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| <b>Committee(s):</b>   | <b>Date(s):</b>           | <b>Item no.</b> |
| Planning and Transportation Committee  | 5 <sup>th</sup> July 2016 |                 |
| <b>Subject:</b><br>Historic Telephone Kiosks   | <b>Public</b>             |                 |
| <b>Report of:</b><br>The Chief Planning Officer  | <b>For decision</b>       |                 |
| <b><u>Summary</u></b>  |                           |                 |
| <p>The City Corporation's position on the City's historic K2 and K6 telephone kiosks was established by the approval of a report on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016, namely that they should in principle be retained in red livery and adapted for public benefit such as WiFi capacity where feasible. Please see appendix (2) for more background information.</p> <p>20 of the kiosks are listed at grade II, while 22 of them are unlisted. The condition, location and townscape value of each kiosk has been assessed in detail, with a particular focus on the 22 unlisted K6 kiosks. The majority of these unlisted kiosks make an important, distinctive contribution to the City's townscape and should be retained with repair and maintenance work where required. Only three are in locations that could support an alternative public use. Recommendations for the management of individual kiosks are contained in appendix 3.</p> <p>Officers have engaged with the three main owner groups, all of whom are willing in principle to install WiFi in their kiosks.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City continues to work proactively with kiosk owners to develop WiFi capability or other public benefit in kiosks and to improve their condition;</li> <li>• The City seeks opportunities through dialogue with the owners or the planning system to secure repair, maintenance or sympathetic new uses for individual kiosks in line with the recommendations in appendix (3).</li> </ul> |                           |                 |

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. On 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016 Members considered a report on the City's historic telephone kiosks (see appendix 2). Members voted to approve the report's recommendations listed below, with recommendation (b) amended to its present form following discussion. This established the City's corporate position on historic telephone kiosks:

- a. The City seeks the removal of all modern kiosks unless operationally required through negotiation with the operators;
- b. The City wishes to see in principle the retention of all K2 and K6 kiosks, and where necessary their repair and change of colour to post-office red, and convert to accommodate Broadband/Wireless infrastructure where possible;
- c. The City undertakes an assessment of the townscape/conservation area contribution and physical condition of each unlisted K6 kiosk, including their potential for conversion to new uses that comply with Local Plan policies. The assessment will form the basis for further discussions with kiosk operators and will yield recommendations for: Repairs and potential new uses; Potential candidates for relocation; Potential candidates for removal of unlisted kiosks.
- d. Following Member approval the City implements the recommendations of the assessment.

### **Recommendation (c)**

2. Officers surveyed 38 of the City's 42 historic telephone kiosks between April and May 2016, with 4 inaccessible due to adjacent development sites.
3. Within the kiosks surveyed there is a distinction between 19 listed K2 and K6 kiosks, deemed to have a greater degree of recognition and protection, and 19 unlisted K6 kiosks, for which the townscape value and capacity for alteration required further assessment. The latter are the focus of this report.
4. Officers have engaged with the three main owner groups, BT, New World Payphones and Red Kiosk, to explore the potential for conversion of the kiosks to house Broadband and Wi-Fi equipment.

### **Townscape and heritage value of unlisted K6 telephone kiosks**

5. Appendix (3) details the findings for individual kiosks. Each kiosk's townscape value is graded 'neutral', 'medium' or 'high'.
6. 'High' townscape value means the kiosk has an obvious relationship with specific listed buildings or other designated heritage assets. **6** of the unlisted K6 kiosks fell into this category. Examples include the Byward Street kiosk, with its presence in views of the Tower of London (World Heritage Site) and Tower Bridge (grade I listed building), and the Holborn Viaduct kiosks, which contribute strongly to the settings of the Central Criminal Court (grade II\*), St Sepulchre's church (grade I), the Viaduct Tavern (grade II) and the Newgate Street conservation area.
7. 'Medium' townscape value means the kiosk generally contributes positively to the settings of nearby designated heritage assets without a specific association with any one of them. **8** of the unlisted K6 kiosks fell into this category. Examples

include the pair of kiosks on Holborn that contribute positively to the settings of nearby listed buildings and the Chancery Lane conservation area.

8. 'Neutral' townscape value means the kiosk's value lies mainly in its intrinsic design quality, with neutral resonance within the townscape. **5** kiosks fell into this category. Examples are the kiosks at Ludgate Circus, the presence of which is diluted by the heavy traffic at this very busy junction and unsympathetic shopfronts nearby.
9. **Conclusion:** The 14 kiosks with medium and high townscape value should be retained in-situ. There is scope for relocation or removal of the 5 with neutral townscape value. Significant alterations to any of the kiosks would unacceptably harm their intrinsic value and townscape value.

### Condition

10. The physical condition of the unlisted K6 kiosks were assessed and divided into 'poor', 'fair' and 'good' according to the level of damage, weathering and ill-usage.
11. **One** kiosk was found to be in good condition, requiring no immediate action. **11** were found to be in fair condition, requiring light maintenance such as localised repainting or cleaning.
12. The **7** kiosks found to be in poor condition require active repair intervention such as replacement of glazing or lettering. Their condition detracts from both their intrinsic design value and wider townscape value.
13. **Conclusion:** Repair of the unlisted kiosks in poor and fair condition should be addressed through negotiation with the owners or within individual planning applications (if applicable). The relevant processes are outlined in appendix (2).

### Position on highway

14. Of the unlisted K6 kiosks, **15** were located on the footway, in locations unsuitable for new uses that generated activity beyond the immediate confines of the kiosk footprint.
15. **Three** of the kiosks – at New Bridge Street, Cannon Street and London Wall – are located off the footway, at the edges of small public spaces.
16. **Conclusion:** The majority of the kiosks are in locations too constrained to support alternative uses such as the previously refused A1 coffee kiosks. Such proposals should continue to be resisted.

### Ownership & Use

17. **Sixteen** of the 19 unlisted K6 kiosks retain their telephone equipment. BT own **6**, New World payphones own **8** and Red Kiosk own **5**. The latter wishes to expand its activity in the City and has first refusal on any kiosk BT wishes to divest from its portfolio.

18. Fixed Broadband infrastructure is usually housed in cabinets on the highway. BT and the City Property Advisory Team (CPAT) have advised that conversion of the unlisted K6 kiosks to house fixed Broadband infrastructure would require time-consuming negotiation and design work. This would result in unacceptable delays to the rollout of this infrastructure.
19. The three owners are willing in principle to explore options for installing smaller-scale WiFi equipment in the kiosks. CPAT and the Chamberlain's Department are considering the kiosks as possible host structures for WiFi hotspots as part of the City Corporation's wireless concession. CPAT have advised that ownership of the kiosks by three different organisations may complicate installation and maintenance of a City-wide network. The tendering process for the concession is anticipated to conclude in 2016.
20. Meetings were held in April with New World Payphones and Red Kiosk, together responsible for **13** of the unlisted K6 kiosks. Officers encouraged them to seek uses for their kiosks that carry a public benefit such as WiFi and that involve the minimum of physical alterations to the structure. Officers advised them that A1 uses were likely to be unacceptable and would be resisted in line with previous refusals.
21. Officers are currently examining the feasibility of using some of the unlisted kiosks to contain defibrillators or air quality monitoring equipment. When specific proposals have been developed these suggestions will be discussed with the kiosk owners.

### **Listed K2 and K6 kiosks**

22. Listing confers national identification as a designated heritage asset, resulting in greater safeguarding and recognition of townscape value. The 19 grade II listed K2 and K6 kiosks were found to have medium to high townscape value and the majority were in fair to good condition.

### **Recommendations**

- The City continues to work proactively with kiosk owners to develop WiFi capability or other public benefit in kiosks and to improve their condition;
- The City seeks opportunities through dialogue with the owners or the planning system to secure repair, maintenance or sympathetic new uses for individual kiosks in line with the analysis in appendix (3).

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Kiosk location map
- Appendix 2: March 2016 committee report
- Appendix 3: Individual kiosk recommendations

- Appendix 4: Kiosk survey (This document is too large to include in the agenda – hard copies will be placed in the members room or an electronic version can be viewed here : <W:\File Transfer\Telephone kiosks 2016\Appendix 4 Survey of City historic telephone kiosks.docx>)

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