

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Friday, 11 December 2020

Minutes of the meeting streamed to <https://youtu.be/ltPkRBgc7p8> at 11 am

Present

Members:

Randall Anderson (Chairman)	Graeme Harrower
George Abrahams	Sheriff Christopher Hayward
Munsur Ali	Natasha Maria Cabrera Lloyd-Owen
Matthew Bell	Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Peter Bennett	Susan Pearson
Mark Bostock	William Pimlott
Deputy Keith Bottomley	Jason Pritchard
Tijs Broeke	Deputy Elizabeth Rogula
Mary Durcan	James de Sausmarez
Helen Fentimen	Sir Michael Snyder
Marianne Fredericks	Deputy Philip Woodhouse
Alderman David Graves	Dawn Wright

Officers:

Andrew Carter	- Director of Community and Children's Services
Dr Sandra Husbands	- Director of Public Health, City and Hackney
Simon Cribbens	- Community and Children's Services Department
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services Department
Chris Pelham	- Community and Children's Services
Gerald Mehrtens	- Community and Children's Services
Will Norman	- Community and Children's Services
Theresa Shortland	- Community and Children's Services
Ellie Ward	- Community and Children's Services
Julie Fittock	- City Surveyor's Department
Andrew Shorten	- City Surveyor's Department
Ola Obadara	- City Surveyor's Department
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Chandni Tanna	- Town Clerks, Communications Department
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks
Rhiannon Leary	- Town Clerks
Ellen Wentworth	- Chamberlains, IT

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ruby Sayed, John Fletcher, the Revd. Stephen Haines, Caroline Haines, Deputy Jamie Ingham Clark, Alderman Alastair King, Alderman Bronek Masojada, Benjamin Murphy, Deputy Joyce Nash, Dhruv Patel, Henrika Priest, Laura Jørgensen and Matt Piper.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming the new Members to the Committee and thanked officers and volunteers for their hard work during this challenging year.

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

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that - the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 6th November 2020 be approved.

Matters arising

A Member commented on the length of the previous meeting and made the following suggestions:

- a) Items for decision and/or likely to generate a lot of debate should be put on agendas as early as possible, whilst the majority of Members are still present. There should be no need for officers to present reports; they would have been read and this would save time at meetings.
- b) Standing Orders provided for the use of Motions at Committee and, whilst those of a complex or technical nature should be presented to officers or the Chairman before the meeting, there should be an expectation that some might arise from the discussion. Such Motions should then be voted on in the meeting, when put, and not taken away in part and dealt with after the Committee.
- c) Whilst not directed towards the Chairman of this Committee, over the past few weeks, there had been a tendency for some Chairmen to ask Members to submit questions in advance and to speak only once, in order to save time in meetings. The Member expressed a personal view in that the City Corporation was lacking in democracy and was concerned at this being further eroded by a perceived attempt to stop Members from expressing views which might challenge the leadership.

Sheriff Christopher Hayward, a new Member of this Committee, asked to go on record that, whilst he broadly supported the suggestions concerning process and efficiency of meetings, he asked to be publicly disassociated from the comment about the City of London Corporation lacking democracy. The Sheriff challenged this view as the City of London Corporation had some 125 Independent Members, with the exception of a few who stood under a party ticket at the last election.

Whilst accepting some of the above suggestions, the Chairman felt that that it would have been courteous to give notice in advance of the Motion put at the last Committee, in respect of establishing a Covid-19 Working Party, and challenged whether this had actually arisen from a discussion at the meeting.

A Member also commented on the use of marking items on agendas, which were not for discussion at Committee, and it was noted that this approach had been rejected by the Establishment Committee.

There were further comments about the need to be respectful of both Officers and Members, as some are able to articulate more quickly than others, and those who struggle to do so might have a hidden disability.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received its Outstanding Actions list.

5. **UPDATE FROM THE COVID-19 RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION WORKING PARTY**

The Chairman advised that the Working Party, established under Motion at the last Committee, had met twice since the last meeting; the first meeting had discussed organisation, terms of reference and agenda planning and the second had robustly debated volunteering and support for volunteers. Members noted that meetings would be scheduled at 2 weekly intervals, throughout the Winter and into early Spring. Members noted that unpaid carers would have a representative on the Working Party but due to time pressures, the representative would only attend meetings when this item was on the agenda.

Covid-19 regular update

The Director of Public Health provided an overview on the City of London and North East London cases. Members noted the significant increase in cases over past week and how the City's small resident population could lead to fluctuations. However, the Director advised that this data was still meaningful, as it was reflected in the Department of Health and Social Care assessments.

Members noted the strong possibility of London moving into Tier-3 the following week and that Hackney was doing slightly better than the rest of North East London. Over the past two weeks, the Public Health Team had focussed on the frequency and intensity of communications across North East London, mass testing of secondary school pupils and staff (to take place before Christmas), increasing asymptomatic testing and intensifying contact tracing. It was noted that infection rates in City schools was not as high as in the rest of London.

In terms of the vaccination roll out, Members noted that the Neaman Practice would not be a vaccination hub but the first one, at the Elsdale Street Surgery, would start vaccinating the following week, with another coming on board shortly. The Director of Public Health explained the logistic challenges in transporting and storing the vaccine but priority groups were likely to be able to receive the vaccine at home soon. The Chairman advised that, the previous day, the NHS Trust had confirmed that transport would be provided for the over 80's with mobility issues.

During the discussion and questions, the following points were noted:

- a. The NHS was in charge of the plans to roll out the vaccination, with the local authorities providing support in terms of prioritising those receiving social care. Currently, the whole of North East London did not have the extreme cold storage units required and this had been raised at the Infection and Prevention Control Group. The NHS were looking to expand the hub hospitals and this might include Barts Hospital.
- b. People who tested positive were required to put their residential postcode into the system and this would be reconciled with their NHS data. It was also noted that the Public Health Team received exceedance reports showing the postcodes of test results and were confident of the results being representative of City residents and not commuters.
- c. The guidelines had been strengthened to include 15 minutes of observation following vaccination. Those with a history of severe allergic reactions to anything and requiring adrenaline injections, have been advised not to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Patients must also have a detailed allergy history taken before being vaccinated.
- d. The Public Health Team were working with universities to support them in testing students in City-based accommodation, before they go home for the holidays. It was currently unclear as to how they would be tested before they returned, since they would be scattered across the UK, but this was a nationwide issue and would therefore be discussed further with University and Public Health colleagues.

6. **SUPPORTING EUROPEAN UNION (EU) NATIONALS WITH NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which identified the impact of EU Exit on rough sleeping in the City of London from 31 January 2020.

During the discussion and questions on this item, the following points were noted :

- a) The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping team worked with specialist partner organisations, who had the necessary language skills and connections in host countries. A reconnection would not be made unless the client had a home there and an assurance that their support needs would be met and was driven by the client's wishes and circumstances.
- b) There was concern expressed about the last Home Office regime which had led to a Judicial Review and whether short term accommodation offers were linked to supported reconnections. Given that the new guidance due in mid-January would also be Judicially Reviewed, then a decision might be

premature. It was noted that both the GLA and the London Boroughs of Islington and Haringey were currently refusing to co-operate.

- c) The officers were in weekly discussions at a Plan London Level. It was noted that the GLA commissioned 'CHAIN' homelessness/rough sleeping data, which was used for reporting to this committee and the outreach groups also reported into it. However, this was not shared with the Home Office.
- d) The Officer stressed the difference between supported reconnection, which would be at the Client's wishes and the City Corporation being confident that their intervention would improve the quality of their journey and reduce the likelihood of them returning to UK, without work or accommodation, and voluntary returns or deportation orders. Short term accommodation offers can improve the logistics before a supported return but they were not dependant on it.
- e) The Chairman stressed that we were unable to spend rough sleeping grant funding on those without recourse to public funds. This report was seeking to achieve the maximum assistance we could offer but was not tied to Home Office reporting or deportation. A client would be asked to provide formal ID in order to determine the best way to assist them but if they did not engage, this placed the City Corporation in a difficult position. The Chairman of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee advised that this report had received thorough scrutiny at the last meeting of the Sub Committee. Given that clients often experienced difficulties in producing documentation, more time had been requested for those applying for settled status.
- f) It was suggested that we look to private or charitable funding for those falling unemployed as a result of the hospitality trade being hit so hard by the pandemic and officers were being as creative as possible.
- g) Counsel had been instructed in terms of the changes to the Immigration Act and EU Exit and a presentation was being drafted for use by housing workers and this would also be available for members.
- h) Whilst the Chairman supported the work of officers in continuing to research the actions being taken by other boroughs, he stressed that it was necessary to move forward and take a decision today. Officers required a framework to work towards in order to get as many clients onto the settled scheme as possible. The Chairmen of both the Community and Children's Services and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee urged Members to agree this report, in principle, and then to work towards its refinement as more information emerged from the Government.

Three Members expressed concerns at the short-term accommodation offers being linked to supported reconnection and felt that the Committee should await Counsel's opinion before taking a decision. Natasha Lloyd-Owen, Helen Fentimen and William Pimlott therefore asked for their dissent to be recorded to the resolution, as set out below.

RESOLVED, that – the recommended course of action set out in the report, which focusses on extending the recommended course of action, which focuses on extending the current approach to supported reconnection, be approved.

7. SUPPORTING DIGITAL INCLUSION

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which set out the need and ambition to tackle digital exclusion among some who live in the Square Mile.

Members noted that, since the report had been drafted, the officer had been in touch with an organisation, in receipt of a City of London Corporation charitable grant, in respect of delivering recycled and refurbished equipment to those on low incomes. Additionally, young people not in work would receive training and be paid London Living Wage to undertake the recycling work. Members noted that the bid would provide 150 recycled pcs, laptops or tablets and funding currently available was £85,000. The Chairman of the Committee, also Chairman of the Digital Services Sub Committee, advised that he had enquired as to whether City Corporation equipment, due for upgrading, could be diverted into this project.

Although the timescale would be driven by the partners' processes they were keen to start work and as soon as a proposal was ready it would come to the Committee, as they would need to approve the funding in their role as Trustees. Committee Member, Mary Durcan had been fund raising for tablets for a school in Hackney, so far they had 80, and thanked Members for their support and generosity.

RESOLVED, That:

1. The current activity in place to support digital inclusion for City residents be noted.
2. The approach proposed to deliver a targeted digital inclusion project be approved.

8. GEORGE ELLISTON AND ERIK WILKINS HOUSES REFURBISHMENT - GATEWAY 2 - PROJECT PROPOSAL

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's services in respect of the whole building refurbishment of George Elliston and Eric Wilkins Houses including windows, roofs, insulation, lifts, internal communal areas, brickwork repairs, water tanks, etc.

Members noted the potential for tapping into Green New Deal Government Funding and hoped that the 2 blocks would benefit in terms of external wall insulation, communal heating systems and solar panels, which could be used across all the HRA Estates. Members were also supportive of a move away from gas boilers to heat pumps which have a considerably lower carbon footprint.

RESOLVED, that –

1. A budget of £200,000 be approved to cover fees and staff costs to reach the next gateway (£150,000 for consultant fees and £50,000 for staff costs).
2. The total estimated cost of the project at £3,706,200 (excluding risk) be noted
3. It be noted that no Costed Risk Provision is required and the risk register in appendix 2 to the report also be noted.

9. HOLIDAY MEAL SUPPORT TO CITY OF LONDON SPONSORED ACADEMIES

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, in respect of the provision of food vouchers to the families of pupils attending City of London sponsored academies, pupils attending the Aldgate School, and City resident children attending other schools who are eligible for free school meals over school holiday periods. Members were asked to consider this report alongside item 13 on today's agenda.

RESOLVED, it be noted that:

1. The City Corporation will review the allocation and distribution requirements to implement the Government Schemes as a Local Authority, which is likely to require additional administrative resource to support the children who will benefit.
2. Financial modelling has been conducted on support to families of pupils in City sponsored academies.

10. CITY OF LONDON JOINT HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY REFRESH - UPDATE AND ENGAGEMENT

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the City of London Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWBS), which must be refreshed for 2021–24.

This report updated Members on the work undertaken to date on developing this strategy, and they were invited to make recommendations on engagement. Members noted that the new Covid-19 Response to Consultation Working Party, referred to above, had a strong focus on improved communications.

RESOLVED, that – the progress made on developing the 2021–24 JHWBS be noted.

11. BARBICAN AND COMMUNITY LIBRARIES - EXEMPTIONS FOR SERVICE DURING THE SECOND LOCKDOWN

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the regulations governing the second national lockdown for English Public Libraries. Members noted that Libraries can stay open for normal business, including pc use, regardless of what tier we are in, provided they are Covid safe and subject to local agreement. The City libraries had

implemented a new select and collect service for the second lockdown within two days. A large number of compliments were listed in the report and Members thanked the Head of Barbican and Community Libraries and her staff for their hard work this year.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

12. RESOLUTION FROM THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (HSCSC)

The Committee received a Resolution from the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, which had met on 3rd November 2020, in response to an update from the Head of Podiatric Medicine, Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, and the Clinical Commissioning Group representative. The HSCSC had asked that, since the matters raised were more social care than health care matters, the Community and Children's Services Committee be asked to explore what opportunities and additional funds could be made available to fill the gap in the service. The Assistant Director had spoken to Hoxton Health and encouraged them to make a bid to the City of London Corporation's Stronger Communities Grant to provide foot care services free for those on low incomes.

RESOLVED, that the Resolution and suggestion, as set out above, be noted.

13. COVID WINTER GRANT SCHEME - SCHOOL HOLIDAY SUPPORT

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, which would provide support to vulnerable households and families with children who have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the winter period. Members were asked to consider this report, alongside item 9 on the agenda.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

14. GOLDEN LANE PLAYGROUND REFURBISHMENT - GATEWAY 6 - OUTCOME REPORT

The Committee considered a Gateway 6 – Outcome Report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted and the project closed down.

15. COMMERCIAL TENANTS AND COVID 19 - SUPPORT IN THE DECEMBER QUARTER

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services and the City Surveyor in respect of offering support to commercial tenants for the December quarter. The Chairman advised that the commercial tenants provided vital community services and the rental incomes, which are used to maintain the Estates, had been under considerable pressure this year. Members noted two non-public appendices at agenda item 20.

RESOLVED, That –

1. The following be approved:
 - a. Deferment of the full quarter's rent due from 25 December 2020 to 24 March 2021 for all DCCS commercial tenants requesting further support of up to £407,529 (£368,504 HRA and £39,023 City Fund) until 24 March 2021, payable thereafter over 24 equal monthly payments, excepting only those tenants that have already paid or wish to pay the December quarter rent.
 - b. Extension of all approved 12-month repayment plans for DCCS commercial tenants that are due to commence in March 2021, to now be payable in 24 equal monthly payments from March 2021, excepting only those tenants that have already paid or wish to pay this rent, or where their lease expiry falls within the 24 month period (in which case bespoke payment plans will be agreed).
 - c. Note that the above offer to defer and further defer rents be 'automatic' i.e. to take effect only upon request by the relevant tenant and not subject to further case by case analysis, excepting only those tenants that have already paid or wish to pay the rents due from 25 March 2020 to 25 December 2020;
2. It be noted that:
 - a. All tenants are expected to have been billed for the December quarter rental payments, consistent with the advice that all tenants who can pay should pay part or all the rent due.
 - b. The 'case by case analysis' of tenant's financial status and trading position has been suspended until March 2021; at which point recommendations on, non- standard, tenant specific repayment plans for the full year period of rent due from 25 March 2020 until 24 March 2021 will be developed and submitted jointly by the City Surveyor's department and the Chamberlain's department to DCCS and this Committee for approval.

16. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

In response to a question about the provision of free sanitary products in schools, the Director advised that the City of London schools were part of this rollout and they were also being provided by the new food bank.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

At 12.55 am, Members agreed to waive Standing Order 40 in order to conclude the business on the agenda.

- a) The Chairman of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee paid tribute to Father Nick at St Katharine's who had been delivering hygiene packages to rough sleepers and vulnerable people across the City and fringe boroughs. So far he had delivered 350 packs and hoped to achieve 1,000. Additionally, the Mitchell Trust was supporting both the City Lodges and Providence Row this Christmas and George Turner (of Just Socks Ltd) a past Livery Master had provided 7 boxes of socks for the lodges and hostels, and for inclusion in Father Nick's packages. The Chairman also commended the Homeless Team for their exceptional work since the start of the pandemic and acknowledged that many of them would be working throughout the Christmas holiday and towards the challenges in the New Year, as set out in agenda item 6.
- b) The Director advised that Healthwatch had produced a very helpful leaflet covering various services' opening hours over the holiday; i.e. - mental health, safeguarding, health provision, and access to support. The City Corporation's Media Team would also add this to the website and it would be included in the weekly residents' newsletter. The Director welcomed further suggestions from Members as to further circulation of this leaflet.
- c) The Chairman advised that the Great Arthur House Appeal would be held in March with each side bearing their own costs.

18. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED, that - under Section 100A(4) 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 Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

Item No	para no
19 - 24	3

19. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED, that – the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2020 be approved.

20. COMMERCIAL TENANTS AND COVID 19 - SUPPORT IN THE DECEMBER QUARTER

The Committee received two non-public appendices in respect of agenda item 15.

21. SYDENHAM HILL - REQUEST FOR A DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The Committee considered and approved a report of the City Surveyor.

22. ALDGATE (PORTSOKEN) PAVILLION - GATEWAY 6 - OUTCOME REPORT

The Committee considered and approved a report of the City Surveyor.

23. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There was one question whilst the public were excluded.

24. 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 13.09

Chairman

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