

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 8 June 2022

Present

Members:

Ruby Sayed (Chairman)	John Griffiths
Helen Fentimen (Deputy Chairman)	Florence Keelson-Anfu
Deputy John Absalom	Timothy James McNally
Munsur Ali	Deputy Susan Pearson
Jamel Banda	Henrika Priest
Matthew Bell	Jason Pritchard
James Bromiley-Davis	Naresh Hari Sonpar
Anne Corbett	Deputy Philip Woodhouse
Mary Durcan	
Deputy John Fletcher	
Deputy Marianne Fredericks	

In attendance (on line):

Ceri Wilkins
Benjamin Murphy

Officers:

Andrew Carter	- Director of Community and Children's Services
Julie Fittock	- City Surveyor's Department
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's Department
Chandni Tanna	- Town Clerk's (Communications)
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services
Chris Pelham	- Community and Children's Services
Teresa Shortland	- Community and Children's Services
Ellie Ward	- Community and Children's Services Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Joanna Abeyie, Caroline Addy, Aaron D'Souza, Steve Goodman, Alderman Gregory Jones, Alderman Alastair King, Alderman Ian Luder, Alderman Bronek Masojada, Benjamin Murphy (joined via Teams) and Ceri Wilkins (joined via Teams)

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

Sophie Fernandes was expected to joint the meeting later and would be declaring a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of her position as a Governor of Guildhall School (agenda item 7).

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 25 April 2022 be approved, subject to correcting ‘Ceri Wilkins’ name and recording Philip Woodhouse as having submitted apologies and joined remotely.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received the outstanding actions list and noted that, in accordance with the recommendations in the Lisvane Governance Review, reports ‘for information only’ had been circulated in a separate pack.

5. **UPDATES FROM THE SUB COMMITTEES**

The Chairman of the various Sub Committees highlighted key points from the recent meetings. The full sets of minutes from these sub committees are available at the link below.

[Committee structure - Modern Council \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/committees/structure)

Members noted that these updates would continue on a regular basis. The Chair advised that the Committee would receive a presentation on the Safer City Partnership following its restructure.

6. **APPOINTMENTS TO SUB COMMITTEES**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk in respect of governance arrangements for the Committee’s various Sub Committees and remaining appointments. Members noted the expressions of interest after the last meeting and, in the interests of democracy, they had been opened up again for nominations.

In respect of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee, there had been three expressions of interest for one remaining place. The Committee agreed to expand the Membership to allow ten Members, rather than eight, in addition to the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Grand Committee.

Members noted that the Integrated Care Partnership Board was in transition from the former Integrated Commissioning Board, as part of an NHS restructure. The Deputy Chairman advised that the new arrangements would see a continuation of the neighbourhood/place based focus and senior posts were being recruited to. The current Clinical Commission Group (CCG) would cease, and Members would receive an update on new arrangements and leadership once there was more certainty.

In terms of the composition and governance arrangements of the Sub Committees, the Chair suggested and Members agreed, that this matter should be considered at a Members’ ‘*Away Day*’, noting that the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee was subject to the recommendations of the Lisvane Governance Review, and might become a Grand Committee in its own right.

RESOLVED, that – the remaining appointments to the Sub Committees be agreed as follows:

1. Henrika Priest, Jamel Banda and Susan Pearson be appointed to the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee.
2. Benjamin Murphy be appointed to the Safeguarding Sub Committee.
3. Ceri Wilkins be appointed to the Integrated Commissioning Sub Committee

Naresh Sonpar be appointed as the Community and Children's Services Committee's representative on the Education Board.

7. TO APPOINT A LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNOR TO THE ALDGATE SCHOOL

Members noted that there had been one expression of interest, from Jason Pritchard. Mr Pritchard had submitted a statement in support of his nomination before the meeting.

Being the only Member expressing a willingness to service, it was RESOLVED, that – Jason Pritchard be appointed as the Local Authority Governor to the Aldgate School.

Mr Munsur Ali was thanked for his contribution over the past 4 years as the LA Governor of the Aldgate School. Members noted that Mr Ali had stood down to focus on the School's cultural offer in the City and Members wished him well in this venture.

8. AFFORDABLE FOOD PROVISION IN THE CITY OF LONDON

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of affordable food provision in the City of London and a food pantry model, which is being explored.

During the discussion on this matter, the following points were noted:

1. Supermarkets in the City tend to cater more for officer workers than family household budgets.
2. Some ethnic groups have specific dietary requirements and are being adversely affected by the increase in cooking oil prices.
3. Foodbanks are running out of supplies as people cannot afford to donate. London Plus have been working with foodbanks in London and might be able to offer advice.
4. In terms of communications, Members noted that Sylheti is more widely spoken in the UK than Bengali. Whilst Ward Members are very happy to

assist residents with language/reading obstacles, they would like them to feel more empowered.

5. The Director reminded Members that the First Love Foundation, which had been appointed to run the food bank, do not have the same communications issues in Tower Hamlets as have been perceived in the City. The previous report on this matter set out the issues concerning the lack of data, due to GDPR implications, and how need could be measured.
6. The Committee received regular updates on poverty levels in the City, and this had been covered in a recent public health 'for information' report.
7. At a recent presentation, the Communication Director had been asked to carry out a City-wide survey and the Resource Allocation Sub Committee had agreed the funding, in principle. The responses from the survey will be captured in the next iteration of this report, which will link in to other work underway on understanding poverty and need in the City of London.
8. Officers would be visiting a pantry set up via this franchise in Peckham, to look at their supply infrastructure. It was suggested that St Luke's Community Centre could also offer advice. A Member, who is also a Trustee at St Luke's, offered to raise this at their next meeting.
9. As the proposal is for a food club, and not a food bank, this will remove some of the stigma, as people will be contributing as part of a community and can help to run the service. Supermarkets cannot offer this, and it would take considerable time to get another supermarket in the City.
10. Peer researchers would be working with residents in the East, starting in mid-July, and Members would receive a report at the November meeting of the Committee. The Director advised that, in the interim, there would be extra communications about food support. Members were concerned about the rise in energy prices in the Autumn, so the City Corporation would need to be ready.
11. The Director agreed to feed back in terms of what might be possible and realistic in terms of a Food Strategy, within current resources and the Terms of Reference of this Committee, and whether this could be expanded into a Poverty Strategy, as part of the wider work being undertaken on poverty.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

9. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2021/22 - COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE (CITY FUND)**

The Committee received a joint report of the Director of Community and Children's Services and the Chamberlain, which compared the 2021/22 revenue outturn for the non-Housing Revenue Account (HRA) services,

overseen by the Community and Children's Services Committee, with the final agreed budget for the year. The report stated that the Director of Community and Children's Services local risk budget was overspent by 249k, with an overspend on all risks including recharges of £1m. Members noted that, due to this adverse variance on local risk, there will be no requests for carry forwards this year for purposes of this Committee.

During the discussion on this item, the following points were noted:

1. The Director meets regularly with the Chamberlain in respect of high cost placements and the pressures on the Director's Local Risk Budget. A higher overspend had been forecast but this had been reduced by savings achieved elsewhere.
2. The Committee would receive a budget estimate report towards the end of this calendar year. This Committee is responsible for overspends of the Director's Local Risk but also needs to be aware of pressures on the central risk.
3. The overspend of 632k in the Central Risk Budget relates to the unaccompanied asylum seeker budget. Numbers in the 18-25 year group are rising, and the Home Office grant doesn't cover the City Corporation's obligations to these individuals. This position has been reported throughout the year to the City Corporation's Finance Committee and will be considered in the budget setting exercise in the Autumn.
4. This is a national problem and, despite extensive lobbying, very little progress has been made with central government. The Chair would be raising this matter at the Resource Allocation Sub Committee on 17th June.
5. The Director explained the challenges facing the small team at the City of London Corporation; i.e., staffing levels have increased in response to demand but this has increased financial pressures. The Department seeks joined up commissioning with other boroughs wherever possible, in order to achieve economies of scale.

RESOLVED, that – the revenue outturn report for 2021/22 be noted.

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

A Member requested a report in July or September this year, outlining the advantages of undertaking a voluntary transfer of the whole of the Council's housing stock to a specially created housing association. Specifically, the Director was asked to consider Bedford Borough Council's 'Bedford Pilgrim's Housing Association' (BPHA) in terms of how the transfer effected in 1989-90 enabled BPHA to fund comprehensive modernisation programmes.

- The Director suggested that this matter be given further consideration by the new Housing Committee. Members noted that more local

authorities are now coming out of ALMOs than going into them, and HRAs are now allowed to borrow up to prudent levels, which wasn't the case 30 years ago.

- Members noted that they would receive a report at the July Committee in respect of the 5-Year Plan and a 30-year forecast. The Director suggested that Members should consider this report first and be mindful of the reputational risk in moving social housing to an ALMO without the Barbican Estate.
- Members noted that there had been an all-residents meeting since the last Committee, and the new Chair of Policy and Resources is keen to hold these meetings more frequently.

The Director was asked about action taken to recognise Carers Week; recognising the difficulties carers face and ensuring that they are visible, valued and supported by the City of London Corporation. An event at the Guildhall was also requested, where unpaid carers can discuss issues and celebrate successes.

- The Director welcomed the opportunity to highlighting the valued role of unpaid carers and their needs. The Director also set out the activities planned for carers' week.
- Members noted that Connexions had been commissioned to support unpaid carers, with regular zoom sessions led by the carers. This Committee had also appointed a lead member for Carers at its last meeting. Members would receive an information report in respect of the co-production work with carers in July, together with an update on the national survey of carers, and a new Strategy was expected in the New Year. The Community and Children's Services Committee had previously invited carers' group representatives to address them and could do so again in the future.
- The Director stressed that the Department does not have the resources to arrange a carers' event at Guildhall and suggested that Members take this forward with the Events Team in Remembrancers. Members noted that there used to be a 'Carers' lunch' before the pandemic, and this was very well received, but it should not detract from the support that carers need in their day to day lives. The co-production and new strategy will cover what is possible and sustainable. Members noted that it is also in their gift to nominate carers for the 'Freedom of the City' and if they have joint receptions, this encourages support and networking.
- The new Lead Member for Carers had been meeting with groups of carers, who are aware of the current strategy and happy to be involved in the new one. One observation is that they have to keep telling their story to various agencies, so a more joined up approach would be welcomed. The Chairman thanked the new Lead Member for the amount of work she has been able to do since being appointed only a month ago.

- Members also noted the Volunteers Celebration event on Monday 18th July between 6 and 7 pm.

At 4.20 pm Members agreed to extend the meeting.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman agreed to accept one item of urgent business.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which sought approval of a standard protocol for the City of London Corporation (the City) to ensure compliance with the consultation requirements under S105 of the Housing Act 1985.

RESOLVED, that - the attached standard protocol for the City, to ensure compliance with the consultation requirements under S105 of the Housing Act 1985, be approved.

12. 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 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

13. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED, that – the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2022 be approved.

14. CHARITIES REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - THE CITY OF LONDON ALMSHOUSES (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1005857)

The Committee considered and approved a report of the Comptroller and City Solicitor.

15. REQUEST FOR A DELEGATED AUTHORITY: HRA COMMERCIAL TENANTS: IMPLICATIONS OF THE COMMERCIAL RENT (CORONAVIRUS) BILL ON OUTSTANDING ARREARS

The Committee considered and approved a report of the City Surveyor.

16. SOUTHWARK ESTATES WINDOW REPLACEMENT AND COMMON PARTS REDECORATIONS - PAKEMAN HOUSE, STOPHER HOUSE AND SUMNER BUILDINGS - GATEWAY 5 AUTHORITY TO START WORK

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

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

There were no questions whilst the public were excluded.

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

One item was noted whilst the public were excluded.

The meeting ended at 4.40 pm

Chairman

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