

Site Visit Summary Notes – Visit to a Disused School Occupied by Property Guardians

This paper sets out the background information and findings from a site visit to a disused school occupied by property guardians to inform the committee's investigation.

Background

In July 2017, the Housing Committee was invited to visit a range of buildings that were occupied by property guardians to help inform the current investigation into property guardianship in London.

On the 28 September 2017, Sian Berry AM, Andrew Boff AM and Tom Copley AM attended a disused school in the London Borough of Croydon managed by Dot Dot Dot. Dot Dot Dot was founded in 2011 and is a social enterprise that provides property guardian services. They have properties around England, mostly in the south east, and currently protect hundreds of buildings in London.

Visit

Members met with representatives of Dot Dot Dot,¹ London Borough of Croydon² and three current property guardians. Members were given a tour of the building and viewed two bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchen facilities. Members discussed the positives and negatives of property guardianship with Dot Dot Dot, the local authority and current guardians.

Members heard that guardianship provides a range of positives and negatives for guardians themselves. Guardianship opportunities provide cheaper accommodation than the private rented sector. Dot Dot Dot require guardians to carry out at least 16 hours of volunteering every month. Guardians raised concerns over the cost of business utilities as these are charged at a more expensive rate for commercial property. The uncertainty over the length of time they would be able to live at the property was also a worry.

The local authority found that guardianship was a successful property protection measure for this property. The local authority was keen to protect the school as its central location meant that it was vulnerable to anti-social behaviour. The local authority does not always use property guardianship to protect vacant property but found that this property could be adapted appropriately and safely to provide short term guardian accommodation.

¹ Peter Brown (Chief Executive), Katherine Hibbert (Founder), Ted Maxwell (Head of Marketing & Special Projects) and Emma Starling (Relationship Coordinator)

² Robert Lines - Estates Surveyor, London Borough of Croydon