

DIGITAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 27 November 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Digital Services Committee held at Guildhall, EC2 on
Thursday, 27 November 2025 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

James Tumbridge (Chairman)
Deputy Dawn Wright (Deputy Chair)
Simon Burrows
Deputy Timothy Butcher
Lesley Cole
Philip Kelvin
Deputy James Thomson CBE (Ex-Officio Member)

Officers:

Caroline Al-Beyerty	- Chamberlain's Department
Zakki Ghauri	- Director of Information and Technology
Sam Collins	- Assistant Director (Digital & Data)
Simon Gray	- ERP Programme Director
Melissa Richardson	- Town Clerk's Department
Gary Brailsford-Hart	- City of London Police
Graham Venn	- City of London Police
Richard Armstrong	- Chamberlain's Department
Ashlee Barnard	- Chamberlain's Department
Wayne Fitzgerald	- Chamberlain's Department
Dawit Araya	- Chamberlain's Department
Molly Carvill	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Deputy Caroline Haines and Sir Alderman William Russell. Susan Farrington observed the meeting virtually.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, That - the public minutes and non-public summary of the meeting held on 23 September 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

4. **PROGRAMME SAPPHIRE (ERP) UPDATE REPORT – NOVEMBER 2025**

The Committee considered a report of the Chamberlain which provided an update on The Programme Sapphire - Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Programme.

It was noted that the Chairman was not satisfied with the quality of the reports, and he requested that reports that require approval have the recommendations clearly stated on the first page so they could be easily located.

The programme director provided an update to Members regarding the implementation of the Employee Central Service System (ECSC) with plans and scoping work for the migration to the new product “Employee Service Management” taking place. It was noted that the existing programme budget will be used for the scoping work, which was estimated at £10,000, with the cost of the implementation of the new system quoted at approximately £140,000.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) The Deputy Chair queried the status of the previously established working group, noting a lack of recent updates. The Chamberlain confirmed that meetings were continuing and would be scheduled in Members' diaries. The Programme Director advised that aligning diaries had been the main challenge and confirmed that dates were now being considered for January 2026.
- b) The Chairman expressed concern that he had not been consulted on agenda planning. The Programme Director clarified that agenda development had not yet commenced as dates were still being agreed but assured the Chairman that he would be contacted regarding the agenda planning.
- c) A Member queried the amber status for Core HR and Payroll (page 12) and the options for a pensions self-service portal (pages 29–30). He noted that the Pensions Committee had previously been advised that pensioners would not have access to the system, which he found unusual, and questioned why this functionality was excluded given the investment in the system. The Programme Director revealed that it was technically feasible for a pensioner to access a pension statement in the payroll but further added that the team were considering a wider portal for sharing information, which is currently going through a change control process. The Chamberlain confirmed that a decision has not yet been made.
- d) It was clarified that changes will go through Board meetings and then be reported back to the Committee for a decision.
- e) A Member asked for clarification on the cost implications of deferring adoption of the new system until the current solution is replaced in three years. It was explained that, while the estimated

implementation cost is £140,000 now, delaying would likely double the cost due to the need to establish a standalone project and secure additional operational resources. The Chamberlain noted that the proposed product is currently untested, whereas the existing solution is proven and widely used. Early scoping allows time to test the new product and address any issues before full migration, ensuring continuity with a reliable system until confidence in the replacement is established.

- f) A Member suggested that, given the supplier had confirmed the current product would be sunset, the Committee should consider negotiating a rebate on the implementation costs of the legacy system, as the replacement product was not yet ready for the UK market. This, he argued, could reduce the estimated £140,000 cost in future. The Chamberlain confirmed that all appropriate strategies would be applied to negotiate the price.

RESOLVED – That, Members;

- Approved the programme team to undertake scoping work for the new HR Service Management tool “Employee Service Management” (ESM) Paragraphs 28, 29 & 30.

5. **DOOR ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEMS (DACS) – SYSTEM CONVERGENCE**

The Committee considered a report of the Chamberlain concerning the proposal to merge door access control systems across the city of London corporation.

The Chairman asked the Director to explain the risk analysis, and how this was focused on the underlying technology. The Chairman stressed how he wanted to avoid the risk of doors across sites having issues at the same time. The Director explained that the proposal sought to harmonise technology across sites by implementing a single common platform for access control. He confirmed that this would involve separate instances of the same system, ensuring that any issue at one site would not affect others. The proposal aligned with the wider Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) Strategy and the Enterprise Architecture framework.

During discussion, a Member queried ownership responsibilities for software and hardware across different sites. It was noted that current arrangements varied, with Guildhall's systems managed under Facilities and Schools under IT. The Director advised that the proposal aimed to establish a common operating model and consistent approach across the organisation. He added that the arrangement would enable resource sharing, for example, deploying support from other sites if a door reader failed. The Chamberlain emphasised that certain responsibilities, such as safeguarding within the Schools, would continue to require local decision-making regarding access permissions.

A Member requested clarification on the financial implications. The Director explained that the initiative was at an early stage and confirmed that integration would be considered at the point of contract renewal or system replacement. A

Member asked when the proposed benefits would be seen, and full integration achieved. The Director advised that the plan was long-term, with a common platform across the estate expected within approximately seven to ten years.

RESOLVED – That, Members:

- Agreed to the unified door access control system.

6. ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURE DELIVERY AND THE CONCEPTUAL FUTURE TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE

The Committee considered a report of the Chamberlain which set out the strategic technology direction required to deliver the Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and related strategies. The Chairman explained that the report was wrongly labelled for Decision and was instead for Information, noting that it sought Member endorsement rather than a formal decision.

The Chamberlain advised that the report provided horizon-scanning updates in response to queries received from outside the Committee regarding ongoing work. The Chairman noted that, during weekly meetings with Officers and the Chamberlain, discussions had taken place on offering seminars and briefing sessions for Members to highlight the forthcoming IT projects.

The following discussion took place:

- a) A Member expressed his appreciation for the insight into enterprise architecture but questioned the use of "City Digital Twin" due to the small geographic area of the City of London compared to other global cities. He asked how best-in-class enterprise architecture could be achieved while ensuring compatibility with neighbouring boroughs and Greater London. The Chairman added that London Councils should take this into accounts to avoid duplication and failure to integrate.
- b) The Chamberlain confirmed that the Greater London Authority (GLA) was responsible for London's overall infrastructure, with the City and boroughs forming part of the wider framework. She noted that the Corporation's data was currently siloed across multiple systems and not yet in a suitable format. It was highlighted that emerging technologies were already being utilised in areas such as traffic flow analysis for Destination City, but these systems were not joined up. Once integration was achieved, the Corporation would be able to align with and connect with other Boroughs and Greater London.
- c) The Chairman asked whether there was ongoing dialogue across boroughs to encourage data readiness, with a view to enabling future collaboration between local authorities. He reiterated that clear messaging on this would be beneficial. A Member, who also sat on London Councils, emphasised the importance of understanding the data held at a high level and exploring how the Corporation could connect to and leverage that information. It was agreed that this would be taken away for reflection.

RESOLVED – Report noted.

7. DIGITAL, DATA & TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain summarising the activities undertaken over the past year across the wider Corporation, including its Institutions under the Shared DDaT Strategy.

The following points were raised:

- a) A Member welcomed the update but raised concerns regarding the limited understanding of Artificial Intelligence (AI) among teaching staff within the Schools. He asked whether Officers could provide support and share best practice guidance to enable teachers to incorporate AI effectively in the classroom and deliver meaningful positive change.
- b) The Director reported that a recent Digital Services Dinner had facilitated constructive dialogue between Schools and Microsoft representatives. He noted that a session had already been delivered with one School to upskill students on AI, with further sessions planned. He added that similar initiatives had previously taken place during Cyber Security Awareness Month and confirmed that Officers were keen to expand such opportunities in partnership with external organisations to enhance skills across the wider organisation.

RESOLVED – Report noted.

8. DIGITAL, AI, AUTOMATION AND DATA LIGHTHOUSE UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain concerning an overview of the Digital Solutions Team, which sits within the Digital, Information and Technology Service (DITS).

RESOLVED – Report noted.

9. CORPORATE DATA PLATFORM PROGRESS REPORT - UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain outlining the ongoing progress in implementing the Corporate Data Platform, which leverages Microsoft Fabric to improve the organisation's data management and analytical capabilities.

RESOLVED – Report noted.

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

There were no questions.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman emphasised that Cyber Security training for Members needed to be easily accessible and straightforward to complete. It was noted that both the Chair and other Members had experienced difficulties when attempting to complete the training. Therefore, the Chairman moved and the Committee

agreed that in addition to the current Cyber Security offerings, by January, Officers should ensure that there would be an external web hosting of cyber training available, which should allow the progress to be saved and/or generate an email update indicating where the training has reached to assist Members and Officers in tracking completion.

RESOLVED – That in addition to current cyber security offerings, by January officers are instructed to ensure there is an external web hosting of cyber training available, that enables the saving of progress and or that generates an email of where the training has reached for the benefit of members and officers recording progress.

In addition, the Chairman moved that Officers should have reports ready nine days before a Committee Meeting, to ensure that Members receive papers within seven days. However, in the debate a Member expressed concerns as to resource and impact, it was agreed that further consideration was required and to not proceed with the motion.

11.1 Revenue Budgets – Budget 2025/26 and Draft Estimate 2026/27 (Supplementary Item)

The Committee considered a report of the Chamberlain regarding the Committee's Annual Revenue Budgets. It was noted that the report needed to be dealt with due to it requiring approval of the Draft Estimate 2026/27 for onward submission to the Finance Committee.

The following points were discussed:

- a) The Deputy Chair queried discrepancies in figures presented on pages 5 and 11 and asked whether the Security Operations Centre (SOC) figure was the same as the MDR figure.
- b) Officers confirmed that the SOC and MDR figures referred to the same service. It was further clarified that MHR represented the current ERP system, which was being replaced by the new SAP system. Apologies were offered for a typographical error, noting that the reference should have read "Cyber Security monitoring service" rather than "survey." Officers also confirmed that the £67,000 figure represented the ongoing cost.

RESOLVED – That Members: -

- i) noted the Budget for 2025/26.
- ii) approved the Draft Estimate 2026/27 for onward submission to the Finance Committee.
- iii) Noted the committee's capital budgets for 2026/27, set out in Appendix 3, agreed that any minor amendments for 2025/26 and 2026/27 budgets arising during the corporate budget setting period be delegated to the Chamberlain.

12. 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.

13. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED – That, the non-public minutes held on 23 September 2025 were approved as a correct record.

14. OVERSEAS POLICY

The Committee considered a report of the Chamberlain regarding an update to the Information Security Policy to reinforce the policy stance on Overseas travel for Officers.

15. FUTURE NETWORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain regarding a Future Network Programme update.

16. CYBER SECURITY

The Committee received a report of the Chief Information Security Officer regarding Cyber Security.

17. PHISHING SIMULATION REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Director of Digital Information and Technology regarding Phishing Simulation exercises.

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

Questions were raised regarding City of London Corporation websites.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

A discussion took place regarding software systems and access controls.

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm

Chairman

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