



Golden Lane Estate

Resident Information Sheet - 30 December 2015

Golden Lane Community Centre

As you will know, we carried out initial consultation on the future of the Community Centre earlier this year and provided some draft proposals for residents to comment on. We have since been sent a list of questions raised at a recent meeting organised by GLERA and facilitated by Southwark Mediation Centre. This information sheet is being sent to all residents to answer those questions.

In the meantime, however, there has been a change of plan, as the Community & Children's Services Committee have asked officers to look at alternative possibilities. This work will start in the New Year. So, for the time being, we will not be doing any further work on the initial proposals.

We do need to find a solution which keeps the centre maintained, in use and available to residents, whilst not incurring additional costs for tenants and leaseholders. In the meantime, the Estate Office staff will honour existing bookings and take enquiries about the centre.

We will keep you informed as the work progresses and will certainly be consulting with residents again as soon as we can.

Questions raised at GLERA meeting and our responses

What does the original contract/lease for the community centre state about the status, location and the use of the community centre?

The community centre is a public building and as such its uses are broad. When it was built, there were no guidelines or conditions that we can find, to set out how it should be used. The building, as part of the estate, belongs to the City's Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This is the budget which is used to run social housing in any local authority. There are strict rules governing the use of the HRA - it has to be spent on services and facilities which directly benefit tenants. Any services and facilities which are used by leaseholders have to be funded through service charges.

In May 2009, the building was let on a lease to the Community Centre Trustees, a group of residents. The lease set out the conditions under which the Trustees, Committee and members could use the building. There are no other restrictions that we are aware of. This Lease expired on 30 April 2014 and replaced by a Tenancy at Will, which we explain below.

What were the original requirements for governance of the community centre?

The original requirements for governance of the community centre were contained in the Lease. The Lease was drawn up by the City of London (COL) as an agreement between the COL (the lessor) and the then Community Centre Trustees (the lessee).

In 2014, before the lease expired, we invited GLERA to comment on it so that we could negotiate a new lease, taking resident views into account. It was intended that a new lease would be let and one was drafted, taking into account GLERA concerns. However, for a number of reasons, the lease was not signed. Instead, an agreement called a 'Tenancy at Will', which said much the same things as the lease, was signed by the new Trustees instead. This Tenancy at Will covered the period 1 May 2014 to 30 April 2016.

If anyone would like to see a copy of the Tenancy at Will or the former and revised Lease, then please ask at the Estate Office.

What are the current requirements for governance of the community centre?

Because the Community Centre Trustees have now handed back the building, it is now being managed by the Department of Community and Children's Services in the same way as any other property belonging to the Housing Revenue Account.

Does the COL have plans to operate a business model for the community centre?

It is essential that we have income to pay for the running costs and maintenance of the Community Centre. The HRA cannot afford to absorb these costs and there is no funding for a refurbishment. So we have to find a solution which covers the costs. The original proposal to incorporate the City of London Community Education Centre (COLCEC) and the Estate Office would have paid for the refurbishment and covered the running costs, as well as making the hall and meeting rooms available for resident use. Work on this proposal has stopped for now, while we explore other options. At the moment, we don't know what these will be but we will consult residents when we have some more proposals.

Is there an opportunity to negotiate with the COL based on their current plans?

Yes, of course. We made it clear that there would be further consultation when we had more detailed plans which took into account the feedback already received.

However, when Members of the Community & Children's Services Committee discussed the proposals at their December meeting, they decided not to proceed, but to explore alternative options. So we will now be doing this and will be consulting with residents again.

How are the current proposals/refurbishment going to be funded?

We estimated that the refurbishment work set out in the proposals we consulted on earlier this year would have cost around £500,000. A budget for this has been built into the costs of the Richard Cloudesley redevelopment project, to pay for the relocation of COLCEC. So the original plans would have been paid for from this budget. If COLCEC moves elsewhere, this money will not be available for the Community Centre, so we would have to look for funding from somewhere else. We do not know at present where this might come from.

Based on the current estate office, why is there a need for 13 workstations and two meeting rooms? Who will occupy these work stations?

The plans shown to residents were meant simply to be an indication of what could be done. They were not in any way intended to be final plans. The feedback from our consultation with residents and COLCEC users, told us that the area drawn for staff use might be more than needed. So we would have changed that in the new plans which we had expected to have drawn up.

The intention was that the workstations would be occupied by housing staff currently based at the existing estate office in Great Arthur House and COLCEC staff currently based in the COLCEC building. Meeting rooms were not intended only for staff, but also for the use of residents and COLCEC.

Relocating the Estate Office to the Community Centre would give us a chance to create a more modern, welcoming reception area for residents, and provide adequate office space for our staff. COLCEC is open in the evenings, so by sharing reception staff, we could offer longer opening hours for our residents. It would also allow us to create some much-needed additional homes on the estate. However, these proposals are now on hold whilst other options are considered.