal) via the regular approval track.
2. The budget of £210,000 be approved to reach the next Gateway;
3. The project budget of £210,000 (excluding risk) be noted;
4. The total estimated cost of the project at £500,000 - £1,500,000 be noted.

13. DECENT HOMES CALL BACKS 2020-2022 - GATEWAY 1-4 PROJECT PROPOSAL & OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which had been approved by the Projects Sub Committee, proposing the appointment of a contractor to supply and install replacement kitchen, bathroom and central heating facilities, to City of London tenanted properties, on an ad-hoc basis, to bring them up to the Decent Homes standard.

RESOLVED, that:-

1. The budget of £5,000 be approved for internal staff costs to reach the next Gateway;
2. The project budget of £5,000 (excluding risk) be noted;
3. The total estimated cost of the project at £535,000 (excluding risk) be noted;
4. Option 2, to appoint a contractor on a fixed budget, 3-year contract be approved.

14. HOLLOWAY ESTATE ELECTRICAL REWIRING - HOLLOWAY ESTATE - ELECTRICAL REWIRING - GATEWAY 6 OUTCOME REPORT

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which had been approved by the Projects Sub Committee, providing the outcome of remedial works to electrical supplies at the Holloway Estate. Members noted that whilst economies of scale had been achieved on this occasion by not splitting the services, this might not be the case on future projects.

RESOLVED, That – the report be noted.

15. AVONDALE SQUARE ESTATE SE1 -EMERGENCY AND COMMUNAL LIGHTING REPLACEMENT - GATEWAY 1-4 PROJECT PROPOSAL & OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Service, which proposed lighting replacement, at Avondale Square Estate, in order to bring it up to compliance and make it energy efficient. Members noted that the Projects Sub Committee had approved the report, subject to the removal of a 10% contingency on the budget.

RESOLVED, That: -

1. The condition of the emergency and communal lighting at Avondale Square be noted;
2. The total estimated cost of the project at £399,000 be noted (excluding risk);
3. The budget of £19,000 for staff costs to reach Gateway 5 be approved;

4. Option 2, as set out in the report be approved; i.e. to replace all communal and emergency lighting, and wiring as necessary.

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

There were no questions.

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

There was no other business.

18. **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

20

Paragraphs

2,3,4

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

There were no non-public questions.

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

There was one item of urgent business whilst the public were excluded.

The meeting ended at 1.17pm

Chairman

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