

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 30 January 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub (Community and Children's Services) Committee held at Committee Rooms, 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 30 January 2024 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Ruby Sayed (Chairman)
Helen Fentimen (Deputy Chairman)
Jamel Banda
Mary Durcan
Deputy John Fletcher
Steve Goodman
Alderman Susan Pearson
Henrika Priest
Ceri Wilkins

Officers:

Pam Wharfe	- Interim Director Assistant Housing
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Michael Gwyther-Jones	- Community and Children's Services
David Blane	- Community and Children's Services
Polly Dunn	- Town Clerk's Department
Rhys Campbell	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received for this meeting.

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

No declarations were made at this meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 29 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Sub-Committee received the actions tracker and noted the following:

1. Regarding the action in respect of vehicle charging points, feasibility studies identified that many of the sites needed more remedial work to the electrical installations than originally anticipated. The Chair highlighted the changes that were expected regarding the abolition of the purchase of fossil fuel consuming motor vehicles and encouraged officers to look at infrastructure, and more innovative technologies that were available for use on City of London Corporation's estates.

2. An officer provided an update on automatic door devices in which they confirmed that an access audit was to be conducted across all of the estates and a report shall be brought to the Sub-Committee at its next meeting advising Members of the next steps needed.

3. The Chair had asked for a report to be brought to the Committee at its next meeting regarding the arbitration panel being a part of the complaints process,

4. An officer provided an update concerning the new repairs and maintenance contract, advising Members that the consultant (Pennington) tender documentation and that all issues had been discussed with Pennington and raised with both the Corporation's Legal team and Procurement team. In response a Member asked when the Sub-Committee shall be able view and comment on the tender document, and it was agreed that once a draft had been produced that it shall be circulated to Members for comment.

5. A member raised a question regarding the September 2022 Customer Service Review and asked officers for the results of this exercise and what actions the City of London Corporation had taken already; the potential costs to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) were mentioned also. Officers confirmed that repairs dominated the review, and a resident focus project was formed which aimed to improve policies, procedures and service standards. A report showing the results of this review had been expected to be submitted to the Sub-Committee in June 2023 but officers were content to circulate to Members after this meeting and also for it to be included on the agenda as an item for information at the next meeting.

5. HOUSING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Sub-Committee received a report which considered the current governance arrangements and recommends how these arrangements should be provided in the future.

The Assistant Town Clerk advised the committee that the report had already been considered by the Community and Children's Services Committee, the Barbican Residents Committee and the Barbican Estate Residents Consultative Committee. The Assistant Town Clerk advised Members that the decision

sought by this Committee was whether it had any feedback to the recommendations listed in the report that it would like to make to the Community and Children's Services Committee.

The Chair asked if more clarity could be given on the annual workplan and was keen to know when an update would be given to the Sub-Committee to which officers confirmed that this would be provided at the next meeting.

A member raised a concern, which had previously been raised at the Community and Children's Services Committee meeting held on 25 January 2023, that it was of their opinion that the Chair of the Community and Children's Services Committee should not be Chair of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee. The creation of a wider management team and a demanding workload were highlighted as factors for their concern.

RESOLVED, that - Members agreed, to the recommendations listed in the report.

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

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services providing an update on the Housing Major Works Programme.

During the discussion and questions, the following points were noted:

- Work on wider windows had been continuing and consultation on William Blake Estate had begun. Officers were exploring all possible technologies available including vacuum glazing.
- There had been advancements on Golden Lane Estate and a pilot project had been ongoing at Crescent House. Feedback regarding this project had exceeded officers' expectations, as the pilot project had received positive reviews, and officers confirmed that vacuum glazing had helped to improve thermal comfort inside the property due to the creation of effective insulation. Officers informed the committee that an architect had been living in the property to ensure that the property is properly tested to its full potential; the architect had been monitoring heating costs and testing the creation of moisture and humidity within the property. Officers also met with residents in the week prior to demonstrate how the ventilation system works.
- Officers referred to the appendices of this report, explaining the data presented and asked Members for feedback in terms of how to better present this information. An update on Avondale Estate was provided and majority of works there had been completed however there were certain clashes with other programmes (Cadent replacing the Gas Infrastructure) whilst also managing several contractors on site which consequently caused a temporary pause on certain works due to be carried out. Officers advised that the estimated costs listed in the

appendices were unfunded and that a quantitative surveyor had been tasked with revising these costs to ensure that they were current to modern day values and to ensure any inflation had been applied. A member acknowledged that a good number of works had been completed under budget however was concerned as to why costs were not predicted closer to outcome. It was suggested that the estimated costs of £110 Million had not been met and as a result the Member suggested that the underspend could be used for unfunded projects. Whilst officers were optimistic that this could be a possibility, they informed Members that this was dependant on the costs of a project as these tended to vary, however officers confirmed that they strived to come under budget where possible.

- The Deputy Chair asked if officers could arrange for a separate session for Members regarding the Housing Revenue Account where there could be a discussion regarding concerns raised. The Chair confirmed that an informal session with both Members of Community and Children's Services Committee and this Sub-Committee shall be arranged once the relevant reports had been commissioned. The Chair thanked officers for their work and acknowledged that completing a project whilst under spending was great achievement compared to previous projects.
- Regarding communal heating installation on Middlesex Street Estate, a member was pleased to see that the installations within Petticoat Tower had been completed, barring five properties, and asked officers for an update regarding these five properties. Officers advised Members that they were progressing well with the remainder of the properties left and were gaining access to these properties via the appropriate channels.
- A Member asked for an update regarding the replacements of windows at Windsor House and asked if officers were able to accelerate the process. Officers confirmed that they would investigate further and return to committee with an update.

RESOLVED, that - the report be received and its contents noted.

7. **TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS 2023-2024**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, providing an update on the planned survey of the City Corporation's tenants.

Officers informed the committee that this was the first year that the tenant satisfaction survey became mandatory, and the results were expected to be supplied to the Social Housing Regulator by 30 June 2024. Performance had increased since the last survey, however repairs needed improvements in the years to come. More analysis of the results was expected to be conducted and a report was expected to be produced for the next meeting. A member asked officers why there were tenants who had not completed the survey and whether an 18% return rate was good in comparison to previous return rates.

Officers responded to Members and explained that there was no clear reason as to why tenants had not filled out the survey, alluding to multiple factors such as personal preference, and that the minimum return rate was based on the tenant population. Acuity, the social housing consultancy firm who conducted the survey, calculated the number needed to meet the central government threshold and officers suggested that the City Corporation would exceed this threshold in the following year. However, the statistics were reliable since there were more tenant responses than both tenant and leaseholders combined in previous years.

A Member asked officers if there was more work that the City of London Corporation could do to help tenants who were struggling with the impact of the current cost of living. Officers confirmed that whilst there were ongoing initiatives, such as the Green Doctors Scheme and Winter Measures Programme, there could be more work to be done and if Members had any areas that they would like further insight on that these areas could be included in the next Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

Members asked whether before the strategy for engagement for the following year had been finalised if the allocated Members for each of the estates could be considered to provide any feedback or suggestions in regards to improvements of the housing estates, to which the Chair confirmed that Members would have a chance at the next meeting to raise any questions or concerns.

A Member asked officers what percentage of the homes situated on the City of London Corporation estates were not described as “decent” and if residents had been informed of the allocation of one survey per household. Officers advised Members that in the ensuing year tenants were to be informed that the survey invitation is personal to each household and should not be forwarded onto others. Regarding the statistics requested by Members, officers confirmed that they would return with further information which shall be included in a report expected to be brought to the next committee meeting. Officers highlighted to Members that whilst the decent homes standard was outdated the data, however, suggested that the City of London Corporation was compliant and whether people were to consider it a “decent” home was a complicated matter. The Deputy Chair was keen to know if there were any properties that did not meet this specific standard and what work could be done to rectify this. Officers confirmed that if there were some that did not meet this standard that the decent homes callback programme can be used to identify these properties.

Regarding the issuing of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, a Member encouraged officers to ensure that these were being properly received by tenants since their neighbour had not received theirs. Officers confirmed that next year they will reconsider how they conduct these surveys; reminders and phone calls were mentioned. Officers also confirmed that there was a vast number of contact information available to them for both tenants and leaseholders, and that they tended to receive a lot of responses via email. A member enquired about the percentage of contact information attained to which

officers confirmed that they would return with statistics at the next committee meeting.

A Member asked officers if this survey was routinely carried out at the same time of year each year and officers confirmed that there was not a definitive routine but would try to get the surveys conducted in a regular cycle.

RESOLVED, that - the report be received and its contents noted.

8. SECURE TENANTS: RENT SETTING 2024-25

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, providing an update on the current rent setting policy.

A Member asked officers whether tenants in receipt of Housing Benefits or Universal Credit would be covered by these benefits mentioned regarding the increase to their rental charge. Officers confirmed that tenants would be covered by these benefits.

RESOLVED, that - the report be received and its contents noted.

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

A Member asked if the Committee could receive a report which provided further details on the progress of the new buildings and projects being constructed to which the Chair advised that this question was related to an item of business which would be picked up under item 10.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

Chair discussed the target set for the building of social and affordable housing and how this was not expected to be achieved in the estimated time given and suggested for these targets to be reset. The Chair asked for a report to be brought to committee at a later date and asked officers to provide more information on the matter. Officers confirmed that the original target had been to build 3,700 new homes; 700 of which are to be social housing units developed on existing housing estates and a further 3,000 on land acquired by the City of London Corporation. They expected that by the end of 2025, 370 of the 700 units will have been built and identified potential for further developments on other estates. Officers informed the committee that an estimated timeline had not been established in the initial report concerning the building of social housing and that officers can report to Members a target that might be more feasible. In regards to Avondale Estate, and its potential for the development of social and affordable housing, this would require demolition and regeneration of the estate to which officers suggested investigating a different approach due to financial constraints.

It was confirmed that a report would be brought to the next committee meeting detailing the status of affordable housing built, in relation to the 3,700 target,

and the expectations of the London Wide Plan and what the City of London Corporations' local plan originally set out to achieve.

11. 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.

12. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

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

There were two non-public questions.

14. 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 12:18pm.

Chairman

Contact Officer: Rhys Campbell
rhys.campbell@cityoflondon.gov.uk