COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 19 June 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Children's Services Committee held at Committee Rooms, West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 19 June 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present

Members:

Matthew Bell
Leyla Boulton
Simon Burrows
Lesley Cole
Deputy Anne Corbett
Deputy Helen Fentimen OBE JP (Chair)
Deputy John Fletcher
Dawn Frampton
Steve Goodman OBE (Deputy Chair)
Sandra Jenner
Shravan Joshi MBE
Jørgensen
Helen Ladele
Alderman Tim Levene
Charles Edward Lord, OBE JP
Sophia Mooney
Leyla Ostovar
Jason Pritchard
Deputy Nighat Qureishi
Beverley Ryan
Sushil Saluja
Stuart Thompson
Deputy James Thomson CBE
Mark Wheatley
Deputy Ceri Wilkins
David Williams
Philip Woodhouse

Officers:

Deborah Bell	-	Community & Children's Services Department
Peta Caine	-	Community & Children's Services Department
Simon Cribbens	-	Community & Children's Services Department
Liane Coopey	-	Community & Children’s Services Department
Andrew Cusak	-	Comptroller & City Solicitor’s
Hannah Dobbin	-	Community & Children’s Services Department
David Downing	-	Community & Children’s Services Department
Dean Elsworth	-	Community & Children’s Services Department
Judith Finlay	-	Executive Director, Community & Children’s Services
Kirstie Hilton	-	Community & Children's Services Department
Mark Jarvis	-	Community & Children’s Services Department
Michael Kettle	-	Chamberlain’s Department
Greg Knight	-	Community & Children’s Services Department
Rachel Levy	-	Community & Children’s Services Department
Chris Lovitt	-	Community & Children's Services Department
Mark Lowman	-	Community & Children's Services Department
Scott Myers	-	City Surveyors
Will Norman	-	Community & Children’s Services Department
Chris Pelham	-	Community & Children's Services Department
Debby Rigby	-	Community & Children's Services Department
Alice Rogers	-	Community & Children’s Services Department
Dan Sanders	-	Community & Children's Services Department
Chris Spicer	-	Community & Children's Services Department

Blair Stringman	-	City Surveyor's Department
Chandni Tanna	-	Town Clerk's Department
Ellie Ward	-	Communications & External Affairs
	-	Community & Children's Services Department

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Alderman Christopher Makin, Deputy Christopher Hayward, Amy Horscroft and Sarah Gillinson.

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

Declarations of interest were received from the following Members:

David Williams – Noted they had dispensation to speak on the CAS scheme

Beverley Ryan – Declared as chair of governors of the Aldgate School

Deputy John Fletcher – Declared as a resident on Mansell Street and was clarified as a governor on the Board of Governors at Aldgate School

Deputy Ceri Wilkins – Declared a dispensation to speak but not vote with regard to the point to increase the limit of funds for the childcare accessibility scheme, and the 0-2 childcare provision at the Aldgate school.

Laura Jorgenhenson – Declared as a governor at Aldgate School, has a child currently in the school, and both children went through the childcare.

Jason Pritchard – Mentioned both their children attended the school from family centre through year 6 and left about 5-6 years ago.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That, the public and non-public summary of the minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2025 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the correction of a Members name.

4. ***PUBLIC OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received the outstanding actions report.

In relation to 6, Basketball Court on Avondale Estate, the discussion centred on efforts to restore the existing facility rather than seeking an alternative location. Officers explained that tree root damage was the main issue and confirmed that work was underway to bring the court back into use by the summer holidays. A Member, said they had visited the site and observed ongoing improvements, expressing appreciation for the progress. Questions were raised about potential funding support from external bodies, but officers clarified that the preference was to keep the facility local and confirmed that all efforts were focused on reopening it in time for the summer break.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

5. **CORPORATION CHILDCARE POLICY AND FAMILY SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning the City of London Corporation Childcare Policy and Family Service Arrangements.

The Chair introduced the item, noting the high level of interest and engagement from Members and the public. It was noted that the report followed a request made in January for a formal childcare policy and further public consultation, which received 151 responses. The policy aimed to promote fairness, equity, accessibility, and choice, and proposed an expansion of the Childcare Accessibility Scheme (CAS) by raising the household income threshold to £60,000p.a. This would be funded through Section 106 contributions and reviewed annually. In addition to the CAS, the report recommended extending the subsidy for 0–2 childcare provision at The Aldgate School until August 2027. This would allow time to assess the impact of upcoming Department for Education changes, particularly the introduction of a 30-hour free entitlement from September 2025. The Executive Director emphasised the importance of maintaining valued childcare provision in areas of disadvantage and confirmed that the £174,000 annual subsidy was separate from Section 106 funding and available for future use, subject to Member decisions.

An amendment was moved by Common Councillor Williams and seconded by Common Councillor Pritchard, that Members;

a) Approve an increase to the household income threshold for the Childcare Accessibility Scheme to £60k as set out in the draft policy;

b) Refer the remainder of the policy back to Officers to thoroughly reflect the requests from this committee as to alternatives - (for example meeting the broad policy objectives set out by a differential pricing model in affordable childcare at The Aldgate School)

c) Seek the presentation at a future meeting of this committee of alternatives in the childcare policy which allow members to vote transparently on the future support for, or withdrawal of funding for affordable childcare to The Aldgate School.

Mr Williams explained that the amendment sought to approve the CAS expansion but defer adoption of the full childcare policy to allow further consideration of long-term support for The Aldgate School. He noted that the current draft policy might be inconsistent with continued support for the school-based nursery and that a unified policy decision was needed. Officers responded that the CAS and school subsidy were distinct and that the policy allowed for future flexibility.

The amendment was then discussed by the Committee with some Members in support for the need for a comprehensive policy that included long-term funding for The Aldgate School, while others emphasised the importance of providing immediate certainty to families and stakeholders. Officers clarified that all options had been considered and that the proposed two-year extension would allow time to assess the impact of government policy changes and develop a sustainable model. Concerns were raised about the accuracy of data regarding the number of City children using the provision, which was clarified by the school's representatives.

The amendment was put to a vote, with 12 for, 12 against and 0 abstentions. In accordance with Standing Order 28.1(c), the Chair exercised a casting vote against the amendment, the amendment was not carried.

The Committee then returned to the substantive recommendations. During the discussion, it was necessary for figures cited by a Member to be corrected, and these were certified as accurate by the Director of Community and Children's Services. Officers and school representatives clarified that while the number of City children fluctuates, the provision serves a broader community and supports the Corporation's strategic aims. Members also discussed the potential for future funding sources, including additional Section 106 contributions and neighbourhood funding.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of aligning with evolving government policy, particularly the recent announcement of increased investment in school-based nurseries. Officers emphasised that the two-year extension would allow time to assess the impact of these changes and ensure the Corporation's approach remains responsive and sustainable. Officers confirmed that there was no suggestion of existing funds having been misspent.

The recommendations were carried, and the Committee expressed a collective commitment to supporting families, maintaining valued childcare provision, and working collaboratively with The Aldgate School, with the aim of providing a sustainable funding model for childcare going forward.

RESOLVED – That Members,

a) Note the findings of the 0-2 childcare consultation March – May 2025 in Appendix Two
b) Approve the Childcare Policy in Appendix One
c) Approve that up to £174,000 funding of 0-2 childcare at The Aldgate School continues for a further year until August 2027.
d) Note the commitment to work with The Aldgate School to secure a financially viable future model for childcare delivery.

6. **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALMSHOUSES SUB-COMMITTEE & OTHER APPOINTMENTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk concerning an amendment to the Terms of Reference of the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED – That Members,

a) Approve the additional allocation for including one additional Member in the composition and Terms of Reference of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee and appoint Mark Wheatley to the Sub-Committee.
b) Agree that the two remaining vacancies for the Safeguarding & Special Educational Needs Sub-Committee be advertised to co-opt from the wider Court of Common Council.
c) Appoint David Williams to the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee.
d) Appoint Dawn Frampton to the Health & Wellbeing Board as the Chairs representative.

7. **RESOLUTION FROM THE CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE TO THE COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered a resolution of the Corporate Services Committee concerning the City of London Corporation's response to the findings of Volume 7 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report.

The Chair introduced the item by highlighting the significance of the Grenfell tragedy and the duty to consider the report's implications with seriousness. Officers noted that the report was originally presented to Corporate Services Committee due to its oversight of health and safety across the organisation and emphasised the importance of keeping committees informed of ongoing developments and learnings post-Grenfell.

Officers confirmed that the recommendations in the report were broadly supported, with minor adjustments to better reflect operational realities—such as broadening the scope of reporting beyond just completed high-risk assessments. They also mentioned the development of a stronger health and safety team within the Community and Children's Services Department, particularly focused on housing. It was noted that an action plan would be brought to both the corporate and local health and safety boards to monitor progress.

A Member raised concerns about the lack of prioritisation and timelines for the recommendations. Officers responded that a specialist in health and fire safety had been recruited and was conducting a gap analysis to inform an action plan. This plan would be reported to the departmental health and safety committee, with the first draft expected at the next meeting.

A Member expressed concern at the number of risks identified—reportedly 19—and sought clarification on the response to this volume. Officers explained that while the risks were being actively managed, the team was enhancing its monitoring through new software and processes. They acknowledged the need for additional resources and assured the committee that the most critical risks were being prioritised.

A Member inquired whether residents would have direct access to the newly appointed fire and safety officer. Officers responded that this would be considered as part of a broader strategy, including a resident engagement plan for higher-risk buildings. They also confirmed that the strategy would eventually encompass other property types such as sheltered housing, almshouses, and hostels.

A Member asked whether the Gresham almshouses were included in the scope and suggested engaging with the Almshouses Association for guidance. Officers welcomed the suggestion and confirmed that the strategy would indeed include such properties.

RESOLVED – That Members,

a) Note the resolution made by Corporate Services Committee and;
b) Agree to refer the request, to set in place a regular reporting rhythm to allow monitoring and escalation of issues, with assigned actions and action holders to the Housing Management & Alsmhouses Sub-Committee and;
c) Agree a standing item on the Community & Children's Services Committee agenda for updates on the matter for the Civic Year 2025/2026.

8. **RESOLUTION TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE FROM THE COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered a resolution to the Finance Committee concerning Commitment of Funding for Homelessness from Council Tax.

RESOLVED – That, the Community and Children's Services Committee, noting the discussion at the Court of Common Council on 6 March 2025 (Item 7, Finance Committee), and the statement made by the Chairman of the Finance Committee, Deputy Henry Nicholas Almroth Colthurst, regarding the potential use of revenue from the Council Tax to support homelessness initiatives, resolves as follows:

That the Finance Committee be asked to:

1. Formally consider and confirm the commitment that revenue generated from the Council Tax on second homes be prioritised for initiatives addressing homelessness within the City of London.
2. Report back to the Community and Children's Services Committee on the mechanisms by which this funding will be allocated, monitored, and evaluated to ensure it delivers meaningful impact.
3. Ensure transparency in the application of these funds, including through regular reporting to the Court of Common Council and relevant committees.

9. **DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**
The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning the five-year high-level business plan for the Community & Children's Services Department.

Officers provided an overview, explaining that the DCCS five-year business plan represented a new approach, moving away from the traditional one-year format. The plan outlines revised strategic objectives and high-level priority workstreams, which will be reviewed annually due to the constraints of an annual budget.

A Member raised two points: an apparent omission of Barbican Estate residents from the housing figures, and the issue of underutilised car parking at the Barbican. They suggested that car parking should be addressed through a city-wide strategy rather than in isolation. Officers acknowledged the oversight regarding Barbican residents and confirmed that the department is engaging with the wider corporation on the broader car parking strategy.

Another Member praised the comprehensive nature of the business plan but noted the absence of any reference to modelling. In response, Officers explained that financial modelling includes five- and ten-year plans for the Housing Revenue Account, extended to 30 years, and that assumptions are made cautiously due to the unpredictability of government grants. Risk factors considered include demand management and the level of government support, all of which are incorporated into the City Corporation's medium-term financial plan.

A Member raised a concern about the performance metrics for affordable housing, suggesting that in addition to completed homes, the plan should also track projects that have begun. This would better reflect progress over the longer timeframes typical of housing developments. Another member suggested adopting a rolling five-year planning model, where each year the plan is updated to maintain a consistent five-year outlook, either within DCCS or across the corporation.

RESOLVED – That Members,

a) Note the factors taken into consideration in compiling the Community and Children's Services Department Business Plan; and
b) Approve, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by this Committee, the departmental Business Plan 2025/26 – 2029/30.

10. **HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME**
The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning the financial challenge of the 10-year housing investment programme.

Officers emphasised the importance of the Housing Investment Programme, clarifying that it applies to all estates under the City's landlord responsibilities—not just individual ones. A Member raised concerns about potential confusion among residents regarding service charges, and it was stressed that the programme is not about new homes but rather investment in existing social housing stock.

It was noted that the programme outlines a 10-year investment plan, based on current estimates and indexed projections. However, it was discussed that the figures are not based on fully developed or tendered projects, and therefore subject to change. Contingency has been included, but Members were cautioned about the limitations of forecasting costs over such a long period.

Attention was drawn to paragraphs 18 and 19 of the report, which propose the creation of a governance group—referred to as a transition or advisory board—for the Golden Lane Estate. This group would mirror the successful steering group model used at Middlesex Street, which improved collaboration between officers, members, and residents. Members supported the proposal, recognising the value of resident input and engagement.

The discussion acknowledged the historical neglect of social housing by the Corporation and celebrated the progress made in prioritising housing investment. Despite this, a funding gap of £84 million remains, and Members discussed the constraints on using Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funds. Suggestions were made to explore the use of climate budget allocations, although this would require adjustments to current strategy timelines.

Concerns were raised about cost escalation, referencing the Black Raven Court project where costs more than doubled. Officers responded by detailing efforts to improve cost accuracy through early contractor engagement, sample surveys, and market analysis. Nonetheless, they reiterated that final costs would only be confirmed upon receipt of tenders.

Leaseholder recharges were discussed, with an estimated £47 million over ten years—averaging £52,000 per property. Clarification was sought on whether this figure assumes full leaseholder contribution or accounts for landlord responsibilities. Officers confirmed that the estimate is conservative and that further legal review of lease terms is underway.
Staffing costs were also addressed, with a projected £1.5 million increase to support the programme. Recruitment is not yet underway, but the figure reflects anticipated needs across compliance and delivery. The plan includes front-loading resources and tapering off through efficiencies and technology, aiming to create a sustainable HRA model for the next 30 years.

The Committee reaffirmed its support for the governance group proposal and acknowledged the need for accurate figures and inclusive planning to ensure the success of the Housing Investment Programme.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

11. ***GOLDEN LANE LEISURE CENTRE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS**
The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children’s Services concerning the future Golden Lane Leisure Centre (GLLC)

management contract. The current contract ends on 31 March 2026 and a period of refurbishment at the centre will follow.

It was proposed that a competitive tender process be undertaken to secure the future management of GLLC. The process will aim to secure the most advantageous arrangement for the Corporation in terms of both quality of service and commercial terms. The process would also allow for the development of an internally led bid to be assessed alongside external submissions. It was noted that Members of the Sports Sounding Board had suggested exploring a quasi-internal bid from one of the Corporation’s natural environment charities, such as Hampstead Heath, which already manages sports facilities and could benefit from charitable tax relief.

Concerns were raised by a Member regarding the performance of the current contract. Officers acknowledged issues but noted the challenges arising from the deterioration of the centre, and several short term contract extension leading to lack of long-term certainty for the provider. Officers acknowledged these issues and emphasised that the new contract would include more robust KPIs and allow for enforcement mechanisms.

Members stressed the importance of ensuring that future arrangements include enforceable standards and protections for community use. Officers confirmed that the new contract would be developed in consultation with Members, particularly through the Sports Sounding Board, to ensure that specifications reflect the needs of users and provide appropriate safeguards.

The Committee endorsed the proposed approach to outsourcing the management of the centre, including the option for a hybrid or internal bid to be evaluated alongside external tenders.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

12. ***SCHOOL ADMISSIONS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children’s Services concerning the allocation of primary and secondary school places for City of London resident pupils for the academic year 2025/26.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

13. ***FAMILIES IN THE CITY UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children’s Services concerning the Families in the City programme.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

14. ***REVENUE OUTTURN 2024/25 – COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN’S SERVICES COMMITTEE (CITY FUND)**

The Committee received a joint report of the Executive Director, Community & Children’s Services and The Chamberlain concerning the 2024/25 revenue outturn for the non-Housing Revenue Account (HRA) services.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

15. ***HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - OUTTURN 2023/24**
The Committee received a joint report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services and The Chamberlain concerning the outturn for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) in 2024/25 with the final agreed budget for the year.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

16. ***DCCS DEPARTMENTAL RISK UPDATE**
The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning detail of the Department's current risk register and the actions taken in mitigation to reduce those risks.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

17. **UPDATES FROM SUB COMMITTEES, ALLOCATED MEMBERS AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**
There was no update from allocated Members and Portfolio Holders.

18. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.

19. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
There was no urgent business.

20. **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.

21. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**
RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 30th April be agreed as a correct record.

22. ***NON-PUBLIC OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**
The Committee received the non-public outstanding actions report.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

23. ***NON-PUBLIC APPENDIX**
The Committee received a non-public appendix in conjunction with item 10.

RESOLVED – That, the appendix be noted.

24. **SUMMER BUILDINGS**
The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services relating to a planning process to develop and design new social rent homes.

25. **GOLDEN LANE LEISURE CENTRE (GLLC) REFURBISHMENT**
The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services in relation to refurbishment of Golden Lane Leisure Centre.

26. **ISLEDEN HOUSE INFILL PROJECT**
The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services in relation to The Isleden House infill development.

27. **HRA COMMERCIAL PROPERTY – ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, DEBT POSITION, PROGRESS AGAINST ARREARS RECOVERY AND VACANT UNITS**
The Committee considered a joint report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services, The City Surveyor and The Chamberlain in relation to current status of commercial arrears and vacancies within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) commercial portfolio.

28. ***DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY OR URGENCY POWERS**
The Committee received a report advising Members of action taken by the Town Clerk outside of the Committee's schedule, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, in accordance with Standing Order Nos 40(a) and 40(b).

29. ***YORK WAY ESTATE PROVISION OF SOCIAL HOUSING**
The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services in relation to new homes all for social rent at the York Way Estate.

30. ***SYDENHAM HILL REDEVELOPMENT, LEWISHAM, SE26 6ND**
The Committee received a report of The City Surveyor in relation to the land and social housing provision within the Sydenham Hill Estate.

31. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no non-public questions.

32. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**
There was no urgent business.

33. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**
RESOLVED – That, the confidential minutes of the meeting held on the 30th April 2025 be agreed as a correct record subject to a correction raised by a Member.

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Blair Stringman
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