

<b>Committee(s):</b> Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 29 November 2023
<b>Subject:</b> Independent 'Access' Review of our Social Housing Estates	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>1, 2, 12</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Paul Murtagh Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services	

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the outcome of the independent review of access into our social housing estates and to seek guidance from Members as to the priorities that should be given to the recommendations emanating from the review.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to note the recommendations emanating from the independent review of access into our social housing estates and to give guidance to officers on the priorities for improvements and how these priorities should be taken forward.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. Evans Jones was appointed to carry out a 'pilot' access audit of the public areas of the City of London Corporation's social housing estate at Middlesex Street. The purpose of the review was to assess the accessibility of the common parts of the estate and make recommendations for improvements as required. For information and illustrative purposes, Evans Jones' access audit is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
2. It was subsequently agreed that a similar access audit should be undertaken on the public areas of the remaining 11 Corporation social housing estates. Following

a compliant procurement process, Direct Access Consultancy Limited was appointed to carry out this work.

3. This report sets out the findings of the access audits across all 12 of the Corporation's social housing estates and, the subsequent recommendations for improvements.

## **Considerations**

4. The 'pilot' access audit carried out at the Middlesex Street Estate and, the access audits for the remaining 11 social housing estates, were required to assess estate approaches, entrances, and internal communal areas, and identify barriers to access for disabled users.
5. The criteria that was used to assess the common parts included:
  - Equality Act 2010.
  - BS8300-1-2018 - Design of an accessible inclusive built environment.
  - Part 1, External Environment Code of Practice.
  - The Building Act 1984, Approved Document M 2015 Edition Volume 1 - Access to and use of buildings (dwellings).
  - The Building Act 1984, Approved Document M 2015 Edition Volume 2 - Access to and use of buildings (buildings other than dwellings).
  - BS9999:2017 Code of Practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings.
  - Revised Lifetime Homes Standard.
  - Wheelchair Housing Design Guide.
6. Attached at Appendix 2 to this report is a general summary of the findings of the 12 access audits and the resulting recommendations for improvements made by Evans Jones and Direct Access Consultancy Limited, along with officers' views on how these improvements may be achieved.
7. Members will also note that several of the recommendations included in the access audits are addressed, or can easily be addressed through the estate inspection and repairs and maintenance processes we employ across our social housing estates including:
  - accessibility of pull cords.
  - removing obstructions from communal areas (corridors, lobbies etc).
  - adjusting doors, where possible, to ensure they are easier to open and close.
  - repairing identified areas of uneven paving.
  - robust lift maintenance programme.
  - signing in process for visitors to our estates who may require assistance in the event of an emergency.
8. At its meeting on 17 April 2023, the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee (HMASC) received a report on the outcome of the independent review

into the security of the Corporation's social housing estates. Some of the recommendations from the security review do align with recommendations from this access audit and can be dealt with simultaneously. This is particularly the case in relation to the external doors in some of our blocks of flats.

9. Now that we have completed both the security review and the access audit across our social housing estates, subject to the expressed views of Members, the two reports can be considered in parallel. It is proposed that the next step is for officers to put together a fully costed and prioritised Action Plan for the implementation of the accepted recommendations from the two reports. It is intended that this will be brought back to a meeting of the HMASC later this year.
  
10. Members will need to be mindful that there is currently no spare capacity within the Housing Major Works Programme for new projects. There is no current funding to carry out the improvements identified in the security review and the access audit. It is likely however, that some of the works will be addressed as part of the current Housing Major Works Programme and other minor works may be carried out as part of the Corporation's Repairs and Maintenance Programme. In terms of the latter, this is an option for carrying out adjustments to the entrance doors and internal communal doors to our blocks of flats to make them more accessible.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Evans Jones Access Audit – Middlesex Street Estate  
Appendix 2 – Access Audit – Summary Recommendations

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