

PORT HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 12 March 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Port Health & Environmental Services Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Mary Durcan (Chairman)	Henry Jones
Deputy Peter Dunphy (Deputy Chairman)	Deputy Elizabeth King BEM JP
Deputy Timothy Butcher	Natasha Maria Cabrera Lloyd-Owen
Deputy John Edwards	Andrew McMurtrie
Helen Fentimen OBE JP	Deputy Henry Pollard
John Foley	Hugh Selka
Steve Goodman OBE	Deputy Dr Giles Shilson
Jaspreet Hodgson	Glen Witney
Wendy Hyde	

Officers:

Bob Roberts	- Interim Executive Director for Environment
Joanne Hill	- Environment Department
Ian Hughes	- Environment Department
Joe Kingston	- Environment Department
Susie Pritchard	- Environment Department
Rachel Pye	- Environment Department
Gavin Stedman	- Environment Department
Jenny Pitcairn	- Chamberlain's Department
Frank Marchione	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Kate Doidge	- Governance Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alderman Alexander Barr, Deputy Christopher Boden, Alderman Prem Goyal, Deputy Marianne Fredericks, Caroline Haines, Deputy Alastair Moss, Alethea Silk, Henrika Priest, and Jason Pritchard.

Deputy Simon Duckworth, Deputy Marianne Fredericks, Jason Pritchard, Alethea Silk, and Luis Tilleria observed the meeting virtually.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The Committee received the public minutes and non-public summary of the previous meeting, held on 9 January 2024, for approval.

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the previous meeting, held on 9 January 2024, be approved as a correct record.

The Committee discussed the following matters arising from the minutes, as follows:

Nicotine Inhaling Products (Vapes)

The Committee heard that officers were visiting the premises which sold nicotine inhaling products (vapes), in order to ensure they were aware of their duties for proper disposal.

City of London Police Horses

The Committee heard that the issue of horses leaving waste on the streets had been raised with the Commissioner.

Wooden Planters on London Bridge

The Committee heard that some of the planters on London Bridge were owned by the City Corporation, and the remainder were owned by Transport for London (TfL). Funding was being sought to fix or replace the planters owned by the City Corporation, and there was work with the third party for funding to fix the planters owned by TfL.

Dog Fouling and Bins

The Committee heard that the Natural Environment Board had approved a City Gardens Keeper. It was raised that there were no bins for dog waste within the City of London area, or signs on fines for littering. The Committee heard that £90k of fines were issued in the last year, which covered all types of littering. Historically, there were no dog waste bins as there had been few dogs in the City of London area. Bins had to be placed strategically around the City, and having separate dog waste bins would have to be considered further following the review of the recently-approved street cleansing resources.

The Committee requested that standard wording be circulated that could be provided to residents on the actions taken on street cleansing resources, and how residents could feed into the review process in the future.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Members received the Committee's Outstanding Actions.

The Committee heard that the Interim Executive Director, Environment Department, had raised the Committee's concerns on the noise from the London Underground that were affecting the Barbican Estate to TfL. A letter would be sent to TfL re-stating the urgency and importance of the issue. The Committee heard that due to costs of the works, this could not be prioritised within TfL among its other works. The letter would state for this to be considered as a priority.

The Committee requested that Members be copied into the letter sent to TfL.

5. **DRAFT HIGH-LEVEL BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25 - ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director for Environment, concerning the approval of the draft High-Level Business Plan 2024/25 for the Environment Department.

It was confirmed that the noise strategy was held within the Public Protection Team.

Feedback was requested on the strategic commitment to Destination City, and the implications for the Committee based on the shifts on working and living in the City of London. The Committee heard that there was a review into Destination City on its future emphasis. Street cleansing was an example of how the Committee would be affected, but this did not fall into one strategy but rather across multiple departments at the City Corporation.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- (i) Note the factors taken into consideration in compiling the Environment Department Business Plan; and
- (ii) Approve, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by this Committee, the elements of the draft high-level Business Plan 2024/25 (Appendix A) which fall into the remit of the Port Health and Environmental Services Committee.

6. **BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24: PROGRESS REPORT (PERIOD TWO: 1 AUGUST - 30 NOVEMBER 2023)**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director for Environment concerning the Business Plan 2023/24 Progress Report, for Period Two (1 August – 30 November 2023).

RESOLVED - That the report be received, and its contents noted.

7. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director for Environment, concerning a risk management update.

A Member queried what actions were being taken to mitigate the risk of fire or flooding at Walbrook Wharf. The Committee heard that officers worked with the City Surveyor to ensure clarity on the risks and challenges from fire, given the context of Grenfell in recent years. There could be additional funding for building repairs and maintenance as part of a separate review of facilities. There was a longer-term review of Walbrook Wharf that would look at the state of the building and the nature of the equipment. There were short-term requirements to ensure that the building was fit for purpose, and a longer-term plan for managing the property. There would be further information following soft-market testing. On flooding, there was a Riverside Strategy that looked at mitigating the risk of flooding from the breaking of the riverside wall and considered a longer-term plan for riverside protection. Following this, it was suggested that the Risk Register be amended to remove the reference that the City Corporation was unable to reduce the likelihood or impact of the risk, given the steps taken as described above.

The Committee heard that the funding from Defra was allocated until July 2024 for the Port Health Service in its Brexit preparations. From July, the charges would work toward a full-cost recovery service. Officers had been working with the Chamberlain to ensure that the budget took account of the additional controls and the additional generated funding. To mitigate the risk, fixed-term contracts were being used, and officers had written to Defra to raise the uncertainty of funding. Defra were supportive of the plan, and there was reserve funding to offset any losses. With regards to any impact from a General Election, the phased introduction of controls had been set and had begun in January 2024. There were later phases which could be affected by a General Election but this was unknown. Following a query on whether the additional costs could cause a rise in food inflation, the Committee heard that when any food imported was subject to multiple charges, such as storage costs. The Port Health service charge was a small percentage of these charges. Officers would follow up on the exact percentage.

The 'Driver Check' issues were caused by an IT integration issue. This was currently being mitigated using manual updates, which took time and resource. The issue had been escalated with the HR Department to resolve this matter and was reported on daily. This also changed daily, as it was affected by casual workers, contractors, and staff departures.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and its contents noted.

8. RE-INTRODUCTION OF STREET CLEANSING RESOURCES - VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director for Environment concerning an update on the Street Cleansing Resources.

The Committee noted that a report would be received at its meeting in September 2024, which would concern the impact of the additional resources agreed by the Committee. A project plan had been implemented, and officers had been meeting regularly with Veolia to map out 'beats'. Recruitment was currently underway. Keep Britain Tidy were independently monitoring the work and had been commissioned to undertake this on evenings and weekends. From 15th April 2024, all resources should be deployed.

Following a query on the responsibility of litter surrounding stations, it was confirmed that there were boundaries between the stations and the streets. Officers would meet and engage with Network Rail if there were issues regarding litter around stations.

RESOLVED – That the verbal report be received.

9. PORT HEALTH BREXIT READINESS - VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director for Environment concerning Port Health Brexit Readiness.

The Committee heard that on 31st January 2024 pre-notification paperwork for importers had been introduced. From 30th April 2024, there would be physical, sampling, and identity checks on medium risk food and feed. There had been engagement with teams across the multiple ports to ensure the correct shift patterns and resourcing, and the process for recruiting and onboarding of new staff was underway. Defra had agreed a phased introduction of approximately 40 new officers. This was to cover the increased work in documentary checks. The increased work was matching the estimations made. There were regular meetings with Defra, other relevant government agencies, trade bodies, and individual importers to prepare for the implementation of the changes from 30th April. The Committee would be updated on the progress.

Following a query, the Committee heard that the City Corporation had the responsibility for the regulatory services at the ports. The port operators provided the facilities. The funding from Defra included staffing and equipment, and the income from the new border control regime would support full cost recovery in the future.

RESOLVED – That the verbal report be received.

10. **DATES OF FUTURE COMMITTEE EVENTS**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk concerning dates of future committee events. The Port of Tilbury 2 would include visiting the new facility designed to deal with the EU trade. The Annual River Inspection would include a visit to Walbrook Wharf, and the incinerator further down the river.

On the Fishery Experiment, the Committee heard that following its requests for the event to have a more scientific approach, officers had been reaching out to educational institutions, and working with the Environment Agency and Port of London Authority to provide the best impact from the event. Officers would also be contacting relevant companies and individuals for funding and sponsorship.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and its contents noted.

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

The Committee noted that a question had been submitted to the Court of Common Council concerning recognising the anniversary of the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI). Due to time constraints, the response had been received to the Member in writing. The Member in question raised whether the City Corporation could recognise the work of the RNLI on the Thames. It was noted that concerns had previously been raised with the RNLI's connection to slavery. It was agreed that a representation be made to the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee, and the Members comments would be passed onto the relevant officers. It was noted that safety on the Thames sits with the Port of London Authority. A response would be provided separately on the commemoration of the Marchioness disaster.

A question was raised on demographic data provided under Agenda Item 5. The data could not be broken down further as there was a risk of individuals

being identified. The data could be linked to the Social Mobility Strategy in future reports.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
There were no items of public urgent business.
13. **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.
14. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**
RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.
15. **HEATHROW ANIMAL RECEPTION CENTRE UPDATE**
The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director for Environment concerning an update on the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre (HARC) forward plan.
16. **REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN**
The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk concerning a Report of Action Taken.
17. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no non-public questions.
18. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERED URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**
There were no items of non-public urgent business.

The meeting closed at 12.31 pm

Chairman

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