

# COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Monday, 17 July 2023

Minutes of the meeting held at Guildhall at 2.30 pm

## Present

### Members:

Ruby Sayed (Chairman)	Deputy Marianne Fredericks
Helen Fentimen (Deputy Chairman)	Steve Goodman OBE
Munsur Ali	Caroline Haines
Jamel Banda	Alderman Christopher Makin
James Bromiley-Davis	Naresh Hari Sonpar
Anne Corbett	
Mary Durcan	
Deputy John Fletcher	

### Officers:

Simon Cribbens	- Community and Children's Services Department
Chris Lovitt	- Deputy Director of Public Health, City and Hackney
Paul Murtagh	- Deputy Director of Public Health, City and Hackney
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services Department
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services Department
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services Department
Will Norman	- Community and Children's Services Department
Rachel Talmage	- Community and Children's Services Department
Mike Kettle	- Community and Children's Services Department
Chandni Tanna	- Town Clerks
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department

## 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Alastair King, Deputy John Absalom, Matthew Bell, Ian Bishop-Laggett, Ben Murphy, Henrika Priest, Ceri Wilkins, Joanna Abeyie and Shahnan Bakth.

Joanna Abeyie and Shahnan Bakth joined the meeting remotely.

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

There were no declarations.

## 3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, that – the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 be approved as a correct record.

The Town Clerk advised that notes and action points from the Governance Section of the Committee's Awayday on 15<sup>th</sup> June had been circulated.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Members noted the Committee's Outstanding Actions list.

5. **TO APPOINT A GOVERNOR TO THE ALDGATE SCHOOL**

The Town Clerk had circulated a statement in support of a nomination and, being the only Member expressing a willingness to serve, it was RESOLVED, that – Deputy John Fletcher be appointed as the Local Authority Governor to the Aldgate School, for a 3-year term, expiring in July 2026.

6. **VACANCY ON THE SAFEGUARDING SUB COMMITTEE**

The Town Clerk advised that as there has been no responses to the advertisement for this vacancy it would be re-advertised to the wider Court.

7. **SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATORY REGIME - TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, which sought to update Members on the new Social Housing Regulatory Regime, Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), which came into effect on 1 April 2023.

In response to a question, Members noted that a breakdown of results by estate would be provided but, previously, there had been low response rates on some estates. It was expected that the use of an external company to conduct the survey would maximise returns by offering telephone, on-line and paper options for submitting responses.

RESOLVED, that:

1. A performance scorecard be developed for the full range of housing key performance indicators and that they be reported on, together with the TSMs, on a monthly basis with effect from end of June 2023.
2. Responsibility for the oversight and scrutiny of performance be delegated to the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee (HMASC).
3. Consideration be given to setting up a monthly performance sub-group of the HMASC, with delegated responsibility for the scrutiny and oversight of the key performance indicators and TSMs.
4. Officers explore options for the tenant perception survey and report their findings and recommendations to the October meeting of HMASC.

8. **WARD MOTE RESOLUTIONS - PORTSOKEN - VERBAL UPDATES ON PROGRESS**

The Town Clerk had circulated the following updates and Members would receive a further update at the September meeting Committee, ahead of a full progress report to the Ward of Portsoken.

**1. The Ward of Portsoken requests the relevant department of the City of London Corporation to consider improvements to the look and feel of the current public entrance (former rear entrance) to Petticoat Tower, following the removal of the former main entrance as a result of a housing infill project.**

The City Corporation's Environment Team have undertaken a two-phase refurbishment project of improvements to the Artizan Street elevation of the Middlesex Street Estate, following the removal of the ramp leading to the first-floor car park. The first phase of this project, completed a few years ago, provided an enhanced landscaping scheme.

The second phase includes:

- The installation of a new bespoke canopy over the residents' entrance to Petticoat Tower.
- Provision of signage (including estate and library signage).
- Options for covering the existing unsightly panels on the first floor (including additional signs or decorative panels).
- Options for artwork, interpretation panels or further signage at street level adjacent to the walkway alongside the hotel on Artizan Street.

Unfortunately, the second phase of the project was delayed due to the pandemic and planning, design and resourcing issues. The Housing Major Works Team will be taking over this project, with an estimated completion date of March 2024. It should be noted, however, that the design proposals for the relocation of the City of London Police's Eastern Base, to surplus space in the Middlesex Street Estate, will include the construction of two projecting 'feature boxes' on the Artizan Street façade. This will significantly enhance the look and feel of the façade, as well as covering the unsightly and unfinished cut ends from the previously removed ramp to the first floor car park.

**2. The Ward of Portsoken request an update from the relevant department of the City of London Corporation on the status of the 2014 project to install power assisted doors in Gravel Lane and on the Podium level of the Middlesex Street Estate**

In October 2014, residents of the Middlesex Street Estate were advised that the Corporation would be installing two additional power-assisted doors on the Estate. The first door would have been located at the Gravel Lane entrance and the second, at podium level, would have led to Petticoat Tower. Following site surveys, the project was subsequently aborted due to major structural issues. Regrettably, residents were not formally notified of this decision.

However, the City Corporation has recently completed an independent access audit on the public areas of its 12 social housing estates. The access audit identified several estates, including the Middlesex Street Estate, where communal entrance doors and internal communal doors require replacement/adjustment to make them more accessible to residents and visitors.

Officers are revisiting the proposal to install the additional power-assisted doors on the Middlesex Street Estate, in order to understand the structural problems and how they can be overcome. If possible, the project will be completed, within the existing local risk budget, by the end of this financial year.

**3. The Ward of Portsoken request the relevant department and/or Committee of the City of London Corporation provide assurance that staff have appropriate training to take into account any specific needs of residents with protected characteristics who seek to engage with City of London Corporation services.**

The City of London Corporation aspires to be a leader in equality and inclusion in serving its wide range of communities, staff, residents, businesses, and the workforce in the Square Mile. Equality and inclusion training, including transgender awareness and unconscious bias, are mandatory for all staff in the City Corporation. Analysis is undertaken by Adults, Children's and Education Services to ensure there is no disproportionality in terms of service delivery.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the City Corporation to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. To support staff in fulfilling this duty, training is provided in undertaking an Equality Analysis; i.e. - a risk assessment tool which examines whether different groups of people are, or could be, disadvantaged by policy and decision making within an organisation.

The City Corporation also supports seven Staff Diversity Networks. The aim of these networks is to provide an inclusive, safe and confidential forum for employees to network and support each other, share ideas and best practice, and to help the City Corporation to better understand the people who work for it and the communities and businesses in the Square Mile.

**2. CITY OF LONDON'S WOMEN PROJECT UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of the City of London's Women's Project, which opened in April 2023. Members noted that the project provides the City Corporation's first dedicated accommodation service for women who are homeless and fleeing domestic abuse. Members noted its significance in fulfilling the City of London's legal and ethical obligations towards vulnerable women, while reinforcing its commitment to addressing Violence Against

Women and Girls (VAWG) as part of the broader City of London Corporation agenda.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

1. Members commended an excellent report and imaginative use of grant funding.
2. The Chair asked if consideration could be given to women with no recourse to public funds.
3. The Committee would receive a further report at the end of the year, with a comprehensive business case, to demonstrate the impact of the project and secure its continuity.
4. Clarity was sought in respect of those 'who identify as women'.
5. Platforms will be used to ensure the rooms are used to capacity and available to surrounding boroughs.
6. The resource has a specialist in BAME women.
7. The 16-18 year olds would be protected by additional safeguarding measures until age 25.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

10. **ANNUAL BUS PASSES FOR CARE LEAVERS**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, in response to a request from the Chair of the Safeguarding Sub Committee, to provide Care Leavers with annual travel cards. Members noted that the London-wide Children in Care Council (Cicci) had been negotiating with Transport for London to provide free/low cost annual travel cards. However, this was yet to be agreed, with the current offer being a 50% discount.

Members noted that the provision of 'all zones' travel cards would cost in the region £160,000, whereas the bus pass option would cost just £30,000 pa. In response to a question from the Chair in respect of available resources for the use of travel cards, rather than bus passes, the Chamberlain advised that there is currently no funding for this proposal. Therefore, a permanent local offer would need to be prioritised within the existing risk budget, and this had been flagged as a pressure in a submission to the Resource Allocation Sub Committee.

RESOLVED, that:

1. Costs for annual bus passes be approved for all care leavers, for one year, whilst the London CiCC negotiates with TfL (allowing for up to 18 months if negotiations are extended).

2. It be noted that the provision of bus passes for care leavers, as part of the City Corporation's permanent local offer, would need to be prioritised within the existing local risk budget.

## 11. **UPDATES FROM THE VARIOUS SUB COMMITTEES, PORTFOLIO HOLDERS AND ALLOCATED MEMBERS**

### **Appointment of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee**

The Chair was heard in respect of the appointment of the new Chair and Deputy Chair of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee, in accordance with the new Standing Orders agreed by the Court of Common Council in April 2023. The Town Clerk reminded Members that any departure from the default position; i.e. – the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Grand Committee being the Chair of its Sub Committees, must be with the will of the Grand Committee.

RESOLVED, that –

- a) Eammon Mullally be appointed as Chair of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee for 2023/24.
- b) Natasha Lloyd Owen be appointed as Deputy Chair of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee for 2023/24.

### **Members noted the following updates from the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Chairs of the Sub Committees and Allocated Members and Portfolio Holders:**

#### Health and Wellbeing Board

The Board had approved the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and agreed to commence consultation. Members of the Community and Children's Services Committee (CCS) would receive a link to the consultation, and the Board and CCS would receive interim updates at their September 2023 meetings.

#### Safeguarding Sub Committee – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023

- The draft minutes from this meeting had been included in the 'information-only' report pack for July and published, as a draft, on the relevant page on the City Corporation's web site.
- The Chair was very pleased to advise of an Award Ceremony, which would be taking place in the evening of 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023, to recognise the achievements of care-experienced young people. All Members of the Committee were invited to attend.

- Members noted the report on bus passes for care leavers on today's agenda.

### Allocated Member Vacancy: South Bank Estates

As there had been a number of apologies for this meeting, the Town Clerk agreed to follow this up with an email seeking expressions of interest. Members were reminded that more than one Member representing each Estate was encouraged.

### Housing Sub

Some GLA grant funding has been returned, as it was out of time, but there had been other complications with this particular project. The Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services meets regularly with the City Surveyors' Department, in terms of external/grant funding, and there will be opportunities for the next stages, particularly once planning permission has been granted.

In respect of the new Housing/Barbican Estate Grand Committee, the outcome of the Housing Review of the City's Estates would feed into this process. There is a separate review underway in respect of the Barbican Estate, which falls under the Terms of Reference of the Barbican Residential Committee. However, the findings and outcomes from both reviews would dovetail, following due consultation with residents. Some of the outcomes represent quick wins, which are process and not governance driven, and can be implemented sooner.

It had been necessary to cancel the last meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee, due to a lack of items for decision. A full agenda was expected for the next meeting in the Autumn.

### Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023

Construction at the Assessment Centre was underway but some serious issues with the roof had been discovered. Fortunately, there is costed risk provision and the works were completed, within budget, with no further major structural issues anticipated.

### Middlesex Street – Deputy John Fletcher (Allocated Member)

The Allocated Member had visited the Estate on several occasions recently. The first was to attend a meeting of the Residents' Association, followed immediately by a meeting of the Leaseholders' Association. The main topic of discussion had been the roll out of the new communal heating system. Some leaseholders feel that the system is being imposed on them; they are very unhappy at having to pay more than expected and have found communications challenging. Since the meetings, two weeks ago, there has been an unexpected increase in the need for asbestos removal.

Following a recent quarterly meeting between the new Executive Director, Ward Members and Officers, which also considered other long-standing issues, a dedicated officer has now been allocated to resolving each one, for review at the next quarterly meeting.

The remaining uncertainties around the police occupation of parts of the Estate, and the impending sprinkler system to be installed in the Tower, had attracted some negative publicity. However, The Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee has since intervened and the Allocated Member was confident of a more positive report in his next update to the Committee.

#### Golden Lane - Mary Durcan (Allocated Member)

A walkabout had taken place on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023 on the Golden Lane Estate and the following issues were noted:

The need for improved communications about future walkabouts.

1. The cleaning complement of 5 is currently down to 2, due to recruitment issues and staff absences. Maintenance of the drains remains an issue. A proper maintenance cycle to deal with drains is required, rather than reactive repairs to blockages. Housing will provide an up-dated 'Standards of Cleaning and Maintenance' in the near future, at a date to be confirmed.
2. Fusion has been contacted in respect of the dumping of official documents on the Estate. The recycling area needs to be re-designed and made more secure to prevent regular fly-tipping.
3. Vandalism at the swimming pool and illegal parking of Lime bikes on the Estate, which Children have been able to hack into. More frequent patrols by City Police/ Park guard are required.
4. The light on Hatfield has been broken since January 2023 and the sticker is disintegrating. Holes remain following the concrete investigation in 2019. The door to Hatfield and the railings have been repaired.
5. An officer would be visiting on 13<sup>th</sup> July to consider ways of reducing noise from the football pitch.
6. The roof repair at Great Arthur house needs to be revisited, as water is pooling under the site of the repair.
7. Weeding is a problem due to the use of a less effective weed killer.

#### Carers – Anne Corbett (Portfolio Holder)

1. Anne was guest speaker at the opening event of the Carers' week on 5th June.



2. A coffee morning had taken place in the Golden Lane Estate, with the project worker, Farzana Khanom. Cake and refreshments were kindly provided by Sue Pearson, Ceri Wilkins and Deborah Oliver. Farzana has done a sterling job in recruiting and engaging with carers across the City and is actively helping carers to build social networks and improve their mental health.
3. Anne met one of the Hackney GPs, who works with carers, and was put in contact with the London Borough of Hackney's lead Member for carers.
4. Carers would like to see a dedicated information/advice facility in the City of London, more advocacy support re applications for benefits and grants and a better system for disabled car parking space applications.
5. The cost of living is having an impact on carers with fixed incomes, noting particularly the increase in service charges on the Barbican Estate.
6. Anne visited Mansion House to meet the Lady Mayoress on 6th June and carers from all over the City were invited. They have been invited back in October 2023 for afternoon tea.
7. Funding has been provided for a card which allows parent carers to jump queues at leisure activities and facilities. Members asked if a similar provision could be made available for adult carers.

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

A Member asked if the City Corporation could extend the loan period for window replacements from 10-25 years, irrespective of age. Also, as some of the works might run over a year, the Leaseholders have asked if this could be reflected in terms of the charges.

The Chair asked for an joint officer report of the Chamberlain and Housing Consultant in terms of the HRA implications. Members noted that the Housing Review was due to complete in October, and the Committee would receive a report in November.

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

**Winter Measures**

The Deputy Chair asked if this could be revisited in good time for the Winter of 2023/24, in respect of the offer of thermal curtains and water tank covers, for example, so that take up and cost implications can be fully understood. Officers agreed to bring a report to the September Committee.

**The Chair introduced the following item of urgent business, relating to the Middlesex Street Estate Communal Heating system.**

1. Members noted that, following discussions with residents, there have been enquiries as to whether the City Corporation can revise arrangements (with

Leaseholders) in such a way to allow them to opt out of the new communal heating system and only accept (and pay service charges for) the communal cold water system. There had been a further request for leaseholders to be allowed to install their own choice of heating system (except for gas) should they choose to opt out.

2. The Chair advised that this matter was brought to her attention in the immediate run-up to the publication of the agenda for this Meeting, by way of a proposed Motion by Deputy John Fletcher. Following legal advice, it was confirmed that this is something that the Committee can legitimately look into. Given the clear legal, financial and reputational implications, the Chair suggested that it would not be sensible to discuss this matter, let alone agree it, without a supporting officer report and recommendations, with a full set of viable options and implications. It would not have been possible to prepare such a report in time for this meeting. However, Chair advised that this is an urgent matter, with contractors lined up to start work as soon as possible, and there is a pressing need for the installation to take place in good time for the Winter of 2023/24. The officer advised that the current infrastructure is beyond its lifespan by about 20 years.
3. The Chair therefore proposed, with the Committee's approval, to delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, Deputy Chair and the whole Committee, to consider the matter ahead of the next meeting, over the course of the Summer recess. The Town Clerk confirmed that, when the report is ready, all Members will be provided with an opportunity to comment over a fixed period, and those comments/questions will feed into the final decision to be taken by the Town Clerk.
4. Members were also asked to note that, at present, the proposed changes to Housing Disclosable Personal Interests (DPI's) have not come into effect. Therefore, the usual approach to DPIs would still apply in this matter.
5. Deputy John Fletcher was then invited to set out his reasons for bringing this matter to the Committee; i.e. – in the interests of transparency and to assist officers, who have been inundated with requests of this nature. Furthermore, Deputy Fletcher stressed that, just because something can be done, it should not automatically follow that it will be done.
6. Deputy Fletcher further requested that, when the decision is made public; i.e. – a as report of action taken by the Committee, that it is accompanied by a public explanation of the reasoning, with Members comments, which can also be representative the views of their constituents and/or tenant/ leaseholder groups. The Town Clerk confirmed that this would be in order. On being put to the vote, all but one of the Members present agreed to this proposal. There was one suggestion in that the matter should be considered at the next meeting of the Committee, on 14th September 2023.

7. Members noted that there had been a couple of emails from the resident groups, asking for them to be shared with the Committee. The Town Clerk advised that, at this time, it would not be appropriate in the absence of a full officer report.

RESOLVED, that:

1. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, Deputy Chair and all Members of the Committee, to take a decision in respect of allowing Leaseholders to opt out of the new communal heating system and to only accept (and pay service charges for) the communal cold water system, and that they be allowed to install their own choice of heating system (except gas) should they choose to opt out.
2. It be noted that any Members comments and the rationale in reaching the decision would be made public.

**14. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**15. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 be approved.

**16. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS - NON-PUBLIC**

Members received the Committee's non-public actions list.

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

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

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

There was one question whilst the public were excluded.

**19. 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 whilst the public were excluded.

**The meeting ended at 3.30 pm**

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Chairman

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