

Committee:	Date:
Gresham (City Side) Committee	21 February 2014
Subject: City of London Almshouses Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
Summary	
<p>This report gives Members an information update on the City of London Almshouses, in Lambeth. Some of the information in the report also relates to the eight Gresham Almshouses on the estate.</p>	
Recommendation	
<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the report. 	

Main Report

Background

1. In February 2013 the City of London Almshouses Trustees Committee was merged with the Housing Management Sub Committee to form the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee. This report is presented to alternate meetings of the Sub Committee to update Members on operational matters relating to the Almshouses and their residents, and highlights any issues of concern. It is then forwarded to the Gresham Committee for information,

Social events

2. Residents enjoyed a trip to Sissinghurst Castle in the summer. One of the trips requested earlier in the year was for a shopping trip and this took place in November in time for some Christmas shopping.
3. Unfortunately Lambeth Community Transport is no longer available (due to funding cuts the transport is only now available for school trips) Using the Community Transport allowed us to keep costs low, however residents were very happy with the alternative transport the Matron booked for their trip to Sissinghurst. This transport company is used by other sheltered housing estates so the Matron was confident the residents would have safe and comfortable trips.
4. Residents expressed thanks to the Trustees for the Social Fund which continues to support building a community spirit.

Christmas hampers

5. The order for Christmas hampers was placed before the end of October to enable an "Early Order" discount to be claimed. The hampers were delivered on Tuesday 10th December 2013 by representatives of both the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee and the Gresham (City Side) Committee.

Garden work

6. The CoLAT Trustees agreed an additional budget of £25,000 to carry out landscaping to the gardens. Residents have had three meetings and a ballot to discuss what shape the landscaping should take. There are a few residents who would like to keep the grounds untouched, although several are keen to have seating areas as well as vegetables patches and possibly a greenhouse. During the summer due to such excellent weather there has been an increase in the number of trespassers on the grounds. This has caused many residents to become anxious about their security and although the local Safer Neighbourhood Team have been informed and have increased their presence in the area as a deterrent, the presence of trespassers continue to cause distress to the most vulnerable residents. The residents have requested that we defer the improving garden facilities until we are able to investigate options for improving site security with electronic opening gates and possibly CCTV installation.
7. The last visit from the company treating a known problem with Japanese Knotweed has taken place. We are hoping for clearance from the company to enable maintenance to be undertaken on the affected areas.

Community Facility & Office

8. A planning application has been submitted to the London Borough of Lambeth, to change the former Deputy Matron's flat to an office and community meeting place. This was agreed by Trustees at the last meeting of the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee. Work will commence as soon as we have permission, but, in the meantime, we are consulting with residents about what they would like to have in the new facility.

Supporting People funding

9. Officers have had several meetings with officers of the London Borough of Lambeth regarding the withdrawal of the Supporting People grant in 2014. Much work has been undertaken on assessing costs currently covered by the Supporting People grant and transferring these costs to Housing Benefit funding. This will cover some of the shortfall from the loss of the grant. A template form has been developed for testing the process to ensure the computer system will calculate the costs which residents will be able to claim. A further report will be brought to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee if the testing shows a significant adverse impact on residents.

Staffing

10. The Sheltered Housing Officer post previously notified to Members has been advertised and an appointment made. Elise Cassar, one of our Apprentices, is the successful candidate. Elise has spent the last year working on our sheltered estates and is looking forward to working at the Almshouses. We are now reviewing gardening arrangements to increase the gardening support on the estate.

Vacancies and applications

11. There are currently no vacancies. There are 4 applicants on the Waiting List, all of whom have been approved, and two other applicants in the assessment process.

Consultees

The Chamberlain, Comptroller and Town Clerk have been consulted in the development of this report.

Appendices

None

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