

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Monday, 20 September 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub (Community and Children's Services) Committee held at INFORMAL VIRTUAL MEETING – ACCESSIBLE REMOTELY on Monday, 20 September 2021 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Mary Durcan (Chairman)
Randall Anderson
Marianne Fredericks
Susan Pearson
Peter Bennett
The Revd Stephen Haines
Ruby Sayed
Caroline Haines
Deputy Jamie Ingham Clark

Officers:

Wendy Giaccaglia	- Community and Children's Services Department
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Amy Carter	- Community and Children's Services Department
Mike Kettle	- Community and Children's Services Department
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services Department
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services Department
Antoinette Duhaney	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

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

- Deputy Henry Jones declared an interest in matters relating to the Middlesex Street Estate, as he was a residential and business lease holder.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 16th July 2021 be approved as a correct record subject to Mary Durcan being removed from the list of attendees.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Sub Committee considered a log of outstanding actions from previous meetings.

In response to questions and comments from Members, Officers advised that the report on the Climate Strategy Action Plan for Community & Childrens' Services Committee would also be presented to this Sub Committee in due course. Officers also reported that the invitations for estate visits had been extended to the Court of Common Council and that once dates were confirmed over the coming weeks, invites would be sent.

RESOLVED – That the outstanding actions from previous meetings be noted.

5. **FIRE SAFETY ACT 2021**

The Sub Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Community & Children's Services and the Rememberancer outlining the relevant provisions of the Fire Safety Act 2021.

Officers advised the issues contained in the report were discussed extensively at the annual Housing Conference. The new Act was not yet fully enforceable as Central Government had yet to issue clarification/guidance on certain elements.

Officers reminded Members the CoL had a responsibility under the Housing Act for private dwellings which may contain cladding and was working closely with MCHLG on this. There were also concerns in respect of the role of the "Responsible Person" and a further update on this would be presented to the Sub Committee most likely on 20 January 2022.

In response to questions from Members, Officers stated that the timescales for fire doors replacement related to HRA properties (excluding the Barbican Estate). In terms of the EWS1 form, £100,000 was a rough estimate and applied to all HRA blocks. There was no legal requirement for EWS1 forms to be completed and following the RICS guidance would not cover all properties and could result in some properties being unmortgageable. Officers undertook to look at processing EWS1 forms for properties which meet the RICS guidance although there was a shortage of expertise to process EWS1 forms

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That Officers consider the feasibility of processing EWS1 forms for properties which meet the RICS guidance.

6. HOUSING COMPLAINTS POLICY REVIEW

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services reviewing the current Housing Complaints Policy.

In presenting the report, officers advised that the current policy had been reviewed to take into account the new Housing Ombudsman Complaints Code which required landlords to implement a 2 stage complaints process and extending stage 2 timelines to allow for more in-depth review.

In response to questions and comments from Members, Officers advised that the complaints procedure was promoted on the CoL website and in the tenants handbook. In instances where queries/concerns were raised by tenants, Officers did highlight that there was a complaints process if tenants were dissatisfied with the way in which queries/complaints were addressed.

In the event that the new policy was approved, Officers undertook to update the website and the tenants handbook and also produce leaflets highlighting the new complaints procedure. Complaint monitoring took place and Officers could report back on timelines and flag complaints which took longer to resolve.

Members requested assurances that whilst retaining oversight and monitoring complaints, complainants had confidence in the process and the Sub Committee should not be advocating for complainants. Periodic review of data would allow the Sub Committee to gauge the effectiveness of the complaints process and highlight any issues of concern.

Officers referred to discussion at a previous meeting where the Sub Committee requested a report on historic complaints which had taken a considerable time to resolve and this report would be presented to the Sub Committee on 15th November 2021

Officers reassured Members that complaints were taken very seriously and it was suggested that the next compliance to be considered by the Sub Committee on 15th November could also capture compliance in respect of complaints handling and outcomes.

RESOLVED –

1. That the draft Housing Complaints Policy be approved.
2. That the next compliance report to be considered by the Sub Committee on 15th November captures compliance in respect of complaints handling and outcomes.
3. That oversight reporting on complaints takes place twice yearly to a specific timescale. *(details on performance are also published in the annual report to tenants)*

7. **GATEWAY 6: MIDDLESEX STREET ESTATE LIFT REFURBISHMENT**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services regarding the refurbishment of lifts for Middlesex Street Estate.

In presenting the report, Officers advised that work was delayed for 3 months due to COVID-19 but was delivered under budget.

RESOLVED

1. That the report and lessons learned be noted.
2. That the closure of this project is authorised.

8. **GATEWAY 6: RENEWAL OF ROOF COVERINGS AT 1-48 BLAKE HOUSE, WILLIAM BLAKE ESTATE**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services regarding roof covering replacement for 1 – 48 Blake House.

In presenting the report, Officers advised that this was one of 3 pilot projects to test processes and had won an award for the manufacturer and supplier insulation as well as achieving the key objectives of the project. The project was delivered slightly over budget due to additional costs in respect of roof damage after the waterproofing layer was laid.

In response to questions from Members, Officers stated that there was some roof insulation on Blake House and the new waterproofing had a 20 year guarantee. Moving forward, insulation opportunities would be maximised wherever possible depending on the roof capacity in accordance with the Climate Action Strategy.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report and lessons learned be noted.
2. That the closure of this project is authorised.

9. **FIRE COMPARTMENTATION - GREAT ARTHUR HOUSE**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services regarding fire compartmentation work to meet statutory requirements.

In presenting the report, Officers advised that timelines were dependant on sprinklers and if a hybrid solution was implemented, this could lead to a reduction in the overall project cost.

RESOLVED -

1. That **£101,665** is approved to cover the remainder of Studio Partington's design fees.
2. That an additional budget of **£10,000** is approved to cover the Communications Consultant's fees.
3. That Additional Costs are added for staff time (**£20,000**).
4. That the revised project budget of **£2,050,665** (excluding risk) be noted.

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

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services regarding progress with the Housing Major works Programme.

In response to questions from Members, Officers advised that in respect of H40 – Golden Lane Estate windows, an issues report which had been considered by the Projects Sub Committee would also be presented to the Community & Children's Services Committee due to the contract value of the overall project. Projects costs were kept under constant review in the light of increased construction costs and materials shortages. There was a focus on crescent House in view of its listed building status and work would be carried out across Golden Lane Estate

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

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

There was one question.

- *Communications Consultants* – A Member raised concerns regarding the employment of Communications Consultants and cited the example of 3 difference Communications Consultants being used for Golden Lane. In response, Officers stated that due to in-house resourcing challenges, external Communications Consultants had been deployed to ensure that projects were progressed in a timely manner.

A report was requested on the cost of employing Communications Consultants and Officers agreed to liaise with colleagues and present a report in due course.

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

There was no other business.

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(s)
14 - 18

Paragraph
3

14. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**
The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2021 were approved
15. **CHARITIES REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - THE CITY OF LONDON ALMSHOUSES (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1005857)**
This item was withdrawn.
16. **HOUSING SECURITY REVIEW STAKEHOLDER PRESENTATION**
The Committee received a presentation regarding Safety & Security of CoL Housing Estates.
17. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE**
There were no non-public questions.
18. **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 business.

The meeting ended at 12.47 pm

Chairman

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