

BUSINESS RATEPAYERS' CONSULTATION MEETING

Minutes of the BUSINESS RATEPAYERS' CONSULTATION MEETING held at Guildhall, EC2 on WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2016 at 12.30pm.

Present

Members:

Mark Boleat	- Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee
Deputy Roger Chadwick	- Chairman of the Finance Committee
Ian Luder JP	- Alderman
Michael Hudson	- Common Councilman
Jeremy Mayhew	- Common Councilman
Deputy Catherine McGuinness	- Common Councilman
Deputy John Tomlinson	- Common Councilman

Also in attendance were representatives from the following companies:

Abrant Ltd	Gestalten
Allenby Capital	GRF Services
Alpina	ILS Word
Alwen Hough Johnson Ltd	KIO Restaurants
ArgusVickers	Lubbock Fine
AXA Insurance	Manchester Airport Group
Bank of Korea	MBA World
Bank of Thailand	Operis Group Plc
Baring Asset Management	Oxford Property Management
Beaumont	Persia International Bank
Brookfield	Providence Row Housing Association
Camino UK	Radcliffes le Brasseur
Catalyst Development Limited	REGUS
CBRE Global Investors	Royal Humane Society
China Council for the Promotion of International Trade	SJC
City and Continental LLP	St Martins Property Corporation
Colville Estate Limited	Studio MA
Cooke, Young and Keidan LLP	TRowePrice
Cystic Fibrosis Trust	Turkish-British Chamber of Commerce and Industry
deVere and Partners	Turkiye Is Bankasi
Endeavour Insurance	Wardour Partners
Evans Hart	Winter Scott
Fincome Limited	WL Bakers
Fxecosystem	Zaiwalla

Officers Present:

John Barradell	- Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Simon Murrells	- Assistant Town Clerk
Fern Aldous	- Town Clerk's Department
Christopher Braithwaite	- Town Clerk's Department
Sabina Johal	- Town Clerk's Department
Simon Latham	- Town Clerk's Department

Peter Kane	- Chamberlain
Heather Adeyemi	- Chamberlain's Department
Caroline Al-Beyerty	- Chamberlain's Department
Carla-Maria Heath	- Chamberlain's Department
Steve Telling	- Chamberlain's Department
Ian Dyson	- Commissioner, City of London Police
Stuart Phoenix	- City of London Police
Claire Holdgate	- Remembrancer's Department
Paul Beckett	- Department of the Built Environment
Ian Hughes	- Department of the Built Environment

The following documents had been circulated to the consultees attending the meeting:

- Finance Position Statement
- Key Facts Sheet

1. Mark Boleat, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, welcomed representatives to the consultation meeting and provided an explanation of the role of the City of London Corporation and his role within it. He explained that the City of London Corporation promoted the City, London and the UK as a world centre for financial services, with the City of London Corporation working with business leaders to promote London as a place to do business. He discussed the current issue of the UK's membership of the EU and stated that the majority of business with which the Corporation had consulted were in favour of the UK remaining within the EU. He explained that the Corporation would continue to support businesses and promote the City as a place for business during the upcoming referendum and beyond, regardless of the decision on EU membership.

The Chairman explained the role of tax, regulation and legislation in ensuring that London and the UK remained an attractive place for companies to do business, and highlighted the need for a decision on increased airport capacity for London. The Chairman also updated Business Ratepayers on progress with improving broadband provision for businesses and residents in the City.

The Chairman highlighted the role that London's culture offering had in attracting businesses and people to the City, and explained the City's specific contribution to the London's culture offering. He particularly highlighted the current work in relation to relocating the Museum of London and the feasibility study for a National Centre for Music.

The Chairman also noted that roadworks continued to be a major issue within the City, in part due to the ongoing Cycle Super Highway works. He explained that the Corporation continued to actively manage the roads in the City, but sought to continue to improve in this area.

2. Deputy Roger Chadwick, Chairman of the Finance Committee, explained that funding for the City of London Corporation's local authority and police functions continued to reduce, although the rate of reduction was slower than had

previously been expected, with cash reductions for 2016/17 of roughly 6% for non-police local authority functions, and 0.5% for Police functions. The Chairman highlighted that the Corporation was already in the process of delivering an £11m annual savings programme.

The Chairman explained that the Government anticipated that local authorities would be able to offset the reduction in central funding through an increase in the retention of business rates. However, he explained that changes in the threshold applied to the City meant that the Corporation's retained rates were likely to reduce, although these losses would be limited to a maximum of £1.2m per annum.

The Chairman explained that the Corporation intended to freeze Council Tax for residents. He explained that the Greater London Authority's draft budget had also indicated a reduced GLA precept for Council Taxpayers.

With regard to the Police funding position, the Chairman explained that uncertainty remained as a number of the grants for specific aspects of the Police's work had not yet been confirmed and the position remained very challenging. The Chairman explained that the majority of Police forces across the country had increased precepts in 2014/15 and all but seven had raised the precept again in 2015/16. He explained that it was anticipated that most forces would increase the precept again for 2016/17.

The Chairman explained that the Corporation was giving serious consideration to increasing the business rates premium, which had been kept at 0.4p in the pound since 2006/07, to address these funding challenges. The Chairman explained that the Corporation sought to minimise as far as possible its direct financial impact on the businesses and residents which it served within the Square Mile and beyond. However, he explained that government funding and tax revenues did not cover the cost of the Corporation's Local Government and Police functions, despite the wide-ranging savings programmes the Corporation and Police had undertaken, and returns from investments and properties.

The Chairman therefore asked the Business Ratepayers present to endorse the proposal to freeze council tax for residents and to note that an increase in the Business Rate premium was being given serious consideration.

3. Ian Dyson, Commissioner of the City of London Police, provided an update on the work of the City of London Police. He explained the challenging budget position faced by the Police, noting that roughly 80% of the budget was spent on staffing, and that staffing levels had reduced from 850 officers down to a target of 700 officers, which would continue to present challenges to deliver the high quality policing services expected by residents and businesses. He explained that the Police was actively pursuing new ways of working to drive efficiency savings to minimise the impact of budget reductions.

The Commissioner explained the impact of the Paris terrorist attacks of November 2015 on the work of the Police to keep the City safe. He explained that both the City of London Police and the Metropolitan Police had undertaken

to increase the number of armed officers to seek to address this threat, which would work alongside a large number of other projects which the Police undertook to protect businesses and residents. The Commissioner particularly highlighted the need to replace the Ring of Steel and the desire to continue to fund Counter Terrorism Security Advisors as particular budget pressures in the Police's counter-terrorism operations.

The Commissioner also explained that the Police was the national lead force for Anti-Fraud, which was an area of crime which had increased significantly over recent years. He explained that cybercrime was another area of increasing activity and this was an area in which the Police was investing.

The Commissioner also discussed road safety, and highlighted a recent operation to address unsafe cycling practices on City streets, which had led to 200 tickets being issued to cyclists. He also explained that the Police was working closely with Transport for London to ensure the safe operation of heavy goods vehicles in the City.

The Commissioner concluded that despite the budget and operational challenges facing the Police, he was confident that the City remained a positive and safe place for people to live and work.

4. John Barradell, the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, explained the Corporation's role in providing civic leadership, and highlighted that he had addressed a local Government conference earlier in the day where he had defined this role as linking people and businesses with prosperity. He explained that the Corporation's role in extended beyond the City, to providing jobs and opportunity to the rest of London and the UK.

The Town Clerk reminded Ratepayers of the upcoming Common Council elections, in March 2017, and urged Ratepayers to ensure that their businesses were properly registered so as to be able to vote in these elections. The Town Clerk highlighted that some Ratepayers may even wish to stand for election.

The Town Clerk explained that the Corporation continued to work with telecommunications companies to improve the provision of broadband to businesses and residents in the City. He also explained that the Corporation would continue to work with Transport for London to mitigate the impact of any roadworks on businesses and residents.

The Town Clerk echoed the comments of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee about the work the Corporation in developing the City's cultural offer. He also advertised to Ratepayers the events to mark the 350th Anniversary of the Great Fire of London, which would take place on 2-4 September 2016.

The Town Clerk concluded by explaining to Ratepayers the full breadth of local authority services provided by the Corporation, including Children's and Adult's Services, education, planning and environmental services.

5. The Ratepayers were given the opportunity to comment on the circulated documents and to ask questions. Many Ratepayers praised the work of the City of London Police. During discussion the following questions were raised:-

Traffic, Transport and Road Use

- A Ratepayer asked what enforcement options were available in relation to delivery vehicles parking on yellow lines. The Director of the Built Environment explained that a number was available for the public to call in the event of vehicles being parked on yellow lines, to allow parking enforcement officers to attend as soon as possible.
- A Ratepayer asked whether any consideration was being given to making certain roads bus only. The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee explained that it was something that could be considered in some areas. The Chairman highlighted the Bank Junction as an area where consideration was being given to making an interim scheme in which the junction would be for cyclists and buses only. A Ratepayer asked for clarification as to when the restructuring of Bank Junction might take place. The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee explained that an interim measure was expected to be in place by the end of 2016, and appropriate permanent measures would follow two to three years after that. A Ratepayer asked whether shared space was being considered for Bank Junction. The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee explained that shared space would be considered where appropriate, but this was not appropriate for a seven-way junction such as Bank Junction.
- Ratepayers discussed the Police's work in addressing dangerous cyclists. The Commissioner explained that the Police had directed dangerous cyclists towards Cycle Safe schemes, and in his opinion the vast majority of cyclists used the road safely.
- A Ratepayer asked what role the Police had in addressing instances of dangerous driving by bus drivers. The Commissioner explained that its role was to investigate such instances and prosecute if appropriate.
- A Ratepayer asked what processes were in place for businesses to request the closure of roads to allow buildings works to be conducted. The Director of the Built Environment explained that in such instances Ratepayers should contact the Department of the Built Environment. However, he cautioned that road closures were challenging at present due to the work at Aldgate Gyratory and for the Cycle Super Highway, which was putting stress on the rest of the road network. The Director of the Built Environment explained that these works were expected to be completed in April 2016, at which point further road closures would be considered.
- A Ratepayer asked whether there was an intention for the extended hours of Cannon Street Station to continue following the completion of the current works at London Bridge Station. The Director of the Built Environment agreed that this could be discussed with Transport for London.

Business Rates and budgets

- A Ratepayer asked whether an increase to the business rates premium would be used solely by the Police. The Chairman of the Policy and Resources

Committee explained that any additional funding from an increased premium would be devoted solely to security, but that would not necessarily mean it was all provided to the Police.

- A Ratepayer asked whether the Police could receive further funding for its Anti-Fraud work, given the national context of this work. The Commissioner clarified that this work was funded by the Government, and was outside of the Police's core budget.
- A Ratepayer, who was also a resident of the City, explained that the reduction in the visible police presence in the City was regrettable, but understood the budgetary situation. He asked whether it would be possible for residents or businesses to voluntarily contribute a greater amount to the Police to assist and ensure a greater visible police presence. Another Ratepayer supported this suggestion. The Town Clerk suggested that this may be problematic from a legal perspective, but agreed to investigate. The Town Clerk also explained that some specific Police programmes, such as the work against Insurance Fraud, was funded by businesses from the industries affected.
- A Ratepayer asked what options were available to the Corporation to share services with local authorities to achieve efficiencies and increase the pool of resources available to all authorities. The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee explained that there was plenty of willingness to share services, but much of the Corporation's work was particularly specialised, given the Corporation's different role to a traditional local authority. The Town Clerk noted that the Corporation did provide assistance to local authorities in areas such as planning, emergency planning and secretariat support.

Promotion of the City

- A Ratepayer asked what role the Corporation played in improving the public perception of the City, which appeared to be broadly positive for those who lived or worked there, but was often perceived negatively elsewhere. The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee explained that the promotion of the City as a positive environment was a role that the Corporation took very seriously, with successive Lord Mayors actively promoting the City across the UK and the world.

Culture

- A Ratepayer asked whether there was anything that the Corporation could do to stimulate the night-time economy in the City at weekends, particularly on the North Bank of the Thames around Cannon Street. The Commissioner explained that the City did have a thriving weekend and night time economy, but this was focused elsewhere in the City.
- A Ratepayer asked for clarification as to the proposals for the redevelopment of the Smithfield Market area and the Museum of London. The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee explained that the proposal was for the Museum of London to be relocated to a currently vacant building at Smithfield Market and no proposals were in place to make any changes to the operational Market buildings. The Chairman explained that the relocation of the Museum provided an excellent opportunity to revitalise the Smithfield Market area.

Littering

- A Ratepayer asked whether more could be done to enforce the Butt It Out campaign against cigarette butt littering, particularly in the area of Austin Friars. The Town Clerk agreed that further work could be done, and informed the Ratepayer that he would ensure that their particular concern regarding Austin Friars was addressed.
6. Following the discussion, the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee concluded by thanking those present for attending the meeting and their contributions to the discussion.

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