

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
Thursday, 25 February 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held at Committee Rooms, 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 25 February 2016 at 1.00 pm

Present

Members:

Mark Boleat (Chairman)
Jeremy Mayhew (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Catherine McGuinness (Deputy Chairman)
Hugh Morris (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Douglas Barrow
Deputy John Bennett
Deputy Roger Chadwick (Ex-Officio Member)
Henry Colthurst
Deputy Alex Deane
Deputy Billy Dove (Ex-Officio Member)
Simon Duckworth
Stuart Fraser
Marianne Fredericks
George Gillon
Deputy the Revd Stephen Haines (Ex-Officio Member)
Wendy Hyde
Edward Lord
Wendy Mead
Deputy Joyce Nash
Dhruv Patel (Ex-Officio Member)
Deputy Henry Pollard (Ex-Officio Member)
Sir Michael Snyder
Deputy John Tomlinson
Michael Welbank (Ex-Officio Member)
Alderman Sir David Wootton

In attendance:

John Fletcher
Alderman Peter Hewitt
Mark Wheatley

Officers:

John Barradell	- Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Peter Kane	- The Chamberlain
Michael Cogher	- Comptroller and City Solicitor
Paul Double	- City Remembrancer
William Chapman	- Private Secretary and Chief of Staff to the Lord Mayor
Damian Nussbaum	- Director of Economic Development
Bob Roberts	- Director of Communications

Nigel Lefton	- Remembrancer's Department
Giles French	- Assistant Director of Economic Development
Simon Murrells	- Assistant Town Clerk
Angela Roach	- Principal Committee and Members Services Manager

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Vivienne Littlechild, Andrew McMurtrie, Henry Pollard, Baroness Scotland, Giles Shilson and Jeremy Simons.

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

There were no declarations.

3. **EUROPEAN UNION REFERENDUM**

The Committee agreed to altering the order of the agenda and to considered matters relating to the European Union Referendum as follows:-

Referendum on the UK's Membership of the European Union

- 3a. Members considered a report of the Director of Economic Development seeking a view on whether the City Corporation should adopt a position on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU) and, if so, what that position should be.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee consider firstly whether a position on the UK's membership of the EU should be adopted and secondly, depending on the outcome, decide what that view should be. He also suggested that given the importance of the matter a vote be taken at the conclusion of the Committee's deliberations. Members supported his suggestion.

During discussion on whether the City Corporation should adopt an official position a number of different views were expressed which, amongst other things, included:-

- The City Corporation needed to remain relevant to its stakeholders. It was therefore important for the City Corporation to comment on major strategic issues which had an impact on them. It was felt that on this occasion the City Corporation's silence would not be welcome.
- A Member stated that he was torn by the issue but nevertheless felt that adopting a position was contestable and divisive. In his view the issue was not about silence it was about whether the City Corporation should abandon its neutrality. He felt that the City should remain neutral in line with its historic approach as a convenor and reflector of opinion.

- Members were reminded that they had been elected to represent the City. The issue of whether to remain “in or out” was the biggest decision the UK would be making since WWII and therefore it was right for the City Corporation to openly take a position, one which represented the views of the majority of its stakeholders.
- A Member noted that whilst the City Corporation had maintained a neutral position on the EU it was now important for a position to be adopted. It was not true to say that remaining neutral was in line with its historic approach. The City Corporation had, when necessary, expressed a view on matters of strategy for the benefit of its business constituents, for example, on issues such as Heathrow and immigration.
- A Member reiterated the importance of remaining neutral and supported the view that adopting a position would be divisive. He expressed concern that there had been no consultation with the City Corporation’s electors. The Member stressed that the City financial would not be unrepresented if the Corporation was to remain neutral as more appropriate organisations, such as TheCityUK would take a position on the matter and voice an opinion. He reminded the Committee that TheCityUK had been set with the specific purpose of representing the financial and business City.
- A Member advised that there was evidence to suggest that the vast majority of businesses were against exiting the EU. The City Corporation needed to be true to itself and maintain its relevance by conveying this.
- Members supported the view that if a position was taken it needed to be evidenced based and should avoid campaigning.

Following further detailed discussion the Chairman summed up the Committee’s deliberations. He pointed out that the City Corporation had been trying to organise an event which included representatives from both sides. The Chairman acknowledged the importance of remaining relevant and confirmed that there was precedence for adopting an official view on important matters on behalf of its stakeholders. Sometimes the view taken was at odds with that of Government or a local government agency, for example, on the issue of immigration. He stated that there was an expectation that the Corporation would adopt a position which he felt it ought to do. The Chairman concluded by supporting the view that any position adopted needed to be evidence based and should not involve campaigning.

A vote was cast on whether the City Corporation should adopt an official position. This resulted in:-

- 18 Members in favour of adopting an official position
- 6 Members against adopting an official position

Detailed discussion ensued on what the City Corporation's position should be during which views were expressed on the positions including that of neutrality. Amongst other things the following comments were made:-

- Non-EU countries such as Iceland and Turkey were able operate outside the Treaty with no adverse effects.
- The City Corporation should avoid making claims that the UK could not prosper as a result of opting out of the EU and should take a stance which acknowledges the breadth of opinion.
- Reference was made to the long period of time it would take to establish trade deals if the UK were to opt out; the difficulties that might be caused in terms of having access to the single market on other countries terms and the knock on effect opting out would have on the UK's role in EuroClearing.
- The City Corporation was already aware of the views of businesses and it should simply reflect the views of the majority which was that the UK should remain a member of the EU. Several Members supported this.

A vote was cast on whether the City Corporation should support the UK leaving or remaining in the EU. This resulted in:-

17 votes in favour of the UK remaining a member of the EU
3 votes in favour of leaving

RESOLVED – that it be recommended to the Court of Common Council that approval be given to the City Corporation adopting a position on the UK's membership of the EU in the following terms:-

“Taking into account the views of City stakeholders and businesses, the City of London Corporation supports the United Kingdom remaining a member of the European Union.”

The European Union Referendum Act 2015

- 3b. The Committee considered a joint report of the Town Clerk, Remembrancer and Comptroller and City Solicitor concerning the provisions of the European Union Referendum Act 2015. The report noted that should more than £10,000 of regulated expenditure be incurred in connection with procuring a 'remain' or 'leave' vote (as defined by the Commission) the City Corporation would need to register as a "permitted participant" with the Commission which would enable spending to be incurred up to £700,000.

The Chairman expressed concern about the Electoral Commission's interpretation of the rules for campaigning. He stated that whilst there

were no plans to incur additional expenditure, the manner in which the City Corporation usually operates could be deemed as campaigning.

It was suggested that, for the avoidance of doubt, the City Corporation should register as a “permitted participant”.

Reference was made to the 28 day purdah period (applicable to Ministers, government departments and local authorities) immediately preceding the date of the poll. It was agreed that, bearing in mind that the City Corporation would not be subject to the purdah on account of its hybrid nature whose expenses were not defrayed wholly or mainly out of public funds, the implementation of a purdah period was not necessary

Members supported both suggestions.

RESOLVED – That:-

1. if required by the legislation to do so, the City Corporation register as a ‘permitted participant’ with the Electoral Commission;
 2. bearing in mind that the City Corporation would not be subject to the purdah on account of its hybrid nature whose expenses were not defrayed wholly or mainly out of public funds, the implementation of a purdah period was not necessary; and
 3. it be noted that donations, sponsorship and affiliation fees provided by the City Corporation to organisations that might become participants in the referendum campaign would be published by the Electoral Commission.
4. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.
5. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
There were no urgent items.

The meeting ended at 2.20pm

Chairman

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