COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 22 April 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Children's Services Committee held at Committee Rooms, West Wing, Guildhall on Wednesday, 22 April 2026 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Deputy Helen Fentimen OBE JP (Chair)
Steve Goodman OBE (Deputy Chair)
Matthew Bell
Leyla Boulton
Simon Burrows
Aaron Anthony Jose Hasan D'Souza
Deputy John Fletcher
Dawn Frampton
Sarah Gillinson
Amy Horscroft
Shravan Joshi MBE
Helen Ladele
Alderman Tim Levene
Charles Edward Lord OBE JP
Alderman Christopher Makin
Leyla Ostovar
Jason Pritchard
Beverley Ryan
Stuart Thompson
Mark Wheatley
Deputy Ceri Wilkins
David Williams
Philip Woodhouse

Observing virtually:

Joanna Tufuo Abeyie MBE
Deputy Nighat Qureishi

In Attendance:

Mercy Haggerty
Alderwoman Elizabeth King BEM JP
Deputy Marianne Fredericks (virtual)
Jacqueline Webster (virtual)

Officers:

Judith Finlay	-	Executive Director, Community and Children's Services
Beverley Andrews	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Paul Barton	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Deborah Bell	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Peta Caine	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Himmang Chemjong	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Simon Cribbens	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Zoe Gayle	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Michael Gwyther-Jones	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Chris Lovitt	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Chris Pelham	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Greg Wade	-	Community and Children's Services Department
Sadhari Perera	-	Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Lisa Ward	-	Communications and External Affairs Department
Amelia Christopher	-	Town Clerk's Department
Kate Doidge	-	Town Clerk's Department

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Munsur Ali, Lesley Cole, Deputy Anne Corbett, Deputy Christopher Hayward, Sandra Jenner, Laura Jørgensen, Sophia Mooney and Deputy James Thomson.

Joanna Tufuo Abeyie MBE and Deputy Nighat Qureishi observed the meeting virtually.

The Chairman noted that it was the last meeting of the civic year and thanked departing members and welcomed incoming members to be appointed at the Court of Common Council on 23 April 2026.

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 previous meeting held on 16 March 2026 be approved as an accurate record.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received the public outstanding actions report.

RESOLVED: - that the report be received, and its contents noted.

5. **GOLDEN LANE LEISURE CENTRE - UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman read out a statement, a summary is provided below:

- She acknowledged the concern and anger among some residents, Golden Lane Leisure Centre (GLLC) users and staff caused by the earlier than expected closure of the leisure centre.
- That the decision was not taken lightly and needed to be taken urgently following the operator (Fusion Lifestyle) going into administration.
- It had been the intention to keep the GLLC open until the planned refurbishment works were due to start later this year, however the condition of the building was unreliable and failures in key systems meant activities were being cancelled.
- A planned and managed closure, with alternative provision secured nearby at Finsbury Leisure Centre and Ironmonger Row Baths - around a 10-minute walk away - at no extra cost to members, was preferable and provided greater reliability and certainty.
- Ensuring children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and other vulnerable users have access to provision had been a priority in agreeing alternative arrangements.

- Officers were working with providers to ensure all groups that use the GLLC were supported, including older residents and organised clubs. Such alternative provision was nearly finalised, with support from neighbouring facilities including those at City of London Girls' School and City University.
- That the £10.4 million investment would transform the leisure centre and secure its long-term future, delivering a modern, high-quality facility.
- She reassured Members that open engagement with residents continued. A public meeting would be held 23 April 2026, to answer questions, listen to concerns and explain both the immediate arrangements and future plans.
- She emphasised that the focus throughout had been on providing the most reliable and responsible outcome for users, while safeguarding the long-term future of the GLLC.

The Chairman stressed that she, the Deputy Chair and officers were committed to working with the Save Golden Lane Leisure Centre campaign group, having met with them and noted the offer for another meeting. She acknowledged the interest by residents and Members in reviewing the refurbishment options, noting that the design was predicated on a public survey with around 400 respondents. A meeting with officers was scheduled on the matter. There would be a trade-off however, if that reconsideration of the design would mean that the timeline for works to commence would slip.

A Member noted an email from Golden Lane Estate Residents' Association (GLERA), Barbican Association, and the Barbican and Golden Lane Neighbourhood Forum that none of the groups liked the chosen option. They asked why the two options had not been engaged on with the users and groups before the Committee's decision. They also asked at what point residents and users would have an opportunity to influence the design. In response, officers explained that expert advice had been followed, with early engagement through a questionnaire and focus groups and targeted meetings. The design proposals were narrowed down to two, with the Committee to agree a preferred option for a more complete technical design for consultation and engagement. Noted the Chairman's comments that the design could be reconsidered.

A Member noted that the debate on the matter in public and non-public had been a challenge regarding communicating the themes and the decisions to the public, stressed the need to do that better to resolve the issue of trust. Highlighted the broad range of opinion from the Committee and community on the design choices but in the end, it was a financial decision, only one model was likely to generate enough income through use to not require a subsidy.

A Member referred to a survey conducted in June 2025 by Active Insight promoted through multiple channels of engagement, that research showed the choices.

A Member stressed the consequences of delay and increased cost.

A Member asked why alternative options were not in place for users before the administration was announced. Asked whether there was an option to amend the design plans for the new GLLC. In response, officers clarified that there had been market engagement on the long-term provision of the GLLC and operator enabling

the mobilisation of alterative provision. The transferring of memberships to local provision was brought forward by several months due to the operator facing financial pressures, Fusion Lifestyle had unsuccessfully tried to find a merger or buyer to prevent its administration. A week after the administration announcement, an arrangement had been made to take on members of the GLLC at no extra cost and officers worked hard to secure a range of alternative provision for targeted activities. There had been dialogue and meetings with various groups to get it right for users, particularly for those with protected characteristics.

A Member asked whether officers were committed to exploring the options the campaign group might have about how the GLLC might be kept open, and also sought confirmation that the £10.4 million was not at risk. They asked for a commitment to resident engagement in the future shaping of the GLLC and its delivery regardless of the option decided. In response, officers noted that all the alternatives were close to being in place, timetables would be shared imminently. Options from the campaign group were being actively explored. The £10.4 million was in place and was being spent. Resident engagement was hugely important, the whole community needed to be galvanised, users were needed to make the service financially viable.

A Member asked whether there were lessons to be learnt about how consultation is conducted, to engaged earlier rather than to have strict options. In response, officers provided reassurance that the lessons learnt would be considered particularly around the communications.

A Member asked whether the SEND swimming programme could be confirmed. In response, officers clarified that had been secured via the City of London Girls' School; and would be noted in a resident briefing.

The Chairman asked Members to submit any other questions via email and the Committee would be updated with any developments.

RESOLVED: - noted the verbal update.

6. DEPARTMENTAL RISK UPDATE

The Committee received the report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services on the departmental Risk Register.

RESOLVED: -

- Noted the departmental Risk Register.
- Noted the actions taken by DCCS to strengthen its response and risk mitigation.

7. REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING INSPECTION - OUTCOME, BENCHMARKING AND IMPROVEMENT RESPONSE

The Committee received the report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services on the outcome of the Regulator of Social Housing inspection.

A Member asked how it would be known that the issues that led to the C3 Consumer Standards grading had been resolved and the Regulator would be satisfied that had been achieved. They also asked who sat on the Housing Improvement Board and who was the independent chair. In response, officers explained that the Regulator would review the Housing Strategy Action Plan monthly providing feedback and assurance. It was vital to track progress to get the services right for residents, supported by the £211 million investment. The Regulator noted that the plan was outcome-focused with the right timescales and direction to achieve a satisfactory outcome swiftly. Noted that the Housing Improvement Board was an internal assurance officer board, chaired by an independent housing consultant. Clarified that the actions were received by the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee, any issues would be escalated to the Committee as appropriate. The Chairman added that the Housing Improvement Board was not new and provided scrutiny.

The Chairman acknowledged the concerns by residents and referred to the Housing Strategy Action Plan noting the many references to residents and engagement. The Housing Investment Group had recently looked at resident engagement on housing, which was substantial, and for that to be circulated to the Committee for their information. More needed to be done around the specificity, any comments on the plan should be sent to officers to refine it and to ensure the right communications.

A Member stressed the need for urgency regarding the repairs and maintenance, and communications, asked what was being done in the Housing Strategy Action Plan to act quickly and improve residents' experience and provide reassurance that the matter was being taken seriously. The Deputy Chair noted that had been discussed at the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee, officers were working on increasing responsiveness and treating tenants as customers. In response, officers stressed that repairs and maintenance was a priority with extra capacity committed, the stock conditions survey was underway. Systems had been upgraded over the past 18 months, such as for fire risk assessments.

A Member asked when the C3 Consumer Standards grading could be reviewed at the earliest. In response, officers explained that inspections occur every four years, however a reinspection could be requested at any point; that might entail a shorter more focused inspection or a desktop exercise.

A Member noted that the housing governance working review was positive. However, on communications with residents, noted the difference between formal consultation and meetings to talk directly to residents, and asked what more could be done to ensure that residents' voices were sufficiently represented and to increase engagement. In response, officers noted that had been discussed at the Golden Lane Estate Renewal Board, around holding a resident session to rearticulate the renewal plan, enhancing communications through a newsletter. The renewal plan could be replicated for other estates going through change.

RESOLVED: -

- Noted the outcome of the Regulator of Social Housing inspection and the C3 Consumer Standards grading.

- Noted the benchmarking position of the City of London Corporation relative to other London boroughs.
- Noted the improvement actions underway and the governance arrangements in place to provide assurance and oversight.

8. **UPDATES FROM SUB COMMITTEES, ALLOCATED MEMBERS AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

There were no updates received.

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

A Member noted that they recently met unpaid carers, part of the City Carers Community group, at their event on 18 April. A resident in their ward asked: 'The Carers Strategy 2023 - 2027 is due for a refresh. Three years in, when can we expect the implementation of accurate carers' emergency plans stored within social care?'

In response, officers explained that regarding carers known to Adult Social Care who have carers assessments on their file, those were reviewed annually and contingency and emergency planning was built into that, there was an option for more detailed emergency plans. Regarding carers not known to Adult Social Care, the carers support group Imago could support those carers in developing emergency plans and those could be stored on a National Carers Card; or those carers could contact Adult Social Care. Discussions were underway about how to extract that information and include it in the Adult Social Care system if requested.

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

There were no public items of urgent business.

11. **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 Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

12. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED: - that the non-public minutes of the previous meeting, held on 16 March 2026, be approved as an accurate record.

13. **NON-PUBLIC OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Committee received the non-public outstanding actions report.

14. **HEALTH AND FIRE SAFETY TEAM**

The Committee received the report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services on the establishment of a new Health and Fire Safety team in the Department of Community and Children's Services.

15. **GOLDEN LANE LEISURE CENTRE REFURBISHMENT - GATEWAY 2 ISSUE REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services on the refurbishment of the Golden Lane Leisure Centre.

16. **WAIVER REPORT**

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

17. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no non-public questions.

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

One item of non-public urgent business was raised.

The meeting ended at 3.13 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Amelia Christopher
Amelia.Christopher@cityoflondon.gov.uk