

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE**
Friday, 14 January 2022

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.30 am
<https://youtu.be/IZZdHyw40x4>

This meeting was held as an informal one, with the views reached by the Committee approved formally by the Town Clerk after the meeting, in accordance with the Court of Common Council's Covid Approval Procedure. This process reflects the current position in respect of the holding of formal Local Authority meetings and the Court's decision of 15 April 2021 and 16 December 2021 to continue with virtual meetings, with formal confirmation of decisions provided through a delegation to the Town Clerk (or his nominated representative) after the informal meeting has taken place and the will of the Committee is known. The link to the public part of this meeting is shown above and will be available for one year from the date of the meeting.

Present

Members:

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

Officers:

Paul Murtagh	- Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Caroline Al-Beyerty	- Chamberlain
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains
Sye Thevathas	- City Surveyors
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Rev. Stephen Haines.

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 15th November 2021 be approved as a correct record.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

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

1. The Assistant Director advised that an update on the windows works to Golden Lane would be circulated with the minutes of this meeting.
2. Further to the item on Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans, which appeared later on this agenda, Members asked for an update report on disabled access on the estates to be added to the outstanding actions list. Members noted that a disabled access audit was due to start later this month on the Middlesex Street Estate.
3. There was no update on yet in respect of a Supreme Court ruling on the cladding at Great Arthur House.
4. Whilst there were some constraints on Electric Vehicle grant funding, officers met regularly with colleagues in the relevant departments about the location of charging points and would keep Members updated.

5. **PORTSOKEN COMMUNITY ENERGY PROJECT - ALDGATE SOLAR POWER (ASP)**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Portsoken Community Energy Project – Aldgate Solar Power (ASP). The Chair and Members congratulated officers on the success of the project, noting that it was the first community owned solar station. Members noted that some of the early delays had been beyond the City of London Corporation's control, but the City Corporation had carried out the roof replacement works promptly and would continue to work with ASP and Repowering on similar schemes. Members also noted that solar panels are part of City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The PPA Agreement be accepted and agreed.
2. The lease agreement be accepted and agreed.
3. The installation of community-owned solar panels on the roof of the Middlesex Street Estate by Aldgate Solar Power (ASP) be approved.

6. **WAYLEAVE AGREEMENTS - SOCIAL HOUSING ESTATES**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of two proposed Wayleave Agreements between the City of London Corporation (the Corporation) and British Telecommunications PLC, and the Corporation and Virgin Media respectively, in respect of the installation of electronic communication apparatus on various defined buildings across the City Corporation's social housing estates.

In response to questions, the officer advised that it would be possible to carry out an assessment of redundant cabling, with the possibility of removing it when undertaking new installations. If this was not possible, then it could be done separately but there would be cost implications. Members noted that all companies are able to use Openreach's infrastructure, which drives competition amongst internet service providers. The officer agreed to respond to a question about whether Openreach would be able to use this wayleave to improve services for non-City Corporation tenants, outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The City of London Corporation enters into separate 'Wayleave Agreements' with British Telecommunications PLC and Virgin Media, in respect of the installation of electronic communication apparatus on various defined buildings across the City Corporation's social housing estates.
2. The specific Wayleave Agreement between the City Corporation and British Telecommunications PLC (attached as Appendix 'A' to this report), in respect of the installation of electronic communication apparatus on various defined buildings across the City Corporation's social housing estates, be approved.
3. The same Wayleave Agreement between the City Corporation and Virgin Media, in respect of the installation of electronic communication apparatus on various defined buildings across the City Corporation's social housing estates, be approved.
4. Authority be delegated to the Director of Community & Children's Services to approve and agree further Wayleave Agreements in the agreed format, as appropriate, in accordance with relevant legislation and in the best interests of the City Corporation.

7. **PROVISION OF EWS1 FORMS**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which sought guidance and instruction from Members on the City of London Corporation's approach to the provision (or non-provision) of EWS1 Forms across its social housing estates.

In response to questions, Members noted that the pro-forma for comfort letters had been checked by legal services. Members noted that EWS1 forms are only required on buildings over 18m, where combustible materials had been used, and this did not apply to any blocks in the City. The Assistant Director advised that those Local Authorities who were not obliged to provide EWS1 forms were progressing in line with the recommendations in this report. Members also noted that the position might change once lobbying had finished

RESOLVED, that – having considered the various options within this report for the provision (or non-provision) of EWS1 Forms across the Corporation's social housing estates, Option 1 in the report be approved: i.e. - where the

Corporation does not undertake and issue EWS1 Forms but provides 'comfort' letters to individual residents upon request.

8. HOUSING MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director, Community and Children's Services, in respect of progress on the Major Works Programme. Members noted that some of the projects in the report were for major works and some for planned maintenance. The programme sought to be fully transparent; thereby removing the need to repeatedly seek Member decisions in respect of cyclical electrical testing and window inspections, for example.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

9. HOUSING SAFETY COMPLIANCE - UPDATE REPORT

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which sought to provide Members with information on how the City of London Corporation (the Corporation), through its Housing Property Services Team, is ensuring that all its social housing within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is managed in a way that meets compliance with current health and safety legislation, best practice and regulatory standards to ensure the health and safety of its residents. Members noted that future updates might require a 'non-public' appendix, in order to provide more detail.

RESOLVED, That:

1. The content of the report be noted, together with the compliance information provided, which details how the Corporation is performing against statutory building compliance relating to its social housing portfolio.
2. The information presented in this first report will be provided to this Sub Committee bi-annually.

10. EVACUATION ASSESSMENTS FOR VULNERABLE RESIDENTS - UPDATE REPORT

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of evacuation assessments for vulnerable residents. Members noted that the interviews had included the evacuation policy for the respective buildings, and the recommended action was confirmed in writing to each resident. The officer agreed to check on the more generic personal emergency evacuation plans for Great Arthur House and report back to Members.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

11. HOUSING UPDATE AND RISK REGISTER

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided a bi-annual update on the housing service's performance and management information in key areas of work.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

12. REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE SERVICE - COMPLAINTS HANDLING

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which provided Members with an overview of the complaints process with regard to the repairs and maintenance service.

In response to questions, Members noted that officers were working on a timeline, setting out the points at which access rights would be enforced. Officers explained that most landlords do not hold keys, in order to protect their employees in terms of culpability, but leaseholders are required to provide emergency contact details.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

13. CITY OF LONDON ALMSHOUSES REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2021/22 AND 2022/23

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Chamberlain and the Director of Community and Children's Services, which provided the annual submission of the City of London Almshouses revenue budgets overseen by the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee.

RESOLVED, that – the 2022/23 revenue budget be approved.

14. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - REVIEW OF 5 YEAR PLAN

The Sub Committee received a report of the Chamberlain and Director of Community and Children's Services which presented a review of the 5-year finance plan for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), analysed income streams and forecast costs and outlines the key challenges over the period.

The Chamberlain confirmed that the HRA is finely tuned; with no immediate pressures and income assumptions are very prudent. Members noted that sufficient time is allowed between the completion of schemes and rental incomes coming on line, and future developments will help to build capital and reduce borrowing and pressures on the account. The risks associated with construction inflation are also factored into budget forecasting. Members also noted the mitigations available in terms of rephasing works under the 30-Year Programme, and the high priority already given to fire safety works post the Grenfell Tower fire. Finally, the Chamberlain advised that the Finance Committee will be scrutinising these matters and suggested that Members (of the Housing Management Sub Committee) might wish to assist in their deliberations by setting out the assurances they required in terms of trigger mechanisms and timeframes, for example.

The Chairman of Finance agreed with the Chamberlain's position, noting that the HRA reflects the risks carried by the entire City of London Corporation budget and there is an inflation reserve built into next year's forecast. Whilst there can be some reliance on the wider contingencies within the City Corporation's financial controls, it was accepted that some issues might need to be addressed more rapidly. However, the Chairman of Finance was satisfied

that the HRA is in a better position than it had been for some time, and some of the risks might fall outside its scope.

In response to questions, the following points were noted :

- a) Members asked for consistency when the figures are reported to the Finance Committee and Resource Allocation Sub Committees.
- b) Members agreed that it would be helpful to receive an updated 30 Year Business Plan, in the Summer of 2022, with a series of options to consider in terms of prioritising the additional major works identified in the stock condition survey. The Chairman agreed that this should be added to the outstanding actions list.
- c) City Fund revenue contingencies cannot be used for the HRA due to ringfencing. However, the biggest risk is construction inflation, which is covered for new build projects by the costed risk provisions for capital projects and funded separately by s106. Major works projects have a level of inflation to some extent built into their individual forecasts and risk registers.
- d) Income assumptions are based on a short gap between completion of a development and rents being collected. The major works costs met by the HRA are net of assumptions around leaseholder recovery from service charges.
- e) Sydenham Hill and COLPAI will be funded by S106 funding, with no impact on the HRA. The Sydenham Hill income projection is very prudent and other funding schemes; i.e. – income from car parking, have not been included.
- f) The Chamberlain works with the Housing Team on project budget forecasting and the Project Managers adjust their outturn projections on a regular basis. Members noted that the figures in the report therefore represent a snapshot when the report was written.
- g) If the Great Arthur House cladding legal issue is lost, then there will be an impact on other projects, but this risk is being closely monitored.
- h) The Windows programme will be delivered within the HRA and is a significant part of the investment set out in the last 5 year programme. Whilst there are risks in terms of delivery and construction costs, all tender documents have been carefully scrutinised, a new Project Manager is in post and the Section 20 notices are due to go out this week. Members of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee are likely to receive a number of Gateway 5 reports in respect of the windows programme, which will provide regular updates on costings.
- i) The HRA is a departmental, not corporate risk and it was suggested that the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee should see the risk report on a regular basis. The Chamberlain endorsed this approach and also recommended it to the Finance Committee, who might want to

add a specific point in the Medium Term Financial Risk, as this might be the best way to manage it corporately.

- j) The City of London Corporation only charges social housing rents, which are subject to RPI increases. However, there are legal parameters around social and affordable housing rents, and they could be considered as part of zero based budgeting. Members are due to receive a report on rent increases and it was suggested that this be incorporated.

In concluding, the Chair welcomed a constructive and helpful discussion.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

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

Members noted the Planning and Transportation Committee this week had received an Application for a Variation on a project in the Minories, requesting the removal of 27 affordable flats from scheme, in lieu of a Section 106 Agreement. Members had noted that a decision on 27 units had been too low for consideration by the Community and Children's Services Committee. Members (of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee (HMASC)) noted that the Local Plan is currently being revised and, therefore, strengthening the housing aspects would be timely in helping to formulate policy.

Whilst the £9.9m contribution from the developers to fund new housing was welcomed, it was noted that this was only handed over in full once 75% of the scheme has been constructed. Members (of the HMASC) sought assurance that payments in lieu reflected construction costs and were inflation linked. The Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, agreed to consult with planning colleagues on this matter and bring an overview report back to this Sub Committee. It was also noted that developers often stated that service charges on some schemes might be too high for social housing tenants.

Whilst supporting a wider discussion, Members noted that this fell outside of the remit of this Sub Committee's (and the Grand Committee's) Terms of Reference. It was therefore Moved by Susan Pearson, Seconded by John Fletcher and RESOLVED, that – a resolution be sent to the Policy and Resources and Planning and Transportation Committees, setting out the above concerns, in order to facilitate a wider discussion.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business.

17. 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.

18. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2021 be approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

The Assistant Director agreed to set out the response given to Alderman Luder at the Court of Common Council, in respect of Fire Safety works, to Members of the Community and Children’s Services Committee, subject to the agreement of the Chairman. Members noted that there would not be a full fire safety update on this occasion.

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 no other business.

The meeting ended at 11.15 am

Chairman

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