

CIVIC AFFAIRS SUB-COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 24 July 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee held at Committee Room,
West Wing, 2nd Floor Guildhall on Wednesday, 24 July 2024 at 9.30 am

Present

Members:

Deputy Keith Bottomley (Chairman)
Deputy Peter Dunphy (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy Henry Colthurst
Jaspreet Hodgson
Deputy Ann Holmes
Deputy Shravan Joshi MBE
Timothy James McNally
Wendy Mead OBE
Alderman Sir William Russell

In attendance (in Guildhall)

Philip Woodhouse

In attendance (observing online)

Emily Benn
Deputy Charles Edward Lord
James St John Davis

Officers:

Ian Thomas CBE	- Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Gregory Moore	- Deputy Town Clerk
Polly Dunn	- Assistant Town Clerk and Executive Director of Governance and Member Services
Mathew Cooper	- Town Clerk's Department
Ben Dunleavy	- Town Clerk's Department
Mark Gettleston	- Town Clerk's Department
Christopher Rumbles	- Town Clerk's Department
Emily Tofield	- Executive Director of Corporate Communications and External Affairs
Paul Wright	- Remembrancer
Leann Corachea	- Remembrancer's Department
Holly Booth	- Remembrancer's Department
Fiona Hoban	- Remembrancer's Department
Dorian Price	- City Surveyor's Department

The Chairman took the opportunity to extend a welcome to new and returning Members to the Sub-Committee.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Deputy Christopher Hayward, Deputy Edward Lord, Deputy Andrien Meyers, Tijs Broeke, Emily Benn, and James St John Davis.

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

There were none.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the public minutes of the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee meeting on 22 April 2024 be approved as an accurate record.

4. **SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE: UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Deputy Town Clerk providing an update following a consultation with Members of Court of Common Council relating to implementation of a Special Responsibility Allowance, presenting feedback received as part of the consultation and seeking agreement on proposed next steps.

The Town Clerk introduced the item confirming work had been ongoing since 2021 following a request by Court of Common Council that consideration be given to the introduction of a Special Responsibility Allowance at the City Corporation. A number of all Member consultation sessions had recently taken place alongside a survey to all Members. This had allowed all Members an opportunity to contribute to the consultation, through which 71 Members had responded expressing their view and this leaving 43% of Members not having responded or expressed a view.

The consensus view of those Members having responded to the consultation was of there being no general support for introduction of a Special Responsibility Allowance across the board, with there being a 50 / 50 split relating to introduction of an allowance specifically for the Chairman of Policy role. A key consideration when advocating for introduction of an SRA for the Chairman of Policy role was for a need to ensure ongoing inclusivity and social mobility opportunities for the role. Members noted that the outgoing Chair of Policy had taken part in the consultation and was supportive of introduction of a Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman of Policy role.

During the discussion that followed, it was suggested that the majority of Members were in their roles in a volunteering capacity and as such there would be a concern through any introduction of a Special Responsibility Allowance across the Board. The Chairman of Policy's role was recognised as being unique due to the full-time nature of the role and the position lasting five-years; there was a concern that without an allowance the Chairman of Policy role could potentially be restricted to people of independent means only, which would not be acceptable. It was suggested that any remuneration for the Chairman of Policy role should not be in terms of it being a paid job but through ensuring there would be no barrier or exclusion to the role moving forwards.

Members raised a number of considerations and options relating to the level of allowance and method of payment. These included offering an allowance based on any gap between gross taxable income and level of the allowance, providing a standard allowance and payment of any gap between this and salary for loss of earnings, paying direct to an employer for loss of time for their employee, it needing to remain a voluntary allowance scheme, with a range of between £50-90k, with the being a consensus view that c£50k would be an appropriate level of remuneration. A Member remarked on a role commanding this type of figure needing to be performance managed.

The Chairman suggested noting potential parameters today, whilst not getting into the detail. A Member suggested that officers be asked to come back with a proposed quantum and that introduction of an allowance should be put in place and introduced in advance of the new civic year in April 2025.

A Member raised their concern from an equalities perspective of not introducing an allowance across the board and potentially missing a trick through not doing so, but accepted the democratic process in reaching this position. The Member added how they considered the Financial Loss Scheme to be redundant in its current form and with it needing to be made more accessible and inclusive.

The Chairman noted the general view of Members being that they were not supportive of introduction of a Special Responsibility Allowance across the board, but with there being support for introduction of an allowance for the Chairman of Policy role, given this role was full time and the position could last up to five years. The exact range and proposed method of payment for an allowance was still to be agreed, with officers to come back to Policy and Resources Committee presenting options and a final proposal for agreement. The Chairman stressed that officers should not spend any further money on benchmarking or external advice. A Member, also Chairman of Finance Committee, remarked on a need to be able to present to tax-payers a rationale for introduction of an SRA.

The Deputy Chairman referred to the Financial Loss Scheme not currently being used to its full extent, with Members not knowing it exists or how it works and many thinking it was a financial hardship scheme. The Deputy Chairman added how the Financial Loss Scheme was an area that would benefit from further consideration and review.

A brief discussion then followed in relation to the application of a proposed inflationary uplift to the Extended Support Scheme, with concern being raised that any payment should not outstrip any annual increase staff were receiving. An increase in line with inflation was considered to be the most straightforward method. There was a consensus view that payments should not be backdated, with any change being introduced from 1st April 2025. A Member, also Chairman of Finance Committee, raised their concern through any automatic increase in line with inflation and proposed a review should take place annually to consider the financial position and presenting a costed proposal.

A further area of consideration was raised relating to any potential tax implications, with it being noted that advice would be sought through a tax advisor

before a final proposal goes forward to Court of Common Council seeking a final decision.

RESOLVED: That Members:

1. Noted the outcomes of the consultation exercise in respect of SRAs and, on the basis of these:
 - a. Agreed that there was no general support for the introduction of SRAs for all Chairs and to cease further activity in this area.
 - b. Agreed that the only role for which there was any substantive support for an SRA was the Chair of Policy & Resources, further agreeing to progress proposals for the implementation of an SRA for that post only.
 - c. Agreed that officers should pursue an alternative approach in relation to the Financial Loss Scheme.
2. Agreed to the application of an inflationary uplift to the Extended Support Scheme element of the MFSP, on the basis of the Consumer Price Index, to update the current allocation to £9,000, with the Chamberlain authorised to make inflationary uplifts on an annual basis moving forward, subject to an annual review of the financial position.

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

There were no questions.

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

There were no additional items of business.

7. **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 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

8. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the non-public minutes of the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee meeting on 22 April 2024 be approved as an accurate record.

9. **BENEFICES**

The link Member to the Benefices was heard providing an update relating to the following:

a) **Saint Peter with St Thomas, Bethnal Green**

d) **North Woolwich St John w Silvertown**

10. **CHARGING REVIEW 2024/25**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Remembrancer presenting proposals relating to a Guildhall Charging Review.

11. CITY HOSPITALITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The Sub-Committee considered a joint report of the Remembrancer and Director of Corporate Communications and External Affairs providing an update relating to City Hospitality and Community Engagement Events.

12. EQUITY, EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EEDI) AND EVENTS WORKING GROUP AND DIVERSITY QUESTIONNAIRE

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Remembrancer providing an update outlining actions taken to enhance event planning and evaluation processes to ensure events were as diverse and inclusive as possible.

13. UPDATE TO CITY CORPORATION FLAG POLICY

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Remembrancer presenting an update relating to the City Corporation Flag Policy.

14. APPLICATIONS FOR THE USE OF GREAT HALL

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Remembrancer detailing applications for the use of Great Hall.

15. EVALUATION OF CITY-HOSTED EVENTS

The Sub-Committee received a report providing a summary of evaluation of City-Hosted events since December 2023.

16. CITY CORPORATION'S WINE STORE

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Remembrancer informing Members of the current position of the City Corporation's wine store.

17. FORTHCOMING COMMITTEE OR COURT EVENTS INVOLVING HOSPITALITY AND OTHER NON-HOSPITALITY EVENTS

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Remembrancer detailing forthcoming committee or Court events involving hospitality and other non-hospitality events.

18. DELEGATED AUTHORITY REPORT

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Remembrancer setting out applications for hospitality and use of Guildhall which had been approved under delegated authority to the Remembrancer, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

19. DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY OR URGENCY POWERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDERS 41(A) AND 41(B)

The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk providing details of decisions taken between meetings in accordance with Standing Orders 41(a) and 41(b).

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

A question was raised relating to travel following evening functions at Guildhall.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE CONSIDER SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

An additional item of business was raised relating to Electric Vehicles.

The meeting ended at 11.13am

Chairman

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