

Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee

Monday, 4 November 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee held at Committee Room 2 - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 4 November 2024 at 9.00 am

Present

Members:

Munsur Ali (Chairman)	Deputy Alpa Raja
John Griffiths (Deputy Chairman)	Anett Rideg
John Foley	David Sales
Jaspreet Hodgson	Alethea Silk
Wendy Hyde	Mark Wheatley
Antony Manchester	Alderman Elizabeth Anne King, BEM JP
Andrew Mayer	Brendan Barns
Wendy Mead OBE	

In Attendance

Officers:

Rob Shakespeare	- Keats House, Open Spaces Department
Jayne Moore	- Town Clerk's Department
Emma Markiewicz	- London Metropolitan Archives
Omkar Chana	- Innovation and Growth
Andrew Buckingham	- Town Clerk's
Jen Beckermann	- Private Secretary to the Chairman of Policy and Resources
Gregory Moore	- Deputy Town Clerk

Joanna Parker - Department of the Built Environment
Mark Jarvis - Chamberlain's Department

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from these Members: Alderman Bronek Masojada, Suzanne Ornsby KC, Deborah Oliver, Judith Pleasance, Ian Seaton, Dawn Wright, Alderwoman Jeanette Newman, and Aaron D'Souza.

These Members sent Apologies and observed the meeting online: Caroline Haines, Jaspreet Hodgson, James St John Davis, Jason Groves.

2. **Members' Declarations under the Code of Conduct in respect of items on the agenda**

Wendy Hyde declared her membership of the selection panel for Artworks discussed at item 4.

3. **Minutes**

RESOLVED, That the minutes of the meeting of 16 September 2024 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings incorporating two amendments to the meeting's attendance as shown on the updated public-facing website.

4. **City Arts Initiative – Recommendations to the Committee**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Profession (Culture) setting out the recommendations of the City Arts Initiative (CAI) that met on 3 October 2024, during which the CAI considered the following two proposals:

1. Court Building, Fleet Street Salisbury Square Development Artworks;
2. Bowyers Hall Blue Plaque Recommendation(s).

Members noted that the final text and poetry selection for the ground floor granite panels, integrated lighting and alternative interpretations will be brought back to the Committee for approval, and that the designs will also go through the planning process as well as the Capital Buildings Board (CBB) for final sign-off.

The Committee commended the panel for the good work completed.

Referencing section 7, the Committee noted (in response to a Member question) that any copyright issues would be dealt with at CBB level.

A Member commented that the original Blue Plaque application was in 2016, and asked whether any of the delay could be attributed to the Corporation. The meeting heard that the resources available to process such matters were not currently matched to the volume of work, and that the lack of resources is being closely examined.

RESOLVED, That the Committee approve:

1. The artist concept and designs for the new court building at the Salisbury Square development; and
2. The Bowyers Hall Blue Plaque (subject to any necessary additional permissions gained from Environmental Health, Planning, and Highways).

5. **Support of the development of a new Culture Strategy for the City of London Corporation**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Profession (Culture) to be submitted for decision to the Policy & Resources Committee on 07 November 2024 on the need to support the development of a new Culture Strategy for the City of London Corporation.

The Committee noted that the Martin Review emphasised the importance of an independent Culture Strategy to maximise the City's unique cultural assets, and that to begin the work immediately (before January 2025) a proposal is to be made for the allocation of £45,000 from the Policy and Resources Committee's Policy Initiative Fund to enable key research, stakeholder consultation, analysis and the creation of a new Culture Strategy to include audience mapping and analysis.

The Committee noted that the new Culture Strategy would align with the City Corporation's corporate priorities and ensure that the Square Mile remains a vibrant cultural destination for residents, workers and visitors.

The Committee noted that a full scope of work would be submitted to the Committee if the funds are granted.

A Member sought clarification on what resources are available within the Culture team, emphasising the importance of running workstreams in parallel rather than sequentially. The meeting noted the importance of a structured framework to deliver a coherent set of proposals.

A Member sought clarity on the £45K and how the amount was determined, also referencing section 22 in which it is suggested that the Committee may bid for further funds - noting the importance of Culture to the success of the City overall. The meeting heard that the sum was determined in line with what was realistic and adequate in the first instance.

Referencing section 7, a Member asked for more details on what constituted the Culture team. The meeting noted that the Culture team is the team responsible for Destination City (DC) in its initial iteration that included events and cultural activities. The team has now transferred to the Culture team, reporting to the Head of Profession (Culture), and includes staff at the Gallery and working in promotions. The meeting also noted that a Director of Culture is expected to be recruited separate to the DC hub who will manage, among other things, the culture strategy and its roll-out. In response to a question on staff numbers, the meeting heard that an organigram would be circulated, though not all positions are currently filled. For the DC hub, the SRO is currently the only position filled. Up to seven FTEs are expected to be recruited to the DC hub, which was recently approved at Corporation level.

A Member asked for further information on how the Culture strategy might interface with the cultural spatial strategy. The meeting noted that earlier strategies would be folded into the Culture strategy and deliver better clarity on Culture.

Referencing section 15, a Member asked why Growth Bid money was no longer available to the Culture team, suggesting that during the current transition year the Committee should have had a claim to a proportion of the Growth Bid money. The meeting noted that the Growth Bid was designed to fund the DC programme and encompasses all aspects of ensuring that the City is an even more attractive destination, noting also that planned events would still take place. A Member asked how that decision was made, in response to which the meeting heard that the remaining Growth Bid money allocation was approved by the Policy & Resources Committee. Members commented that the purpose of the Growth Bid was to focus on the City's cultural assets and that it appeared that those assets were being undermined by an apparent lack of funding of some assets, including the Guildhall Art Gallery. The meeting noted that the apparent reduction in resources for the Guildhall Art Gallery could be explained by the way some employees were counted

(including, for example, retail and display staff) in a way that did not accurately reflect the resources.

Members expressed a view that Culture appears in practice to be a sub-set of DC and commented that it appeared that the Committee was to all intents and purposes a sub-Committee of the Policy & Resources Committee, noting that the sentiment has been expressed on previous occasions. The meeting noted that the placing of Culture under the Committee as per the Martin Review did empower the Committee, and that the PIF funding was a mechanism for getting that started.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations set out in the report.

6. **Commission research into the City of London Corporation's links to the historical trade in enslaved African people**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk setting out the application to the Policy and Resources Committee's 2024/25 Policy Initiatives Fund for £34,400 to commission a piece of independent research into the City of London Corporation's links to the historical trade in enslaved African people.

A Member asked whether an endpoint was envisaged, and whether there were any plans for what would be done with the information. The meeting heard that the work would endorse the work of the City and would ensure that the City has input and involvement in the ongoing research that was expected to be carried out with or without the City's involvement. The meeting noted that a body of work already exists that will be supplemented with more specific information, and that once the research is completed it is expected that the City will decide where to take that research.

A Member commented on the benefits of also highlighting abolitionist initiatives in the City.

7. **Departmental budget allocation - CHL**

The Committee agreed to discuss the budget allocation document during the Public session noting that budgetary allocations were routinely discussed in Public sessions, noting that any sensitive matters would be deferred to the non-Public session.

The Committee viewed a presentation on the budgetary allocations at the Corporation that included information on the funding sources of City Fund, City

Estates, and City Bridge Foundation, noting also the £20.7M allocated to Culture that mostly comes from City Fund.

Members also noted these key assumptions agreed in 2024:

1. Increase for Adult & Children's social care pressures and staff strengthening for HR and internal controls;
2. 2% inflation uplift in local risk budgets;
3. No additional resources to be agreed (prioritisation to be made within overall envelopes);
4. No new bids processes for City Fund/City Estates; and
5. Continued work on workstreams to improve operational property utilisation and income generation.

Members noted the recent challenging budget position for Sculpture in the City (SITC), noting that the Committee, Environment and external partners had supported the SITC programme for the current year.

A Member sought clarity on the difference between local and central risk. The meeting heard that local risk references expenditure that is wholly within the responsibility of a Chief Officer, and central risk references the demand-led element of expenditure rendering it more challenging to control and the relevant Chief Officer is not required to make good any deficit.

A Member asked for clarity on how the Committee might influence the budget-setting process. The meeting heard that the priorities of the relevant Chief Officer and the Committee would ordinarily be expected to map onto each other so that resources could be prioritised accordingly – but that the CHL Committee currently has more than one Chief Officer which complicates the situation. The meeting heard that the absence of a defined cultural strategy and the absence of a co-ordinating cultural director position meant that the scope, priorities and remit have become unclear but that the development of a clear strategy and the appointment of a cultural director (both imminent) would clarify the Committee's position and drive resource allocation in line with a cultural strategy. The Committee also noted its approval in January 2022 of structural and resourcing changes resulting in the current organisation.

In response to a question on the timeline for strategy-setting and how that fitted in with the budget-setting process for the forthcoming year, the meeting heard that it

was unlikely that a cultural strategy would be finalised in time for the 2025-26 budget-setting process though plans may be revised in the light of a defined cultural strategy via mid-year adjustments.

The Committee noted that additional income source and tools should be considered to inform a five-year strategy, and that a Chief Officer would ordinarily be expected to be factoring that in.

Members commented on some of the constraints within the budgetary process given the fixed items of expenditure.

8. Questions on matters relating to the work of the Committee

In response to Member questions on the progress in recruiting to the Culture Director post, the meeting noted that once a clearer team structure was in place the recruitment process would get under way in early 2025.

On the plans to draft a definition of Culture, the meeting noted that the strategy and the definition would be worked out in tandem.

9. Any other business the Chair considers urgent

There was no other business

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.

The meeting ended at 11.00 am

Chairman

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