

BARBICAN RESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 2 February 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Virtual Teams meeting at 1.45pm
<https://youtu.be/rMRUuTRSCUU>

Present

Members:

Michael Hudson (Chairman)*
Mark Wheatley (Deputy Chairman)*
Mark Bostock
Deputy David Bradshaw
Henry Colthurst*
Mary Durcan
Barbara Newman
Susan Pearson*
Deputy John Tomlinson
Dawn Wright*
Randall Anderson (Ex-Officio Member)

*indicates non-resident member

Officers:

Paul Murtagh	- Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, Community and Children's Services
Michael Bennett	- Community and Children's Services
Ann Mason	- Community and Children's Services
Alan Bennetts	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Jeremy Mayhew and Andrew McMurtrie.

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

There were no declarations.

3. SERVICE CHARGE EXPENDITURE AND INCOME ACCOUNT - LATEST APPROVED BUDGET 2020/21 AND ORIGINAL BUDGET 2021/22

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chamberlain and the Director of Community and Children's Services which set out the original budget for 2020/21 and 2021/22 for revenue expenditure included within the service charge in respect of dwellings.

The Chairman advised that comments from the Resident's Consultation Committee (RCC) Annual General Meeting on 25th January 2021 had been circulated to Members of the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) ahead of this meeting. The Committee noted that a further appendix had been added to the report this year, showing how service charges relate to elements of the report. The Committee also noted that the budget would be reviewed before the service charge letters were sent out and, therefore, the final amounts might not be the same as those set out in this report.

The Assistant Director advised that the timing of the redecoration works might be reviewed as a number of major works projects, including fire doors and works to the podium, were likely to cause some dust and construction debris. The Committee would receive an update on the scheduling of the works at their March Committee meeting.

The Committee noted that the Assistant Director had been working with residents on the Service Charges Working Party in respect of a detailed review of service charges; looking at efficiency savings that could protect and possibly reduce charges in the future. The Committee noted that this would be an extensive piece of work, likely to take about six months, and the findings would be reported to both the RCC and BRC. The Assistant Director stressed that any benefits from the findings of the Working Party would not become apparent until the next financial year. The Committee was very supportive of this work in helping residents to understand the detail and dispel some of the misapprehensions.

In respect of comments made by the RCC, the Committee noted that the Chamberlain would be looking at car park charges in terms of usage, and noting the impact of the new congestion charges. Some Members of the BRC had been challenging the City Corporation's valuation for being too high, and the assumptions for being unrealistic, in terms of planning restrictions on the use of the car park and whether it should be compared to a commercial car park. The Committee noted that the annual charges report was due at the June meeting of the RCC/BRC Committees and the Car Park Charges Working Party was due to meet before then.

The officer agreed to investigate the £23K budget set aside for the renewed door entry and some concerns expressed about the difficulty in getting keys for the existing system. There would also be an update on the Open Spaces Garden Maintenance, in terms of the appointment of the new gardener, once the costs were clearer.

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Local Government Accountancy Regulations, this iteration of the budget report, which is usually presented in November, was always amended before the service charge letters were sent to residents. Whilst the Service Charges Working Party would be consulted on any changes, it would not generally come back to the Committee in the interim period.

Whilst there was a consensus for approving the budget today, there was also a strong agreement that the Committee were not accepting it as a fixed budget, that it represented an absolute maximum and there was an expectation that further reductions would be sought. The Chamberlain explained that the City Corporation needs to set a balanced budget before 31st March 2021, and the Finance Committee will consider the budget for the entire City of London Corporation in mid-February. The Committee noted that the Finance Committee sets the financial envelope and will be assuming a zero-based budget for the service charge account, with the actual detail on income and expenditure falling within the remit of the BRC. The Assistant Director further stressed that this is a budget and not a final account and Members would get the opportunity to scrutinise how far the final budget had met their expectations.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The provisional 2021/21 revenue budget be approved for submission to the Finance Committee, noting that that the Barbican Residential Committee were accepting the budget as an absolute maximum, with an expectation that further reductions would be achieved.
2. The Chamberlain be authorised to revise these budgets to allow for further implications arising from departmental re-organisations and other reviews, and corporate projects.

4. **REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS - LATEST APPROVED BUDGET 2020/21 AND ORIGINAL 2021/22 EXCLUDING DWELLINGS SERVICE CHARGE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

The Committee received a joint report of the Director of Community and Children's Services and the Chamberlain in respect of the annual submission of the revenue and capital budgets.

In response to a question about the lack of detail on the proposed savings, the Assistant Director advised that officers were working on a range of options but, at this stage, some might be discounted and some would need considerable work before being presented as viable. The Committee considered the comments from the meeting of the RCC in terms of savings being found for the residential leaseholder account. The Assistant Director confirmed that savings might be required on the service charge account, and they too would be put before the Committee for a decision, following consultation with residents.

RESOLVED, That:

1. The provisional 2021/22 revenue budget be approved for submission to the Finance Committee, noting the work underway on savings proposals.
2. The draft capital budget be approved for submission to the Finance Committee; noting the work underway on savings proposals.

3. The Chamberlain be authorised to revise these budgets to allow for further implications arising from departmental reorganisations and other reviews including corporate projects.

5. **ANNUAL REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk in respect of the Annual Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Members noted the radical amendments made the previous year in terms of reducing the number of non-resident and resident Members and agreed that the current arrangements were working well, with the Committee carrying no vacancies. Members also agreed that the frequency of meetings should remain the same, noting that 'Special Meetings' could be called if necessary.

There was some discussion as to whether the term 'management' should be more specific in terms of the Barbican Estate Office, although there was no formal request for a further amendment at this time. However, there was a consensus that a general reference was probably more helping at this time, noting that the Committee was subject to further consideration as part of the Lisvane Governance Review.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The terms of reference of the Committee (set out at Appendix 1) be approved for submission to the Annual Meeting of the Court of Common Council in April 2021; and,
2. The Committee continues to meet quarterly, in March, June, September and December.

6. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There were no items

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 item(s) on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

Item no	Paragraph No
10	3

9. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT
AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED
WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

Two items of business were discussed whilst the public were excluded.

The meeting ended at 3.10pm.

Chairman

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