

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB (COMMUNITY AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE**
Monday, 30 June 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, 30 June 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present

Members:

Steve Goodman OBE (Chairman)
Deputy Helen Fentimen OBE JP
Deputy John Fletcher
Deputy Ceri Wilkins
Deputy Anne Corbett
Sarah Gillinson
Sandra Jenner
Charles Edward Lord, OBE JP
Deputy James Thomson CBE
Mark Wheatley

Officers:

Peta Caine	- Community & Children's Services Department
Anna Donoghue	- Community & Children's Services Department
Wendy Giaccaglia	- Community & Children's Services Department
Liam Gillespie	- Community & Children's Services Department
Michael Kettle	- Community & Children's Services Department
Lochlan MacDonald	- Community & Children's Services Department
Greg Nott	- Community & Children's Services Department
Blair Stringman	- Community & Children's Services Department
Greg Wade	- Town Clerk's Department
	- Community & Children's Services Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Leyla Boulton and Philip Woodhouse.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

In accordance with Standing Order 26, Deputy Ceri Wilkins being the only Member indicating their willingness to serve was declared Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

RESOLVED – That, Deputy Ceri Wilkins be declared Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

4. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 13 January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

5. **OUTSTANDING ACTION TRACKER**

The Sub Committee received the outstanding action tracker.

Officers updated members on financial support for long leaseholders, explaining that the original solution proved more complex due to billing structures. They are working with finance colleagues to develop revised options, aiming to present them to CCS and Finance Committees by September.

A Member stressed the importance of meeting the September deadline, especially given the governance structure recently agreed for the Golden Lane project. The policy is seen as essential for upcoming lease negotiations.

A separate concern was raised about a faulty automatic door at Bowater House. Officers confirmed it's a repairs issue and not part of the current investment programme. While there's no estate-wide plan for automatic doors, a programme could be considered.

RESOLVED – That, the action tracker be noted.

6. **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO VARIOUS HOUSING ESTATES**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk concerning appointment of Members to various Housing Estate Portfolio's.

RESOLVED – That the following Members be approved to the various Housing Estates,

- a) Deputy John Fletcher - **Tower Hamlets and Middlesex Street**
- b) Deputy Ceri Wilkins - **Hackney and Golden Lane Estate**
- c) Charles Edward Lord - **Southwark**
- d) Sandra Jenner – **Lewisham**
- e) Anne Corbett - **Islington**
- f) Sarah Gillinson - **Lambeth**

7. **BALTIC STREET WEST - DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning an application which has been made to develop an area on Baltic Street West into a two-bedroom flat.

The Chair introduced the item briefly, noting that there had been several approaches from a party interested in building on land adjacent to the Golden Lane Estate. Officers had previously responded that the land was not available for disposal, and the Chair explained that, with new Members joining, further approaches had been made. To formalise the position, the matter was brought

to the committee for endorsement and referral to the DCCS Committee as the decision-making body.

During the discussion, a Member sought clarification on the specific parcel of land in question, which was confirmed to be marked by dotted lines on the plan. The Chair confirmed that the Committee was being asked to support the officers' stance that the land should not be disposed of, and to recommend this position to the CCS.

The Deputy Chair raised a concern about the potential for future time-wasting if the land remained open to speculative interest. They asked whether anything could be done to prevent future proposals altogether. The Chair responded that the resolution being passed and referred to CCS would serve that purpose. Another Member added that many Members had been inundated with emails about the issue and supported taking a firm stance to close the matter. They emphasised the importance of having a clear committee-backed position to simplify future responses.

The Sub-Committee agreed to pass the recommendation to CCS, affirming that the land is not available for disposal.

RESOLVED – That Members, recommend that the Community and Children's Services Committee formally reject the application to declare this parcel of land surplus for housing purposes.

8. **HOUSING MATTERS UPDATE**

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

The Chair opened the item by thanking Officers for presenting the Housing Matters Update in a consolidated format. This was the second time the approach had been trialled, and Members were encouraged to subdivide the discussion for clarity. The first section focused on policy decisions, with Members invited to raise questions.

Aids and Adaptations Policy

A Member queried the funding mechanisms for aids and adaptations, seeking clarification on whether the policy applied equally to tenants and leaseholders. Officers confirmed that while the funding sources differ—either from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) or the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)—the assessment process is consistent. However, another Member noted a discrepancy in the policy wording, which stated that leaseholders were excluded. It was agreed that the policy should be revised to clearly outline responsibilities between the local authority and the NHS, and specify leaseholder eligibility. Members requested a future briefing on the current status of DFGs and HRA grants.

Vulnerability Policy

A Member praised the clarity of the vulnerability policy but asked whether it included proactive measures to identify vulnerable residents. Officers confirmed that an audit of all residents was planned to improve data and support proactive engagement.

Parking Enforcement

Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of third-party parking enforcement, particularly its impact on disabled residents. Officers explained that legal changes had limited enforcement powers, and penalty notices were now the primary tool. Members suggested improved signage and requested data on enforcement activity. It was confirmed that disabled parking is free upon evidence, and mobility scooter storage is managed case-by-case due to estate constraints.

Pets and Garage Use

A Member expressed concern over enforcement of the pets policy and misuse of garages for storage. Officers acknowledged historical lapses and proposed reviewing policies to reflect practical realities while maintaining safety standards. The need for better monitoring and pragmatic policy adjustments was emphasised.

Repairs and Maintenance

A Member highlighted the importance of repair quality, not just speed. Officers agreed and noted that new KPIs and IT systems would support sample inspections and contractor oversight. Another Member added that value for money should be explicitly mentioned in the policy, especially for leaseholders. Officers agreed to include this in the policy preamble. Planned preventive maintenance was confirmed to be in development through procurement exercises.

Performance Dashboard

Officers introduced the dashboard as a new tool for tracking housing performance. Members raised several points:

- Fire door checks were initially reported at 77% but updated to 100%.
- Complaints had increased, attributed to improved accessibility and encouragement to report.
- Firebox and electrical safety checks were flagged as low. Officers outlined plans to complete checks by the end of the financial year.
- Playground inspections had dropped due to estate-specific issues but were improving.
- A spike in Right to Buy applications in November was due to the abolition of discounts.
- Discrepancies in mutual exchange figures and housing register cancellations were noted and will be clarified.

Officers identified electrical safety and fire compliance as top priorities. A business case for additional staffing was being developed to support estate services and health and safety teams.

A Member requested data on housing waiting lists and repairs speed. They suggested flagging priority issues in future dashboards and including resource constraints in the narrative. Members approved the policies subject to the comments raised.

Arms Houses and Fire Safety

Officers reported ongoing procurement for fire alarm upgrades at the Arms Houses. A waking watch was in place to mitigate risks, and the London Fire Brigade was satisfied with progress. The risk of escalation was considered low.

RESOLVED – That Members, approve the Housing Policy of New Policies and of Revisions to existing Policies and Practices at Appendices 1-9 of the report:

- Draft Aids and Adaptations Policy
- Draft Tenancy Management Policy
- Draft Vulnerability Policy
- Revised Parking Sheds and Garages Policy
- Revised Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Revised Compensation Policy

9. ***TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES 2024-25**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning the revised regulatory regime for social housing.

The Chair introduced the item, and officers provided a brief overview. It was noted that, in line with regulatory requirements for social landlords managing over 1,000 homes, an annual return has been submitted to the regulator. This includes the results of the second annual resident satisfaction survey, which were submitted ahead of the deadline. The results are appended to the report.

Members queried how the satisfaction score of 67.7% compared with similar providers. Officers explained that while the regulator does not benchmark results, comparative data is available through subscriptions such as Housemark. Some contextual benchmarking for the previous year is included in the appendix, showing the Council performed relatively well—joint third or fourth in overall satisfaction and highest in London for complaints handling in 2023–24. A more detailed benchmarking report will be brought to the next meeting.

Concerns were raised about the low response rate of 18%. A Member noted only receiving a single letter and questioned the effectiveness of the outreach. Officers acknowledged the low return and explained that the survey was conducted via a mix of telephone and online methods, with letters prompting participation. A significant number of phone numbers were found to be inoperative, and the survey provider was instructed not to make repeated calls. Officers confirmed that the response rate met the regulator's statistical requirements and that Members' previous request to aim for a 25% response rate had been noted.

It was agreed that alternative approaches, such as rolling or quarterly surveys, would be explored. A report will be brought to the next sub-committee meeting to consider options for improving response rates and engagement.

Further questions were raised regarding the geographic spread of responses across estates and whether the 18% return was evenly distributed. Officers were asked to provide estate-level breakdowns in the next report.

Members also queried how the results would be used to inform housing practice. Officers were asked to include in the next report an analysis of how the findings will influence service delivery. Additionally, the potential for door-knocking as a more effective engagement method was suggested for future surveys.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

10. ***TENANT HANDBOOK REVISION**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning the updated tenant handbook which included new policies, procedures, and guidelines that reflect current best practice and regulatory requirements.

Officers explained that the Tenant Handbook is a key document outlining tenants' rights and responsibilities. It complements the tenancy agreement and is used in both enforcement and rights claims. The revision has undergone consultation with residents and staff, and a legal consultation on the tenancy agreement itself is forthcoming, as it has not been updated in nearly a decade.

Members were invited to provide general comments during the meeting and to send specific feedback directly to Officers. A Member praised the clarity and accessibility of the document but queried how residents would be engaged—whether through passive distribution or active discussion. They found the language overly legalistic and suggested future revisions adopt more plain English, citing the use of technical references like "Section 103 of the Housing Act 1985" as inaccessible.

A Member raised concerns about the depth of resident consultation, particularly whether feedback had been gathered from all estates, noting that residents possess the most intimate knowledge of their communities. They questioned whether the revised handbook would be effective across all 17 estates.

In response, Officers confirmed that further engagement is planned, particularly as part of the Section 103 consultation on the tenancy agreement. All households will be contacted, and additional publicity will be provided online and on estate noticeboards. They acknowledged the feedback on legalistic language and indicated that revisions could still be made. Focus groups had already taken place with good attendance, and further engagement is expected.

The handbook is intended to be general rather than estate-specific, serving as a companion to the legal tenancy agreement. A Member suggested including

estate-specific appendices to address unique tenancy issues per estate. Officers was open to this idea and proposed a follow-up conversation to explore what might be included, though he noted that such content might be better suited to a separate document or online resource.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

11. ***GOLDEN LANE ESTATE UPDATE BRIEFING**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning a Golden Lane Estate Update Briefing.

Officers explained that the "meanwhile repairs initiative" had already begun, though broader publicity was delayed pending testing. Consultation events were held in April and May, with door-knocking by the communications consultant to gather resident feedback. This led to a list of window-related issues, supplemented by surveys from the project manager. A pilot programme involving around a dozen properties is underway using contractor Abbotts, with a broader specification to follow. Roofing works are also in progress.

A Member asked whether there was a schedule for interim repairs and redecorations, given the 10-year programme starting in 2025. Officers responded that while repairs are ongoing, redecorations are not currently planned due to the focus on fabric repairs. However, any health and safety issues would be addressed through the repairs process.

Discussion turned to the newly proposed Transformation Board, which was agreed at CCS. Members stressed the urgency of convening this group before the summer recess, given it was first proposed over a year ago.

A Member questioned whether the 10-year timeline could be shortened. Officers explained that the current plan is already ambitious, considering the need for phased decanting, specialist labour, and multiple tender packages. The indicative programme shows completion by 2035, with the first blocks starting in 2027.

A Member sought clarification on the timeline, and it was confirmed that the original 20-year estimate had been reduced to 10. A Member noted that listed building status and the need for repair (rather than replacement) of windows added complexity. Redevelopment sequencing and scaffolding logistics were also discussed.

A Member raised concerns about leaseholder recovery and requested a copy of the recent letter to leaseholders and associated legal advice. Another Member highlighted the importance of redecoration, especially for older residents, to improve the estate's appearance in the interim. Officers acknowledged the point but reiterated that many surfaces were too degraded for simple painting. The term "external fabric repairs" was used to describe the necessary preparatory work.

A Member, asked about lessons learned from the estate's deterioration and how future projects might be expedited. The Chair and officers agreed that a key lesson was the need for a comprehensive, holistic programme of works, supported by better repairs contracting and preventative maintenance planning.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

12. *ESTATE SERVICES UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning how the team operates and updates Members on the inspections and standards regime currently in use across the Corporation's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estates.

A Member raised a point about improving communication with residents regarding inspection outcomes. They suggested exploring ways to involve residents more directly in inspections to foster trust and collaboration. This was positively received, and officers agreed that more proactive engagement was needed. While quarterly walkabouts are currently open to residents, there is scope to deepen this involvement.

Another Member supported this direction, highlighting the role of lead members on estates as key contacts for both staff and residents. She emphasised the importance of these roles in gathering resident feedback and supporting officers' work. Another Member added that on Middlesex Street Estate, walkabouts with residents' association representatives are already proving effective. They reiterated the value of resident knowledge and advocated for more estate assistants and enhanced training to support this engagement.

Further discussion confirmed that all estates are covered by the inspection system, and Members can access relevant data. Officers agreed to provide monthly inspection and SweepUp data to allocated Members to support their oversight and reporting responsibilities.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

13. *HOUSING MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT

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

Officers reported that the team is currently managing a mix of legacy projects and active delivery. Legacy projects, primarily involving window replacements and external decorations, are in the process of being closed out. It was confirmed that Southwark has successfully achieved practical completion, with only final snagging works remaining.

Regarding active delivery, the fire door programme—covering the entire housing portfolio—is currently in Lot 4. This phase is temporarily suspended

due to framework constraints, with delivery expected later in the financial year. The Middlesex Street heating project is in its final stages, pending the outcome of a First Tier Tribunal case scheduled for 11 August. Meanwhile, the team is working to engage residents who have not yet provided access for the installation of new HIUs and heating systems.

Projects currently in design include George Elliston and Eric Williams Houses on the Avondale Square Estate. Originally a combined package for external envelope works and lift refurbishment, these are now being separated into two standalone projects, with lift refurbishment prioritised for delivery. Additionally, William Blake House is out to tender for consultancy services. A correction was noted on page 342: the anticipated on-site start for William Blake House is now between spring and summer 2027, rather than autumn 2026. This delay is attributed to the implications of the Building Safety Act and Procurement Act, which have affected the procurement timeline.

The Deputy Chairman queried the funding arrangements for roofing works, specifically whether repairs fall under the capital budget or a separate repairs budget. Officers clarified that the repairs currently underway at Golden Lane are historical and managed by the repairs and maintenance team. These are separate from the capital roofing programme, which includes full replacements with 20–25 year guarantees.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

14. *INCOME RECOVERY UPDATE

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

A Member queried the cost of providing the income recovery officer service, particularly in relation to the amount of rent recovered and the number of residents retained in their homes. Officers responded that the service is cost-effective due to its embedded model, which reduces reliance on more expensive services like tenancy support. Officers act as a bridge between residents and services such as the DWP or social work, offering personalised, doorstep-level support. However, Officers acknowledged that specific cost data was not immediately available and committed to providing a more detailed cost-benefit analysis in due course.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

15. *HOUSING COMPLAINTS UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning a summary of housing complaints data for 2024/25.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

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

There were several questions and matters arising raised by a Members.

- A proposal was made to organise estate visits for all committee members, especially to benefit new members. These visits would include opportunities to meet estate teams and managers, and ideally involve walkabouts with tenant associations. The aim is to improve understanding of estate operations and resident concerns. The sub-committee agreed to proceed with scheduling these visits.
- In response to the recent Common Council debate on housing, concerns were raised about the lack of recognition for the substantial work already underway by the sub-committee and CCS. It was emphasised that a refreshed housing strategy is in development and is expected to return to CCS in September. Importantly, Members requested that a detailed delivery action plan accompany the strategy to ensure clarity and accountability. A Member sought confirmation that they could inform the Chair of CPR that both documents would be ready by September. Officers supported the idea but noted that further discussion was needed to finalise the delivery plan
- The conversation then turned to funding. Officers stressed the importance of exploring all legal and prudent funding sources, including the Heritage Lottery Fund. They cautioned against allowing a narrow financial control mindset to limit options, especially given the strong member consensus on the need for housing investment. A Member added that the shortfall in funding for major works is already known, and there is a firm commitment to securing the necessary funds. The remaining task is to identify the specific sources and mechanisms for drawdown.
- Concerns were also raised about the long-standing vacancy of flats at Golden Lane, where costs have escalated from £29 million to £61 million. The delay is due to pending certification from Islington Council, which is required before the building can be registered with the Building Safety Regulator. If certification is received by the end of July, registration should be completed by August, allowing occupation to begin in September. Members expressed frustration over the delay and its financial impact, and committed to working with City Surveyors to expedite the process.
- Finally, the need for a detailed member briefing was highlighted. Many Members are not fully informed about the current status of the housing programme and funding plans. A briefing would help clarify the situation and address perceptions that the Corporation is slow to act. The meeting concluded with agreement on the importance of transparency, urgency, and continued collaboration to deliver housing improvements effectively.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business.

18. 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.

19. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

20. ***CITY OF LONDON (AND GRESHAM) ALMSHOUSES FIRE DETECTION SYSTEM REPLACEMENT**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services in relation to a new compliant Part 1 (LD1) system.

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

There was several questions raised by Members.

22. **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 3.53 pm

Chairman

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