

**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:**

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

**Officers:**

Rofikul Islam	- Town Clerk
Gemma Stokely	- Town Clerk
Emily Garland	- Remembrancers Office
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Michael Gwyther-Jones	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Aqib Hussain	- Chamberlains Department

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Jason Pritchard.

**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 summary of the meeting held on Monday, 30 September 2020, be approved as a correct record.

**Matters arising**

**Presentation on the Repairs and Maintenance Service**

A Member noted that the virtual presentation on the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service (a service provided by Wates) 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 Communications Team, who is responsible for putting up the information on the website. It was noted that the Communications Team is slightly behind schedule and the Head of Housing Management agreed to chase this up 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 centre'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 for 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 Funds 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 tender soon. There had been some delay, due in the main to the complexities

with Great Arthur House and its listed status. The Committee was also informed that further Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) will be undertaken next year. Following a corporate procurement exercise, a new supplier, Turner Townsend, has been appointed to carry out future FRA's.

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 fire testing to assess its level of fire and smoke resistance. The notional 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 test failed in less than five minutes and stressed the need to escalate the development of the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) policy. The Assistant Director, Barbican Estate & Property Services, reminded Members that the door set had failed so quickly due to the construction of the fanlight above the door. He also reminded Members that urgent and immediate action had been taken to upgrade the fanlights. It was noted however, that a few residents had denied us access to do this work.

A new fire alarm system was also installed in Great Arthur House some time ago and, the fire safety signage was updated. Residents had been written to advising of the changes and the work that had been done. The Committee was assured that Officers had reacted very quickly to address the issues identified at Great Arthur House.

The Member also noted that there was a power outage in Basterfield, 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 advised that it is not normally considered necessary to provide fire extinguishers in common parts of blocks of flats. Such equipment should only be used by those trained to use it and, it is not considered practical or appropriate for residents to receive such training. In terms of the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), the Committee was assured that a report would be presented to the Committee in the New Year. The Chairman of the Grand Committee noted that concern had been raised with the new signage in the Barbican blocks and asked if there were similar problems in our 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 signage.

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 well and due to complete by the end of the week; however, due to the announcement of a second lockdown, further completions such as the fire door replacements were subject to delay. . The Committee was further informed that the resident satisfaction levels for the balcony doors and windows 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 physical viewings 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 will 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 social housing development in the future.

**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 corporate process to close down projects that are still in the Gateway system but, will not be progressed. 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 multiple estates which were due to have their windows 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 forward. The Committee was updated that the costs were inflated as the planning officers had asked that aluminium windows framed installed.

A Member asked what justifications were given by the planners for switching from UPVC to aluminium. Officers advised that as some of the estates became conservation areas and as such, the revision of materials was required. Officers assured the Committee that the planners were challenged on several occasions. The Member agreed to work with the Head of Major Works to discuss this outside the meeting for future works.

The Deputy Chairman asked if aluminium 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 Head of Major Works 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 redecoration 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 Basterfield House. The cause of the power failure was due to a power supply issue that was not the responsibility of the Corporation. Operatives were currently on site testing all residents' properties to ensure they remained safe. 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 Property Services Officer, Nicola Twinn, who has been providing excellent support for the residents and Officers. The Member further commented that many appliances were damaged by the power surge and asked if it would be possible for the Corporation 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 as, this is being done as a separate audit. The Housing Safety Audit had been concluded successfully however, one of the audit recommendations was that Members needed to have more of an oversight of our performance relating to housing safety.

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

The Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services advised that in future, he will be presenting a report, every six months, to this Committee advising on performance on all aspects of housing safety.

## **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**

**Paragraph**

**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 15.11**

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Chairman

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