

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE
Monday, 13 January 2025

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 Monday, 13 January 2025 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Steve Goodman OBE (Chairman)
Helen Fentimen OBE JP (Deputy Chairman)
Mary Durcan
Deputy John Fletcher
Eamonn Mullally
Deputy Ceri Wilkins

In attendance

Anne Holmes

Officers:

Peta Caine	- Community & Children's Services Department
Liam Gillespie	- Community & Children's Services Department
Michael Gwyther-Jones	- Community & Children's Services Department
Lochlan MacDonald	- Community & Children's Services Department
Blair Stringman	- Town Clerk's Department
Greg Wade	- Community & Children's Services Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Timothy McNally, Henrika Priest and Deputy Keith Bottomley.

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 28 November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Town Clerk concerning outstanding actions.

Members were informed that many of the outstanding actions were covered in the reports included in the agenda.

5. HOUSING MATTERS UPDATE

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning an update on some key issues currently being dealt with by the Social Housing Team.

Officers introduced the report noting that it aimed to consolidate various issues into one document.

Several issues were raised by Members, one question concerned the Lettings and Transfers Policy, specifically about the cleaning standards and repairs when a property is let. Concerns were also raised about properties not being in a suitable condition for new tenants. It was clarified that electrical and gas safety checks should be completed before a new tenant moves in. However, some work might be done after the tenant has moved in, provided they are informed.

Questions were also raised about the clarity and targets of the action plan. It was noted that the plan had been tidied up and discussed with the senior management team. There was a suggestion to make the report in future more concise for the sub-committee.

Members also asked for specific areas that might be going in the wrong direction in the Risk Profile Summary. Key areas highlighted included loan working, statutory compliance, and health and safety procedures. The Sub-Committee discussed the need for more resources in the health and safety team.

RESOLVED – That Members,

- a) Approve the Hate Incidents Policy – Appendix 1
- b) Approve the Lettings and Transfers Policy – Appendix 2
- c) Endorse the Housing Strategy Action Plan – Appendix 4

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

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning an update on the progress that has been made with the Housing Major Works Programme and to advise Members of issues affecting progress on individual schemes.

Officers noted an overview of the financial shortfall identified for the major works programme. It was estimated that there is a £60 million shortfall to deliver works up to 2031 and a further £40 million shortfall for the programme from 2031 to 2036. This shortfall is due to previously unidentified unfunded projects, construction cost inflation, and other economic factors.

The following points were noted:

- **Window Refurbishment Projects:** There was a question about the completion timeline for the Southwark Estates window refurbishment project. It was clarified that the project is expected to finish by the end of January 2025.

- **Golden Lane Estate:** Questions were raised about the delays in the Crescent House and wider estate projects. It was explained that the delays were due to the buildings being classified as higher risk, which required additional safety assessments and registration.
- **Middlesex Street Estate:** Concerns were raised about the cost increases for the concrete repairs and CCTV installation. It was noted that the costs have increased due to tender prices and additional work required for asbestos removal.
- **Heating System Issues:** There was a discussion about the heating system not working properly for many residents. It was mentioned that some residents opted for less than the optimum fit-out, which affected the system's performance. A consultant has been asked to assess the system and provide a report.

7. **FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR LEASEHOLDERS (HRA)**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning recommendations for extending the discretionary loan arrangements available to leaseholders facing major works costs.

It was noted that at the September meeting, a paper was brought forward asking for some works, which would normally be done through the HRA, to be brought forward and funded in conjunction with the police contract. This was because it was thought to be more cost-effective and less disruptive to do the works at the same time.

The following points were noted:

- **CCTV Installation:** There was confusion about the funding and scope of the CCTV installation. It was clarified that the capital cost of installing and updating the CCTV was part of the police project, but the ongoing maintenance would be covered by the HRA and leaseholders.
- **Concrete Repairs:** Concerns were raised about the cost increases for the concrete repairs. It was noted that the costs have increased due to tender prices and additional work required for asbestos removal.
- **Communication with Residents:** There was a discussion about the need for better communication with residents regarding the scope and costs of the works. It was suggested that the steering group should be involved in these discussions to ensure transparency and clarity.

RESOLVED – That Members,

- a) Endorse the discretionary loan arrangements contained in section eight.
- b) Agree to retain the use of equity loans/property charges only in cases of severe financial hardship

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

There was one question raised by a Member in advance of the meeting.

A Member asked what systems are currently in place to assess the quality and standard of cleaning on the GLE in blocks and communal/ outside areas? At present, there seems to be a 75% rating, however, following a walkabout with the Deputy Director and Head of Housing the standards clearly fall much lower than this. How are residents kept informed about standards? Can I also please confirm how many cleaners/porters we have at present and their roles eg: how many hours spent cleaning weekly and where as often nobody is seen cleaning on the Estate, do we need more staff?

In response, officers noted that a full written answer would be provided to the Member. Members were informed that the City of London Corporation has an estate inspections regime managed by the estate services team, and a new system for these inspections was being introduced. The inspections cover cleaning standards, grounds, maintenance, and other aspects. The new system will calculate a percentage score, with a minimum acceptable score of 75%. Inspections are snapshots in time, and maintaining standards between inspections is crucial. Some blocks, like those in Golden Lane, usually score highly, while others have historically scored less well. Residents are concerned about costs and want a clean and pleasant environment. A fuller written answer can be provided if needed.

It was suggested that a paper could be brought back to the Sub-Committee with further information.

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

There was one item of other business.

An allocated Members report on Middlesex Street was provided to Members.

The following points were noted:

- **Lack of Progress:** Since September, no issues have moved from Amber to Green, indicating no items have been completed. This lack of progress is concerning despite the ongoing efforts.
- **Canopy Issue:** There is frustration over the absence of a canopy leading into the tower, even after more than ten years. This has been a long-standing issue that remains unresolved.
- **Heating System Problems:** The heating system is not working effectively for many residents. The main issue identified is that the system requires an optimum fit in each flat to operate correctly. However, many residents chose to have fewer or smaller radiators, or radiators in different locations, which has affected the system's performance. There is a concern that residents were not adequately informed about the impact of these choices on the system's efficiency.
- **Consultant Involvement:** There is a request for community leaders and residents to have input into the consultant's review of the heating system. This involvement is seen as crucial for learning lessons and ensuring the consultant's work addresses the residents' concerns.
- **Resident Engagement:** Efforts are being made to engage residents by inviting them to have their heating systems assessed by an engineer and

a team member. This initiative aims to address the heating issues more effectively.

- **Need for Resolution:** There is a call for finding ways to resolve these issues outside of the sub-committee meetings to avoid repetitive discussions and ensure progress is made.

10. **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.

11. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

12. **MIDDLESEX STREET COMMUNAL HEATING REPLACEMENT PROJECT**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services.

13. **HRA REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE MOBILISATION AND DE-MOBILISATION**

The head of Repairs and Maintenance was heard.

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

There were no non-public questions.

15. **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 3.12 pm

Chairman

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