

Committee	Date:
Gresham (City Side) Committee	13 May 2016
Subject: Gresham Almshouses Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Jacqueline Whitmore, Sheltered Housing Manager	

Summary

This report gives Trustees an information update on the Gresham Almshouses, in Lambeth. Some of the information in the report also relates to the City of London Almshouses on the estate.

Recommendations

Trustees are asked to:

- Note the report.
- Note the decision made by Housing Management & Almshouses Sub - Committee on 25 April 2016, regarding the approval, in principle, of a two year refurbishment programme for City of London Almshouses Trust properties (point 7 and appendix 1).

Main Report

Background

1. This report is presented half yearly to the Trustees of the Gresham Almshouses. It updates Trustees on operational matters relating to the Gresham Almshouses and their residents and highlights any issues of concern, particularly where funding is required which is not included in the current year's budget.

Current Position

2. Social activities

Over the Easter break, residents enjoyed watching DVD films in the communal hall. The Almshouses Manager is organising a series of evening quizzes throughout the coming months. Residents have made suggestions regarding their summer trip this year; the venue decided upon by majority preference is Bournemouth. Officers will be discussing options for further summer events with residents. As this year is the Queen's 90th birthday, to celebrate the event officers have decided to have a joint event for all sheltered housing residents to be held at the new community hall at Avondale Square, which will be open mid-summer. Details and invitations will be issued once dates have been finalised. Officers would be pleased if Trustees were able to attend.

3. Estate meetings

Officers continue to work with Southwark Mediation Centre and the residents to explore and agree new ways of communication and working together.

At a recent meeting, residents agreed that, when working together with officers, for instance on repairs and maintenance issues, they had found that consultation and collaborative working resulted in an improved service, as well a sense of involvement for residents.

The view of the Manager of Southwark Mediation Centre is that this approach has worked extremely well. He feels that residents have appreciated involvement in resolving their repairs issues and that there is greater satisfaction with repairs.

Using the same approach a meeting was held with residents on 11 May to review the Estate Handbook. The handbook has not been updated since 2012 and some sections are out of date. As the HRA Tenant's Handbook has been recently updated, officers used this as the starting point for consultation with Almshouses residents to review and update their own handbook.

4. Letter of Appointment

The Almshouses Association has recently updated their Standards of Management which includes a new Letter of Appointment. Officers consider this would be an appropriate time to review the Letter of Appointment in current use and update this for all residents accordingly. This would tie in well with the review of the Estate Handbook. Officers will bring a draft new Letter of Appointment to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee and Gresham (City Side) Committee once this has been developed, in liaison with the Comptroller and City Solicitors.

5. Tree pruning

In February, London Borough of Islington and their contractors undertook long-awaited tree maintenance with advice and permission granted by the Tree Preservation Officer from London Borough of Lambeth. There is a small amount of work to finish, however there are nesting birds in these areas so this will have to be undertaken later in the year.

6. Repairs

The Property Services Team Manager continues to visit the estate on a monthly basis to ensure all work undertaken is to a high standard. Residents have agreed this has worked well in maintaining an improved standard. There would appear to be higher satisfaction with repairs and we are certainly hearing of fewer issues.

7. Refurbishment programme

At the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee on 25 April, officers presented a report of the Director of Community & Children's Services regarding the refurbishment required on the City of London Almshouses. See appendix 1.

Members discussed the report and agreed that the two-year timescale was preferable to ensure the least amount of disruption for residents. The Assistant Director, Barbican & Property Services was instructed to commence the procurement and gateway process with a view to appointing a single contractor to deliver the programme of work.

The programme will also include undertaking the works for Gresham Almshouses however; the approximate costs of £898,000 are for the 42 City of London Almshouses only. Officers have asked the Property Services Team to provide costs for Gresham Almshouses for Trustees consideration. Once costs have been assessed, officers will liaise with finance colleagues and prepare a report for Trustees action for funding the works for the 8 Gresham homes.

8. Vacancies

There is currently one vacancy, the previous resident has moved to residential care. Once the void work has been complete within the property officers will advertise the vacancy in the Square Mile. If there are no applications, officers will make an offer to current City Almshouses residents who have expressed a wish to move to a Gresham home.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - City of London Almshouses Refurbishment Programme report to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee, 25 April 2016

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