

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Committee(s) | Dated: |
| Policy and Resources Committee | 26 September 2024 |
| Subject: Report of Action Taken | Public |
| Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly? | See background papers |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | See background papers |
| If so, how much? | £n/a |
| What is the source of Funding? | n/a |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | n/a |
| Report of: The Town Clerk | For Information |
| Report author: Chris Rumbles, Governance and Member Services Manager | |

Summary

This report advises Members of action taken by the Town Clerk outside of the Committee's meeting schedule, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, in accordance with Standing Order Nos. 41(a) and (b).

Recommendation(s)

That Members note the report.

Main Report

Decision Under Standing Order 41(A) – Relocation of Banksy Artwork (City of London Police Sentry Box)

On 11 August 2024 an artwork depicting fish underwater which was spray painted onto the glazing of City of London Police box on Ludgate Hill was confirmed by the artist Banksy as one of his. This was the seventh Banksy artwork that had been revealed across London in recent days.

Working with the City of London Police (COLP), a City Corporation team led by the City Surveyor, Paul Wilkinson, immediately put in place plans to protect the site and the public, in anticipation of the considerable public interest in the piece. 24/7 security and a barrier were put in place.

The City Surveyor carried out a site inspection alongside the City Operations Director (City Streets & Spaces), regarding the artwork and determined that an urgent course of action was required to remove the complete COLP Sentry box to secure the artwork, but more importantly to remove a significant health and safety risk given its close proximity to a busy road.

The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Policy and Resources Committee, Culture Heritage and Libraries Committee, City of London Police Authority Board and the Chief Commoner approved a course of action to relocate the Sentry Box Banksy Artwork and authorised the City Surveyor to undertake the necessary action to give effect to the decision.

Decision Under Standing Order 41(A) – Supporting Inter-Local Authority Initiative “Securing the Future of Council Housing”

A report, led by Southwark Council and supported by several other local authorities, advocated for council housing as a solution to the housing challenges in England. It calls for reforms to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and other programmes, highlighting that council landlords face deficits of over £3 billion on their HRAs over the next ten years. The current framework is becoming unworkable for the provision of social housing, and the City Corporation has experienced pressures on its HRA, resulting in rent increases for social tenants and a precarious revenue funding position.

In July 2024, the City Corporation was approached by Southwark Council with a preliminary version of their report titled "Securing the Future of Council Housing." This report presents council housing as a crucial solution to the various challenges confronting residents and the nation at large. It outlines a comprehensive strategy aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of council homes throughout England.

The report recommends that the City Corporation endorses the principles outlined in the report and approves its submission to the Government by the deadline of 14 August 2024. The proposal, reviewed by the Chamberlain and Executive Director of Community and Children’s Services, notes that supporting the report would benefit the City Corporation by easing its HRA pressures, improving its delivery of housing services, and demonstrating its willingness to work with other local authorities.

The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair(s) and Deputy Chair(s) of the Policy & Resources Committee, Finance Committee and Community and Children’s Services Committee, approved the following:

- a) To endorse the principles outlined in the *Securing the Future of Council Housing Report* and approve on behalf of the City of London Corporation, its submission to Government by the deadline of 14 August 2024.

Decision Under Standing Order 41(A) – Proposed relocation of Banksy Artwork (City of London Police)

In August 2024, the graffiti artist Banksy produced nine new artworks in nine days. On 11 August 2024 an artwork depicting fish underwater spray painted onto the glazing of a City of London Police box on Ludgate Hill was confirmed by the artist Banksy as one of his, the seventh Banksy artwork that had been revealed across London that week. On 12 August there was approval to the artwork being moved urgently to Guildhall Yard. The piece was moved due to serious concerns for public health and safety, and the Yard was considered an appropriate short-term solution in the circumstances.

Following its move to the Guildhall Yard, the artwork had attracted significant interest and attention (around 1500 visitors per weekend). Of the nine new Banksy artworks, two were vandalised within days of their installation. Colleagues at the London Museum examined the piece in situ in relation to the conservation requirements, and perspex panels were placed over the box to protect it from any attempts at vandalism. Despite these measures, there were wider concerns over attempted theft or vandalism.

The Guildhall Security Team put in place 24 hour security at an additional cost to their usual operations. The Strategic Security Director had advised that it would not be appropriate to leave the artwork without an appropriate level of security provision, but with the current position and ongoing costs being unsustainable and with the mitigations in place not being sufficient.

Officers identified options for the future display of the artwork, securing its safety whilst maximising on the positive public interest.

The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Policy and Resources Committee, Culture Heritage and Libraries Committee, City of London Police Authority Board and Chief Commoner approved the following:

- The work to be moved as soon as possible to the South Ambulatory for temporary display of up to 6 months (subject to review). This would give time to evaluate the security implications of moving the work to another City location where it can be viewed, and where there is more of a security presence and safe viewing areas for the public well away from traffic.

Conclusion

Copies of background papers concerning these decisions are available from Chris Rumbles on request.

Contact:

Chris Rumbles

Governance and Member Services Manager, Town Clerk's Department

Email: christopher.rumbles@cityoflondon.gov.uk