City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee: Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee	**Dated:** 19 November 2026
Subject: Estate Review Update	**Public report:** For Information
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Diverse engaged communities & Providing excellent services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community & Children's Services
Report author:	Mehran Ahmed, Head of Housing Management

Summary

This report to the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee updates Members on the progress made to date with the Estate Review and next steps. Members are asked to note the report.

The review commenced forms part of the Housing Strategy Annual Plan for 2026/27 and follows feedback from residents regarding the accessibility of estate services, concerns about estate office availability, and wider discussions about the most effective use of housing management resources. Residents highlighted the importance of reliable and visible services, clear communication, and confidence that enquiries will be dealt with promptly.

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. As part of the review, all estate office opening arrangements were examined. The current offer is 8am to 4pm with offices closed for one hour at lunchtime.

2. Residents were invited to give feedback through the Common Place platform, and a small number commented on operating hours. A time and motion review was then undertaken. Given the low number of residents raising concerns about opening and closing times, it was concluded that the current arrangement would be retained subject to the findings of the Housing Quality Network Review detailed below.

3. The time and motion review identified significant variations between estates and highlighted the challenges staff face in managing service demand. Residents did raise concerns about the accessibility of services. In response, a telephone has been installed in estate offices where there is suitable space, to improve residents' access to services.

Staffing and Resources

4. Sickness absences through sickness has had some impact on service accessibility and led to inconsistent delivery across local estate officers. To address this, the recruitment of two floating officers is underway, and both are expected to be in post in the new year. They will help maintain consistent service across the estates during both planned and unexpected absences.

5. A new Area Manager has been recruited and started 26 October. The post is dedicated to Golden Lane Estate and Black Raven Court, with direct line management responsibility for the estate residents' services team. This should relieve pressure on the other two Area Managers, who can concentrate on their own regions, and it allows cover to be provided to other estate residents teams during planned manager absences, such as annual leave, so that service standards remain consistent.

Noticeboard Audit

6. A pilot was completed on estate office information and noticeboard standards. It identified inconsistencies across estates in the configuration, size and management of noticeboards. Some boards were found to be too small, overloaded or inconsistent, leading to overlapping notices making it difficult for residents to receive clear, up-to-date information. Estate supervisors and porters are responsible for checking noticeboards regularly to keep them current and in good condition.

7. With the onboarding of the new compliance and quality assurance roles within our estate services team, noticeboard standards will form part of the quality element of block inspections, giving better and more regular

oversight of content and condition. A formal review will then take place in Q4 2026/27 to establish a single consistent standard, with the aim of sharing the model noticeboard standard across all estate offices.

Code of Professional Standards for Housing

8. The Housing competency framework and professional qualification process are being embedded alongside recruitment. A Code of Professional Standards for Housing is also being developed to set out the behaviours, values and expectations of staff delivering housing services. The Code supports compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Competence and Conduct Standard, which requires landlords to ensure staff have the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours needed to deliver good quality housing services, and to adopt and embed an appropriate code of conduct. It also reflects the professional values, behaviours and competencies promoted by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), and complements, rather than replaces, the City of London Corporation's Code of Conduct.

9. Residents and staff had the opportunity to help shape the Code, consultation with residents closed 30 October and was publicised through Common Place, the October newsletter and posters on noticeboards. Once finalised, all new Housing Service employees will be required to read and understand the Code as part of their induction, and an accessible version will be made available to staff, residents and other stakeholders.

Housing Quality Network Review

10. Housing Quality Network (HQN) has been commissioned to review the Housing Management structure and operating model, working with the new Head of Housing Management. The review covers estate office delivery, efficiency, communications and customer service. Following a meeting with HQN in October, a programme has been agreed and established.

11. The review will focus on tenancy and estate management, looking at structures and resources as well as behaviours, attitudes and culture. It is an opportunity to refresh and reset what good looks like for estate management, tenancy management and customer service more generally, and to engage staff and residents in reshaping the service. The local office model may remain the right one, but it may need modernising, and there is learning to be drawn from other organisations.

12. The programme will place residents at the centre of the review, using focus groups to establish what they value most from the service and what would improve their satisfaction. Officers and Managers will also take part in focus groups, alongside a staff perception survey, to give a clearer picture of the service challenges and how standards can improve.

13. The review will also include mystery shopping and reality checking of

telephone, in person and online or email enquiries, to assess the service from a customer perspective. HQN will benchmark the findings against other London local authorities and housing associations. The review is expected to be completed in January 2027, and results will be shared with Members on completion.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – None

Financial implications – None

Resource implications – None

Legal implications – None

Risk implications – None

Equalities implications – None

Climate implications – None

Security implications – None

Conclusion

14. The review was prompted by residents' concerns about the accessibility, visibility and consistency of estate services. It has found variations between estates, pressures on staff arising from service demand and absence, and inconsistent standards in areas such as noticeboards. Opening hours were retained at 8am to 4pm on the basis of limited resident feedback, while access has been improved through the installation of telephones where space allows.

15. A number of measures are already in progress to address these issues. Two floating officers will provide cover for absences from the New Year, and the new Area Manager adds management capacity and resilience. Noticeboard standards will be strengthened through block inspections and a formal review in Q4 2026/27. The Code of Professional Standards for Housing will set clear expectations of conduct and competence and supports compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's standards.

16. The independent HQN review, due to complete in January 2027, will provide a broader assessment of the housing management structure and operating model, informed by residents, staff, mystery shopping and benchmarking. Its findings will be reported to Members and will shape further improvements, so that residents can be confident of a reliable, visible and responsive estate service.

Appendices

- None

Background Papers

- None

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