

PORT HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9 July 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)	Deputy Marianne Fredericks
Deputy Peter Dunphy (Deputy Chairman)	Steve Goodman OBE
George Abrahams	Wendy Hyde
Deputy Timothy Butcher	Andrew McMurtrie
Deputy John Edwards	Deputy Henry Pollard
John Foley	Mandeep Thandi
Dawn Frampton	Jacqui Webster

Officers:

Ruth Calderwood	- Environment Department
Joe Kingston	- Environment Department
Susie Pritchard	- Environment Department
Rachel Pye	- Environment Department
Gavin Stedman	- Environment Department
Joanne Hill	- Environment Department
Ian Hughes	- Environment Department
Jenny Pitcairn	- Chamberlain's Department
Jennifer Philips	- Comptrollers & City Solicitor's Department
Kate Doidge	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Tijs Broeke, Jaspreet Hodgson, Deborah Oliver, and Glen Witney.

Shahnan Bakth, Caroline Haines, and Henry Jones 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 7th May 2024, for approval.

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the previous meeting, held on 7th May 2024, be approved as a correct record.

The Committee agreed that it would have an actions tracker for any Outstanding Actions.

4. **RESOLUTIONS FROM THE GRAND COURT OF WARDMOTE**

The Committee received the Resolutions from the Grand Court of Wardmote.

With regards to the Resolution from the Ward of Portsoken (Item 4(a)), the Committee heard that officers had reviewed the complaints from the last six months from the Mansell Street Estate. These had been dealt with in conjunction with Guinness Estates, to ensure that the work was underway with regards to pest control. The Committee heard that the estate manager should be contacted if there were any concerns with pest infestation, and to contact the City Corporation if their issues were not being resolved with the estate manager. There was currently no statutory nuisance or health and safety hazard in the Mansell Street Estate and therefore no formal action. This was kept under continual review.

RESOLVED – That the Port Health and Environmental Services Committee receive the Resolutions from the Grand Court of Wardmote.

5. **CHANGES TO THE WASTE PRESENTATION RESTRICTIONS**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director for Environment, concerning proposed changes to restrictions on domestic and commercial waste on the footway, and a proposal for strengthened communications, education and enforcement approach to improve compliance.

Members discussed the proposals. One area of concern raised was the impacts of the current waste presentation on small businesses that operated within the City, especially those which primarily operated at lunch hours (such as sandwich shops). Members shared concerns received from businesses who paid for extra hours for an employee to present the waste from 6:00pm, or else take the waste home. Members offered suggestions to address these issues, such as the small businesses working with larger restaurants to use their larger commercial waste bins which were lockable.

Members raised that if waste was put out prior to 6:00pm, this was during high footfall periods on the street and could cause further issues, and the changes to the restrictions does bring more flexibility for businesses to put out their waste later. Members heard that the City Corporation offered internal collection for smaller businesses, although there were a variety of businesses that separately collected waste for businesses throughout the City.

Members also discussed issues raised with having waste on the street, which included waste attracting rodents, foxes, and seagulls. Those businesses who put out their waste at 6:00pm may not have it collected until the early hours of the next morning. Vehicles collecting the waste during the nighttime could cause noise nuisances for residents – although on this point the Committee heard that the City Corporation's fleet was electric which was quieter, and Veolia were transitioning into electric vehicles. The Committee heard that the

Time Banding Scheme was introduced in 2012 as waste bags on the street caused further littering from members of the public.

On residential waste, points raised by Members included suggestions to provide residents with sacks or bags for domestic waste, food waste, and recycling, and being clear with communications on the contents of each bag or sack. Other suggestions included ensuring that internal bin storage was provided for residential blocks at the planning stage.

Members heard that there was no perfect solution to the waste presentation restrictions, and the amendment in current arrangements aimed for an incremental improvement. The proposals also included agreement for proactive engagement with the residential and business communities. It was agreed that the proposed changes would be considered to form part of a trial period, following which there could be a report received at a future meeting of the Committee (the date to be determined) which would report on the outcomes and response to the proposals.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- Agree the changes to the permitted times for the placement of residential and commercial waste on the footway.
- Agree a strengthened communication, education, and enforcement approach to help improve compliance.

6. PUBLIC CONVENIENCE PROVISION

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director for Environment, concerning the current public convenience provision in the Square Mile and outlined options for the future.

Members discussed the proposals. Points made included the need for improved publicising and wayfinding for public convenience facilities within the Square Mile, and need for better signage at locations such as libraries and train stations within the City. The Committee noted that one of the recommendations was to improve the wayfinding aspect of public conveniences. There had been discussions with Transport for London at the public toilet provision within the London Underground Network. There would also be consideration of extending the opening hours of the urilifts at Paternoster Hill utilising the nighttime levy.

Some Members highlighted their concerns with the Community Toilets Scheme, such as its lack of ambition with the number of toilets available, and the signage not being prominent or large enough to be noticeable.

The Committee made points with regards to the funding of public conveniences, including utilising cashless systems and hiring staff via agencies to manage the facilities. On these points, the Committee heard that there was still a strong demand for coins, and there were issues with those who did not pay the fee and climbed the barrier into the toilets. It was not being recommended to remove the fees and charges for public conveniences, as it contributed to meeting the cost of running the facilities. The Committee were reminded of the challenge to backfill £1.2m, the toilets that had been closed

had been closed based on usage data. Even if toilets were closed, there were still maintenance costs. It was confirmed that agency staff were used for managing the facilities.

Members of the Committee referred to Grade I listed facilities which had been closed, and a closed facility on an island in Smithfield. The Committee heard that toilets on islands created safety risks for members of the public trying to access them. For the closed facilities, these cost money to decommission, and an alternative scheme had to arise to change or find an alternative use for the building.

It was requested that a report providing an update on the proposals be received by the Committee ahead of the 2025 elections.

RESOLVED – That Members agree the following (within currently agreed budgets):

- Review and enhance the publicity and signage for the City's public toilets at all locations.
- Refurbish the toilet facilities within the City's car parks.
- Identify potential locations for additional urilifts.
- Explore opportunities for a limited reopening of the public toilets at Blackfriars (after the completion of the Tideway project).
- Review the benefits, promotion and funding of the Community Toilets Scheme.
- Press for further private sector provision of public toilets through the Planning process.
- Work with ParkGuard to focus their nighttime economy resources on anti-social behaviour hotspots.
- Explore additional funding opportunities to reinvest into the provision and maintenance of public toilets.

7. AIR QUALITY ANNUAL STATUS REPORT FOR 2023

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director for Environment, concerning the statutory Annual Status Report for air quality.

A Member enquired why there were gaps in the data for locations such as Upper Thames Street. It was explained that the air quality monitors had to be re-located as the sites was no longer viable, or monitors had not been installed until recent years.

A Member raised concerns on riverside pollution and enquired if this was monitored. The response was that a monitor had been installed on Tower Pier, and the City Corporation worked with the Port of London Authority (PLA) who also monitored pollution on the riverside. Monitors had also been installed on the City's bridges in conjunction with the City Bridge Trust. The locations of the monitors were reviewed annually.

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

8. **BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24: PROGRESS REPORT (PERIOD THREE: DECEMBER 2023 - MARCH 2024)**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director for Environment, concerning an update on the progress toward the delivery of the high-level Business Plan 2024/24, for Period Three (December 2023 – March 2024).

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

9. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director for Environment, concerning the actions being taken by the Environment Department to monitor, mitigate and effectively manage risks arising from the Port Health and Public Protection and the Cleansing Services.

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

10. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2023/24**

The Committee received a joint report of the Chamberlain and the Interim Executive Director for Environment, concerning the revenue outturn for the services overseen by the Committee in 2023/24 with the final budget for the year.

A Member raised that Finance Committee was encouraging the service committees to receive regular reports for the current financial years budget, and enquired if this was incorporated as part of the Committee's forward plan. The response was that financial updates were regularly included as part of the regular business update, the next of which was due to be received at the Committee's November meeting.

It was explained that the figures in Appendix 1 were the net costs, with the figures in brackets being the net expenditure.

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

11. **BREXIT UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director for Environment concerning an update on Brexit in relation to Port Health. With the introduction of the second phase of the controls on 30th April 2024, there had been a project of 140,000 consignments. There was an average of 3,000 consignments, which meant projections were currently accurate. This could increase as trade adjusted to the new border control regime. The new staffing resource was in place, with fixed-term contracts to cope with the additional work and extended operational hours. The Service was collecting data to be reviewed at six-months post-implementation, at which point the resourcing requirements would be reviewed. Issues had arisen with recharging for the EU goods on the IT system, and a workaround had to be created in the interim.

A Member enquired if it was known on what the percentage of the recharge would be on imported goods. The response was that this was currently

unknown. The border control regime operated on a full-cost recovery basis, and the recharges were based on the cost recovery for the service. It was unknown how this would impact imported products on shelves, however the fees and charges structure was reasonably modest when compared to the other charges imports are subject to, and that these charges had been placed on imports from the Rest of World for many years. The charges were the same for medium risk goods for the EU imports and Rest of World. The primary difference with the new controls was the concept of a low-risk good, which was a surveillance process which cost approximately £10 per consignment.

It was queried why the IT system has caused issues for EU imports if it had previously been used for the Rest of World. The response was that the new system was not able to distinguish easily between low and medium risk imports of food and feed from the EU and they traded on a block basis. There was a 50:50 split between low and medium risk products and some imports straddled both categories depending on their country of origin. Rest of World products and their associated risk were easier to define. Furthermore, there had been issues with the government IT systems which broke a link between the databases.

RESOLVED – That the verbal report be received.

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

There were no public questions.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

A Member raised a noise nuisance that had occurred at the Barbican during the preceding weekend. Residents had attempted to make contact with the noise team via the phone number on the City Corporation's website, but was unable to get through. The Member enquired what had occurred and what assurances could be given that this situation would not occur again.

The response was that this matter had been picked up and the issues were being investigated, the initial cause appeared to be that the phone lines went down. Officers were attempted to recover and follow up on noise complaints received over the weekend. Once the investigation was complete, the Committee would be informed. The Committee were assured that this was a unique incident.

Members commented on the increasing issues of noise nuisances with holiday rental properties, and there was uncertainty on whether the noise arose from the tenants or visitors and was difficult to police. It took a lot of time, evidence, and work to convict.

14. 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.

15. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the non-public minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th May 2024 be approved as a correct record.

16. **WRITE-OFF OF OUTSTANDING DEBT**

The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director of Environment concerning a write-off of outstanding debt.

17. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

A Member raised a question in relation to the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre.

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 non-public items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 1.00 pm

Chairman

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