

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND LIBRARIES COMMITTEE

Monday, 22 September 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee held at
Committee Room 3 - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 22 September
2025 at 9.00 am

Present

Members:

Brendan Barns (Chairman)
Suzanne Ornsby KC (Deputy Chair)
Leyla Boulton
Elizabeth Corrin
Karina Dostalova
Alderman Professor Emma Edhem
John Foley
Stephen Hodgson
Adam Hogg
Tessa Marchington

Vasiliki Manta
Alderman Bronek Masojada
Sophia Mooney
Anett Rideg
Gaby Robertshaw
David Sales
Stephanie Steeden
Deputy Dawn Wright
Matthew Waters

In Attendance

Officers:

Elizabeth Scott	- Head of Guildhall Art Gallery
Rob Shakespeare	- Keats House, Environment
Jayne Moore	- Town Clerk's Department
Emma Markiewicz	- London Archives, Head of Profession (Culture)
Omkar Chana	- Interim Culture Director
Andrew Buckingham	- Town Clerk's, Media Officer
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Kevin Colville	- Comptroller and City Solicitors
Laurie Miller-Zutshi	- Town Clerk's Department
Susana Barreto	- City Surveyor's Department
Chris Bonner	- City Surveyor's Department
Laurence Ward	- Assistant Director (Audiences)
Katie Whitbourn	- Cultural Policy & Partnerships Officer
Greg Moore	- Deputy Town Clerk

Also present:

Sarah Walters	- Things Made Public
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1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Munsur Ali, Irem Yerdelem, Deputy Helen Fentimen, Caroline Haines, Melissa Collett, and Wendy Mead.

These Members observed the meeting online: Alderman Prof. Emma Edhem, Jason Groves, Mark Wheatley, James St John Davis, and Matthew Waters.

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

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, That the minutes of the meeting of 07 July 2025 be approved as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. **FORWARD PLAN**

Members noted the Forward Plan.

5. **CULTURE, HERITAGE AND LIBRARIES REVENUE OUTTURN FORECAST AS AT QUARTER 1 2025/26**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services, City Surveyors, and Executive Director of Environment setting out the Quarter 1 estimated outturn for the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee. Members noted that:

- The total local risk is projected to overspend by £195k, attributed to unidentified savings coupled with lower than targeted income levels highlighted in paragraph 3 of the report; and
- The total central risk budget is projected to overspend by £110k, related to an increase in rents and rates upon The London Archives as highlighted in paragraph 4 of the report.

Members viewed a presentation setting out budget areas and relevant figures, which was circulated to the Committee on 29 September 2025 as well as being available on the Corporation's YouTube channel, noting the preference for the information to be circulated prior to the meeting.

The presentation set out figures for the 2024/25 budget and outturn, and the 2025/26 budget for these service areas: Guildhall Art Gallery, City Information Service & Outdoor Arts, Guildhall Library, London Archives and Projects, Heritage Gallery, Keats House, Monument, Barbican & Shoe Lane Libraries, Artizan St Library, Roman Remains and Guildhall complex land, Mayoralty & Shrievalty, Committee Directorate, and London Museum Grant.

A Member asked for more information on how recharges are allocated. The meeting heard that the corporate function generally dictates the allocation of recharges in an equitable way, that the basis of those allocations can vary, and that the allocations are agreed by the Corporation's Finance Committee and/or Corporate Services Committee.

A Member asked how staffing costs are calculated. The meeting heard that detailed calculations are available for staff costs based on their grade and are agreed with each budget manager, and that National Insurance and other oncosts are included in the calculations.

6. CITY ARTS INITIATIVE - RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk presenting the recommendations of the City Arts Initiative (CAI) which met on 24 July 2025 during which the CAI considered these three:

1. Framework Knitters Hall Blue Plaque
2. Frances Quarles Blue Plaque
3. Fleet Street Quarter Festive Trail

RESOLVED, That the Committee approve these three proposals:

1. Framework Knitters Hall Blue Plaque
2. Frances Quarles Blue Plaque
3. Fleet Street Quarter Festive Trail

noting also that approvals are subject to any additional necessary permissions gained from environmental health, planning and highways.

7. UPDATE ON BLUE PLAQUES

The Committee heard a verbal update on the City's blue plaques, that included the following information:

- The blue plaque scheme has been under-resourced during the last decade;
- A backlog of plaques is being cleared, with about five remaining to be handled;
- The scheme is to be rebooted around a nominations process that is inclusive and transparent;
- Recruitment is under way for a Head of Heritage Estate; and
- The rebooted scheme is expected to be launched during 2026, ideally in time for the February 2026 Committee event.

A Member commented that the scheme appeared to be reactive and that the City does not appear to propose names. The meeting heard that a rebooted scheme is likely to be more proactive.

A Member asked for more information on anticipated fees, and what financial help might be available. The meeting heard that a plaque costs £1500 to make (installation costs vary) and that the plans include a facility for the City to fund one plaque per year.

A Member asked when the backlog of five plaques would be cleared. The meeting heard that each application takes 3-5 months to process given the requirements to liaise with developers, manufacturers and other stakeholders

and that the process is expected to accelerate with the appointment of the Head of Heritage Estate.

8. DEVELOPING THE CULTURAL STRATEGY - PROGRESS UPDATE JUNE TO AUGUST 2025

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk providing an update on activity between June and August 2025 on the development of the Cultural Strategy, together with a forward look on the delivery plan for 2026 and viewed a presentation from Things Made Public.

Members noted the forthcoming 05 February 2026 event at the Guildhall Art Gallery, and were invited to ensure that details of cultural contacts known to them are forwarded to the executive. In response to a question on whether the cultural strategy would be unveiled at the February 2026 event, the meeting heard that the strategy is not expected to have been finalised at that point and that the event is expected to act partly as a springboard for further action.

A Member asked whether The Audience Agency would be in a position to discuss and explain the data presented in the report. The meeting heard that an informal session would be arranged (see action point).

A Member asked what key messages were being taken to inform ongoing work, commenting that the document appeared to be quite generic. The meeting heard that Things Made Public and The Audience Agency are expecting to co-create an action plan on the back of the data presented taking into account further feedback, with a further iteration of the document expected to be presented that will explore key audiences and segments and how these can be activated, alongside evaluation frameworks. In response to a question on whether a brief would be compiled ahead of the document's next iteration, the meeting heard that a brief is to be put together for the next phase of the document.

A Member asked for clarification on whether the cultural strategy document is a final iteration. The meeting heard that the document continues to be a work in progress and that further comments and suggestions are invited.

In response to a question on whether Things Made Public was of the view that the document is currently fit for purpose, the Committee heard that the document is not yet complete, that there is still phase 3 work to be completed, and a decision still is to be made on the nature of the alignment with Destination City, noting that foreign investment into the City is in part connected to its unique cultural assets.

A Member commented on the apparently small sample size of c. 1300 people, and asked why the research had not identified 'superusers' (for example, Barbican Centre users). The meeting heard that, generally speaking, little difference in the veracity of findings was observed beyond 1000 survey respondents. The Committee discussed focus areas around the broad base of users and 'superusers', as well as the overlap between the Destination City remit and the cultural offering of the City of London.

A Member asked whether the data had been specifically put together for the City of London Corporation, or whether it was existing survey data. The meeting heard that phase 1 had made use of existing data whereas phase 2 data was specifically gathered for the purposes of the current report, noting also the visitor figures for foreign tourists.

A Member asked whether a shared definition of culture in the City has been finalised. The meeting heard that the uniqueness of the City has not yet been captured in any finalised definition, and that a working group on that is to be set up to include the Chair and Deputy Chair (see action point).

A Member asked for more information on timelines for the project. The meeting heard that the expectation is that the cultural strategy is expected to be completed in May 2026 rather than February 2026, partly as a result of the significant amount of stakeholder engagement.

A Member asked that further information be provided on potential partners/organisations and stakeholders involved in the compilation of the report (see action point)

A Member recommended that the world-class nature of the City's cultural offering be emphasised to a greater extent in any further iteration.

A Member commented that the 'old town' designation for the City of London is a concept worth adopting and disseminating.

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

There were no questions.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

A Member asked whether information was available on how Members and staff might access the City's cultural assets. The meeting noted that the information could potentially be included in the next Members' update or shown on the Members' portal with links to the relevant asset, given the frequency with which the access information changes (see action point).

Noting that a paper copy of the City's cultural assets is available at the City Information Centre, a Member asked whether that map is available on any website. Members noted the 'cityofldn' website that includes a wide range of information on City cultural assets and is refreshed frequently.

On the pocket book: Members noted that the information has been updated on the pocket book and that there is a preference for the pocket book to be electronic given that the information quickly becomes outdated.

A Member commented that a forward plan of Guildhall Yard events would be welcome (see action point).

A Member commented that the explanatory plaque on the Beckford statue appeared to be scratched, and asked what could be done to remedy that.

11. **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.

12. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The Committee considered the non-public minutes of the meeting of 07 July 2025.

13. **THE LORD MAYOR'S STATE COACH - UPDATE**

The Committee received the report of the City Surveyor and Executive Director of Property outlining the current condition, conservation priorities, and long-term display strategy for the Lord Mayor's State Coach.

14. **REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN - HARBINGER PORTRAITS**

The Committee noted the report of action taken.

15. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

The meeting ended at 11.00 am

Chairman

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