

PORT HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13 July 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Port Health & Environmental Services Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Keith Bottomley (Chairman)	Alderman Gregory Jones QC
Mary Durcan (Deputy Chairman)	Shravan Joshi
Rehana Ameer	Alderswoman Susan Langley
Alexander Barr	Vivienne Littlechild
John Bennett	Deputy Robert Merrett
Peter Bennett	Deputy Andrien Meyers
Deputy Peter Dunphy	John Petrie
John Edwards	Deputy Henry Pollard
Helen Fentimen	Henrika Priest
Sophie Anne Fernandes	Jason Pritchard
Christopher Hill	Jeremy Simons
Deputy Wendy Hyde	George Abrahams

Officers:

Jon Averbs	- Director of Markets & Consumer Protection
Gary Burks	- Superintendent & Registrar, COL Cemetery & Crematorium
Ruth Calderwood	- Environmental Health Officer
Paul Chadha	- Chief Lawyer
Tony Macklin	- Assistant Director, Environmental Health & Trading Standards
Jenny Pitcairn	- Chamberlain's Department
Rachel Pye	- Pollution Control Team Manager
Richard Steele	- IS & Finance Officer
Gavin Stedman	- Port Health & Public Protection Director
Ian Hughes	- Deputy Director, Transportation and Public Realm
Vince Dignam	- Business Performance & Transport Group Manager
Leanne Murphy	- Committee and Member Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Elizabeth Rogula, Tijs Broeke, Anne Fairweather and John Chapman.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 18 May 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising

With regards to a question raised by a Member concerning noise nuisance by buskers outside of the Tate Modern, Officers confirmed a meeting was hosted by Southwark Council last week and the Deputy Chairman attended along with other Councillors. It was hoped the collaboration would bring changes on buskers and needed enforcement. Another meeting would take place in 4-6 weeks.

A Member enquired why buskers were able to use amplification. It was felt byelaws could stop its use, but resource was needed to resolve the problem.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS AND WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk setting out the current list of outstanding actions:

Electric Vehicle Charging

Officers confirmed there had been progress, and they were pressing DCCS for an update on the Middlesex Street plan and working closely on securing funding for kit.

Members were reminded that Estates generally provided charging spots themselves. The City was only developing sites for commercial/visitor use only and did not want to become a destination for recharging, only to provide for top ups for taxis, etc. Officers were looking to expand numbers at hubs but not significantly, with the Baynard House facility as a key site.

A Member requested a solution for East City residents and businesses. As the Corporation had not provided options in timely manner, the Member asked if residents were able to access the facility at Minorities Car Park for free. The Committee supported this suggestion as a practical solution.

Whilst it was acknowledged these car park bays were not significantly used, this decision could not be made by this Committee and Officers agreed to follow up with the Planning & Transportation Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

Garden Waste Recycling

Officers confirmed there were no updates since the last meeting.

Measurement and mitigation options for operational rail noise from London Underground affecting the Barbican Estate

Members were informed that a letter was sent to London Underground regarding the concern and frustration that only half the issue had been dealt with, and Officers awaited an imminent response.

A Member voiced concern that those residents to the east have the worse situation and asked Officers to keep up the pressure as London Underground had given no indication that they would carry out the work soon.

It was noted that the Northern Line Bank Branch would be shut for a significant time and Officers agreed to ask if this would have an effect in communications.

Amendment to KPI TPR 11 of the DBE business plan 2021/22 / surveys

The Chairman confirmed data would come to the September meeting plus an agenda item.

5. **COVID-19 AND BREXIT UPDATE**

The Committee received an oral update from the Port Health and Public Protection Director concerning COVID-19 and the UK's impact of leaving the EU (Brexit) on Port Health & Public Protection.

COVID-19

The Government announced yesterday that most Covid guidance and legal restrictions would be lifted in England on the 19 July 2021. Officers awaited details of best practice; however, guidance remained on people meeting others outside where possible and the recommended use of face coverings in crowded public settings. The City will therefore look very different with clubs able to open and table service no longer mandatory.

The City's Public Protection Teams will continue to engage with businesses to provide advice and guidance. However, in light of the latest announcement, the City Covid Accreditation scheme is currently under review.

Members were reminded that the FSA was due to publish a roadmap for food hygiene interventions. This has recently been published and considered a reset of the inspection programme. Officers will bring details of the plan up to 2023 to the September Committee meeting.

Ports and HARC have continued to operate and both have been extremely busy this year with HARC experiencing a 40% increase on normal June levels. Similarly, Port Health are running at 25+% above normal levels although this may dip from July as a result of the impacts of the end of import quotas in June and the Suez Canal backlog. Port Health continue to work closely with the port operators to put procedures in place to increase capacity, e.g. approving extra seal check areas and numerous meetings with the trade to address delays have taken place.

Brexit

The implementation of the next phase of controls on high-risk imported food and feed is due to come in on the 1 October. This is the introduction of 100% documentary checks. Port Health continues to train its staff and work with stakeholders to ensure a smooth process. The aim remains to advise agents and importers if there are issues with paperwork, etc, and get the process correct for full checks to be implemented from January 2022.

It was noted that a bid had been made for additional funding from Defra in light of Sheerness advising that they would also be dealing with high risk food and feed. Officers await the final detailed bidding process to be confirmed.

With regards to animal health, Members were advised that the controls on live animals from the EU would not come in until 21 March 2022 at the earliest. There were concerns that private BCPs would be set up in competition to HARC and Officers were responding by making representations and seeking Counsel's opinion.

The Chairman congratulated the Team for their hard work which was not an easy feat.

A Member was concerned that private companies accepting animals from abroad would mean the Animal Reception Centre would be left with the rarer/more difficult animals. Officers agreed it was not a level playing field as the ARC covered a wide variety of animals as a statutory requirement and were responding to Defra accordingly.

6. **DENTON PIER AND PONTOON OVERHAUL WORKS - GATEWAY 2 REPORT**

The Committee considered a report of the City Surveyor regarding Denton Pier and Pontoon Overhaul Works – Gateway 2 Report.

A Member enquired where is Denton Pier was and how often it was used. Officers confirmed it was located on the Thames near Gravesend and the pier was strategically important to launch service and its ability to undertake a number of statutory duties and it is used by vessels daily.

Members were advised that the pier was 55 years old and the works would help it continue for the next 25 years. Members were interested to understand how long piers generally lasted and whether it was worth looking to move the facility to the new site of the markets, rather than spending £1m on a pier the Corporation did not own.

Officers confirmed the resiting of the markets was a long way off, and the site might not be suitable for launches but could be considered in the future. Officers agreed to investigate how long piers lasted.

RESOLVED, that the Committee:

- Budget of £50,000 for a condition survey and options appraisal is required to reach the next Gateway;
- Note the total estimated cost of the project at £850,000 (excluding risk);
- Note the estimated costed risk of £150,000.

7. **MST FEES 2021/22**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Markets and Consumer Protection regarding MST Fees 2021/22.

RESOLVED, that the Committee agree the proposed fees for 2021/22.

8. **WASTE AND STREET CLEANSING ANNUAL REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Committee noted a report of the Director of Markets and Consumer Protection regarding the Waste and Street Cleansing Annual Report and Improvement Plan.

The Chairman thanked the Team for the fantastic service keeping the City clean. Members queried how dirty the City got during lockdown and if the stats provided gave the full picture as the City was worse than the national benchmark.

Members were advised that whilst there was a lower footfall, there were less resources and the service still kept above the London benchmark. Officers were monitoring the situation closely following the new reductions to ensure standards were maintained and resources were in the right place as recovery and footfall would likely have an impact.

With regards to the questions concerning the use of electric vehicles and co2 savings, Officers required more time and data to make a proper comparison and agreed to bring this to a future Committee meeting.

A Member enquired if there were particular areas in the City that were prone to graffiti noting the increase. Member were advised that the increase was likely due to there being less people in City, so they were able to come unnoticed. This was being monitored by Officers who were reacting quickly and reporting these cases of ASB to the Police. It was noted that it could be difficult to engage with owners and rail owners to remove the graffiti when on private land.

A Member advocated for the introduction of reverse vending machines in the City which were popular in other countries. Officers confirmed none were in place yet, but they were looking for Partners for suitable areas to trial this.

In response to a question, Officers confirmed that the City's drinking fountains would return on 19 July 2021.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

9. **AIR QUALITY ANNUAL STATUS REPORT**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Markets and Consumer Protection in relation to Air Quality Annual Status Report.

The Chairman highlighted the huge importance of climate challenge issues noting that the Environment Bill was currently going through Parliament and Lord Tope supported the Corporation's amendments. It was noted that WHO would be publishing guidelines in September.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

10. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2020/21**

The Committee noted a joint report of the Chamberlain, Director of the Built Environment, Director of Markets and Consumer Protection and Director of Open Spaces regarding the Revenue Outturn 2020/21.

Highlights included an underspend of £2.2m, £1m was moved into a reserve fund for the ports due to Brexit implications and successful bids had been made for grants for waste cleaning and recycling.

A Member saw lots of the savings to be opportunistic and questioned how much of the underspend was planned and could be replicated in the future. Officers agreed some of the extra income was opportunistic and they would take advantage when possible. The Business Plan was being prepared and would take budgeting, the expansion of ports and late trade issues not yet budgeted for into account. Some of the reserve transfer was due to £300k in grant funding from Defra and would be carried over to next year and ringfenced.

Members were reminded that the accounts must always be cost neutral hence the move to the reserve fund.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted and carry forward the local risk underspending to 2021/22.

11. **CITY LIGHTING STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Director of the Built Environment concerning City Lighting Strategy Update.

The Chairman stated that this was an interim report, requested in partnership with the Planning & Transportation Committee Chairman, following concern from Members at the lack of progress on buildings not applying the necessary efficiency benefits and keeping lights on permanently.

Officers were proud of the ground-breaking LED Programme and noted that budgetary savings were not as high due to the increase in energy prices. The right steps were being taken to reduce usage and the carbon footprint in the City, and the aim was to include setting lighting in the framing of climate action which would require significant engagement with businesses and developers. Planning campaigns and new guidance were being developed.

The Deputy Chairman stated that the street lighting project was completed to time and budget with phenomenal savings and should be highlighted in communications from the Media Team.

A Member noted that building managers were surveyed and keen to change but were receiving push back from their tenants. It was hoped that the formal guidance would help support change. Officers agreed to engage with the Member concerning a lighting code of practice.

A Member observed that there was nothing in the strategy regarding lighting for safety for public exercise and encouraged engagement with sports and activity clubs. Officers confirmed they could directly influence how lights were managed against ASB and safety for exercise.

A Member suggested advertising how easy it was to change to LED lighting and the benefits to all residential estates.

In response to a request for practical advice that Members could share now to encourage constituents to switch lights off, Officers agreed to check what advice was currently available in advance of the upcoming planning advice and guidance coming for best practice.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

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

Damage caused by Euros

A Member reported that the damage caused during and after the football was worse than New Year's Eve and asked what lessons had been learnt in advance of the World Cup next year, and whether the budget cuts would affect the ability to respond. Officers confirmed that cleansing colleagues had reported significant littering in the City, but the contractors were expected to clean up after big events as part of their contract.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business.

14. 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.

15. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

16. PORT HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEBTORS - PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2021

The Committee noted a joint report of the Director of the Built Environment, Director of Markets and Consumer Protection and Director of Open Spaces regarding Port Health and Environmental Services Debtors for the period ending 31 March 2021.

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

There were no questions.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERED URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There was one item.

The meeting closed at 12.45 pm

Chairman

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