

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 16 January 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Children's Services Committee held at Committee Rooms, West Wing, Guildhall on Thursday, 16 January 2025 at 10.00 am

Present

Members:

Munsur Ali
Matthew Bell
Deputy Keith Bottomley
Anne Corbett
Mary Durcan
Helen Fentimen OBE JP (Chairman)
Deputy John Fletcher
Dawn Frampton
Steve Goodman OBE
Alderman Prem Goyal, OBE
Deputy Natasha Maria Cabrera Lloyd-Owen

Alderman Christopher Makin
Timothy James McNally
Eamonn Mullally
Henrika Priest
Beverly Ryan
Naresh Hari Sonpar
Jacqui Webster
Deputy Ceri Wilkins
David Williams
Philip Woodhouse

In Attendance:

Deputy Marriane Fredericks

Officers:

Deborah Bell	- Community & Children's Services Department
Peta Caine	- Community & Children's Services Department
Kevin Colville	- Comptroller & City Solicitor's
Simon Cribbens	- Community & Children's Services Department
Liane Coopey	- Community & Children's Services Department
Hannah Dobbin	- Community & Children's Services Department
David Downing	- Community & Children's Services Department
Dean Elsworth	- Executive Director, Community & Children's Services
Judith Finlay	- Community & Children's Services Department
Philippe Greaves	- Community & Children's Services Department
Michael Gwyther-Jones	- Community & Children's Services Department
Kirstie Hilton	- Chamberlain's Department
Mark Jarvis	- City Bridge Foundation
Jack Joslin	- Community & Children's Services Department
Michael Kettle	- Community & Children's Services Department
Greg Knight	- Community & Children's Services Department
Rachel Levy	- Community & Children's Services Department
Chris Lovitt	- City Surveyors
Mark Lowman	- Chamberlain's Department
Goshe Munir	- Community & Children's Services Department
Scott Myers	- Community & Children's Services Department
Will Norman	- City's Surveyor's
Ola Obadara	- Community & Children's Services Department

Chris Pelham	- Community & Children's Services Department
Debby Rigby	- Community & Children's Services Department
Alice Rogers	- Community & Children's Services Department
Dan Sanders	- City Surveyor's Department
Chris Spicer	- Town Clerk's Department
Blair Stringman	- Communications & External Affairs
Chandni Tanna	- Community & Children's Services Department
Ellie Ward	- Community & Children's Services Department

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Deputy Nighat Qureshi and Deputy Shravan Joshi.

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

Prior to declarations being received, the Town Clerk reminded Members that Under standing order 44. Interests: If a matter for decision is under consideration by the Court, or any Committee thereof, in which a Member has an interest they must act in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the Members' Code of Conduct.

It was noted that it is entirely Members responsibility to declare an interest if they believe they should do so and where a Member has registered their pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code, there is no requirement to additionally declare the existence of such an interest at a meeting of the Corporation at which that interest is engaged. However, in the interests of transparency it is good practice to do so.

The following declarations were received by Members:

- Beverley Knight – declared an interest in item 7 as the governor of The Aldgate School.
- David Williams – declared that their children attend The Aldgate School, which they had previously declared.
- Jacqui Webster – declared that their organisation, Shoreditch Trust, is a named supporter of the Young Londoners' Manifesto 2024 and is listed in the cost of living responses as an organisation providing support for City residents.
- Ceri Willins - declared that their daughter was three and that they are pregnant.
- Natasha Lloyd Owen –that their 13-month-old child receives nursery provision in the City.

3. **MINUTES**

MATTERS ARISING:

- Discussion was raised about the accuracy of a statement on page 13 regarding the completion of assessments for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). An officer confirmed that 100% of statutory assessments for education, health, and care plans for City residents were completed within the prescribed time limit.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the correction of a Members name, that the public and non-public summary of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning outstanding actions.

The following points were noted:

- A Member raised a question about the funding for the City of London Scout Group, specifically whether there would be a cut in their funding of £7,000. An officer responded that they had encouraged the Scout group to use grant funding, as it is a non-statutory provision. Due to the proportion of scouts who live in the city, they might not qualify for grant funding. The officer confirmed that they would pay the £7,000 from their budget but noted that this might need to be revisited if there are wider cuts within the Corporation.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

5. **ALLOCATED MEMBERS TO THE CITY CORPORATION'S VARIOUS HOUSING ESTATES**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk concerning allocation of Members to the City of London Corporation's various Housing Estates.

It was noted that there was a previous discussion about the role of lead Members for each of the boroughs, and it was noted that post-election, the information about the role of lead Members should be updated. This would ensure that any changes in names are fully briefed and supported to take on the role more effectively.

RESOLVED – That, Members endorse the following appointments to the various housing estates:

- Southwark: Timothy McNally
- Islington: Mary Durcan
- Hackney : Ceri Wilkins
- Tower Hamlets : John Fletcher
- Lewisham: Steve Goodman
- Lambeth: Eamonn Mullally
- City of London – Golden Lane Estate: Ceri Wilkins
- Middx St Estate: John Fletcher

6. **DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025/26 - COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES EXCLUDING HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services and Chamberlain concerning approval of the budget

estimates for the Department of Community & Children's Services for 2025/26, for subsequent submission to Finance Committee.

Officers noted that the proposed revenue budget for 2025/26 totals £19,779,000, which was an overall increase of £1,854,000 from the current budget. Members were informed that the increase was mainly due to two reasons, firstly, due to an increase in the allocation of budget for recharges and support services by £648,000 following a corporation-wide review of the allocation methodology. Secondly, due to the department securing substantial additional funding to address existing and projected future pressures in adult and children's social care.

Discussion was raised regarding the pressures in adult and children's social care, with a Member raising a question about the proportion of the budget allocated to each. It was noted that the budget pressures are due to high-cost placements and increasing demand for services. Members also discussed the importance of communicating available support to residents, particularly regarding the Household Support Fund and winter fuel payments. Suggestions were made to improve communication through the City of London website, residents' WhatsApp groups, and including information with Council tax bills.

RESOLVED – That Members,

- a) review and approve the Community and Children's Services Department's (excluding HRA) proposed revenue budget for 2025/26 for submission to Finance Committee,
- b) review and approve the Community and Children's Services Department's (excluding HRA) proposed capital and supplementary revenue projects budgets for 2025/26 for submission to Finance Committee,
- c) authorise the Chamberlain, in consultation with the Executive Director of Community and Children's to revise these budgets to allow for any further implications arising from Corporate Projects and changes to the Cyclical Works Programme,
- d) agree that the Chamberlain be authorised to make minor amendments for 2024/25 and 2025/26 budgets arising during the corporate budget setting period.

7. **CHILDREN'S CENTRE SERVICES AND 0-2 CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS**
The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning the context in which the policy proposals for Children's Centre Services should be considered and puts forward options for Members to consider and to approve a preferred option for further development.

Members were provided with an introduction to the report by the Director for Education, outlining three options for the future of children's centre services and brought to two childcare arrangements. Members were provided with a brief outline of the options noting the following:

- Option 1 involves using the existing budget to deliver children's centre services across various venues in the City, retaining the City Childcare Accessibility scheme for eligible residents, and planning for family hub start-for-life services.
- Option 2 proposes using the existing budget to deliver children's centre services and subsidise The Aldgate School to deliver nought to two childcare, retaining the City Childcare Accessibility scheme but with no remaining funding for family hub start-for-life services.
- Option 3 suggests using the existing budget to deliver children's centre services and subsidise childcare for eligible city residents to use at providers of their choice, reducing but not necessarily removing funding for family hub start-for-life services.

Several members expressed strong support for Option 2, emphasising the importance of maintaining the current provision at The Aldgate School, which is highly valued by parents and the community. Concerns were raised about the potential disruption to The Aldgate School and the impact on families if the current provision is altered. Some Members contemplated a more equitable distribution of services across the City, suggesting that Options 1 or 3 would benefit a broader range of families. Discussion was also raised about the number of children currently using the nought to two childcare provisions at The Aldgate School, with clarification provided that the service was fully subscribed and serves a significant number of City residents.

NB: At this point during the meeting Members unanimously agreed to suspend the meeting for a period of five minutes to resolve technical issues.

After reconvening, Members noted that a non-public appendix was affixed to the report presented, and it was deemed inappropriate to make a decision without first considering this appendix. Therefore, Members unanimously agreed to exclude the public before making a decision, which would then be presented back in the public domain.

NB: Members unanimously agreed that:

- *under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act and;*
- *after formal discussion on the non-public appendix to the report, that the public be re-admitted to conclude the formal public business on the agenda.*

After reconvening, the Chairman thanked members of the public in the room and those online for their patience. It was noted that following discussion on the non-public appendix affixed to the report, an amendment had been discussed and would be put to the Committee.

Moved by Alderman Goyal. Seconded by Common Councillor Corbett, and Resolved: That Members, Support option 2 academic year which ends in August 2026 for one year and Members agree to consult on future strategic and policy direction exploring alternative models. Members unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED – That Members, Support option 2 academic year which ends in August 2026 for one year and Members agree to consult on future strategic and policy direction exploring alternative models.

8. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION STRATEGY 2025-29

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-29 for approval.

NB: At this point in the meeting, Members unanimously agreed to extend the meeting by 30 minutes to conclude business.

Officers noted that the strategy aims to support children and young people with SEND, aged 0-25, living in the City of London. The strategy was developed through engagement activities with children, young people, parent carers, and professionals. It includes an action plan, equality impact assessment, and a summary of engagement and consultation.

Five priority areas were identified:

1. Providing the right help at the right time.
2. Supporting transitions, including preparation for adulthood.
3. Enabling a skilled, valued workforce.
4. Ensuring children and young people feel recognised and part of their community.
5. Providing high-quality, appropriate alternative provision when needed.

Members were informed the strategy emphasises early identification and response to needs, minimising waiting times for services, and supporting families while waiting. It also focuses on the emotional well-being of parent carers and aims to make families feel recognised and valued within their local community. It was noted that the strategy will be delivered and monitored by the SEND Programme Board.

RESOLVED - That Members, approve the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-29.

9. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2025/26

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning the annual submission of the revenue and capital budgets.

Members were informed that the overall financial position of the ring-fenced HRA remains challenging, with a relatively low level of reserves projected for the end of 2025-2026. The balanced budget for 2025-2026 shows an increase in expenditure mainly related to employee costs and repairs, which is broadly offset by an increase in expected service income due to the inclusion of new rental income from Black Raven Court. There were questions and comments from Members regarding the overall exposure of the Corporation's properties and the need for a comprehensive view of the financial challenges across the

entire portfolio. Officers noted ongoing conversations with Members on the way forward and the need to reflect the national challenge faced by HRAs.

RESOLVED – That Members,

- a) Review the provisional 2025/26 revenue budget to ensure that it reflects the Committee's objectives and, approve the proposed budget for submission to the Finance Committee.
- b) Review and approve the draft capital budget.
- c) Authorise the Chamberlain to revise these budgets to allow for further implications arising from departmental reorganisations and other reviews.

10. **POLICY AND PROTOCOL TO TACKLE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF ROUGH SLEEPING**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning a draft policy statement and protocol in support of interventions to tackle the negative impacts such as anti-social behaviour that can be associated with rough sleeping.

Members were informed that the aim of the policy is to allow officers and partners to act in a way that balances the response to issues arising from rough sleeping with the welfare of the individuals involved. It was noted that the policy was developed with extensive consultation with Members of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee, the government's specialist advisor on rough sleeping, and voluntary sector providers like Thames Reach. It was not about removing tents to reduce rough sleeping but ensuring a welfare-driven approach that offers credible support off the streets.

Members highlighted the importance of having a clear and consistent approach to dealing with rough sleeping, ensuring that the welfare-first approach is embedded while addressing issues that affect other city residents and workers.

RESOLVED – That Members,

- a) Approve the draft policy, protocol
- b) Note risk and resource implications
- c) Note the proposed bid for funding to pilot an approach

11. **SOCIAL HOUSING DECARBONISATION FUND CONSORTIUM GRANT AGREEMENT**

The Committee considered a report of the City Surveyor concerning the City of London Corporation joining a consortium of over 20 London Boroughs, led by London Councils, to submit a grant application to the Warmer Homes Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

RESOLVED – That Members, authorise the Executive Director of Community & Children's Services to enter into a Grant Agreement for WH:SHDF Wave 3.

12. ***CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE SELF-EVALUATION 2024**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning the City of London Corporation (City Corporation) Department of Community and Children's Services (DCCS) Children and Families Service self-evaluation (SEF) 2024.

Members reviewed the self-evaluation report, which highlighted the strengths and areas for improvement within the service. It was noted that the report emphasised the importance of early identification and intervention, the need for a skilled and valued workforce, and the significance of supporting children and families throughout their journey.

Members expressed their appreciation for the comprehensive nature of the report and the efforts made by the team to achieve outstanding results in the recent Ofsted inspection. They also discussed the challenges faced by the service, including the increasing demand for services and the need for continuous improvement.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

13. ***OFSTED INSPECTION OF CITY OF LONDON CHILDREN'S SERVICES 2024**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning key findings and appends Ofsted's findings in full.

The Committee was delighted to report that the service was rated as outstanding once again. Members expressed their appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the team in maintaining high standards of service delivery.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

14. ***SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME -CONNECT TO WORK**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services concerning information about the recently introduced Supported Employment Programme, which is grant funded by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP).

Officers noted the programme aims to support individuals in finding employment by providing them with the necessary skills and resources. Members discussed the importance of the programme in addressing unemployment and helping individuals gain meaningful employment. They highlighted the positive impact the programme has had on participants, including increased confidence and improved job prospects.

Members also discussed the challenges faced by the programme, such as securing funding and ensuring that the support provided is tailored to the needs of the participants. They emphasised the need for continued collaboration with local businesses and organisations to provide opportunities for participants.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

15. UPDATES FROM SUB COMMITTEES, ALLOCATED MEMBERS AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

The Committee received a report of the allocated Member for Middlesex Street.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

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

There were several questions raised by Members.

- **What has caused the further delays to the Crescent House Windows replacement project?**

The delays are due to bio-safety issues and the inclusion of external works that were not part of the original programme.

- **Why weren't residents informed about the delays?**

The project team had a meeting in November with members of the Crescent House CSG to explain the issues and promised to provide an overarching programme by the end of January.

- **What impacts will the delays have on the wider estate?**

The delays have caused significant frustration among residents, particularly leaseholders, due to the increasing costs of the works.

- **Who will bear the costs of the works?**

There are ongoing discussions about who will bear the costs. Partial advice has been received from the legal team, and further advice is being sought regarding the heating issue and the improvement versus repairs issue.

- **What is the scope of the project?**

The project scope includes not just window replacements but also other pressing works such as electrics, fire doors, and concrete repairs.

- **What are the plans for future meetings with residents?**

The team is planning future meetings with residents and will send out a letter with more information shortly.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was one item of urgent business regarding Golden Lane refurbishment project.

- **Delegation of Decision Making:** Members were asked to delegate decision-making responsibility to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman for the initial stages of the Golden Lane refurbishment project. This involves progressing the gateway one and two reports, which establish the project on the system, set the budget, and allow for scoping and design work. It was confirmed that the budget for the refurbishment is already in place, and the works can commence to enable the refurbishment. The scoping includes considerations for the climate action strategy, particularly focusing on remediating the boilers, which are a significant sustainability issue. Additionally, there was a mention of an interest in the City Gen extension, which will be considered as part of the project.

RESOLVED – That Members, agree to delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, to approve a Gateway 1 and 2 report in relation to the refurbishment of the Golden Lane leisure Centre.

18. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

19. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

MATTERS ARISING:

- Officers sought delegated authority to the Town Clerk in consultation with Chairman and Deputy Chairman in relation to a matter considered in non-public.

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

20. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

21. ***NON-PUBLIC APPENDICES**

The Committee received two non-public appendices to be read in conjunction with the relevant items on the agenda.

21.1 **Non-Public Appendix to be read in conjunction with item 7**

The Committee received a non-public appendix to be read in conjunction with item 7.

Members discussed the non-public appendix and agreed to readmit the public to continue the formal business on the agenda once concluded.

21.2 **Non-Public Appendix to be read in conjunction with item 12**

The Committee received a non-public appendix to be read in conjunction with item 12 on the agenda.

22. **GREAT ARTHUR HOUSE – ROOF AND CANOPY REFURBISHMENT**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services.

23. **INSTALLATION OF SPRINKLERS IN SOCIAL HOUSING HIGH RISE BLOCKS**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services.

24. **HARDSHIP GRANT PROPOSALS FOR THE CITY OF LONDON COMBINED RELIEF OF POVERTY CHARITY (CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER 1073660)**
The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services.
25. **MIDDLESEX STREET, CAR PARK, MIDDLESEX STREET, E1 7AD**
The Committee considered a joint report of the City Surveyor and Commissioner of Police.
26. ***CITY CORPORATION MENTORING PROJECT**
The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Education and Skills.
27. ***HRA COMMERCIAL PROPERTY - DEBT POSITION, PROGRESS AGAINST ARREARS RECOVERY AND VACANT UNITS**
The Committee received a joint report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services, the City Surveyor, the Executive Director, of Property and the Chamberlain.
28. ***YORK WAY ESTATE PROVISION OF SOCIAL HOUSING**
The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community & Children's Services.
29. ***REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS**
The Committee received a report of the Town Clerk.
30. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
A question was raised by a Member.
31. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**
There was no urgent business.
32. ***CITY OF LONDON PAY AWARD 2024/25 – UPDATE FOLLOWING TRADE UNION ENGAGEMENT**
The Committee received a joint report of the Chief People Officer and the Chamberlain.

The meeting ended at 12.37 pm

Chairman

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