

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Friday, 11 February 2022

Minutes of the meeting held at 1.45 pm

Members:

Ruby Sayed (Chair)
Randall Anderson (Deputy Chair)
Matthew Bell
Peter Bennett
Deputy Keith Bottomley
Mary Durcan
Helen Fentimen
John Fletcher
Marianne Fredericks
Graeme Harrower

Christopher Hayward
Deputy Jamie Ingham Clark
Alderman Gregory Jones QC
Deputy Henry Jones
Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Susan Pearson
William Pimlott
Jason Pritchard

Officers:

Andrew Carter	- Director of Community and Children's Services
Simon Cribbens	- Community and Children's Services
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services
Chris Pelham	- Community and Children's Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Nicholas Sommerville	- City Surveyors
Edwin Birch	- City Surveyors
Julie Fittock	- City Surveyors
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Munsur Ali, Rehana Ameer, Caroline Haines, Rev. Stephen Haines, Alderman Alastair King, Alderman Bronek Masojada, Elizabeth Rogula, Sir Michael Snyder, Mark Wheatley and Dawn Wright.

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

Susan Pearson declared an interest in respect of agenda Item 10 – Fire Door Replacement Programme - by virtue of being a leaseholder on the Golden Lane Estate. Ms Pearson would be speaking but not voting on this report.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, that – the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 17th December 2021 be approved.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Committee received the Outstanding Actions list.

5. DRAFT RESOLUTION FROM THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB COMMITTEE

Before opening a discussion on this matter, the Chair made some observations and suggest a way forward. Members were reminded that the draft Resolution on the agenda, from the Housing Management and Almshouses Committee of 14th January 2022 to the Planning and Transportation and Policy and Resources Committees, referred to discussions and decisions taken at other committees, following members' consideration of officer reports, recommendations and debate.

The Chair was concerned about an emerging culture which was attempting to circumvent decisions taken by Committees, by raising them at other Committees; thereby undermining the democratic process. Furthermore, the matter had been raised as an 'Item of Other Business' at the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee, without notice, and the aftermath had taken up a disproportionate amount of Officer and Member time.

In terms of proposing a way forward, the Chair suggested that the Community and Children's Services Committee should receive a report and presentation at their next meeting on 25th April 2022. Members would then be able to debate the impact of Section 106 funding on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and take an informed decision as to whether or not it would be appropriate to send a Resolution to another Grand Committee or Committees. The relevant Planning Officer would also be invited to answer questions about the Minorities development. The Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, also a Member of this Committee, supported the suggestion.

The Chair of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee (HMASC) thanked the Chair (of Community and Children's Services Committee; i.e. – the Grand Committee) for her support in this matter. The Chair (of HMASC) was concerned that this situation might discourage other Members from chairing committees and, whilst everyone had a right to express and debate alternative views, it should be done courteously, at the right time and in the right forum.

The Member who proposed the Resolution felt that, given the Local Plan is currently being reviewed, a wider discussion about housing requirements would be timely, and had not envisaged the Resolution being contentious. The Member also welcomed the Chair's suggestion for a report and presentation at the April Committee.

During comments and questions from other Members, the following points were noted:

1. It was suggested that there had not been a breach of the process, which was in place to serve Members in representing their constituents and delivering to our communities.
2. A Resolution is the democratic will of the Committee, not of one Member.

3. The draft minutes stated the matter was outside the Sub Committee and Grand Committees' Terms of Reference, although the Resolution sought a wider discussion and not to change policy.
4. There had been a very long debate at the Planning and Transportation Committee on this matter, ahead of a decision being taken, within its Terms of Reference.
5. Members were reminded that the Court of Common Council provides a regular forum for Members to ask questions and express views on any matter.
6. One solution might have been for the Chairs of the HMASc and the Grand Committee to meet with the Chair of the Local Plans Sub Committee, to share Members' views on delivering housing and how it could be represented in planning policy. It should also be a given that the HMASc is a stakeholder in this process.
7. The Deputy Chair of the HMASc felt that a meeting between the Chair and Deputy Chair (of the HMASc) would not represent the views of all Members, particularly those who had not been able to attend. However, given the circumstances, now regretted the suggestion to take a Resolution to the Planning and Transportation and Policy and Resources Committees.
8. It would be helpful to review the HMASc's Terms of Reference and for Members to have more clarity on the City's housing targets. Members noted that there are currently no firm proposals in respect of a dedicated Housing Committee at the City of London Corporation.
9. Members are generally frustrated that not enough housing is being built and felt that this matter should not fall outside of the HMASc's Terms of Reference. There are a lot of constituents in overcrowded housing and disappointment was expressed in that the City Corporation missed an opportunity to obtain 27 units.
10. This matter could have been dealt with more effectively and efficiently if notice had been given to the Chair of the HMASc ahead of the meeting.
11. April is a good time for the Grand Committee to receive a report and presentation, as it fits with the Local Plan schedule and a call for housing sites in May this year.
12. The work of other Grand Committees; i.e., the Markets Consolidation Project, will free up land and present further housing opportunities.

In concluding, the Chair thanked Members for their contributions, and it was RESOLVED, that – the Community and Children's Services Committee receive a full report and presentation at its meeting on 25 April 2021, addressing the issues raised today, and covering Section 106 Funding and the Minorities

development, in order to facilitate an informed debate on general housing matters and a possible Resolution to the relevant Grand Committee(s).

6. COVID UPDATE

The Deputy Director of Public Health was heard and provided the following update:

1. Infections amongst City residents were stabilising following a rapid increase in December 2021, with 77 cases in the City in the week up to 2nd February 2022. There had been outbreaks in workplaces and entertainment venues but track and trace was focussing on areas with vulnerable residents, such as care homes. Whilst we are in a better position than last year, and Omicron is a more benign infection, rates are plateauing at a fairly high level. Hospital infection levels were down, with 75 beds currently occupied in Homerton and 4-7 patients a week requiring mechanical ventilation.
2. There are currently 5,300 residents fully vaccinated in the City, with 7,000 having received a 2nd vaccine and just over 8,200 having received their first. Portsoken had a lower uptake initially, due to the lack of a convenient vaccination centre, but this was addressed in December, leading to a 20% increase in uptake of first vaccines.
3. There will be a pop-up vaccination centre on 17-19th February in Mansell Street Car Park, with more are planned at Liverpool Street. The Boots Vaccination Centre on Fleet Street will remain open.
4. The Government is expected to bring forward plans for the next stage of the Covid response in the week commencing 21st February and, if they continue on a downward trend, then a number of self-isolation requirements are likely to end.

7. APPOINTMENTS TO THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES AND SAFEGUARDING SUB COMMITTEES FROM THE WIDER COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

Members considered a report of the Town Clerk in respect of appointments to the Housing Management and Almshouses and Safeguarding Sub Committees, from the wider Court of Common Council.

Members felt that it would be timely to delay this matter until after the Common Council Elections, and the first meeting of the Committee after the Annual Meeting of the Court of Common Council in April 2022, noting that the Housing Management and Almshouses and Safeguarding Sub Committees are not scheduled to meet again until May 2022.

RESOLVED, that – if any vacancies on the Community and Children’s Services Committee’s Sub Committees are not filled by Members of the Grand Committee, then they will be opened up to the wider Court of Common Council.

NB. The first meeting of the Community and Children’s Services Committee after the Annual Meeting of the Court of Common Council, in April 2022, appoints to its various sub committees and approves its Terms of Reference.

8. COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVENUE OUTTURN FORECAST AS AT QUARTER 3 2021/22

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chamberlain and Director of Community and Children's Services setting out the Quarter 3 estimated outturn for the Community & Children's Services Committee budget (excluding the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account) for the year 2021/22. The report also provided an update on progress with the Fundamental Review (FR) and Target Operating Model (TOM) savings in the year.

Members noted that, whilst officers had been working pro-actively with the Home Office to expedite asylum applications; thereby enabling young people to receive their benefit entitlements, this is beyond the City of London Corporation remit and needs to be addressed by central government.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

9. DRAFT DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2022/23

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which presented the Business Plan for 2022/23 for approval.

In response to a question about housing delivery targets, the Assistant Director explained that these are scheduled over a number of years, but will identify if any are due to complete in the 2022/23 business plan period. The Director reminded Members that the Committee receives regular reports on the Housing Delivery Plan, which reports progress on social and affordable housing delivery.

RESOLVED, that:

- i) The factors taken into consideration in compiling the DCCS Business Plan be noted.
- ii) The DCCS Business Plan for 2022/23 (or the elements therein that fall within this Committee's terms of reference) be approved, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by this Committee.

10. FIRE DOOR REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME: GATEWAY 4 - ISSUE REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which proposed a programme of works to replace all front entrance doors (including any associated panel surrounds and fanlight windows) within City of London housing managed residential blocks of flats, excluding those covered by existing programmes.

Officers fully understood the need to expedite these works, both in terms of the fire safety implications and the risk of rising construction costs. Members noted that a new Project Manager had been appointed to manage the windows and

fire safety programme and another appointment was imminent to support further projects in the capital works programme.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The revised project timelines, following delay to the programme due to Covid-19 and design compliance issues, be noted.
2. The total estimated cost of the project at £8,983,214 (excluding risk), (£9,100,000 including risk) be noted.
3. Option 1 in the report be approved; i.e. - the procurement of the remaining Lots will be undertaken via the Hyde Fire Safety Framework by means of their direct award mechanism to the top ranked supplier, Gerda Security Products Ltd, subject to tendered costs being within previously approved estimates.

11. AVONDALE SQUARE ESTATE - EMERGENCY AND COMMUNAL LIGHTING: GATEWAY 6 - OUTCOME REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of emergency lighting at Avondale Square estate, which was non-compliant, and a number of luminaires were either not working or constantly lit with no control. The works improved the economy and energy efficiency of the communal lighting across Avondale Estate.

RESOLVED, that - the contents of this report and the lessons learnt be noted and the project be formally closed.

12. REVIEW OF THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME 2017

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the requirement on local housing authorities, under Section 166A of the Housing Act 1996, to have a scheme for allocating housing accommodation. Members noted that the City Corporation's Housing Allocations Scheme was comprehensively rewritten in 2017 and implemented following extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders. The scheme has now been refreshed, with some minor changes, to ensure that it remains as up to date as possible. In response to a question, officers agreed to investigate why income thresholds used the National Living Wage and not the London Living Wage (LLW).

RESOLVED, that – the Housing Allocations Scheme be approved.

13. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

The following 2 questions were put:

"When will the Green Box be removed from the Guinness Estate. I hope this is soon as Guinness are about to undertake the huge task of installing fire

suppressant sprinklers in all the flats and the space is sorely needed for parking contractors' vehicles."

Officers had contacted the Guinness Trust (without prejudice) in respect of a financial settlement, which is common at the end of a lease period. This would enable Guinness to undertake restoration and removal of the Green Box and release the Department from the procurement and project management costs. Initial indications were that the Guinness Trust would like the site to be restored for parking. Members noted that a meeting was scheduled for 16th February 2022, after which officers would update the Chair, Deputy Chair and Ward Members. The Member who put the question offered support, if required.

"In respect of the water charges refund, what will the requirements be for tenants in residence between 2001 and 2005, to enable them to receive their refund, and how do officers plan to deal with requests for monetary refunds, particularly from residents on housing benefits. Currently, the web site only contains the press release and when will there be more information"?

Officers had produced a letter to all tenants; due to go out the following week, together with a fact sheet explaining how current and former tenants can claim. In the absence of records by Thames Water and the City Corporation from this time, if tenants are able to provide evidence of paying charges between 2001 and 2005, then they will be included in the refund process. However, if they have proof of tenancy, with no possibility of them having paid for their water by alternative means, then they too would be refunded. However, this might be more complex in the case of deceased former tenants.

The web site was being updated to include the fact sheet. In terms of those tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, as has been the case with other local authorities, any debts would be cleared first from the refunds, and current tenants would be offered a credit against their rent. If they preferred a cash payment, then this would be provided in the same way as for previous tenants.

Members were reminded that the previous report on this matter had included evidence gathered from other local authorities, which had demonstrated different approaches. A Members suggested that, had the refund been paid from 2001, then the process would have been far less complex.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Director advised that Members are able to raise any points in the information-only reports at Committee, with notice. As requested by Members, there had been an extensive discussion at the Safeguarding Sub Committee about the provisions for young people. The information-only finance report had been included in the main agenda pack, also in response to Members' requests.

15. 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	Para No
17-26	3

16. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2021 be approved.

17. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS (NON-PUBLIC ITEMS)**

Members received the non-public outstanding actions list.

18. **SUMNER BUILDINGS & AVONDALE SQUARE ESTATE**

Members considered and approved a joint report of the Director of Community and Children's Services and the City Surveyor.

19. **ASSESSMENT CENTRE FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS: GATEWAY 4 - ISSUE REPORT**

Members considered and approved a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.

20. **SYDENHAM HILL WINDOW REPLACEMENT AND COMMON PARTS REDECORATIONS: GATEWAY 5 - AUTHORITY TO START WORK**

Members considered and approved a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.

21. **YORK WAY ESTATE PROVISION OF SOCIAL HOUSING: GATEWAY 5 - AUTHORITY TO START WORK**

Members considered and approved a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.

22. **MIDDLESEX STREET FLAT CONVERSIONS PROJECT: GATEWAY 6 - OUTCOME REPORT**

Members considered and approved a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.

23. **SYDENHAM HILL REDEVELOPMENT, LEWISHAM, SE26 6ND - DELEGATED AUTHORITY REQUEST**

Members considered and approved a report of the City Surveyor

24. **REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN: AFGHAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME**

Members received a report of the Town Clerk, and the Director of Community and Children's Services provided a verbal update.

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

There were no questions.

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

There were no items.

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm

Chairman

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