

# COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 14 September 2023

Minutes of the meeting held at Guildhall at 2.00 pm

## Present

### Members:

Ian Bishop-Laggett	Deputy John Fletcher
Anne Corbett	Steve Goodman
Mary Durcan	Deputy Marianne Fredericks
Helen Fentimen (Deputy Chairman) – <i>in the Chair</i>	Alderman Christopher Makin
	Benjamin Murphy

### In Attendance:

Eamonn Mulally – Chair of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee

### Officers:

Judith Finlay	- Executive Director, Community and Children's Services
Chris Lovitt	- Deputy Director, Public Health, City and Hackney
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's Department
Helen Turnbull	- Town Clerk's, Media Services
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains
Simon Cribbens	- Community and Children's Services
Paul Murtagh	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community and Children's Services
Rachel Talmage	- Community and Children's Services

## 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ruby Sayed, Joanna Abeyie\*, Deputy John Absalom, Munsur Ali, Shahnan Bakth\*, Jamel Banda, Matthew Bell, Aaron D'Souza, John Griffiths, Caroline Haines, Florence Keelson Anfu, Alderman and Sheriff Alastair King, Henrika Priest, Deputy Nighat Qureishi\*, Naresh Sonpar, James St John Davis, Ceri Wilkins and Deputy Philip Woodhouse.

*\*Members who 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 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023 be approved.

#### 4. **ACTION TRACKER**

The Committee received the action tracker and the Executive Director agreed to work with the Chair and Deputy Chair to improve its format.

In respect of Community Safety Patrolling (delivered by Parkguard), officers had submitted a bid to the Home Office for their 'Safer Streets Fund' and, if successful, this would enable the scheme to be widened. However, if unsuccessful, officers would explore if there might be other funding sources available. The Chair noted that Parkguard had been raised in a number of Committees recently. Officers reiterated that this patrolling is not a 'call and response' service but seeks to give reassurance, undertake targeted activity and support the homelessness outreach teams.

#### 5. **COMMUNAL HEATING AND HOT WATER SYSTEM**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of the decision taken by the Committee, in September 2019, to replace the existing communal heating and hot water system at the Middlesex Street Estate, with a new, more efficient system. The report asked the Committee to consider a Members's proposal to allow leaseholders to opt-out of the new system and install their own. Members had received an email from the Chair of the Petticoat Square Leaseholders Association, setting out their response to the report.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) It is possible for individuals to install their own system for hot water and heating, subject to tolerance checking and assurance that it would not be detrimental to other residents. If not, an upgrade and meter change would be necessary, which would incur a cost to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Leaseholders. Currently, officers are only aware of a small number of leaseholders who wish to opt out.
- b) Leaseholders can be compelled to allow access, under the terms of the Lease. Members had expected to see more legal information in the report.
- c) More energy efficient equipment should lower consumption; i.e. LED power, and general upgrades and inspections will ensure safety. The City Corporation is able to get a lower unit price and new builds perform a lot better in terms of energy consumption.
- d) Leaseholders would like to understand the benefits against a system which they could purchase on the open market. Central government is encouraging social landlords to be more flexible and residents feel that the City Corporation is imposing a decision on them.
- e) In concluding the debate, the Chair suggested, and Members agreed, that the Committee is not able to make an informed decision based on the current version of the report. The Chair stressed that there was never any

intention to apportion blame and would like to see any perceptions addressed. The Chair suggested that further work to resolve the queries, as set out under f (i-v) below, should include residents as well as officers. The Chair also expressed concerns in that we are approaching another winter, without an adequate heating system.

- f) Members agreed that the next iteration of this report, to be agreed under Delegated Authority, needs to include the following information:
- i. The full extent of the works in terms of the electrical supply and feasibility.
  - ii. The actual number of Leaseholders who might wish to opt out.
  - iii. More clarity on the legal position.
  - iv. Changes in the costings over the past 4 years.
  - v. Information as to whether residents in other Local Authorities have opted out.

Members were encouraged to contact the Executive Director, [Judith.finlay@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.finlay@cityoflondon.gov.uk) with any further queries.

Members noted that the additional work requested above would be completed within the next month, ahead of the delegated decision being taken. The Town Clerk advised that the consultation process for a delegated decision can include the whole Committee, not just the Chair and Deputy Chair. Furthermore, when the decision is reported to the next Committee, it will include Members' comments.

RESOLVED, that – authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with all Members of the Community and Children's Services Committee, to agree the installation of a new communal heating and hot water system, to all properties on the Middlesex Street Estate currently served by the existing communal heating system, as per 'leases under repair', and to continue to recover service charges for the communal heating and hot water system installation and future servicing costs.

## 6. HOUSING SPECIFIC WINTER MEASURES

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, which sought approval of an extension of a programme to provide a suite of housing specific thermal winter measures to homes on its social housing estates, with poorly performing single-glazed windows. The Assistant Director agreed to refresh and reissue last years' communications in terms of damp and mould. Members noted that following a survey of the Almshouses, the damp and rot in the Almshouses had been rectified to all homes except for one where, there are access issues. Works to our social housing were due to start shortly.

RESOLVED, that – the statistics provided on the take-up of the housing specific thermal winter measures offered last winter, for homes on the City of London Corporation's (the Corporation's) social housing estates, be noted and the extension agreed.

7. **CITY ASSESSEMENT CENTRE - PROCUREMENT STAGE 2 AWARD**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services (CCS) and the Chief Operating Officer, in respect of the award of the contract for the City of London Rough Sleeper Assessment Centre. Members noted that the decision would be taken by the Finance Committee and was before CCS Committee for information.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

17. **VERBAL UPDATES FROM THE SUB COMMITTEES, ALLOCATED MEMBERS AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

The Town Clerk reminded Members of the vacancies being carried for Allocated Members to represent Avondale Square, Harman Close and the South Bank Estates.

The vacancy on the Safeguarding Sub Committee had been advertised to the wider Court but remained unfilled.

**Allocated Members**

Members considered the briefing and photographs from the Allocated Member and noted the following:

1. The poor condition of the front doors and hallways at Spitalfields.
2. Whilst Dron Estate is generally in good order, residents had submitted a petition, seeking to retain their Estate Assistant. Residents felt strongly that this member of staff had been very effective in dealing with day to day matters. The Allocated Member suggested that the issues highlighted were reflective of issues on other estates, where works had not been made good, and expressed concerns in that an unkempt appearance can increase anti-social behaviour. The other Allocated Members were reminded to be vigilant to this.
3. Middlesex Street remains in a very poor condition and photographs were tabled showing low level damage caused by contractors failing to make good. The Allocated Member suggested that this could be remedied by withholding payment to Contractors pending satisfactory inspections, followed by a 7-day period to enable residents to comment. The Executive Director agreed to this request, as a soon practical and within the terms of the contract.

The Assistant Director responded to the above points as follows:

4. Some of the issues had been observed during Estate walkabouts and could be resolved quickly. The next meeting of the Committee would receive an update on the remaining issues.

5. The internal redecoration works would best be carried out once the current major works programmes were complete.
6. The guest rooms would re-open next week, following some delay to sourcing furniture.
7. The problem with the ANPR reader on the entrance barrier was being rectified.
8. The alarm had been problematic since its upgrade and, it has subsequently been agreed that this will be replaced as part of the CoLP project.
9. Notices across the estate would be checked to ensure they contain correct, up-to-date information.
10. Funding had been identified as part of the Police Project to upgrade and modernise the ball court. Initial repairs to the acoustics and insulation would be undertaken over the next couple of weeks.
11. A consultant had been successful in identifying the impact matting, under the artificial grass, as the cause of static electric shocks to the playground equipment. This will now enable a permanent fix to be sourced via the contractor.

### **Carers update**

Members noted that they would receive the new Carers' Strategy at the November meeting of the Committee. The Lead Member had met with her counterpart in Hackney and they would be working together, given the large number of carers in Hackney and relatively low number in the City. The Chair also recommended reaching out to Nina Griffith of the City and Hackney Place Based Partnership.

### **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee**

The Chair advised that the Committee would receive the new Strategy for 2023-27 at their next meeting on 4th October 2023.

## **9. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

In response to a question about the extension of the Repairs and Maintenance Contract, and concerns expressed by the Golden Lane Estate Residents' Association, the Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, addressed the Committee, taking full responsibility for the delay in procuring the new contract.

Members noted that a Deed of Variation would be sought, to extend the contract by a year. During this time, officers would fully engage with residents, review the current contract, specification and supply chains. The governance route would be via the Operational Property and Projects Sub Committee, the Finance Committee and the Court of Common Council but CCS Committee would receive the reports for information. Members noted that the Head of

Special Projects would be running this procurement process separately and a draft timeline would be circulated to Members. The Executive Director gave further assurance in that the City Corporation would not be in this position again and would be overseeing the extension and the new contract. The former Chair of the Housing Management and Alsmhouses Sub Committee reminded Members of the Sub Committee's suggestion of a compensation system for residents, in the event of service failures and missed appointments.

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

The Assistant Director advised that RAAC had traditionally been used between the 1950's and the 1990's. An officer working group had been set up across the City Corporation's relevant departments and a desk top survey conducted on the blocks built during that period. Members noted that the Government had provided an identification tool for a physical survey but given the tight timeframe, the works are likely to need an independent surveyor.

11. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

<b>Item no(s)</b>	<b>Para no(s)</b>
12-19	3

12. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023 be approved.

13. **ACTION TRACKER (NON-PUBLIC)**

The Committee received the non-public actions tracker.

14. **CITY ASSESSMENT CENTRE - APPENDIX**

The Committee receive a non-public appendix in respect of agenda item 7.

15. **SYDENHAM HILL REDEVELOPMENT, LEWISHAM, SE26 6ND**

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

16. **FINANCE UPDATE AND DRAFT ACCOUNTS FOR CITY OF LONDON COMBINED RELIEF OF POVERTY (CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER 1073660)**

The Committee received a report of the Bridge House Estates Charities Director (on behalf of the Chamberlain).

17. **VERBAL UPDATES**

The Assistant Director, Community and Children's Services and the City Surveyor were heard.

18. **QUESTIONS**

There were no questions whilst the public were excluded.

19. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items whilst the public were excluded.

**The meeting ended at 3.40 PM**

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Chairman

**Contact Officer: [julie.mayer@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:julie.mayer@cityoflondon.gov.uk)**