

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND LIBRARIES COMMITTEE

Monday, 4 November 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee held at Committee Room 2 - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 4 November 2024 at 9.00 am

Present

Members:

Munsur Ali (Chairman)	Deputy Alpa Raja
John Griffiths (Deputy Chairman)	Anett Rideg
John Foley	David Sales
Jaspreet Hodgson	Alethea Silk
Wendy Hyde	Mark Wheatley
Antony Manchester	Alderwoman Elizabeth Anne King, BEM JP
Andrew Mayer	Brendan Barns
Wendy Mead OBE	

In Attendance

Officers:

Rob Shakespeare	- Keats House, Open Spaces Department
Jayne Moore	- Town Clerk's Department
Emma Markiewicz	- London Metropolitan Archives
Omkar Chana	- Innovation and Growth
Andrew Buckingham	- Town Clerk's
Jen Beckermann	- Private Secretary to the Chairman of Policy and Resources
Gregory Moore	- Deputy Town Clerk
Joanna Parker	- Department of the Built Environment
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from these Members:

These Members sent Apologies and observed the meeting online: Caroline Haines, Jaspreet Hodgson, James St John Davis, Jason Groves.

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

Wendy Hyde declared that she was on the selection panel for Artworks discussed at item 4.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, That the minutes of the meeting of 16 September 2024 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings incorporating two amendments to the meeting's attendance as shown on the updated public-facing website.

4. **CITY ARTS INITIATIVE – RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Profession (Culture) setting out the recommendations of the City Arts Initiative (CAI) that met on 3 October 2024, during which the CAI considered the following two proposals:

1. Court Building, Fleet Street Salisbury Square Development Artworks;
2. Bowyers Hall Blue Plaque Recommendation(s).

Members noted that the final text and poetry selection for the ground floor granite panels, integrated lighting and alternative interpretations will be brought back to the Committee for approval, and that the designs will also go through the planning process as well as the Capital Buildings Board (CBB) for final sign-off.

The Committee commended the panel for the good work completed.

Referencing section 7, the Committee noted (in response to a Member question) that any copyright issues would be dealt with at CBB level.

A Member commented that the original Blue Plaque application was in 2016, and asked whether any of the delay could be attributed to the Corporation. The meeting heard that the resources available to process such matters were not currently matched to the volume of work, and that the lack of resources is being closely examined.

RESOLVED, That the Committee approve:

1. The artist concept and designs for the new court building at the Salisbury Square development; and
2. The Bowyers Hall Blue Plaque (subject to any necessary additional permissions gained from Environmental Health, Planning, and Highways).

5. **SUPPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW CULTURE STRATEGY FOR THE CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Profession (Culture) to be submitted for decision to the Policy & Resources Committee on 07 November 2024 on the need to support the development of a new Culture Strategy for the City of London Corporation.

The Committee noted that the Martin Review emphasised the importance of an independent Culture Strategy to maximise the City's unique cultural assets, and that to begin the work immediately (before January 2025) a proposal is to be made for the allocation of £45,000 from the Policy and Resources Committee's Policy Initiative Fund to enable key research, stakeholder consultation, analysis and the creation of a new Culture Strategy to include audience mapping and analysis.

The Committee noted that the new Culture Strategy would align with the City Corporation's corporate priorities and ensure that the Square Mile remains a vibrant cultural destination for residents, workers and visitors.

The Committee endorsed the recommendation, noting also that a full scope of work would be submitted to the Committee if the funds are granted.

A Member sought clarification on what resources are available within the Culture team, emphasising the importance of running workstreams in parallel rather than sequentially. The meeting noted the importance of a structured framework to deliver a coherent set of proposals.

A Member sought clarity on the £45K and how it was reached, also referencing section 22 in which it is suggested that the Committee may bid for further funds - noting the importance of Culture to the success of the City overall. The meeting noted that the sum was determined in line with what was realistic and adequate in the first instance.

Referencing section 7, a Member asked for more details on what constituted the Culture team. The meeting noted that the Culture team is the team responsible for Destination City (DC) in its initial iteration that included events and cultural activities that has now transferred to the Culture team, reporting to the Head of Profession (Culture) and includes staff at the Gallery and promotions. In response to a question of staff numbers, the meeting heard that an organigram would be circulated though not all positions are currently filled, and that the DC team is currently its SRO, though the formation of a DC Hub was recently approved at Corporation level comprising up to seven FTEs, and that a Director of Culture will be recruited.

A Member asked for further information on how the Culture strategy might interface with the cultural spatial strategy. The meeting noted that earlier strategies would be folded into the Culture strategy and deliver better clarity on Culture.

Referencing section 15, a Member asked why Growth Bid money was no longer available to the Culture team, suggesting that during the current transition year the Committee should have had a claim to a proportion of the Growth Bid money. The meeting noted that the Growth Bid was designed to fund the DC programme and encompasses all aspects of ensuring that the City is an even more attractive destination, noting also that planned events would still take place. A Member asked how that decision was made, in response to which the meeting heard that the remaining Growth Bid money was approved by the Policy & Resources Committee. Members commented that the purpose of the Growth Bid was a focus on the City's cultural assets and that it appeared that those assets were being undermined by an apparent lack of funding of some assets, including the Guildhall Art Gallery. The meeting noted that the apparent reduction in resources for the Guildhall Art Gallery could be explained by the way some employees were counted (including, for example, retail and display staff) in a way that did not accurately reflect the resources.

Members expressed a view that Culture appears in practice to be a sub-set of DC and commented that it appeared that the Committee was to all intents and purposes a sub-Committee of the Policy & Resources Committee, noting that the sentiment has been expressed on previous occasions. The meeting noted that the placing of Culture under the Committee as per the Martin Review did empower the Committee, and that the PIF funding was a mechanism for getting that started.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations set out in the report.

6. **COMMISSION RESEARCH INTO THE CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION'S LINKS TO THE HISTORICAL TRADE IN ENSLAVED AFRICAN PEOPLE**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk setting out the application to the Policy and Resources Committee's 2024/25 Policy Initiatives Fund for £34,400 to commission a piece of independent research into the City of London Corporation's links to the historical trade in enslaved African people.

A Member asked whether an endpoint was envisaged, and whether there were any plans for what would be done with the information. The meeting heard that the work would endorse the work of the City and would ensure that the City has input and involvement in the ongoing research that was expected to be carried out with or without the City's involvement. The meeting noted that a body of work already exists that will be supplemented with more specific information, and that once the research is completed it is expected that the City will decide where to take that research.

A Member commented on the benefits of also highlighting abolitionist initiatives in the City.

7. **DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET ALLOCATION - CHL**

The Committee agreed to discuss the budget allocation document during the Public session noting that budgetary allocations were routinely discussed in Public sessions, noting that any sensitive matters would be deferred to the non-Public session.

The Committee viewed a presentation on the budgetary allocations at the Corporation that included information on the funding sources of City Fund, City Estates, and City Bridge Foundation, noting also the £20.7M allocated to Culture that mostly comes from City Fund.

Members also noted these key assumptions agreed in 2024:

1. Increase for Adult & Children's social care pressures and staff strengthening for HR and internal controls;
2. 2% inflation uplift in local risk budgets;
3. No additional resources to be agreed (prioritisation to be made within overall envelopes);
4. No new bids processes for City Fund/City Estates; and

5. Continued work on workstreams to improve operational property utilisation and income generation.

Members noted the recent challenging budget position for Sculpture in the City (SITC), noting that the Committee, Environment and external partners had supported the SITC programme for the current year.

A Member sought clarity on the difference between local and central risk. The meeting heard that local risk references expenditure that is wholly within the responsibility of a Chief Officer, and central risk references the demand-led element of expenditure rendering it more challenging to control and the relevant Chief Officer is not required to make good any deficit.

A Member asked for clarity on how the Committee might have influence on the budget-setting process. The meeting heard that the priorities of the relevant Chief Officer and the Committee would ordinarily be expected to map onto each other so that resources could be prioritised accordingly – but that the CHL Committee currently has more than one Chief Officer which complicates the situation. The meeting heard that the absence of a defined cultural strategy and the absence of a co-ordinating cultural director position meant that the scope, priorities and remit have become unclear but that the development of a clear strategy and the appointment of a cultural director (both imminent) would clarify the Committee's position and drive resource allocation in line with a cultural strategy. The Committee also noted its approval in January 2022 of structural and resourcing changes resulting in the current organisation.

In response to a question on the timeline for strategy-setting and how that fitted in with the budget-setting process for the forthcoming year, the meeting heard that it was unlikely that a cultural strategy would be finalised in time for the 2025-26 budget-setting process though plans may be revised in the light of a defined cultural strategy via mid-year adjustments.

The Committee noted that additional income source and tools should be considered to inform a five-year strategy, and that a Chief Officer would ordinarily be expected to be factoring that in.

Members commented on some of the constraints within the budgetary process given the fixed items of expenditure.

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

In response to Member questions on the progress in recruiting to the Culture Director post, the meeting noted that once a clearer team structure was in place the recruitment process would get under way in early 2025.

On the plans to draft a definition of Culture, the meeting noted that the strategy and the definition would be worked out in tandem.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

10. **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.

Item	Paragraph

11. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED, That the non-public minutes of the meeting of 16 September 2024 be approved as an accurate record of the proceedings.

12. **MONUMENT VISITOR CENTRE OPPORTUNITY**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director, Environment setting out details of an opportunity to secure floorspace through the Planning process for a Monument visitor centre, delivered by a commercial developer at minimal cost and risk to the Corporation.

The Committee noted that a new Monument visitor centre, secured through Planning, also represents an opportunity to create an enhanced visitor offer in the east of the Square Mile, supporting corporate priorities for culture and Destination City.

The meeting noted that the developer of Faryners House, 25 Monument Street, has made an offer of floorspace within their proposed new building, and associated benefits. Members noted that the Planning application is live and expected to be determined by Committee in January or February 2025, meaning that the opportunity exists during the remainder of 2024 to negotiate the most favourable commercial terms with the developer, to be captured in the Planning approval and its associated S106 agreement.

It was noted that, in pursuit of this opportunity, it is likely that the Corporation will need to secure funding to deliver the fit-out costs required to open the visitor centre to the public, currently estimated between £775k and £1.5M. However, opportunities to fund these costs through an external grant will also be explored.

In response to a question (referencing section 3) on whether the proposed plans were likely to improve the staffing issues causing the Monument to be closed at short notice, the meeting noted that the staffing issues were due to operational oversight and governance which would be considered as part of the wider remit of the project, noting in particular the staffing levels set out in

section 26 of the report, the additional staff required being funded from the additional income generated by the visitor centre.

A Member commented that the new London Museum should have involvement in the Monument, noting the importance of the Great Fire in London's history.

A Member urged the executive to ensure that good toilet facilities were available at the site, and Members heard that proposals were in place for such facilities thanks to private sector entities interested in the provision.

A Member sought confirmation that the Monument was able to support the proposed doubling of visitor numbers. The meeting heard that the feasibility study had considered that matter carefully and were confident that the structure would support those visitors which could include timed ticket arrangements.

A Member asked how the proposed rent compared with other recent spaces let as cultural assets. The meeting noted that the peppercorn rent represented a saving to the Corporation of £21.6M across a 25-year period, and that each case varies considerably.

Members sought clarification (referencing section 16) on what harm might be caused to adjacent assets. The meeting noted that the development's increased floor space could impact on views of local historical features including a nearby church, though there is no harm to the Monument itself.

The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Town Clerk to agree commercial terms prior to the Planning decision, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

RESOLVED, That the Committee

- Support the pursuit of an opportunity to secure a space through Planning for a dedicated visitor centre for the Monument as per paragraph 18 (option A);
- Note the corollary to this support is the likelihood of a funding request to the Corporation of up to £1.5M towards capital costs not met by the prospective development partner, noting also that the timing of this funding request is subject to the developer's own timetable for the redevelopment of Faryners House but is likely to be within the next 3 years and that alternative sources of funding to meet these costs, such as external grants, will be explored; and
- Authorise negotiations between the Corporation (acting as a prospective tenant) and the developer of Faryners House to seek the most favourable commercial terms to be reported back to the Committee prior to the Planning decision, via urgency procedures if necessary.

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

There were no questions.

14. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 11.00 am

Chairman

Contact Officer: Jayne Moore
jayne.moore@cityoflondon.gov.uk