MINUTES OF
LIVING AND WORKING SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 7 February 2018
(7:00 - 9:30 pm)

Present: Cllr Phil Waker (Chair), Cllr Mick McCarthy (Deputy Chair), Cllr Irma Freeborn, Cllr Syed Ghani, Cllr James Ogungbose and Cllr Lee Waker

Apologies: Cllr Dave Miles

24. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

25. Minutes (5 December 2017)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2017 were confirmed as correct, subject to an amendment to show that the Committee asked for details of compensation given to leaseholders with regard to lift breakdowns under minute 20 (Leasehold Service Charges).

26. Update from LWSC Working Group

The Lead Member advised that the working group had not met.

27. Estate Renewal Programme Update

The Head of Affordable Housing presented a report to the Select Committee updating on the progress of the Boroughwide Estate Renewal Programme and the delivery of new homes on the Estate Renewal sites.

The Council’s Estate Renewal programme had been running since 2010 and had been successful in transforming the boroughs poorest quality housing into new high-quality developments bringing additional place making and environmental benefits.

The delivery of all Estate Regeneration workstreams from the earliest consultation through the process of decanting, working with leaseholders, master-planning, development and Construction Management for all the schemes remaining in the programme was continuing in line with the current approvals however the responsibility for delivery of these work streams had now transferred to a dedicated Affordable Housing team in the new Be First Company.

One of the main concerns raised by the Select Committee was the opportunity for residents to return to an estate once the renewal process had taken place. The Head of Affordable Housing explained that while the opportunity to return was there, often residents did not return as they had spent a considerable amount of time away from their previous home and had settled elsewhere.

The Select Committee noted that the Borough was currently the most affordable in London however were concerned that this could mean more investment buyers
would take up property in the area, leaving less opportunity for local residents.

The report was noted.

28. Fire Safety Policy Proposals

The Operational Director, Enforcement, presented a report updating the Select Committee on the process of the Fire Safety Policy proposals.

The Select Committee were aware that the Fire Safety Policy Proposals, adopted by Cabinet on 17 October 2017 (Min.50 refers), set out a series of recommendations in relation to fire safety. The recommendations were based on three broad headings:-

- Improving Fire Safety in Buildings
- Using Regulation to improve fire safety
- Protecting people from the risk of fire

The recommendations from that report focused on the following key areas:

- Sprinklers in High Risk Residential Blocks;
- Properties in Multiple Occupation in High Risk residential blocks; and
- Protecting people from the risk of fire through Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP’s).

The Operational Director advised that the government had commissioned a report on fire safety regulations lead by Dame Judith Hackitt. An interim report, “Building a Safer Future, Independent review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety was published in December 2017. The final report will be published in the Spring 2018.

The interim recommendations of the Dame Judith Hackitt report fell under the following 4 headings:-

- The government
- Skills and competency
- Handover process; and
- Consultation and transparency

Full details of the recommendations were contained within the report and Members were pleased to note that they broadly correlated with the Fire Safety Cabinet report, approved in October 2017 and the Fire Risk Assessment report agreed in September 2017.

Concerns were raised regarding the accessibility of properties within the Borough with car parking around residential properties and roads, which the Director confirmed was an ongoing issue that was being looked into.

The Select Committee also raised concerns regarding the heating shaft at Thaxted House, which could become a fire safety issue. The Principal Quality and Compliance Manager, who was also in attendance, advised that works to the heating shaft were planned as part of fire safety improvements to Thaxted House.
The report was noted.

Standing Order 7.1 (Chapter 3, Part 2 of the Council Constitution) was suspended at this juncture to enable the meeting to continue beyond the 9pm threshold.

29. Leasehold Service Charges

The Director of My Place presented an update report on leasehold service charges following a request by the Select Committee at the meeting held on 5 December 2017 (Min. 20 refers). The Select Committee requested a further report to explain the current management arrangements of the leasehold service, the council’s position of refunds, consultation requirements and additional service charge information, all of which was contained within the report before the Committee.

In response to questions, the Director advised that the appointment of a permanent Head of Landlord, Customer and Commercial would mean stability in the management team for leaseholders.

The report was noted.

30. Lifts Maintenance

The Director of My Place presented an update report on lift maintenance.

Following the meeting on Wednesday, 7 February 2018 (Min. 22 refers), the Select Committee had several questions regarding the maintenance of lifts and requested a report on the maintenance of Passengers Lifts addressing the following areas:

- The lifts the Council repaired;
- Contractors used; and
- Performance statistics.

The report before the Select Committee detailed all passengers lifts within Corporate and Education buildings, Housing blocks and Sheltered Accommodation schemes lifts from the 1 January 2017 to the 31 December 2017 and included the number of lift repairs reported and response times to requests for repairs.

In response to questions, the Director advised that compensation for lift breakdowns was not normally paid by the Council as in the majority of cases there was a second lift available. 44% of breakdowns were caused by vandalism or no fault found, e.g. a door had been wedged open.

The report was noted.