

Committee: Policy and Resources	Dated: 11 April 2024
Subject: Barbican Strategy Group proposal	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	
Report of: Judith Finlay, Executive Director – Community and Children's Services	For Decision
Report author: Simon Cribbens – Community and Children's Services	

Summary

In response to a resolution from the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) to create a Barbican Strategy Group, Policy and Resources Committee tasked officers to consult with all relevant stakeholders and come back with a proposal and a draft Terms of Reference.

The proposal for Barbican Strategy Group originates from a request of residents, to bring together all stakeholders to enable a joined-up approach to the asset management and maintenance of the Barbican Complex.

Following stakeholder consultation, a review of current working groups, Member led Committees, and representational groups, this report sets out three options:

- do nothing
- secure the outcomes desired or most deliverable through existing structures
- create a new Barbican strategic body

The report notes the challenges and complexity of creating a new strategic body. It recommends that a joined-up approach to the Barbican Complex is secured through the existing Barbican Area Advisory Group. It is proposed this includes twice yearly engagement with the Barbican Association and the Barbican and Golden Lane Neighbourhood Forum.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the report
- Approve the proposals to strengthen the Barbican Area Advisory Group

Main Report

Background

1. A resolution from the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) received by the Policy and Resources Committee (Appendix 1) proposed a 'Barbican Strategy Group' be considered 'comprising all stakeholders, to facilitate a joined-up approach to the future of the Grade II listed the Barbican Estate'. In this context 'estate' refers to the whole Barbican Complex (the Complex).
2. The Committee resolved that a report should come back, based on consultation with all relevant stakeholders, that detailed the composition, purpose, terms of reference and resourcing implications of such a group.
3. The Complex comprises four major constituent parts – the Arts Centre, Barbican residential estate, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and City of London School for Girls. Each is supported by a governing Committee or Board and a plethora of subcommittees. Policy and Resources acts as the walkway authority for the purposes of promoting works to the Barbican Podium.
4. The Complex is architecturally cohesive with common and shared elements.
5. The City Corporation is – through both funding and its status as freeholder – the unifying and over-arching body.
6. The BRC resolution proposes a 'Barbican Strategy Group.' It draws on the ambitions of the Barbican Association (the recognised association representing residents on the estate) for a body they describe as the 'Barbican Estate Strategic Authority' (Appendix 2).
7. The driver for such an approach is the reported decline in the physical fabric of the complex. The Barbican Association cites the complexity of existing governance – with 'separate and compartmentalised interests' – as leading to a failure to view the complex as an integrated entity.
8. Stakeholders consulted with (see Appendix 3) supported the aim for better co-ordination and oversight, and the opportunity for collaboration in relation to major works. Elements such as the podium walkways, lighting, climate change mitigation, concrete repairs and signage were identified as lending themselves to a cross complex approach.
9. Whilst conceptionally logical and straightforward, there are complexities of funding sources, responsibility and governance. These are not insurmountable issues but have implications for the short-term impact of any changes and the need to identify and navigate proposals across governance.
10. It was also noted that many projects are at an advanced stage, and action that may result in delay could add further cost to the project through inflation or lead to worsening condition.

Current Position

Governance

11. The current structure of governance supporting the constituent parts, and that within the Corporation overseeing major projects, is complex. They include the core governing Committees and Boards, and the Corporation's decision-making Committees relevant to major projects. There are numerous sub-committees. Policy and Resources Committee (and the Court of Common Council) provides the opportunity for the holistic oversight of the Complex.
12. The creation of a Barbican Strategy Group - as envisaged - would either need to replace elements of this governance or secure an approach to which all the relevant governing bodies would need to agree. It may risk compounding the reported complexity and would have additional resourcing implications to address the legal, governance and logistical issues that would need to be addressed.
13. The challenge of governance reform is complex, and subject to wider debate and process that is beyond the remit of this report.

Strategy

14. The strategic landscape in which the Complex operates is crowded with players and strategic plans: various Barbican Committees and Boards; Culture Mile BID; Smithfield East; Museum of London; Destination City; resident reset; cultural strategy; and the recently developed Neighbourhood Forum.
15. In this context it would seem a further broad strategy is unlikely to make others redundant, and therefore may not offer significant value to the wider strategic vision. However, there is an opportunity to address the absence of a single overarching strategic plan to deliver major works and maintenance to the common areas of the complex.

Co-ordination and delivery

16. Many stakeholders expressed concerns about the potential for a new or additional group in terms of duplication or adding to the substantial number of bodies that already exist. Such a group could serve to delay and complicate projects, or act to frustrate the ambition of the individual entities if its remit was not clearly and tightly defined.
17. Strong support exists for a more joined up approach. There is common feeling of benefit from, and desire for, a more co-ordinated and unified approach to the planning, implementation and project management of key (and common) infrastructure issues. For most stakeholders this was not about strategic direction, but an issue of project development, delivery and co-ordination among the different actors on the Complex. A more joined up approach could result in programme and cost efficiencies

18. Some stakeholders highlighted examples of positive collaboration and co-ordination that could be built upon. Stakeholders who are members of it, pointed to the Barbican Area Advisory Group (BAAG), and the opportunity it presents to meet the objectives of the resolution. Its terms of reference (Appendix 4) describe it as existing 'to streamline, focus and create links and efficiencies between the projects underway and proposed for the area, led by the City Corporation and its partners'.

Options

19. Following stakeholder consultation, a review of current working groups, Member led Committees, and representational groups, this report sets out three options:

- A. do nothing
- B. secure the outcomes desired or most deliverable through an existing structure, or
- C. create a new overarching strategic group.

Option A: do nothing

20. The reported disconnect between various projects tackling the shared or aligned infrastructure plans for the complex, suggests that there is a valid case to scrutinise existing mechanisms and either make changes or reinforce the opportunities for co-ordination. Consolidation and co-ordination of some projects does currently take place (e.g. Barbican Podium works) and does yield efficiencies and economies. However, to do nothing could be a lost opportunity.

21. This is not recommended.

Option B: secure the outcomes desired or most deliverable through existing structures

22. The ambition for a more joined up approach could be met through the strengthening of the Barbican Area Advisory Group (see proposals below).

23. This option would avoid duplication and the further complication/expansion of governance. This body already exists and therefore its operation is met within existing resource.

24. It is proposed the membership and format is reviewed to widen representation and engagement with stakeholders on the Barbican complex, including the opportunity to meet twice yearly with the Barbican Association and the Barbican and Golden Lane Neighbourhood Forum.

25. This is recommended.

Option C: create a new Barbican strategic body

26. The creation of a new overarching body would require radical and fundamental change to the governance of the institutions that make up the Barbican complex.

This would require significant resource of the Governance and Member Services Team in the short-term and would likely require an ongoing staffing resource. No budget has been identified for this.

27. Such a body already exists through the remit of the Policy and Resources Committee, which sets strategic direction where multiple service areas are affected and allocates appropriate resources via the reports of the various sub-committees that represent the main stakeholders within the Complex.

28. This is not recommended.

Proposals

29. For the reasons set out above, the Barbican Association's proposal for a Barbican Estate Strategic Authority – with a breadth of governance, strategic, management and financial responsibilities – is not recommended. It is proposed that the focus of ambition should be securing a 'joined-up approach' to common projects of infrastructure – delivered through a unified strategic plan.

30. To meet this aspiration, it is proposed that the BAAG delivers and is accountable for improved project development, consolidated project planning and overall co-ordination. The focus would be on delivering a unified approach to asset management and future major interventions across the common parts of the complex.

31. To achieve this, the BAAG would need to bring forward unified proposals and plans to enable Policy and Resources to fulfil its remit for cross-cutting decision making for the complex.

32. The BAAG is not formally accountable to a Board or Committee. To strengthen its accountability it is proposed that the BAAG report annually to this Committee (or its nominated Committee) to report the progress and impact of its work.

33. This proposal avoids the risk of duplication or the creation of additional bureaucracy, complexity or resource burden.

34. It is proposed that its Membership is expanded to include City of London School for Girls to ensure all the constituent institutions are represented. Membership should be at a senior level.

35. The BAAG's terms of reference already set out an outcome to identify the "interests and concerns of residents and other stakeholders" through "proactive and effective engagement". To better achieve this it is proposed that the BAAG meet twice yearly with the Barbican Association and the Neighbourhood Forum.

36. To ensure this does not increase the need for resourcing, it will be proposed to those bodies that these two meetings substitute for two existing engagement meetings.

37. Given the focus on co-ordination and the promotion of a joined-up approach to assets and communications, it may be necessary to commission new work that plugs any identified gaps. Where this is the case, budget will need to be identified.

38. As an officer led group, the remit and role of the BAAG is within the delegations and responsibility of the relevant chief officers. Therefore, it is anticipated that this development should be achievable without the need for approval from every governing body or Committee, although clearly it will be important to share the approach for information.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

39. The proposals of this plan support the delivery of the Corporate Plan objective that the 'Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained'.

Financial implications

40. Within current resources

Resource implications

41. As noted above.

Legal implications

42. The recommended Option B does not give rise to any legal implications. If Members were minded to pursue Option C then, to the extent that this might impinge upon the responsibilities of existing Committees or Boards, it would require a careful consideration of their terms of reference, governing documents, etc. especially where the Corporation is acting in different capacities. There would also be issues regarding any potential pooling of funds between different institutions, particularly where some are charitable, and some are not.

Risk implications

43. None.

Equalities implications

44. None.

Climate implications

45. None.

Security implications

46. None.

Conclusion

47. The proposed role for the BAAG provides an opportunity for an economic, efficient and effective mechanism to secure greater consistency and co-ordination of works to the Barbican Complex infrastructure.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Resolution to Policy and Resources
- Appendix 2 - Barbican Association Proposal
- Appendix 3 – Consultees
- Appendix 4 – Barbican Area Advisory Group – terms of reference

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