

COMMUNICATIONS & CORPORATE AFFAIRS SUB (POLICY & RESOURCES)
COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 24 April 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications & Corporate Affairs Sub (Policy & Resources) Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Deputy Keith Bottomley (Chairman)	Catherine McGuinness
Deputy Rehana Ameer	Alderman Sir William Russell
Tijs Broeke	Jason Groves
Alderman Prem Goyal, OBE	Deputy Madush Gupta
Deputy Shravan Joshi	Helen Fentimen
Deputy Edward Lord	

Officers:

Rhiannon Leary	-	Town Clerk's Department
Emily Tofield	-	Executive Director of Communications and External Affairs
Kay Abidilahi	-	Communications and External Affairs
Anna Clarke	-	Communications and External Affairs
Preet Desai	-	Communications and External Affairs
Mark Gettleson	-	Communications and External Affairs
Sam Hutchings	-	Communications and External Affairs
John Park	-	Communications and External Affairs
Kristy Sandino	-	Communications and External Affairs
Sam Collins	-	Chamberlain's Department
Daniel O'Byrne	-	Innovation and Growth
Paul Wright	-	Remembrancer
Katie Foster	-	Remembrancer's Office
Bruce Hunt	-	Remembrancer's Office
William Stark	-	Remembrancer's Department

Members observing online:

The Hon. Emily Benn
Caroline Haines

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Deputy Chris Hayward, Alderman Alastair King DL and Tom Sleigh. The Hon. Emily Benn and Caroline Haines also issued apologies, but were observing the meeting online.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

that the public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 28 February 2024 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- that Deputy Edward Lord be recorded as having given their apologies for absence for the previous meeting.

MATTERS ARISING:

there were none.

4. **CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS & EXTERNAL AFFAIRS UPDATE REPORT**

Members received a report of the Executive Director of Corporate Communications and External Affairs regarding an update on the Department's work. The Chair welcomed the report, noting the importance of stakeholder and branding reviews which would translate into how the organisation moved communications and external engagement forward.

In the discussion which ensued, the following points were made:

- What progress had been made on further development of economic security?
- In relation to the Communications comprehensive review, members urged that this be progressed at speed and that officers should consider putting forward ambitious suggestions for improvement.
- The recent invitation for members in residential wards to contribute to Ward newsletters was warmly welcomed. A query was put forward in relation to the positive work being undertaken by the Barbican Transformation Board and how this might be communicated more broadly.
- Those present heard that very positive recent feedback from Emily Thornberry had been received by a member in relation to the communications and engagement work being undertaken by the Corporation.
- In relation to the section of the report which encapsulated the recent visit to Northern Ireland, officers were urged to reframe this narrative given that the Honourable the Irish Society had worked actively with Irish political representatives on behalf of the CoL Corporation for several hundred years. A request was made that officers work closely with the Honourable the Irish Society on this aspect of the Corporation's communication work.
- Members sought further information in relation to which social media channels were being used to engage with different sections of the electorate, including both residents and businesses.
- In relation to the Net Zero delivery conference, the use of in-house capability was welcomed.
- How would the new CRM system be used to engage the electorate?
- A member referred to the significant uptake of the postal voting option in their ward, which was to be welcomed; however, they flagged that

current postal delivery systems, post-Covid and in a hybrid working environment, did not meet the needs of voters and asked that consideration be given to how this may be improved in a future report on hybrid working.

Officers then responded as follows:

- Officers from the Innovation and Growth Department were scheduled to present an update on economic security to the Policy & Resources Committee. The CoL Police Authority Board and the Communications team were also involved in taking this work forward. An officer had recently attended a speech on economic security given by the Deputy Prime Minister and it was agreed that a summary of this should be circulated to all members of the sub-committee.
- The sub-committee heard that the work on the comprehensive review was well underway; however careful planning was required for each stage.
- Officers agreed that messages around the positive work being done on the Barbican Estate should be more broadly communicated.
- Officers noted the comments made and agreed to follow up on the communications work in relation to the Honourable the Irish Society.
- In response to the query regarding social media channels, officers advised members that Facebook, Linked In, Instagram and Tik Tok would all to some degree be involved in the development of a digital communications strategy.
- The Chair noted that the CRM system was on the agenda under Item 6 and that any discussion on that item would be taken at that stage.
- An appointment had been made to the post of Election Engagement Campaign Manager and it was anticipated that they would be in post in the near future. Given the very clear legal guidelines in relation to postal voting, any action would require careful consultation with the Electoral Services team; however, members heard that, potentially, it may be possible to advise the electorate that they had the option to receive their postal ballots at their home addresses (rather than a business address) should they so choose.

In addition to the above discussion, members warmly welcomed the work being done on sports engagement. A further comment was made that work in relation to areas of tourism, including sports, needed to be aligned across the Corporation.

In terms of the plan for longer-term funding, a request was made for this to be discussed at the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee (RASC) Awayday, to which all members agreed.

Members asked that careful consideration be given to the membership of any Corporation delegation attending the political parties' conferences, in light of the possibility of an early General Election being called.

RESOLVED, that:

- i) members note the report;

- ii) a summary of the recent speech by the Deputy Prime Minister on economic security be circulated to all members of the Sub-Committee.
- iii) officers develop closer communication with the Honourable the Irish Society given that body's long-established engagement with Irish political representatives;
- iv) that the Sub-Committee's request for longer-term funding to be considered at the RASC Awayday be communicated to the Policy and Resources Committee.

5. **RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT UPDATE**

Members received an update from the Head of Campaigns and Community Engagement regarding recent progress made and planned next steps in resident engagement activity.

Members welcomed the effort and energy put into the residential engagement work. Officers were urged to work closely with neighbouring boroughs given the similarities involved in the problems with aging housing stock, with comment being made that inter-departmental working was crucial if this work was to be as effective as possible. Officers agreed and, in response, advised that the way the Corporation communicated its work, including via service provision across departments, would be explored as part of the Communications comprehensive review.

A member also expressed the view that community topic-based events/discussion sessions had been very well attended, in some contrast to Community Question Time events, and urged all present to bear in mind that residents, not businesses alone, should be made to feel included in these events. Another member endorsed these comments but also emphasised that the right balance needed to be found in order to be inclusive of both residents and business; furthermore, it was noted that residents' perception of inclusivity differed depending on the ward involved.

RESOLVED:

that the report, and members' comments, be noted.

6. **DATA LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT UPDATE**

Members were presented with a report of the Chamberlain which provided an overview of the Data Lighthouse project, the findings of which supported the need for a corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system as a key priority for the Corporation. In presenting the report, officers emphasised that holding data in Departmental or team silos hampered the Corporation's ability to engage with stakeholders at all levels.

Members enthusiastically welcomed the report. A question was posed as to how quickly this work could be undertaken and in response, officers advised that the aim was to proceed at pace, although the funding source and ongoing support had yet to be confirmed.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

14. PARLIAMENTARY TEAM UPDATE

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Remembrancer which updated members on recent elements of the City of London Corporation's political and parliamentary engagement. Members heard that three new pieces of legislation had been introduced to parliament since the previous update; the Tobacco and Vapes Bill would be particularly pertinent to the City of London Corporation given its role as the local Weights and Measures enforcement body.

At paragraph 24, in relation to the House of Lords' Financial Services Regulation Committee's invitation to the Corporation's representative, members heard that the Committee had instead decided to proceed to open an enquiry and would therefore no longer be inviting private submissions of evidence. Separately, the letter from the Policy Chairman to the Chair of the Treasury Sub-Committee on Financial Services Regulations (TSCFSR) had been published on the TSCFSR's website.

RESOLVED that:
the report be noted.

8. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

In relation to Catherine McGuinness' decision to stand down from this Sub-Committee, the Chair, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, expressed very warm thanks for all Ms McGuinness for all her dedication and hard work.

The Chair then advised that he planned to stand down as Chair of the Sub-Committee following this meeting – whilst continuing to serve as one of its members – and thanked all members of the Sub-Committee for their commitment and support during his Chairmanship.

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.

11. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED, that:

the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

12. OVERVIEW OF CITY HOSTED EVENTS

The Sub-Committee considered a non-public report of the Remembrancer at Item 12.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

13. INNOVATION AND GROWTH UPDATE

The Sub-Committee considered a non-public report of the Director of Innovation and Growth at Item 13.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

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

There were none.

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

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 3.07 pm

Chairman

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