

PORT HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 24 January 2023

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)	Wendy Hyde
George Abrahams	Elizabeth Anne King
Deputy Peter Dunphy	Deputy Natasha Maria Cabrera Lloyd-Owen
John Edwards	Owen
Helen Fentimen	Andrew McMurtrie
Deputy Marianne Fredericks	Jason Pritchard
Alderman Prem Goyal	Deputy Dr Giles Shilson
Caroline Haines	Mandeep Thandi
Deputy Ann Holmes	Glen Witney
	Henrika Priest

Officers:

Gavin Stedman	- Port Health & Public Protection Director
Jenny Pitcairn	- Chamberlain's Department
Gary Burks	- Environment Department
Ben Dunleavy	- Town Clerk's Department
Ian Hughes	- Environment Department
Aggie Minas	- Environment Department
Ellen Fouweather	- Town Clerk's Department
Timothy Bage	- Environment Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Shahnaz Bakht, Alderman Alex Barr, Deputy Chris Boden, Timothy Butcher, the Deputy Chairman Mary Durcan (observing virtually), Henry Jones (observing virtually), Deputy Henry Pollard, Alethea Silk (observing virtually), Oliver Sells, Irem Yerdelen and Alderman Kawsar Zaman.

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

There were none.

3. MINUTES

The public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 29 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Members noted the following items from the Committee's outstanding actions list:

- A letter to London Underground regarding the ongoing noise issues affecting the Barbican Centre was being prepared;
- A diary invite had been sent to Members for a presentation to Committee Members regarding income generation and the medium-term Capital Plan.

5. **CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM FEES AND CHARGES 2023-24**

Question from Alderman ZamaMembers received a report of the Executive Director, Environment, regarding the cemetery and crematorium fees and charges for 2023-4.

The Chairman asked officers from the City of London Cemetery what plans they had in place for faiths which required prompt burials, such as Jewish or Islamic burials. In reply, officers said that the Cemetery was non-denominational and did not historically receive much demand from the Jewish or Muslim communities, as it did not have space to offer the designated faith areas they often require. A move from the current system would raise the overall costs of burials and cremations and require considerable change in staffing structures. These factors, combined with the low demand for weekend funerals, meant that it had not been considered in the past and Officers felt that it was unlikely there would be a sufficient business case to move towards a change in the operational structure in the future.

Members noted this reasoning but requested that officers carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment to consider the Cemeteries approach and to see what else the City Corporation could offer for these communities. Officers undertook to undertake this and to provide Members with the results.

RESOLVED, that – Members agree the fees and charges as set out in the report and its appendices, for implementation with effect from 1 April 2023.n (apologies):

1. Does the Corporation have in place plans to deal with funerals for those of the Jewish and Muslim faiths who require prompt burials, even over weekends?
2. As such, in setting fees for the weekend (which appear to be higher for understandable reasons), does the Corporation consider that, as a result of religious obligations, these religious groups/individuals do not necessarily 'choose' to have a burial over the weekend, and thus is there scope to reduce these costs in line with weekday costs?

Decision – to agree the fees and charges set out in the report and its appendices, for implementation with effect from 1 April 2023

6. **MESSAGE AND SPECIAL TREATMENT FEES 2023-24**

Members received a report of the Executive Director, Environment relative to Massage and Special Treatment fees for 2023-24.

The Chairman asked if officers were confident that the proposed fees were in line with those of neighbouring local authorities, and if they felt the fees were competitive. In reply, officers said that fees were set on a cost recovery basis, with the City Corporation following the requirements as set out in legislation.

RESOLVED, that – Members agree the proposed fees for 2023/24.

7. BUSINESS PLANS 2022/23: PROGRESS REPORT (PERIOD 2, AUGUST-NOVEMBER)

Members received a report of the Executive Director, Environment providing a progress report on the Business Plan for 2022/23.

A Member requested further information regarding the variances and unidentified savings mentioned in the report. In reply, officers said they had needed to find the unidentified savings to stay within the allocated resource envelope, which had been split between the Environment Department's service committees. The variance had retained rather than reallocated due to a change in how budgets were managed and to help make it clear to Members where variances had arisen during the year. They would be able to revise the ways in which savings were made in future years, and consider broader elements of income generation.

A Member asked about the relationship between the Climate Action Strategy and the air quality team, and if they worked together on air quality issues such as those affecting Crescent House. In reply, officers said the air quality team had been established by the City Corporation to achieve its statutory responsibilities. Officers undertook to return to Members with further information on the issues affecting Crescent House, and encouraged Members to contact them regarding any concerns on air quality.

A Member commented on the overspends noted in the report, and the statement that these were being offset by salary savings due to vacancies, and asked if these vacancies were having any impact on services, and asked officers to comment the management of future budgets to move past year end overspends. In reply, officers clarified that while the department as a whole was projecting a small overspend, a break-even position was projected for City Fund. The position for the Committee's budget had worsened as part of a managed process where officers were reducing what was drawn from their reserve to avoid unnecessarily going into an underspend position, and retain as much resource as possible to take forward. With regards to staff vacancies, officers said that there should be degree of pragmatism as vacancies were a natural part of running a service, but agreed that they should not be used to balance budgets.

A Member thanked the cleansing team for their work, and said that residents were pleased with the service provided. The Chair echoed these comments.

A Member requested that future iterations of the key performance indicators table at Appendix 2b included further information on the origin of the targets.

RESOLVED, that – the report be received and its contents noted.

8. PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY UPDATE

Members received a report of the Executive Director, Environment providing an update on the Port Health Authority.

A Member asked what impact strikes might have on the Port Health Authority. Officers replied that the strikes might result in additional volume at the ports, but they would be able to cope with this within normal timeframes.

RESOLVED, that – the report be received and its contents noted.

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

A Member asked how the Port Health team was managing staff with regards to working from home and on site. Officers replied that officers had been continuously available in front-facing roles throughout the pandemic, and that this had not changed.

A Member informed the Committee that Westminster Council had approved an application for a 'party boat' licence, and that at their licensing hearing the Council had been informed that there were no noise complaints. The Member said that it had subsequently been revealed that there had been complaints about that boat. The Member therefore asked how the City Corporation could help ensure that noise complaints were submitted at to the relevant licencing hearings. Officers replied the City Corporation had taken a strong lead in ensuring there was a coordinated response to noise, and assisting the other riparian boroughs. These actions included meeting with the Port of London and local authority working groups..

The response to a Member's request for an update on noise complaints at Five Guys Bishopsgate was provided in the non-public section.

A Member informed the Committee of comments she had received from residents near St Barts Square on the noise created by lorries in a low noise area, including City Corporation dustcarts. They asked officers to ensure that City Corporation vehicles adhered to noise policies and to be proactive in ensuring that lorries do not drive through no noise areas. In reply, officers said they were aware of the issue and looking at what could be done to ease and resolve the problem.

A Member asked for an update on the letter that had been received from Defra regarding sewage. In reply, the Chairman said that the government would be supervising the five worst offending water companies, including Thames Water, and that the City Corporation's Corporate Affairs team would be monitoring the government's actions.

A Member, who served as the Committee's representative on Thames21, asked if pressure could be kept up on the government on the issue of plastic

and wet wipe pollution. The Chairman replied that they would ask the Corporate Affairs team to make representations on that issue.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other business.

11. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

12. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The non-public minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

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

There was one question in the non-public session.

14. **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 of other business in the non-public session.

The meeting closed at 12.25 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Ben Dunleavy