

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 26 November 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held at Committee Rooms, 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Wednesday, 26 November 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present

Members:

Florence Keelson-Anfu (Chair)
Anthony Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chair)
Adam Hogg
Sandra Jenner
Charles Edward Lord, OBE JP
Philip Woodhouse

Union Representatives:

Ben Campbell White (GMB)
Diane Timmins (GMB)
Leila Ben-Hassel (Unite) - online
Danny Hogan (Unite) - online

Officers:

Cliff Morton

Chris Fagan

Maggie Heneghan

Tom Kennedy

Rachel Mackay

Sonia Virdee

Christopher Rumbles

- Chief People Officer and Executive Director of HR
- People and HR Department
- People and HR Department
- Head of Policy and Industrial Relations
- People and HR Department
- Chamberlain's Department
- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and non-public summary of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 4 September 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

4. ITEMS RAISED BY GMB AND UNITE

a) Pay Award 2025 / 26

Executive Pay

The GMB Union Representative raised a concern regarding a perceived gap between executive pay and other staff at the City Corporation and requested more transparency and fairness in compensation decisions. The Chamberlain explained that the reported rise in pay referred to in a MyLondon article was due to backdated payments for extra duties taken on by Chief Officers after

organisational changes, not a general salary increase. An error in the draft accounts added to the confusion but with this having now been corrected. It was confirmed that detailed executive pay information was available to view, and that the increases in question were tied to additional responsibilities rather than across-the-board raises.

Pay Negotiation and Timelines

The GMB Union Representative raised a concern relating to a delay in pay negotiations and late implementation of the pay award at the City Corporation, contrasting this with an earlier negotiating process followed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services where negotiations commence early and with pay awards being implemented by April. The GMB Union Representative called for negotiations to start in January each year to ensure timely July payments and to reduce staff uncertainty; with the current process often resulting in the pay award not being implemented until December or January of the following year.

The Unite Union Representative voiced their disappointment that the 3.2% pay offer was not increased during the ACAS talks, especially given higher inflation at the time. They attributed this to strict budget limitations given to the officers involved in the negotiations and noted the absence of Member involvement as a missed opportunity for better engagement. The unions urged more competitive pay for lower-graded staff to support recruitment and retention.

The Head of Policy and Industrial Relations acknowledged the concern raised regarding a delay in the pay award process, confirming that preparations have begun for earlier negotiations for the 2026/27 pay award. A commitment was given to working to a clear framework and an efficient process supported by Acas when negotiating future pay awards.

It was confirmed that the 3.2% cap maintained during ACAS negotiations was due to a budget limitation agreed by Members, with authority having been delegated to officers to take forward negotiations accordingly, thereby streamlining the process in line with the direction given and with this explaining why no elected Member attended ACAS directly.

Consultant Costs

The GMB and Unite Union Representatives questioned the City Corporation's high consultant costs, suggesting savings could be achieved to fund higher permanent staff pay. The Chamberlain responded and confirmed that consultant spending was closely monitored for value for money, and with it being necessary for certain specialist roles or where temporary roles were required during periods when there was a pause on permanent hiring. Ongoing reviews of consultant costs spending were conducted by the Efficiency and Performance Working Party, with results reported to the Finance Committee. The suggestion to further reduce consultant costs was noted and with it being an area that would remain under review as part of financial efficiency efforts.

b) People and HR Update

The GMB Union Representative referred to concerns that had been raised previously relating to a dysfunctional and under-resourced HR function, particularly issues with inconsistent advice, support, and delays in handling grievances and disciplinary hearings due to a reliance on temporary staff. These concerns had been formally raised with the committee in June 2025 via a risk assessment, and with an update now being requested on progress made since the appointment of the Chief People Officer, specifically regarding improvements in these areas.

The Chief People Officer responded and presented a number of slides to the Committee, during which he outlined the significant progress that had been made in stabilising and strengthening the HR function, including recruiting permanent staff to replace temporary roles, improving the timeliness and consistency of casework, and enhancing engagement through initiatives such as site visits and regular communications. The update highlighted ongoing transformation efforts, the implementation of new systems like SAP, and a positive pulse survey indicating strong confidence in the department's direction, whilst also acknowledging that continuous improvement and team development remain priorities.

The GMB and Unite Union Representatives responded positively to the Chief People Officer's presentation, acknowledging the comprehensive and structured approach being taken to HR transformation and the progress that had been made in stabilising the department. Improvements appeared to be well embedded and were likely to support long-term organisational stability, with an emphasis being placed on the importance of continued collaboration and monitoring to ensure ongoing success.

c) Results and recommendations of GMB AI in the workplace member survey

The GMB Union Representative confirmed that GMB had surveyed its members on AI in the workplace, following a rise in AI use within the City of London Corporation. The results had revealed a level of uncertainty about how AI operates, with a perception being one of a lack of transparency, and with there being concerns over job security, training, data protection, and ethics. GMB were calling for strong governance, adequate training, and thorough consultation before expanding AI any further, to ensure responsible innovation and to protect jobs and standards.

The Chamberlain responded and acknowledged a need for strong governance, full transparency, and proper staff training. An AI policy already existed and was available for review, with both management and staff responsible for accessing relevant training and raising concerns as needed. AI use was intended to automate routine tasks to allow staff to focus on more valuable work, not to replace jobs. Training visibility was being improved, and ongoing consultation with Trade Unions would continue as AI adoption advances.

The GMB Union Representative welcomed the commitment given to ongoing consultation, whilst also acknowledging the existence of an AI policy and training opportunities and stressing a need for meaningful staff engagement before introducing AI in the workplace. There was a call for transparency, strong governance, and clear communication about AI's effects on roles. The GMB Union Representative also stressed that responsible innovation must protect job security and professional standards, urging proactive action to address staff concerns as AI was adopted.

5. ITEMS RAISED BY CITY CORPORATION

a) City of London Corporation - Trade Union Recognition Agreement & Partnership Agreement

The Head of Policy and Industrial Relations noted that the Trade Union Recognition Agreement from July 2000 was outdated and no longer aligns with current union representation or organisational roles. It was proposed updating this agreement and to create a new partnership agreement to formalise how the City Corporation engages and collaborates with GMB and Unite, ensuring future working arrangements were relevant and effective.

The GMB and Unite Trade Union Representatives requested details about the proposed scope, objectives, and timeline for the update. Clarity was also sought on how the process would allow input from all parties and how issues such as facilities time and union representation would be managed, especially if relevant laws changed.

The Head of Employee and Industrial Relations confirmed that updating the recognition agreement to reflect current unions and arrangements was the immediate priority, with a revised and updated version to be presented at the next Joint Consultative Committee meeting taking place in February 2026. A broader partnership agreement would be developed collaboratively with Trade Unions over time to address strategic issues e.g., facilities time and upcoming legislation.

The GMB and Unite Trade Union Representatives welcomed the proposals, recognising the value of a modernised framework for industrial relations and expressing their commitment to working together on implementing these changes.

RESOLVED: That Members: -

- a) Agreed to a review of the current Recognition Agreement, which formally recognises trade unions engaged with the Corporation.
- b) Agreed to development of a proposed Partnership Agreement, which sets out the principles and processes for collaboration and engagement between the Corporation and the recognised trade unions.

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

There were no questions.

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

The following items of additional business were considered: -

LGA Peer Review

The Unite Trade Union Representative requested details about the recent LGA Peer Review at the City of London Corporation, including its purpose, terms of reference, and key steps involved in the process.

The Head of Policy and Industrial Relations confirmed that the Corporate Strategy and Performance Team were coordinating the Peer Review and managing its documentation. Relevant documents, such as briefings, were likely sent directly to contributors rather than being distributed publicly and made available online. The Head of Policy and Industrial Relations confirmed that the information was not confidential and that he would request the necessary documentation, including terms of reference and a review process outline, from the Corporate Strategy and Performance Team and circulate them once compiled.

The Committee noted the update and the agreed action.

Update from Unite

The Head of Employee and Industrial Relations requested an update from the Unite Trade Union Representative relating to facilities time, Ambition 25 consultations, and the representative election at the Central Criminal Court.

The Unite Trade Union Representative assured the Committee that Unite remained committed to ongoing engagement. Recent months had proved challenging, but with two new Trade Union Representatives having now joined and with training underway to strengthen the team. Historic issues relating to the resilience of the team were acknowledged, but with steps now being taken to address these concerns.

Regarding Unite attendance at Ambition 25 consultation meetings, this was sometimes impacted by work demands, but with efforts made subsequently to review meeting recordings to stay informed. It was confirmed that an issue had arisen at the Central Criminal Court when a workplace representative was TUPE transferred over to a contractor, ending their status as a City of London Corporation employee and their Membership not being dealt with accordingly at the time. Conversations have since taken place to clarify the individual's status and ensure such occurrences were not repeated.

There was an acknowledgement that facilities time usage had fallen short of the five-day allocation. Starting from 1 January 2026, the Branch Secretary would be focussing exclusively on Ambition 25 and acting as the programme's main contact. Training was planned to ensure a smooth handover, and with Branch Secretary duties being distributed among other Unite representatives to allow them to prioritise Ambition 25. These steps aimed to resolve the Committee's concerns.

The Head of Policy and Industrial Relations thanked the Unite Union Representative for the update provided and confirmed that he had no follow-up questions at this point and with him being content to discuss matters further offline.

8. **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 Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

9. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The non-public minutes of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 4 September 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

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

There were no questions.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There were no questions.

12. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

The confidential minutes of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 4 September 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

The meeting ended at 3.20pm.

Chairman

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