

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 25 January 2024

Minutes of the meeting held at Guildhall at 2.00 pm

Present

Members:

Ruby Sayed (Chair)	John Griffiths
Helen Fentimen (Deputy Chair)	Alderman Christopher Makin
Munsur Ali	Benjamin Murphy
Matthew Bell	Beverley Ryan
Anne Corbett	Naresh Hari Sonpar
Mary Durcan	Ceri Wilkins
Deputy John Fletcher	
Deputy Marianne Fredericks	
Steve Goodman OBE	

In Attendance:

Jim Gamble – Independent Chair, City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership
Rory McCullum – Senior Professional Advisor, City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership
Eamonn Mulally – Chair of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee

Officers:

Judith Finlay	- Executive Director, Community & Children's Services
Dr Sandra Husbands	- Director of Public Health, City & Hackney
Chris Lovitt	- Deputy Director of Public Health, City & Hackney
Polly Dunn	- Assistant Town Clerk
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains
Andrew Cusack	- Comptroller & City Solicitors
Deborah Bell	- Community & Children's Services Department
Simon Cribbens	- Community & Children's Services Department
Chris Pelham	- Community & Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services Department
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's Department
Chandni Tanna	- Town Clerk's Department

The Chair welcomed Beverley Ryan, Chair of Governors of the Aldgate School, to her first meeting of the Committee and Jim Gamble, the Independent Chair of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership, who would be presenting the Partnership's Annual Report at agenda item 5.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Joanne Abeyie*, Jamel Banda*, Ian Bishop Legatt, Florence Keelson-Anfu, Alderman Alastair King and Caroline Haines.

*Members joined remotely.

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

Ceri Wilkinson, who is a City of London Corporation resident, declared that she might have an engaged disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of some of the items on today's agenda and would therefore refrain from speaking or voting, should this arise.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 13th December 2023 be approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

a) *'Bridge to the City'* is an initiative of the Chair of the Community and Children's Services Committee and not the Lord Mayor.

b) Deputy Director of Public Health, Chris Lovitt, was present at this meeting.

Matters arising

- The report on Safe Havens had been approved by the Resource Allocation Sub Committee the previous day. There had been further discussions about security implications at some of the sites and agreed that, initially, they would include Guildhall and the public libraries. Whilst the scheme has been framed within the Violence Against Women and Girls Policy, as they are more likely to be under threat, a 'safe haven' is open to all those who might be a victim.
- The report on the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy will be brought back to this committee in March before progressing it to the Police Authority Board and the Policy and Resources Committee.
- The Assistant Director, Commissioning and Partnerships, agreed to follow up on the decision in respect of Community Centre Finance being taken before the end of the financial year.

4. **ACTION TRACKER**

The Committee received the Actions Tracker and noted the following updates:

a) The HRA Housing Consultancy Group, similar to the Barbican Residents Consultation Committee (RCC) is a recommendation in the Housing Governance Review, which appeared later on this agenda. Members noted that the preparatory work had been done; Members (of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee) would be considering the proposal at their next meeting and could refer it back to the Grand Committee if necessary.

b) The Crescent House windows replacement project had slipped slightly but the Design Team had met earlier in the day and the tender stage was imminent. The scope of works for the project had been finalised, together

with the programme for the S20 consultations. Some of the blocks were ready to submit their Listed Building Consent applications and key milestones would be communicated to residents and Members. Members noted that regular Resident Liaison Group (RLG) meetings were taking place, with the Project Manager in attendance.

- c) Members would receive the Departmental Business Plan for consideration in March 2024. There had been an informal meeting on the Business Plan at the end of 2022 but it was put on hold to ensure alignment with the Corporate Plan and the 5 Year Strategic Plan. In the interest of good governance, the Chair suggested that business plans should be reviewed annually.
- d) There had been an options appraisal undertaken in respect of the Sports Strategy, including future options for the Golden Lane Leisure Centre. The Assistant Director advised that these options would be reviewed by senior officers prior to engaging Members in discussion, so that recommendations can be put to the appropriate Committees later this year. Members expressed concern at the condition of the Golden Lane Leisure Centre and its implications on the City Corporation's reputation. Officers explained that the provider has a responsibility for the interior condition, under the Lease, but their contract is only short term and therefore there is no incentive to invest. Wider refurbishment is the responsibility of the Corporation. Future funding for any refurbishment or options arising from the Sports Strategy would be the subject of a Member decision. The Chair asked for the Golden Lane Leisure Centre to be kept on the Committee's actions list for further updates.

5. THE CITY & HACKNEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (CHSCP) ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Committee received the Annual Report of the Independent Chair of the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership for 2022/23, which sets out examples of the evidence, impact, assurance and learning of the statutory safeguarding arrangements in the City of London and the London Borough of Hackney.

The Independent Chair opened the presentation on the Annual Report by commending Chris Pelham, Assistant Director (People) for his role in the success of the partnership over a number of years. The Chair felt strongly that the strength of the partnership comes from its independent scrutiny. However, under new legislation, this would be replaced with one of the statutory partners; ie the Local Authority, Health or Police Authority. Whilst this might appear to be adequate on the surface, the Independent Chair expressed concern in that it might lead to an imbalance in the partnership. Members noted that the partnership had objected to the proposal in the 'Working Together' consultation, which comes into effect in December 2024. The Independent Chair suggested that the 'Child Q' report, for example, might never have come to light had it been left to the statutory agency. A Member also commented on the poor public perception of Police and Health services over the past few years.

The Chair thanked the Independent Chair, noting that 'Working Together' is statutory guidance only and the City of London Corporation is not obliged to adopt it entirely. The Executive Director advised that the legislative change would be presented to Members for decision and endorsed the value of the Independent Chair. The Chair suggested a briefing ahead of the Committee Meeting which takes a decision on this matter.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

6. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk in respect of the Annual Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference. The Chair agreed to take this report together with agenda item 9, the Housing Governance Review. The Chair welcomed a clear and concise report and thanked officers for the work that had gone into the Housing Governance Review.

The Assistant Town Clerk took Members through the general 'housekeeping' amendments, noting that they could be implemented notwithstanding the Governance Review later on this agenda, which recommends no substantive changes at this time. Members noted that the Housing Governance Review had been approved by the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) earlier in the week and would be presented to the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee the following week. Members were also asked to note that, whilst the existing Terms of Reference would ensure that the Committee discharges its statutory and strategic responsibilities, the relevant Committees would have detailed workplans to give Members assurance at a more granular level.

The establishment of a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Consultative Group (similar to the Barbican Residents Consultation Committee) would be subject to a further report in terms of its composition, terms of reference and resourcing. The recommendations in the report included a request to delegate authority, in respect of the finalising of the Housing Governance Report, to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Community and Children's Services and Barbican Residential Committees. This would allow for the inclusion of any comments from the the Housing Management and Almshouses Committee (HMASC) which is due to meet at the end of this month.

A Member suggested that the Chair of the Grand Committee should not also be Chair the HMASC. The Chair (of the Grand Committee) explained that this had been an interim measure, pending wider consideration of the Governance Review. The Assistant Town Clerk reminded Members that, under Standing Order 27.2, Sub Committees are to be chaired by the Chair of the relevant Grand Committee, or their nominees, but this must be with the will of the Grand Committee. Members noted that the Grand Committee appoints to its Sub Committees at the first meeting of the Civic Year, following the Annual Meeting of the Court of Common Council, and they also reserve the right to raise any issues when the Court papers are issued.

Members noted that a new Assistant Director for HRA properties would be recruited shortly, to deliver the Housing Strategy, and the Executive Director confirmed the focus on customer care and contract performance. Members also welcomed the separation of the roles of the Assistant Directors for the Barbican and HRA properties. The Interim Assistant Director advised that she had approached two companies in respect of facilitating the Asset Maintenance Programme.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The necessary 'housekeeping' updates to the Committee's Terms of Reference, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved: ie
 - Appointment of Governors to the Aldgate School to be the responsibility of the Education Board, to bring this in line with other School Governor appointments.
 - The removal of the term '*social services*' as it is captured throughout the Terms of Reference.
 - The necessary amendments following the governance changes concerning the form Combined Education Charity.
2. Any further necessary changes arising from the Housing Governance Review be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee.

7. **DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET ESTIMATES COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES - EXCLUDING HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services and the Chamberlain, which presented the budget estimates for the Department of Community & Children's Services for 2024/25, for subsequent submission to Finance Committee.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- a) Members noted a correction whereby the Assessment Centre for Rough Sleepers and High Support Hostel, which is marked as '*Public Health*', should have '*Social Care*' as the correct service description.
- b) The movement between the original and 23/24 budget mainly reflects the pay award and some transformational funding. The local risk budget does not include overheads, which will change.
- c) A Member asked for use of the term '*manpower*' to cease.
- d) The Cyclical Works Programme does not currently have an allocation for 2024/25 but this will increase once it has been approved by the Resource Allocation Sub Committee. The Chair asked if the Committee could be notified when the report is published.

- e) There are pressures in respect of high cost placements but the City's relatively small number of service users makes it difficult to profile demand. However, these are under constant review, led by case assessments and prevention measures aim to reduce the need for services. The Executive Director confirmed that the Department remains vigilant of savings opportunities and grant maximisation to offset pressures in local risk budgets.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The Community and Children's Services Department's (excluding HRA) proposed revenue budget for 2024/25 be recommended for submission to the Finance Committee.
 2. The Community and Children's Services Department's (excluding HRA) proposed capital and supplementary revenue projects budgets for 2024/25 be recommended for submission to the Finance Committee.
 3. The Chamberlain, in consultation with the Executive Director of Community and Children's, be authorised to revise these budgets, to allow for any further implications arising from Corporate Projects and changes to the Cyclical Works Programme.
 4. Any minor amendments for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 budgets arising during the corporate budget setting period be delegated to the Chamberlain.
8. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2024/25**
The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services and the Chamberlain, which presented the annual submission of the revenue and capital budgets overseen by the Community and Children's Services Committee.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The provisional 2024/25 revenue budget be recommended for submission to the Finance Committee.
 2. The draft capital budget be approved.
 3. The Chamberlain be authorised to revise these budgets to allow for further implications arising from departmental reorganisations and other reviews.
9. **HOUSING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**
The Committee received a report on Housing Governance Arrangements and how they should be provided in the future. The Chair had asked for this item to be considered in conjunction with agenda item 6, the Annual Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED, that:

1. There be no immediate change to the current governance arrangements because of the dedicated focus on improving operational performance with new management arrangements for the Barbican Residential Estate and the HRA.
 2. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Community and Children's Services Committee, to consider any changes to the Terms of Reference arising from the discussion.
 3. Consideration should be given to options for the establishment of a separate forum for HRA residents, including proposals for a body comparable to the Barbican Residential Consultative Committee.
 4. It be noted that Terms of Reference are routinely reviewed on an annual basis, and that there should be a further, more comprehensive ,review of housing governance arrangements in two years' time, on the understanding that the dedicated focus on both the Barbican Residential Estate and HRA should have delivered significant improvements to performance and the customer experience.
10. **UPDATES FROM SUB COMMITTEE CHAIRS, ALLOCATED MEMBERS AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

Members noted the following updates:

Issues on Middlesex Street were ongoing and being progressed by the Housing Services Manager.

The Deputy Chair of Community and Children's Services (CCS) reported on the City and Hackey Sub Committee (of the North East London Integrated Care Board), which is finding its place in terms of local and neighbourhood focus. At the last meeting, there was a detailed discussion about performance and outcomes, in terms of honing them to be City and Hackney specific. The Chief Executive of Homerton Hospital is leaving in the Spring of 2024 and the Deputy Chair will be on the Interview Panel in February. Chris Kennedy, a Member at the London Borough of Hackney and Co-Chair of the Sub Committee, together with the Deputy Chair of CCS, will be the City and Hackney's representative at the formal Health and Care meetings.

The Golden Lane windows programme was progressing well and two Resident Liaison Groups (RLG) had been set up, together with an estate wide group. They had been generally well received but there was some negative feedback about the communications reach. The Property Services Officer was commended for their assistance with a leak at Bowater House, which had been outstanding for a while.

Carers had been very pleased at their raised profile, arising from the new Strategy and last month's meeting and thanked Hannah Dobbin for her hard work. The Tower Hamlet's Carers Centre office support carers in the City is leaving their role. It was noted that they had done some excellent outreach work and they were greatly valued by the local Community. Members noted that the officer - Farzana Khanom - had received a well-deserved 'Freedom of the City'. The Chair gave assurance of the Corporation's commitment to this level of ongoing focus and support.

There had not been a meeting of the **Safeguarding Sub Committee** since the last meeting of the Committee and the next meeting would be in April 2024. The next meeting of the **Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee** would be on 30th January 2024. The Chair advised that, at this meeting, Members would be asked to consider a reset for social and affordable housing, given that the targets were set a number of years ago and are no longer relevant. The Chair felt that this would be timely in terms of the Housing Governance Review.

There would be a 'soft go-live' for the **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Assessment Centre** after its completion in February 2024. The Severe Weather Emergency Plan (SWEP) been activated between 8th and 20th January and had accommodated 1,200 homeless clients across Greater London, with 40 in the City (33 being in the highest need category). There had been 569 offers made by the Outreach Team and the next meeting of the Sub Committee would be looking at this data in terms of service planning in future years.

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

There were no questions.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chair had submitted a request for business rates relief for Early Years Nursery provision in the City, which is due to be considered by the Resource Allocation and Court of Common Council as part of the Annual Budget setting for 2024/25 and asked for Members' support.

13. 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)

14-21

Paragraph No (s)

1,2 & 3

14. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED, that – the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2023 be approved.

15. **ACTION TRACKER**
The Committee received the non-public actions tracker.
16. **FURTHER CORPORATE CHARITIES REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS – THE CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION COMBINED RELIEF OF POVERTY CHARITY (1073660)**
The Committee considered and approved a report of the Managing Director of the City Bridge Foundation.
17. **EMERGENCY AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FRAMEWORK: PROCUREMENT STAGE 1 STRATEGY REPORT**
The Committee considered and approved a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children’s Services.
18. **LEASE RENEWAL - REQUEST FOR A DELEGATED DECISION**
The Committee considered and approved a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children’s Services.
19. **SYDENHAM HILL REDEVELOPMENT, LEWISHAM - PROGRESS REPORT**
The Committee received a report of the City Surveyor.

At 3.50 pm, Members agreed to extend the meeting to conclude the business on the agenda.
20. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions whilst the public were excluded.
21. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**
The Chair permitted four items of urgent business whilst the public were excluded.

The meeting ended at 4.10 pm

Chairman

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