

## **RESOURCE ALLOCATION SUB (POLICY AND RESOURCES) COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, 26 May 2021**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Resource Allocation Sub (Policy and Resources) Committee held in Committee Rooms 3 & 4, Guildhall, and via Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday, 26 May 2021 at 10.00 am

### **Present**

#### **Members:**

Deputy Catherine McGuinness (Chair)  
Deputy Jamie Ingham Clark (Deputy  
Chairman)  
Deputy Keith Bottomley  
Tijs Broeke  
Karina Dostalova  
Tracey Graham  
Sheriff Christopher Hayward

Shravan Joshi  
Alderman Vincent Keaveny  
Deputy Edward Lord  
Jeremy Mayhew  
Deputy James Thomson  
Alderman Sir David Wootton

#### **In Attendance**

Marianne Fredericks  
Deputy John Tomlinson

#### **Officers:**

Joseph Anstee	- Town Clerk's Department
Michael Cogher	- Comptroller and City Solicitor
Caroline Al-Beyerty	- Chamberlain
Bob Roberts	- Director of Communications
Angela Roach	- Assistant Town Clerk
Gregory Moore	- Town Clerk's Department
Dianne Merrifield	- Chamberlain's Department

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Anne Fairweather and Deputy Tom Sleigh.

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

There were no declarations.

### **3. MINUTES**

The Sub Committee noted a correction within Item 4 wherein 'process of electing Sheriffs elsewhere' should read 'process of appointing Sheriffs elsewhere'.

**RESOLVED** – That, pending the above amendment, the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 12 May 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **CAPITAL FUNDING UPDATE**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Chamberlain regarding capital prioritisation and the 2020/21 and 2021/22 rounds of annual capital bids. The Chamberlain introduced the report and outlined the proposals recommended.

**RESOLVED** – That the Resource Allocation Sub Committee:

- (i) Review the schemes summarised in Table 1 and, particularly in the context of the current financial climate, confirm their continued essential priority for release of funding at this time;
- (ii) Agree the release of up to £2.93m for the schemes in Table 1 from the reserves of City Fund and City's Cash, subject to the required gateway approvals;
- (iii) Note that in order to maintain sound financial discipline a review of unallocated central project funding provisions will be brought to Members before the summer recess.

5. **GOVERNANCE REVIEW: COMMITTEE STRUCTURE - PRINCIPLES**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk concerning the Governance Review in respect of principles underlying the Committee structure.

Introducing the report, the Chair reflected on the structured and piecemeal consideration of Lord Lisvane's recommendations to date. Whilst this had been productive so far, now that consideration turned to the overall committee structure itself she was minded that a more holistic approach would be beneficial. With that in mind, she sought and obtained the Sub Committee's endorsement for the proposal that, rather than continuing to press ahead on a piecemeal basis, a revised approach seeking to draw together the totality of Members' emerging views into an overall proposition for consideration, be adopted.

During discussion, the following points arose:-

- It was agreed that the application of "executive or non-executive" nomenclature was not an appropriate one for Members, given their varying responsibilities and the Corporation's differences with other organisations. However, it was agreed that a serious look at the level of delegations in place and getting that balance right was important, with it observed that in some areas Members perhaps had a tendency to micro-manage issues where it would be more beneficial to take a more strategic approach.
- With reference to the scheme of delegations, Members agreed that there was a need to undertake a holistic review with the aim of seeing where improvements to efficiency and the speed of decision-making could be

made. Ultimately, Members would need to determine to what level they were comfortable in delegating to officers, with it stressed that the review needed to happen through a partnership approach between officers and Members, rather than being officer-driven, so that relevant Chairs in particular could be engaged prior to amendments being presented. It was noted that timescales for achieving this review would be challenging, particularly in the context of current resource constraints, and the Chair undertook to liaise with the Town Clerk following the meeting with a view to identifying how this could be progressed expeditiously. The Deputy Chamberlain suggested that early proposals could be drawn up on the key financial and policy aspects by the recess.

- There was support for revisiting committee meeting cycles and frequencies, as well as implementing a limit on the number of committees which could receive any given report.
- Several Members commented on the issue of the same reports being considered by multiple committees, observing that this caused complication and delay. The approach of the European Parliament was highlighted as an example of an established alternative system, whereby one committee was identified as being responsible for decision-making and where any other committees had an interest they could submit their opinion ahead of the primary committee considering the matter.
- With reference to minutes, whilst there was some support for streamlining committee minutes and moving away from a detailed account of debate, it was argued that there still needed to be a reflection of the broad differences of opinion expressed, representing the balance of views sensibly, rather than simply recording decisions. It was also observed that, for certain areas, minutes would need to be fuller to comply with various inspection regimes. It was also argued that Court minutes should continue in their current format.
- Support for expressed for the tightening of terms of reference and a more rigid approach to prevent “mission creep” by committees.
- There was an endorsement for minimising “for information” reports and giving consideration as to how they might best be taken under the new system.
- In relation to proposals around limiting the numbers of sub-committees and related bodies, it was observed that the present total must not just be reduced but that mechanisms must be in place to prevent the proliferation of new bodies in future. It was suggested that with careful oversight, requiring perhaps a business case to be submitted to Policy & Resources for consideration and setting out resourcing implications each time, would be appropriate. A much greater use of Task and Finish Groups with fixed lifetimes, rather than permanent sub-committees, should also be pursued.
- The use of joint meetings where appropriate was supported, with particular reference made to recent examples and it being observed that they represented a good opportunity to bring multiple committees together, perhaps where there was a report scheduled to go to several bodies, thereby minimising repeat consideration of items.

- There was an endorsement for appropriate training and appraisals for Chairs.
- The proposals relating to green impact assessments were supported, with it noted this was already being implemented in any case.
- It was agreed that there was universal opposition to the proposition of a Governance & Nominations Committee and that this recommendation should be rejected; however, there was support for the greater use of skills matrices, together with more intelligent advertising and use of data, to help inform Members' voting.
- Whilst there was broad in-principle support for smaller committees, it was recognised that a blanket approach could not be taken and that a more nuanced approach, utilising the right size committee for right type of body, was necessary; for instance, committees such as Policy & Resources would need to retain a larger membership.
- Similarly, whilst there was in-principle support for reducing the numbers of committees or outside bodies one might serve on, this would need to be handled carefully so as not result in an abundance of vacancies, as well as facilitating the clear benefits of cross-pollination of service on various committees. Continued use of the ability to waive service limitations once a vacancy has been open for a certain period was suggested as prudent.
- With reference to the practice of having three Deputy / Vice Chairs of Policy and Resources, following debate there was support for moving away from this and reverting to the practice of having a single Deputy Chair. Whilst the heavy workload was noted, it was suggested that the use of rapporteurs or lead Members was a preferable alternative which allowed for peoples' specialisms or interests to be engaged whilst also minimising any complication or confusion around the committee's leadership.
- However, it was cautioned that the Deputy Chair should not be seen as the natural successor when elected several years in advance of the Chair's term ending; rather, any lead members or sub-committee chairs, for instance, might be considered in the round as potential successors.
- Discussing the automatic right for outgoing Chairs to take up the Deputy Chair role, Members felt on balance that this should be a matter for the committee to determine in each instance. In some cases there was a clear value to this handover process and continuity, whereas in others, it could be seen differently; ultimately, Members felt that the democratic approach would be preferable and the outgoing Chair should be eligible to stand as Deputy Chair but be required to be elected.
- With specific reference to Policy & Resources, the Chair suggested that there should be a sort of "purdah period" for outgoing Chairs, similar to that in place for Lord Mayors.
- On the question of term limits, there were a range of views, with it ultimately felt that they were clearly essential in those areas where there was a statutory or regulatory expectation to have them, or where there was a lack of obvious turnover in membership; however, they were not necessarily always appropriate for all committees.

- On the question of the convention whereby Aldermen did not stand for certain chairmanships, it was clarified that the Aldermen were supportive of no substantive change in this area and did not necessarily support Lord Lisvane's proposal to remove the convention. Another Member suggested that this issue perhaps needed to be considered in the round, potentially looking at what other organisations did, although it was observed that very few organisations had such a structure and so it was unlikely relevant benchmarks existed.

The Chair thanked Members for the positive discussion.

**RESOLVED:** That:-

- (i) The proposals made by Lord Lisvane in relation to general issues and principles for the committee structure be noted (Appendix 1).
- (ii) The feedback provided by Members through the informal engagement process be noted (Appendix 2).
- (iii) The views of the Sub Committee in respect of the various proposals, as set out in the above minute, be collated and reflected in composite proposals to be presented to the Policy & Resources Committee in due course.

**6. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

**7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other business.

The Chair then thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions before closing the meeting.

**The meeting ended at 11.02 am**

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Chairman

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