

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 1 May 2024

Minutes of the meeting held at Guildhall at 2.00 pm

Present

Members:

Joanna Tufuo Abeyie	Deputy Elizabeth King BEM JP
Shahnan Bakth	Henrika Priest - <i>in the Chair</i>
Deputy Keith Bottomley	Deputy Nighat Qureishi
Deputy Anne Corbett	Ryan
Mary Durcan	Ruby Sayed
Helen Fentimen OBE JP	Naresh Hari Sonpar
Deputy John Fletcher	Jacqui Webster
Steve Goodman OBE	Ceri Wilkins
Deputy Shravan Joshi MBE	Philip Woodhouse

Officers:

Judith Finlay	- Executive Director, Community & Children's Services
Deborah Bell	- Community & Children's Services
Michael Gwyther-Jones	- Community & Children's Services
Simon Cribbens	- Community & Children's Services
Chris Pelham	- Community & Children's Services
Ellie Ward	- Community & Children's Services
Pam Wharfe	- Community & Children's Services
Deborah Bell	- Community & Children's Services
Liam Gillespie	- Community & Children's Services
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks
Chandni Tanna	- Communications & External Affairs
Andrew Cusack	- Comptroller & City Solicitors
Steve Chandler	- City Surveyors
Jack Joslin	- City Bridge Foundation

Henrika Priest was moved into the Chair until the appointment of the Chair at agenda item 4, which was uncontested.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Matthew Bell, Alderman Prem Goyal, Alderman Christopher Makin, Eamon Mullally, Tim McNally, Dawn Frampton and Jason Pritchard.

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

There were no declarations.

In respect of item 28 (Installation of Sprinklers in Social Housing Tower Blocks), the officer advised that the work would require Building Control Consent by the District Surveyor but not Planning Permission. Therefore, any Planning and Transportation Committee Members' interests would not be engaged.

3. **ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL**

RESOLVED, that – the Committee received the Order of the Court dated 25th April 2025.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIR (Uncontested)**

The Committee elected a Chair in accordance with Standing Order 29 and, being the only Member declaring a willingness to serve, it was RESOLVED, that – Helen Fentimen be declared as Chair of the Community and Children's Services Committee for 2024/25.

Vote of Thanks

It was moved by Henrika Priest, seconded by Helen Fentimen and RESOLVED unanimously, that – the Members of the Community and Children's Services Committee place on record their sincere appreciation to:

RUBY SAYED

for the tenacious and compassionate manner in which she has chaired their Committee since 2021.

Ruby's term as chair started in the aftermath of the covid pandemic, quickly followed by the arrival of some 600 refugees into the city. This had been a very challenging time but Ruby extended a warm welcome to our guests, ensuring their needs were met in terms of health care, safeguarding and education.

Ruby has campaigned for high quality social housing, to ensure tenants feel safe and comfortable and are given a voice; noting that this has not been without challenges and, at times, beyond the control of both the Committee and the City of London Corporation. Tenants in the most deprived area of the City have been placed at the forefront, noting particularly the delivery of the New Community Centre and Artmakers Space in Portsoken.

Working with our partners, ruby has demonstrated excellent co-production in respect of the high support hostel for the City's street population and overseen tremendous improvements in the City of London Corporation's approach to homelessness; by securing permanent pathways off the streets.

Ruby's compassion towards vulnerable residents was further evidenced by the implementation of new strategies aimed at improving the lives of the City Corporation's unpaid carers and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. (SEND)

Ruby has been a tireless champion of care leavers; implementing a policy to make care experience a protected characteristic and in the delivery of the London Care Leaver Compact.

Finally, the committee wishes to place on record its recognition of ruby's dedication and to wish her every success in the future, noting that her legacy will improve the quality of life of city residents for many years to come.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR (Uncontested)**

The Committee elected a Deputy Chair in accordance with Standing Order 30and, being the only Member declaring a willingness to serve, it was RESOLVED, that – Ruby Sayed be declared as Deputy Chair of the Community and Children's Services Committee for 2024/25.

6. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 11th March 2024 be approved.

7. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received the outstanding actions list

8. **APPOINTMENTS TO SUB COMMITTEES, PORTFOLIOS AND ALLOCATED MEMBERS**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk concerning the appointment of the Community and Children's Services Committee's Sub Committees and approval of their Compositions and Terms of Reference. In addition, Members were asked to appoint Lead Members to the various portfolios, and Allocated Members to the City's Housing Estates.

RESOLVED, that – the following sub committees/ portfolio holders and Allocated/Lead Members be appointed, together with the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Sub Committees:

a) **Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee:**

Steve Goodman - *Chair*
Helen Fentimen – *Deputy Chair*
Ruby Sayed
Joanne Abeyie
Keith Bottomley
Mary Durcan
John Fletcher
Tim McNally
Eamonn Mullally
Henrika Priest
Ceri Wilkins

Members agreed that it was in the best interests of both the Grand and Sub Committee, given the extensive work in this area, to expand the Membership by 1 (from 8-9 Members) for 2024-25.

b) **Safeguarding Sub-Committee**

Ruby Sayed – *Chair*
Helen Fentimen – *Deputy Chair*
Joanne Abeyie
Anne Corbett
Mary Durcan
Jackie Webster
Philip Woodhouse
Ceri Wilkins

c) **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee**

Eamonn Mullally – CCS - *Chair*
Natasha Lloyd Owen – CCS – *Deputy Chair*
Henrika Priest - CCS
Anne Corbett - CCS
Shravan Joshi - CCS

Members agreed to the vacancy for a Court Member being advertised again following the meeting.

d) To appoint the Chair of Community and Children's Services Committee to the **Education Board**

e) **Lead Members**

- a. **Adult and Children Safeguarding** – Ruby Sayed
- b. **Young People** – Ceri Wilkins
- c. **Carers' and SEND* Champion** – Anne Corbett

The Committee agreed to expand (C) to include Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

f) To appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Community and Children's Services Committee, together with the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB), along with up to 3 Deputies, to the **City and Hackney Sub Committee of the North East London Integrated Care Board**).

Deputies:

Ceri Wilkins
Mary Durcan

Members noted that Mary Durcan was likely to be appointed by the Health and Wellbeing Board later that week and agreed to the vacancies being advertised again following the meeting.

g) To appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Community & Children's Services Committee, or their representatives, to the **Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee**.

- h) To appoint the following **Allocated Members to the City Corporation's various Housing Estates**. Members agreed to the 2 vacancies being advertised again following the meeting.

ESTATE	ALLOCATED MEMBER
Avondale Square (Southwark), including Harman Close	<i>Vacant</i>
<u>Small Estates:</u> Isleden House (Islington); Windsor House (Hackney)	Mary Durcan Ceri Wilkins
Golden Lane (City)	Ceri Wilkins Anne Corbett
Holloway & York Way (Islington)	Mary Durcan
Middlesex Street (City) & Dron House/Spitalfields (Tower Hamlets)	John Fletcher
South Bank Estates: Southwark Blocks (Southwark) William Blake (Lambeth)	<i>Vacant</i>
City of London & Gresham Almshouses (Lambeth)	Florence Keelson-Anfu
Sydenham Hill: Lammas Green/Otto Close (Lewisham)	Ruby Sayed

9. **APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTEES**

RESOLVED, that – Beverley Ryan and Laura Jørgensen be appointed as the two Parent Governors.

10. **HOUSING COMPLAINTS UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of housing complaints. The Chair advised that it was unusual for the Grand Committee to receive detailed housing reports and Members noted that this report, and the next two on the agenda, had been deferred from the recent inquorate Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee (HMASC).

The Chair stressed the importance of robust communications in respect of these reports, to ensure that tenants, leaseholders and staff know how to access the policies. The Chair also asked Members to be mindful of monitoring and targets and, whilst the Housing Complaints Report would require a decision today, it would also receive further scrutiny at the HMASC. The officer advised that there would be a report to the HMASC in July, presenting the results of the Housing Complaints Handling Self-assessment, together with the Complaints and Compensation Policy.

RESOLVED, that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The suitability of arbitration, as a potential dispute resolution measure for housing complaints at the City Corporation be endorsed, noting that this would be referred to the HMASC.
3. The Assistant Director for Housing Management acts as the '*Senior Lead Person*' for housing complaints, in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
4. The Chairman of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee acts as the '*Member Responsible for Complaints*' (MRC) under the same Code.
5. The reporting cycle for complaints be approved.

11. **HOUSING COMPLIANCE POLICIES**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of compliance. In response to a suggestion from a Member, the officer agreed to include re-inspections for asbestos in the Policy.

RESOLVED, that – the following Policies be approved for use by the Housing Division:

1. Asbestos Management
2. Electrical Safety
3. Lift Safety
4. Water Safety

12. **REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS POLICY**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of the reasonable adjustments Policy.

RESOLVED, that – the Reasonable Adjustments Policy be approved for use by the Housing Division.

13. DEPARTMENTAL FIVE-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN - DIRECTION OF TRAVEL AND PROPOSED SCOPE

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of the Five Year Business Plan. The Committee welcomed the report as it has provided the Department with the opportunity to be a 'trailblazer' in shaping and trialling a five-year business plan model, which could be adopted corporately. Members noted that numbers in the City are relatively low, leading to large swings in service projections, thereby making this model far more efficient in terms of budgetary forecasting.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

14. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND

The Committee received a report of the Managing Director, City Bridge Foundation, in respect of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Fund. The Chair commended the strong alignment between the views of City workers and residents.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

1. The team has a 12-Month Outreach/Communications Plan, which seeks to widen diversity. The Team are very pro-active in terms of supporting organisations and Members were invited to make suggestions. The Deputy Chair had referred groups to the team and thanked them for their excellent service.
2. The application forms can be complex and the team agreed to look at this.
3. There are smaller grant programmes, which are also managed by the Team, leading to pathways to larger funding. Some smaller/minoritised groups may not have the infrastructure in their organisations to deliver applications and the Team offer assistance in this regard.
4. Pro-active feedback is always offered as it can be a developmental tool. The Team works with organisations to help them submit stronger bids, when it might be better for them to withdraw an application, rather than receive a rejection which is in the public domain.
5. Delegations to officers are assessed quarterly and reported to the Resource Allocation Sub Committee.
6. The Golden Lane and Barbican Neighbourhood forum, which came into effect in July 2023, will have 25% input in respect of CIL funding collected in the area. The Team are working with planning colleagues in terms of putting this into practice and can provide more detail on request.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

15. STRONGER COMMUNITIES ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Managing Director of the City Bridge Foundation, which presented the Stronger Communities Annual Report.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

1. The new CRM system is enabling profiling on new applications. The neighbourhood fund has targeted outreach and the stronger communities fund is available for smaller companies.
2. Some large charities have small branch offices; i.e. Age UK in the City of London, which relies on this funding to serve the community.
3. Monitoring and evaluation form part of the Terms and Conditions of grant approvals. The next report to the Committee would provide more information.
4. A member suggested that some organisations might want to deliver presentations in terms of what they have achieved with their grant funding.
5. Housing estates outside of the City can apply to Stronger Communities but the Neighbourhood Fund is for the square mile. There are neighbourhood funds across London but they are likely to be constituted differently. The Resource Allocation Sub Committee (RASC) received a report on CIL funding in other boroughs some years ago and the officer agreed that this work could be refreshed.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

16. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES SELF-EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (SEND SEF)

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, in respect of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Self-Evaluation Framework (SEND SEF).

The Chair of Governors of the Aldgate School expressed concern about data showing underperformance at the Aldgate School. The Strategic Director advised that the data was correct on the DfE website in December 2023 but there are different data sets available, for schools only, and welcomed the Governor's feedback. The Executive Director agreed that this would be rectified in the future, as the SEND SEF is designed to be iterative and the report would be updated and re-circulated to the Committee.

Members noted that the LA function of the CoLC was being peer reviewed, in preparation for the next Ofsted/CQC Area SEND and AP Inspection, and a meeting had taken place earlier in the day looking at areas of focus. The Chair of Governors advised that, given the increasing number of children requiring additional support, there will be financial implications. The Chair (of the

Committee) agreed with this position, noting the need for dynamic data in the reports.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

17. MEMBER ENGAGEMENT - HOUSING ESTATES

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children’s Services, in respect of Member Engagement on the City’s various housing estates. The Chair suggested that this report would benefit from a more detailed discussion at the next meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee, stressing the importance of good governance in respect of major developments, to enable allocated members to be aware of issues at an earlier stage.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

18. UPDATES FROM SUB COMMITTEES, ALLOCATED MEMBERS AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Members had received three reports in advance of the meeting. Given the time constraints on this agenda, the Chair suggested that Members raise any queries directly with the relevant officers.

At 3.50pm, the Committee agreed to extend the meeting to conclude the business on the agenda.

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

There were no questions.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chair advised that the new Housing Director would be starting on 26th May 2024 and thanked the Interim Housing Director for a sterling job covering both the HRA and Barbican Estates.

21. 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)	Paragraph No (s)
22-33	3

22. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED, that – the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2024 be approved.

23. NON-PUBLIC OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Committee received the non-public outstanding actions list.

24. **REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN: GREAT ARTHUR HOUSE**
The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk.
25. **WINDOWS AND COMMON PARTS REDECORATIONS - GOLDEN LANE ESTATE (PHASE 1 CRESCENT HOUSE) - SERVICE CHARGE ABATEMENT**
The Committee considered and approved a report of the Comptroller and City Solicitor.
26. **HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS - PROCUREMENT STAGE 1 REPORT**
The Committee considered and approved a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services.
27. **WINDOWS AND COMMON PARTS REDECORATIONS – GOLDEN LANE ESTATE (PHASE 2)**
The Committee considered and approved a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services.
28. **INSTALLATION OF SPRINKLERS IN SOCIAL HOUSING TOWER BLOCKS**
The Committee considered and approved a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services.
29. **SUMNER BUILDINGS & AVONDALE SQUARE ESTATE**
The Committee considered and approved a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services.
30. **SYDENHAM HILL REDEVELOPMENT, LEWISHAM**
The Committee received a report of the City Surveyor.
31. **MIDDLESEX STREET CAR PARK**
The Committee received a report of the City Surveyor.
32. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.
33. **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.

The meeting ended at 4.20 pm

Chairman

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