

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 17 June 2020

Minutes of the meeting streamed on You Tube at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Randall Anderson (Chairman)
Ruby Sayed (Deputy Chairman)
George Abrahams
Munsur Ali
Rehana Ameer
Matthew Bell
Peter Bennett
Mary Durcan
Helen Fentimen
John Fletcher
Marianne Fredericks
Alderman Prem Goyal
Alderman David Graves
Caroline Haines

The Revd Stephen Haines
Graeme Harrower
Natasha Maria Cabrera Lloyd-Owen
Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Deputy Joyce Nash
Barbara Newman
Dhruv Patel
Susan Pearson
William Pimlott
Henrika Priest
Jason Pritchard
James deSaumarez

Officers:

Andrew Carter	- Director of Community and Children's Services
Sandra Husbands	- Director of Public Health, City and Hackney
Chris Pelham	- Community and Children's Services
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services
Simon Cribbens	- Community and Children's Services
Carol Boswarthack	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Mike Kettle	- Community and Children's Services
Rachel Green	- Community and Children's Services
Gerald Mehrtens	- Community and Children's Services
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Chandni Tanna	- Town Clerk's (Communications Department)
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's

1. APOLOGIES

Mr Dhruv Patel submitted apologies for lateness by 30 minutes.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the following minutes be approved:

A) **24th April 2020** (amended from the draft circulated for the 22nd May meeting)

B) **22nd May 2020**

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Members noted that the Congestion Charge exemption had been extended to social workers and care home staff, and certain carers.

5. **COVID-19 UPDATES**

The Director provided the following update in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic and invited the Assistant Directors to contribute as appropriate.

- a) Buildings' risk assessments were complete and, given that working at home (where possible) was likely to continue in the medium term, risk assessments for home working were taking place, specifically for the 'at risk' groups; i.e. - BAME staff or those with medical requirements. Work was also underway for the re-opening of libraries.
- b) Sir John Cass School had opened to more children on 1 June 2020 and secondary schools had re-opened this week for years 10 and 12. It was noted that the statue at the school would be moved and consideration given to changing its name.
- c) The vast majority of the City's homeless population had been offered accommodation in hotels, hostels or homeless accommodation, with just 14 long-term rough sleepers choosing to remain on the streets. Whilst not incentivising homeless clients to remain on the streets, they could have access to the facilities in the Youth Hostel Association (YHA). The YHA had been working closely with the outreach teams, as there were health and safety implications in opening up facilities for general use and access to the facilities would be provided as part of a pathway off the streets.
- d) The Director of Public Health advised that the team were working with Public Health England in respect of track and trace to ensure that residents understood the process and its requirements. Currently, authorities were not being provided with full details, and Public Health were not receiving information about individuals who had tested positive, but this would be added into the communications work. It was also noted that GPs did not currently have direct access to test results.
- e) Members noted that standard operating procedures were being developed across all settings, including businesses and schools, including direct contact details and information on how to contact Public Health. The Public Health Director advised that testing capacity was still

being explored and the laboratory at Barts might have capacity to scale up their operations. Whilst we were able to publicise when the mobile testing unit was in Hackney, there were currently no plans to put a unit in the City. However, Directors of Public Health would have the authority to direct mobile testing in due course. Discussions were underway with North East London Partners and the National Joint Security Centre was collating information on those who have had COVID-19 tests (linked to the test and trace system) and the raising and lowering of the risk rating, and test results would be transferred into GPs systems.

6. OFSTED INSPECTION 2020

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the Ofsted inspection of children's social care services in March 2020. Their findings were published on 6 April 2020 and the report summarised key findings and appended their findings in full. Children's Social Care Services received an overall judgment of 'Outstanding' and the Chairman and Members commended the Director and staff for this excellent achievement.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

7. NEW PORTSOKEN COMMUNITY CENTRE - BUSINESS PLANNING

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) The proposals presented provide an opportunity to evidence the costs of running the centre and its potential for income, and to explore different management approaches.
- b) There was concern expressed about the business case costs set out showing a reduced business rate which may not be possible and would therefore add a further £20k to costs. The officer explained that Locality provided indicative costs and an estimate of possible income. It was suggested that the business rate reduction shown probably assumed the Centre was operated by a charity.
- c) Staffing was a large part of the budget. It was proposed that this could provide an opportunity to recruit from the local community. It was also suggested that there may be a need for a specialist to market the Centre to maximise income.
- d) There was concern expressed that the Centre was not just for the residents of Mansell Street - who would be losing the 'Green Box'. The officer explained that it was envisaged that the Centre would benefit a wider community living in Portsoken, but that it would have to meet the needs and ambitions of Mansell Street especially as it was next to the estate.
- e) The Assistant Director emphasised the need for the Centre to be financially sustainable and Members noted that the first stage would look to develop the most cost-effective model.

- f) Reference was made to learning lessons from the Golden Lane Community Centre and its Advisory Board made up of local residents as part of the management structure.
- g) It was suggested that there may be an opportunity to generate income from use as a child contact centres across for which there was a need in East London.

RESOLVED, that:

- 1. The proposal for Phase 1 (Management by the City of London Corporation) be approved and more detailed plans should be presented to set out the management approaches beyond this.
- 2. The estimated operating costs of £114,000 and the risk to income in the short term to offset them be noted.
- 3. It be noted that these costs had not been planned for, and it may not be possible to contain them within the local budget.

8. **TENANTS ELECTRICAL SERVICES TESTING AND SMOKE DETECTOR INSTALLATION - PHASE 5: GATEWAY 1-4 PROJECT PROPOSAL & OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

Members considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the last phase of the upgrade of electrical works, which would result in all tenanted homes having been inspected; thereby ensuring the installation of smoke detectors and that all wiring met current standards. Further to discussions with insurance colleagues, a slight decrease might be possible on the premiums as a result of these safety works but it wouldn't be significant as the rates were already very competitive.

RESOLVED, that:

- 1. A budget of £27,000 be approved for staff costs to reach the next Gateway.
- 2. The total estimated cost of the project at £387,000 be noted: i.e. - £360,000 works and £27,000 staff costs (excluding risk).
- 3. The Costed Risk Register (at Appendix 2 to the report) be noted.
- 4. Option 1 in the report be approved; i.e. – authority to seek tenders to appoint a contractor to carry out the testing of electrical tenanted supplies and install mains powered smoke detectors within identified properties.

9. **WINDSOR HOUSE CONSULTATION**

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the results of consultations with residents at Windsor House,

between May 2019 to February 2020, which was carried out to ascertain whether the residents were in favour of regeneration on their estate.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) Concern was expressed about the condition of the Windsor Estate generally as it was in need of essential repairs. It was felt that the rooms were too small by modern standards and there were problems with mould and damp in several homes. Furthermore, the building is on five floors but, there are no lifts and, many of the homes have stepped access making the properties unsuitable for some housing applicants. It was noted, however, that the window replacement programme would resolve a lot of the mould and damp issues.
- b) Some Members felt that there was some lack of clarity in respect of the housing strategy for the delivery of 3700 new homes. It was noted that the commitment was for 700 new social housing units across our existing estates and 3000 units on other land owned by the Corporation. There was some challenge as to how realistic the original housing targets were and whether they should now be reviewed. The Chair of Policy and Resources, also a member of this committee, advised that this was under consideration with the Town Clerk and Chair of the CCS. Members were reminded that the original decision to expand the City's housing stock had been based on making a significant contribution to London and, a significant contribution towards the 3000 units is expected to come from the markets consolidation project and discussions with other London Boroughs.
- c) The Chairmen of the CCS and HMAS Committees had visited Windsor House and made a commitment to undertake essential deferred maintenance. The Chairman re-iterated that, whilst there was an obvious objective for providing more housing, they had listened carefully to existing residents. Furthermore, 60% of residents were not in favour of regeneration and, without a positive ballot in favour of regeneration, GLA funding would not be available. Sumner House was quoted as an example whereby residents reconsidered their previous decision against a regeneration option, having built trust with officers during an extensive consultation process. It was noted that the information from the consultation exercise, as set out in the report, would put all parties in a good position going forward.
- d) The Consultation Team had worked previously with the London Borough of Hackney on major regeneration projects. The Assistant Director's team had also been working with colleagues in the City Surveyor's Team who, also had experience of major regeneration schemes in the London Borough of Camden. It was accepted that the Estate's elderly tenants would not wish to live on an estate undergoing major regeneration for what might be a considerable length of time.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

10. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

Major Works Programme

In response to a question about the City of London Corporation being in the final year of its' 5 Year Major Works programme, Members noted that COVID-19 had affected not only costs but uncertainties on revenues. There were further challenges due to uncertainties in the construction industry around social distancing etc. Members were asked to note that the current 5-Year Plan may now extend to 7 years and the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee would receive an update at its July meeting.

Roof Plant Installation on Crescent House, Golden Lane Estate

In response to a question about the installation of roof ventilation on Crescent House, which was in breach of planning law and potentially a criminal offence, the Chairman stressed that this must be addressed promptly. The Assistant Director acknowledged the situation and advised that steps were being taken to rectify it.

Members noted that the Planners and Building Control were consulted before installing the unit, which should have been identical to the one being replaced. Unfortunately, the unit was not identical. Members noted that the Assistant Director was seeking redress with the manufacturer, but it would be possible for the units to be used elsewhere. Low level cowlings would be installed, and officers would be looking at ventilation and dampness across all dwellings generally. It may be the case, that new units will be fitted however, this will be subject to achieving all necessary approvals from the various statutory bodies. If this option were to be taken, then the new units would be installed on one property and then rolled out to others. The Assistant Director agreed to provide more detail to residents (and Members) on future similar works to ensure that they were kept informed. In respect of enforcement action, the City could not take action against itself, but the enforcement Team is working with the Assistant Director and his Team to achieve a desirable outcome.

At 12.50pm Members agreed to waive standing orders and extend the meeting.

Internet Access

In response to a question about the progress of the proposed internet access scheme, the Assistant Director advised that the scheme has been launched offering help to shielding or self-isolating residents in receipt of Council Tax Benefit. It was noted that the emergency response had been targeted at those who were data poor – rather than without devices or the skills to use them. The Member made a helpful suggestion in respect of signposting charities who may be able to assist. The Director advised that devices had been provided to a number of children in homes with none or too few devices. Members were reminded that this was an interim measure and they would receive a report looking at longer term proposals to support digital inclusion.

Food Banks

In response to a question about on-going demand and increased hardship the Director advised that there would need to be more evidence as to whether the increased take up was due to residents being unable to get to food shops, or access on- line food delivery services, rather than actual food poverty.

However, it was also accepted that furloughing and potential redundancies were likely to have an impact post Covid. The Director advised that work was underway to consider how we meet this on-going need, as part of a larger project looking to address post Covid scenarios and the impact on all services, including social care and food poverty. Members would receive a report on the outcome of this work at a future meeting.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Town Clerk was heard in respect of the Annual Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference, which would now be considered at the Annual Meeting of the Court in July 2020. Members agreed to include the following reference to the Library Service noting that, whilst the Head of the Library Service reported to the Director of Community and Children's Services, the budget fell under the remit of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee.

RESOLVED, that – the following reference to the Library Service be added to the Committee's Terms of Reference:

'Libraries - in so far as the library services affects our communities'. NB. the budget for the Library Service falls within the remit of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee but the Head of the Libraries Service reports to the Director of Community and Children's Services.

At 12.50pm Members agreed to waive standing orders and extend the meeting.

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act as follows:-

Item No(s)	Paragraph No(s)
13-14	3
15	1, 2 & 3

13. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May were, approved subject to an amendment in respect of item 12.

14. AVONDALE SQUARE WINDOW OVERHAUL - GATEWAY 6: OUTCOME REPORT

Members considered and approved a report of the Director of Community and children's services.

15. NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

Two questions were asked whilst the public were excluded.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There were no items.

The meeting ended at 1.30 pm

Chairman

**Contact Officer: Julie Mayer tel. no. 020 7332 1410
julie.mayer@cityoflondon.gov.uk**