

RESOURCE ALLOCATION SUB (POLICY AND RESOURCES) COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 17 February 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Resource Allocation Sub (Policy and Resources)
Committee held at Virtual Meeting on Wednesday, 17 February 2021 at 10.00 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Catherine McGuinness (Chairman)	Alderman Vincent Keaveny
Jeremy Mayhew (Deputy Chairman)	Deputy Edward Lord
Deputy Keith Bottomley	Alderman Ian Luder
Deputy Jamie Ingham Clark	Deputy Tom Sleigh
Anne Fairweather	Sir Michael Snyder
Sheriff Christopher Hayward	Deputy James Thomson
Shravan Joshi	Alderman Sir David Wootton

In Attendance

Officers:

John Barradell	- Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Peter Kane	- Chamberlain
Michael Cogher	- Comptroller and City Solicitor
Caroline Al-Beyerty	- Chamberlains
Bob Roberts	- Director of Communications
Peter Lisley	- Assistant Town Clerk
Angela Roach	- Assistant Town Clerk
Simon Latham	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received by Karina Dostalova.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

4. GOVERNANCE REVIEW: PLANNING

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk concerning the governance review in respect of planning.

The Policy Chair thanked the Deputy Chairman of Policy & Resources Committee for his continued work in leading consultation sessions with Members. Members heard how it had become very clear that there was a diverse range of views on how Lisvane's recommendations on planning should be taken forward, and this was less straight-forward than previous issues the Sub-Committee had considered. The Deputy Chairman of Policy & Resources added that planning had been the most challenging of the tranches of Lisvane but urged Members not to delay decisions for action on this, understanding that the Court would need to look at majority rather than unanimity.

The Sub-Committee considered the report across three key areas:

1. The status of the Planning & Transportation Committee and whether it should be ward committee.
 - a. Members heard how the views at the Member consultation sessions were split between those who felt that Planning & Transportation should be a ward committee, and others who felt that planning applications verses strategic and policy matters should be handled differently (in common with other Local Planning Authorities where most applications are taken under delegated authority).
2. The question of establishing smaller panels to consider large applications.
 - a. Members heard how a general view had been taken that no Member should sit on a panel to hear a planning application that affected their ward. There had also been a suggestion that the size of the panel could be between 8-10 Members.
3. The issue around transparency and perceived transparency.
 - a. The Deputy Chairman underlined how the City Corporation had very clear rules about disclosable interests but some Members have argued that there was currently an issue of transparency, particularly for those Members who also sit on the Capital Buildings Committee or Property Investment Board or who may have related professional interests. The Deputy Chairman noted the recent letter from Transparency International and informed Members that the Planning & Transportation Committee had received those views from the organisation and rejected them.

The Chair of the Planning & Transportation Committee was then invited to address the Sub-Committee. He outlined the leading work that his Committee was undertaking including the work surrounding the Recovery Task Force as well as aligning the built environment with the Climate Action Strategy. He also reported that the Secretary of State had commented that the City of London was a "leading authority". He also felt that the Local Plan and the Transport Strategy were flagship strategies led by this committee and so it was too important to diminish its status as a ward committee.

Addressing the questions in the paper, he felt that the Committee, currently containing 35 Members, was too large, and that the detailed work should be left to the two Sub-Committees (i.e. Local Plans Sub-Committee and Streets & Walkways Sub-Committee). He also spoke in favour of introducing panels for

planning applications to avoid minute detail and complex representations at Grand Committee. Alongside more effective decision, this would allow better advocacy for ward Members. He argued that the ability for a colleague to address a smaller group (i.e. a panel) would be more empowered and effective at the application stage and would enhance the Ward Member advocacy role. He continued to say that in addition, the Ward Member advocacy role would be unfettered. In their advocacy role, Members not on panels could be free to undertake their democratic tasks. Members could shape and refine matters at an early stage and applicants would be wise to work closely with Ward Members.

Finally, the Chair addressed Lord Lisvane's points on Members of Property Investment Board also sitting on Planning & Transportation Committee. As a leading authority with diverse interests, this had its challenges. Learning from the Holocaust Memorial case, it was suggested that it would be better to withdraw the burden from officers and separate the functions out.

The Deputy Chairman of Planning & Transportation then spoke in favour of Deputy Edward Lord's email to the Sub-Committee setting out – in practice – what panels could look like ensuring that there was no geographic overlap causing conflict of interest for Members. He also added that Chairs of the panels should be elected via the Grand Committee and Sub Committee and should be rotated in a fair and appropriate manner.

Deputy Edward Lord then gave more detail of his email he had circulated earlier that day which proposed that, geographically, panels would be comprised of ward members with its opposite number. Members were broadly supportive of this proposal.

The following points were then made by Members of the Sub-Committee:-

- The two existing Sub-Committees of Planning & Transportation should stay as they are.
- Alderman should be appointed on the Committee but this fits within the Ward Committee discussion.
- It was important that Members with professional expertise should be utilised on the Planning & Transportation Committee.
- Training should be mandatory.
- Consideration should be given to the accessibility of meetings as most working Members do not have the time or capacity to sit through lengthy meetings.
- There should not be a blanket ban for those who sit on Property Investment Board or Capital Buildings Committee to sit on Planning & Transportation, and the logic for arguing this was deemed "clumsy".
- If property professionals were to be "banned" from sitting on Planning & Transportation, this would also mean that accountants be banned from Finance Committee and public affairs consultants be banned from Policy & Resources Committee. We have a mechanism to declare conflict of interests under the Code of Conduct and this should be utilised rather than creating a ban.

- Residents would be reassured if there was always a Member representing a residential ward on each panel.
- Introducing panels would help with individual Members' workload and conscious of the amount of work the Grand Committee was currently demanding on Members' time.
- Good governance is encouraging those with the right skills to participate in the governance structures.
- We should be very proud of our planning system, which is seen as an exemplar.

The Policy Chair then concluded the discussion by summarising the consensus reached during the debate, as follows:-

- That Planning & Transportation Committee should remain ward committee.
- Smaller panels should be convened to consider planning applications.
- The Grand Committee should be focused on policy and strategy and applications by panels.
- The composition of panels based on their geographic location as set out in Deputy Edward Lord's email be broadly supported and officers should work up a more detailed proposal on this. This needs to address the issue of quorum on panels.
- The existing Streets & Walkways Sub-Committee and Local Plans Sub-Committee should remain.
- Members should be able to speak on proposals, but those conflicted should not vote.
- Aldermen should continue to make appointments to the Planning & Transportation Committee.
- An outright ban on Members sitting on Property Investment Board and Planning & Transportation Committee should be avoided.
- Members with property expertise should be allowed and encouraged to sit on the Planning & Transportation Committee.
- Training for Members should be mandatory.
- The perception of transparency was very important and Members should always look to mitigate conflicts, although it was also acknowledged that there was a current smear campaign running, which was rejected by Members of this Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED, that:-

- The recommendations from Lord Lisvane's Governance Review and the feedback from the Members Consultation Sessions be noted.
- A report be submitted to the Policy & Resources Committee proposing the next steps as set out in the summary consensus reached by this Sub-Committee as noted above.

5. **LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN - TRANSPORT FOR LONDON FUNDED SCHEMES 2020/21**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of the Built Environment concerning the Local Implementation Plan.

RESOLVED, that:-

- The report be noted.

6. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were no urgent items of business.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED, that under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

Item No.

10

Paragraph No.

3

9. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

The non-public minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting held on 4 February 2021 were approved as a correct record.

10. PROPERTY PROJECTS GROUP COVID19 CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the City Surveyor concerning the COVID19 Capital Projects Fund.

11. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE SUB-COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There was one item of urgent business:-

- A report of the City Surveyor outlining a proposal to support market tenants affected by COVID19.

The meeting ended at time not specified

Chairman

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