

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 1 November 2023

Minutes of the meeting held at Guildhall at 2.00 pm

Present

Members:

Ruby Sayed (Chair)

Helen Fentimen (Deputy Chair)

Munsur Ali

Matthew Bell

Ian Bishop-Laggett

Anne Corbett

Mary Durcan

Deputy John Fletcher

Deputy Marianne Fredericks

Steve Goodman OBE

John Griffiths

Alderman Christopher Makin

Henrika Priest

Naresh Hari Sonpar

Ceri Wilkins

Deputy Philip Woodhouse

Officers:

Judith Finlay

- Executive Director, Community and Children's Services

Andrew Fothergill

- Comptroller and City Solicitors

Mark Jarvis

- Chamberlains

Polly Dunn

- Assistant Town Clerk

Raquel Pinto

- Town Clerks

Jason Hayes

- Community and Children's Services

Chris Pelham

- Community and Children's Services

Simon Cribbens

- Community and Children's Services

Pam Wharf

- Community and Children's Services

Deborah Bell

- Community and Children's Services

Dean Elsworth

- Community and Children's Services

Mark Lowman

- Community and Children's Services

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Caroline Haines, Florence Keelson-Anfu, Alderman Alastair King and Benjamin Murphy.

The following Members joined the meeting remotely Joanna Tufuo Abeyle and James St John Davis.

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

Deputy Marianne Fredericks declared a standing non-pecuniary interest by virtue of her position as a Governor of the Aldgate School.

In respect of the urgent item of business on the Middlesex Street Estate (Opt-out of Communal heating system), whilst there were no declarations on this matter, the Town Clerk advised that any similar, future projects would need to

be considered on merit, noting that Members are responsible for managing their own pecuniary interests. *NB. Members were asked to be mindful that, as soon as they become aware of a potential conflict of interest, they should raise this with the Town Clerk/Monitoring Officer, in order to receive timely advice ahead of the relevant Committee meeting.*

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 14th September 2023 be approved.

Matters arising

Members noted that there had been a brief delay to the damp works at the Almshouses, due to lack of access in respect of ill-health, but works were now underway. In respect of other snagging issues, an environmental sensor was being trialled in respect of windows and ventilation. The installation of CCTV would require Listed Building Consent.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Members received the actions list and noted the following updates:

1. Charges to leaseholders would be covered in a report to a future meeting.
2. The Deed of Variation in respect of the Repairs and Maintenance Contract, would be presented to the Finance and Project and Procurement Committees at the end of this year/early next year, with tracking of the tendering process and resident consultation being monitored by this Committee.
3. Members noted the previous suggestion for an arbitration/compensation system in respect of missed appointments and poor service. The Chair advised that this would be considered by the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee in the first instance.

5. **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING (HRS) SUB COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk in respect of proposed changes to the Terms of Reference of the HRS Sub Committee, recommended by the Sub Committee, in respect of external membership and frequency of meetings.

Chair asked if this could be deferred in order to consider appointing external Members with sector experience.

DEFERRED

6. **HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2023-2027**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, which presented the City of London Corporation's draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (2023-27) for approval. Members

noted that the draft Strategy had been scrutinised and endorsed by the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Sub Committee.

The Chair thanked the Sub Committee and officers for their work on this comprehensive Strategy. The Chair of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee was in attendance; keen to hear the views of CCS Members, noting that it would be a very dynamic and flexible strategy. There was a suggestion that the Strategy should make reference to the 5 Business Improvement Districts, to ensure a shared agenda and outcomes.

Members noted that the City Corporation is part of a GLA led partnership, represented by key partners, which reports to the Department of Levelling up. The City Corporation enjoys a good working relationship with the London Borough of Hackney and challenges over individual cases are rare. The Assistant Director assured the Committee that objectives are well aligned across housing, health and commissioning and the Strategy's initiatives are evident across the Partnership.

The Director agreed to respond outside of the meeting in respect of the total cost of the service, which was not covered in the Strategy.

RESOLVED, that – the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2023-27, as set out in in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved, subject to the inclusion of the 5 Business Improvement Districts.

7. CITY OF LONDON PRIMARY ACADEMY ISLINGTON (COLPAI) - RESIDENTIAL BUILDING NAME

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the naming of the City of London Primary Academy Islington (COLPAI) residential development, which will deliver 66 much-needed homes for social rent, and three commercial units. Following several submissions and ballots, the most successful eligible name was "Black Raven Court, derived from the historical Black Raven Court Street name which existed in the area during the 1700s.

RESOLVED, that - the building be named "Black Raven Court" to enable the project team to register it with London Borough of Islington and procure the signage.

8. EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN: TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, seeking Member support to launch a Violence Against Women and Girls Educational campaign, developed by the City of London Corporation Community Safety Team, alongside the London Boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

Members commended an excellent report, noting particularly the step change being sought in behaviours. The Chair further advised of the work in schools targeting teenage boys; the curriculum is frequently reviewed by the DfE and

gives Schools autonomy to meet the needs of their communities. The Director of Education agreed to circulate details of this initiative to the City's schools via weekly communications. The Virtual Head Teacher was also following up this work in respect of looked after children.

The Deputy Chair, who represents the Committee on the Police Authority Board, advised that the Board had approved this report at their last meeting and received a briefing from Baroness Casey on significant learnings from her review of the Metropolitan Police. The Board and various community Groups had asked for use of the acronym 'VAWG' to cease.

A Member advised of a similar campaign in a Canadian Town in respect of drinking and consent and their material is available for free if the town is accredited. The Member agreed to forward the link to the relevant officers. The Officer advised that both Licensing and the Police are enhancing their Christmas campaigns.

Members asked to see outcomes in terms of changing behaviours in due course.

RESOLVED, that – the commissioning of the campaign be approved.

9. UPDATES FROM SUB COMMITTEES, ALLOCATED MEMBERS TO THE VARIOUS HOUSING ESTATES AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Vacancy on the Safeguarding Sub Committee

RESOLVED, That – being the only Member expressing a willingness to serve, Eamonn Mullalley be appointed to the Safeguarding Sub Committee for the year ensuing.

Vacancies on the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee

Members noted that there was one long-standing vacancy for this Sub Committee, which had been advertised to the wider court and received three expressions of interest. However, another Member of the Sub Committee had resigned earlier this week.

It was suggested that the three members expressing an interest be allowed to join today. However, Members noted recent amendments to Standing Orders, whereby the memberships of Sub Committees should only be extended in exceptional circumstances. Therefore, the Chair suggested, and Members agreed, that the later vacancy should be filled once all Members of CCS had been given a chance to apply, given that some Members had submitted apologies today and might not be aware of the latest resignation. Furthermore, all three candidates were Members of the wider Court and not CCS Members. The Town Clerk agreed to write to all Members of CCS after the meeting, calling for nominations within the next 14 days. In the absence of any expressions of interest, the vacancy would, once again, be opened up to the whole Court.

Following a ballot whereby Eamonn Mullaney received 5 votes, Mark Wheatley received 2 votes and Alderwoman Susan Pearson received 8 votes, it was RESOLVED, that – Alderwoman Susan Pearson be appointed to the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee for the year ensuing.

Updates from the Allocated Members

Deputy John Fletcher had provided a written update for Members in respect of outstanding items on Middlesex Street and asked officers to keep him apprised of progress. Members noted that, at a recent resident association meeting, there was strong resistance to the installation of sprinklers in the tower blocks, due to residents' concerns about legacy issues with the City Corporation's various major projects.

Ceri Wilkins reported on various issues on the Golden Lane Estate in respect of repairs and maintenance, and the lack of CCTV, porters, cleaners and gardeners. However, a Ward Meeting had been scheduled for the following day when, these matters could be considered further. The Allocated Member thanked officers for responding to a query about the Pets Policy, outside of this meeting. Members also noted the appointment of a new Estate Officer at the Windsor Estate, as the Golden Lane Estate Officer had been covering both positions.

The Head of Major Projects advised that there would be a number of stakeholder events over the next few weeks to visit the newly refurbished flat on the Golden Lane Estate. Members noted that the work was of a very high standard.

Young People

Florence Keelson-Anfu had recently attended the Trustee Board and AGM for 'Partnership for Young London' where the annual budget and strategy had been agreed. Florence had agreed to support them with an apprenticeship and approach the City of London Corporation's HR Department, noting that the City Corporation are looking to ringfence apprenticeships to care leavers. The Chair, Deputy Chair and Florence would be attending the Children in Care Council (CICC) Awards Ceremony for Care Leavers at the Guildhall.

Sydenham Hill

The Chair advised that the asbestos issues were being resolved and was pleased to report on improved relationships with residents. There were some issues with vibrations and surveys were underway to seek a resolution.

Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB)

The Deputy Chair advised that the last meeting had considered winter planning, in light of the recent increase in Covid and respiratory infections. Members noted the importance of the work of the voluntary sector, pre and post hospital admissions, and detailed plans had been submitted to the Better Care Fund to ensure sustainable investments. The ICB also alternates business meetings with development sessions, with a development session scheduled for the following week.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

The last meeting had received a presentation from Home Connections, who had taken over Streetlink, and received valuable feedback from Members. The Sub Committee's Terms of Reference and the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy also appeared on this agenda. Members noted that the Assessment Centre is expected to complete at the end of December 2023, a number of businesses across the square mile had pledged support and meetings were being arranged with officers.

Safeguarding

The Chair provided an update on care leavers receiving a TfL subsidy and support with Council Tax payments, which would be the subject of a report to the next Safeguarding Sub Committee and the next meeting of this Committee, for approval. Work was underway in respect of the new CQC Framework to ensure that the City Corporation is in a good place for the forthcoming inspection. The Deputy Chair had also attended a National Webinar on this matter. Members were reminded of the Corporate Parenting Hybrid session scheduled for 14th November and encouraged to attend or dial in.

Housing Sub

The Chair welcomed Pam Wharf, the new Interim Director of Housing, noting also the high number of housing reports on this agenda, which evidenced the intensive work underway to resolve legacy issues on both the City and out-of-City Estates. Work was also underway in respect of enhancing governance across the Housing Revenue Account and the implementation of a separate Housing Committee. Members noted that, whilst the recent tenants satisfaction survey had been poor in respect of repairs and maintenance, there had been some improvements in respect of major works.

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

A member asked about the lack of consultation over the use and recharging in respect of agency cleaning staff. The Executive Director, who took up her position in June 2023, advised that, since 2017, the cost for temporary staff had been apportioned to leaseholders. The Director also accepted that there had been no consultation in 2017 but the City Corporation had sought Counsel's opinion and communications with residents would follow.

The City of London Women's Project (information only) report would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee for discussion. The Director agreed to speak to the Town Clerk in respect of future management of information and decision reports on Committee agendas. With effect from December the budget reports, which are also for information, would also appear on the main agendas.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

Middlesex Street Heating System - Opt-out.

The Chair has agreed to receive this report as urgent business and apologised for the late despatch, which had been necessary to ensure that the information is as comprehensive as possible. Members noted that this iteration of the report responded to the outstanding queries from the last meeting and the City Solicitor was in attendance for any further questions.

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

1. The City Corporation can compel leaseholders to provide access to flats for inspections/surveys in respect of the replacement heating system. If there are a large number of access refusals then the project could still progress in terms of the pipework and the heating system would still operate. As a last resort, an injunction could be sought to gain access.
2. In theory, a challenge to the reasonableness of costs, on the basis that they have been incurred contrary to the Corporation's Climate Action Strategy, could be brought before the First-tier Tribunal but would be unlikely to succeed.
3. Removal of residents from the communal system increases the apportionment, making contributions from the remaining leaseholders higher. This would also apply to future servicing and repairs costs and component replacement and add further financial burden to HRA budgets.
4. No other City or out of City Estates would be able to opt out as they do not have communal systems.
5. Middlesex Street Petticoat Tower was offered the Cadent Scheme but the take-up was low and the Square will not be eligible.
6. Members expressed some concern as to the highly technical nature of this matter, although they accepted that the current system is at end of lifespan. There was some surprise at this being a gas installation, as it is far less popular, but a full comparison across various alternative systems had been provided.
7. A couple of Members were very concerned at having to take this decision, as it would be imposing a system on a small number of residents, noting that the cost and inconvenience of allowing them to opt-out would be negligible. A conflicting view was expressed in that a large majority are satisfied with the proposal.

At 3.35 the Committee agreed to extend the meeting beyond 2 hours to conclude the business on the agenda.

On being put to the vote, 9 Members voted for and 2 voted against the proposal and it was RESOLVED, that - the Communal heating and hot water system will be installed to all properties on the Middlesex Street Estate, that are currently served by the existing communal heating system, as per leases under repair, with service charges for the communal heating and hot water system installation and future servicing costs recoverable from leaseholders.

12. 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.

Item no(s) Para no(s)

13. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 14th September 2023 be approved

14. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Committee received the non-public Outstanding Actions list.

15. COLPAI VERBAL UPDATE

The City Surveyor was heard.

16. MIDDLESEX STREET COMMUNAL HEATING REPLACEMENT

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

17. SYDENHAM HILL: WINDOWS AND COMMON PARTS REDECORATION

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

18. HOLLOWAY ESTATE: WINDOWS AND COMMON PARTS REDECORATION

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

19. GOLDEN LANE ESTATE (PHASE 2): WINDOWS AND COMMON PARTS REDECORATION

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

20. WINDSOR HOUSE: WINDOWS AND COMMON PARTS REDECORATION

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

21. SUMNER BUILDINGS AND AVONDALE SQUARE ESTATE

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

22. ISLEDON HOUSE INFILL PROJECT

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

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

There were no questions.

24. 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 of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 4.20pm.

Chairman

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