



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Children, Environment and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children, Environment and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Monday 18th September, 2017**, Room 3.1, 3rd Floor, 5 Strand, London, WC2 5HR.

Members Present: Councillors Andrew Smith (Chairman), Rita Begum, Iain Bott, Melvyn Caplan, Councillor Peter Cuthbertson, Aicha Less and Gotz Mohindra.

Co-opted Members: Eugene Moriarty and Ann Townshend.

Also present: Councillor David Harvey (Cabinet Member for Environment, Sports and Community).

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Robert Rigby, Councillor Nick Evans, Annie Ee and Aki Turan.

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 It was noted that Councillor Gotz Mohindra was substituting for Councillor Robert Rigby.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed Councillor David Harvey (Cabinet Member for Environment, Sports and Community) to the meeting.
- 1.3 The Chairman advised that Councillor Richard Holloway (Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Young People) would not be attending the meeting. Any questions that Members had regarding his portfolio would be placed on the Committee's Action Tracker.
- 1.4 The Chairman congratulated Melissa Caslake on her new position as Bi-Borough Executive Director of Children Services and also congratulated and welcomed Miranda Gittos as the new Interim Director of Family Services.
- 1.5 The Chairman announced that both Louise McCullough and Brenda Morrison had decided to step down from the Committee and that their replacements would be announced shortly. The Chairman thanked Louise and Brenda for all their hard work over the years and wished them well for the future.

1.6 The Chairman welcomed Sarah Mitchell, Director, from Heart of the City who would be contributing to the Voluntary and Community Sector Support Report.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 No further declarations of interests in respect of items to be discussed were made, other than those noted in the circulated schedule as set out below in paragraph 2.2.

2.2 Table of Member's interests tabled at the Committee Meeting was as follows:

| Councillor/Member of the Children, Environment and Leisure P&S Committee | Organisation | Nature of Interest |
|---|---|--|
| Iain Bott | Paddington Academy One Westminster | Governor Non-Voting Member of the Board |
| Eugene Moriarty | St Augustine's Church of England School | Headteacher |
| Ann Townshend | St Barnabas' CE Primary School | Headteacher |

3 MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2017 be approved for signature by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

4 TRACKERS AND WORK PROGRAMME

4.1 ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKERS

4.1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Action and Recommendation Trackers be noted.

4.2 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

4.2.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Work Programme be noted.

5 CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, SPORTS AND COMMUNITY

5.1 The Committee received a written update from the Cabinet Member who responded to questions on the following topics:

- the launch and initial success of the #DontBeldle air quality campaign.
- the benefits of both Open Forums and on line community engagement.
- the Library Commission and its effect on the Council's future Library strategy.
- the possibility of introducing Guerrilla gardening across the City.
- the timeframe for the Leaf Removal Programme.
- the possible increase in customer use of the Report it online tool.
- the opportunities to increase recycling across the City.
- the waste collection service and fly-tipping across the City.

5.2 **ACTION:** That the timeframe for the Leaf Removal Programme be sent to Committee Members.

6 CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, YOUNG PEOPLE

6.1 The Committee received a written update from the Cabinet Member which covered current and forthcoming issues in his Portfolio.

7 VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR SUPPORT - RECOMMISSIONING OF THE SERVICE AND WIDER STRATEGIC CONTEXT

7.1 The Committee received a report outlining the work of The Voluntary and Community Sector Support Service managed within the Council. The Committee noted that the service acted as a coordinator between the Council and the large and complex range of organisations that make up Westminster's Voluntary and Community Sector. The Committee further noted that a full procurement process had recently been undertaken to secure a new, long term contract for delivery of these important services.

7.2 The Committee welcomed Sarah Mitchell from Heart of the City who outlined the work of her organisation and contributed to the discussion especially regarding Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) and how the Council could encourage businesses (especially small to medium size businesses) to get involved in volunteering within the borough to give back to the community. The Committee noted how Heart of the City encouraged their organisations to focus on trying to get their responsible business practices to align with their core business strategy so that volunteering was not just seen as an added extra but that it was contributing to their business plan, staff morale and the profit of the business. The Committee considered the huge impact it would have if Westminster based businesses found opportunities to support the voluntary sector in the City through a responsive CSR brokerage Service.

7.3 The Committee discussed that Westminster had a large, diverse and very active Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) which had already contributed to the achievement of a wide range of City for All outcomes and that the sector would have a significant and increasing role in local service delivery in the future. The Committee then highlighted the need to support employers to develop Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes and to find creative ways to engage people and businesses and make them aware of how they could contribute to their Communities such as by providing them with information through their Business Rate bills. The Committee noted that the new contract would make a major contribution to ensuring Westminster had a strong Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) which was fit for the future.

7.4 **RESOLVED:** The Committee made the following comments which would be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Sports and Community for consideration:

1. The Committee welcomed the work that has been achieved in establishing the Voluntary and Community Sector Support Service.
2. The Committee agreed that the Voluntary Sector played a central role in supporting Westminster's communities and that the Council had an important role in supporting and acting as a coordinator between the Westminster's Voluntary and Community Sector.
3. The Committee welcomed the extension of the contract to support the development of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes within businesses based in the City.
4. The Committee highlighted the potential huge impact for the City if Westminster based businesses found opportunities to support the voluntary sector in the City through a responsive CSR brokerage Service.
5. The Committee highlighted the importance of supporting employers in the City to develop Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes and considered that this be included as part of the contract.
6. The Committee encouraged the Council to look at new ways to engage with businesses and possibly provide them with information about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes through their Business Rate bills.

8 OPEN SPACES AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY: DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

8.1 The Committee received a report on the draft Open Spaces and Biodiversity Strategy for the Council which reflected assets that were both owned or managed by the Council and those which were not such as the Royal Parks and private spaces. The Committee noted that the aim of the consultation was to develop an accessible and engaging document that would appeal to a wide public audience as well as complementing existing statutory policies.

- 8.2 The Committee heard that throughout the strategy and the accompanying action plan there was a strong focus on partnership working and the role everyone, including residents, could play in maximizing the impact of all available green space. The Committee then discussed the range and value of Westminster's impressive network of 'green assets' including parks, gardens and green infrastructure and the creative and innovative ways that roof gardens, living walls and small spaces were being shaped to promote biodiversity and green areas.
- 8.3 The Committee considered the possibility of working with the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), productively using the space around housing estates and widening public access to green spaces. The Committee noted the importance of maximizing the benefit out of all spaces such as introducing window boxes, green hoarding and community food growing as all green infrastructure had many environmental benefits for wildlife, air quality and even reducing anti-social behaviour in the City.
- 8.4 The Committee noted that the document was due to be launched for full public consultation very shortly and responses would be welcome through the autumn.
- 8.5 **RESOLVED:** The Committee made the following comments which would be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Sports and Community for consideration:
1. The Committee welcomed the report and highlighted the importance of green spaces and biodiversity making Westminster an attractive place to live.
 2. The Committee highlighted the role of business in supporting green spaces in creative ways such as pocket parks and street greenery.
 3. The Committee encouraged further innovation in making use of our limited space to create green biodiversity areas using appropriate roofs, hoardings, walls and boundaries.
 4. The Committee highlighted the importance of maximising the impact of green spaces by careful planning and management.

9 REPORTS OF ANY URGENT SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

- 9.1 The Chairman advised that there was nothing to report.

10. TERMINATION OF MEETING

- 10.1 The meeting ended at 8.45pm

