



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

DRAFT MINUTES

Communities & Customer Services Policy & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Communities & Customer Services Policy & Scrutiny Committee** held on **Monday 24 June 2019**, Rooms 18.01 and 18.02, 17th Floor, City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP

Members Present: Councillors Tim Barnes (Chairman), Lorraine Dean, Richard Elcho, Murad Gassanly, Louise Hyams, Andrea Mann, Guthrie McKie and Hamza Taouzzale.

Also Present: Councillor Iain Bott.

1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 There were no apologies for absence. All Members were present.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 No declarations were made.

3. MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

4. CABINET MEMBER UPDATE: SPORTS, CULTURE & COMMUNITY

4.1 Councillor Iain Bott updated the Committee on key issues in his portfolio, and highlighted the success of the recent Westminster Mile event which had 9,256 finishers and had been supported by Mo Farrah. He also commented on the City Council's key role in hosting the Cricket World Cup; and was keen to increase the access Westminster's residents had to sports and leisure facilities in the borough. Work in developing the City Council's Cultural Strategy continued, and the final

draft would be referred to the Committee for comment prior to publication in 2020. Councillor Bott commended the resources that were available at the Westminster archive.

- 4.2 The Committee discussed the use of sports facilities and open spaces in Westminster, together with the removal of the restrictive 'No Ball Games' signs and Byelaws. Members commented that although some areas that had been restricted might seem ideal, signs may have been put up for a reason. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that discretion was important as some signs needed to be kept, but believed that the vast majority could be removed. Andy Durrant (Director of Community Services) confirmed that the Byelaws were being reviewed, and that any changes to Byelaws or signage would need to be carried out as smoothly and as efficiently as possible. A policy for the review was being prepared and would be submitted to the Committee for comment. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that residents at the Hallfield Estate had also been consulted on the types of activity that were wanted; to ensure that different types of activity were delivered in the right place by the right people. Committee Members asked to receive data on the age and ethnicity of people using Westminster's facilities.
- 4.3 The Cabinet Member commended the work of the City Lions and the recent event with the Society of London Theatre. The Committee noted that the City Lions continued to seek new partnerships; and asked to receive details of whether the majority of participants were residents of Westminster, or children from schools that live outside of the borough. Councillor Bott also commented on the forthcoming launch of the Strictly Westminster disability dancing programme later in the year; and confirmed that the Committee's views would also be sought on the recommissioning of the voluntary sector.
- 4.4 Other issues discussed included recruitment and training for the Westminster Adult Education Service; the preservation of Banksy street art in Westminster; the extension of the ActiveStreets Programme to the south of the borough; and BME representation in the City Council's Green and Blue Plaque schemes.
- 4.5 **RESOLVED that:**
1. The report be noted; and
 2. The Committee receive data on the age and ethnicity of people using Westminster's sports and leisure facilities

5. CABINET MEMBER FOR CUSTOMER SERVICES & DIGITAL

- 5.1 The Committee received a written update on key priorities within the Cabinet Member portfolio, which included improving customer experience with a new approach to customer services handling; establishing a Customer & Digital

Standards Board; and proposals for short-term improvements to the City Council's website.

5.2 RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted: and
2. Committee Members be invited to submit any comments or questions arising from the update to the Cabinet Member.

6. LIBRARIES SERVICE – REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT LIBRARIES ADVISORY BOARD AND FUTURE STRATEGIC DIRECTION

6.1 Chris Cotton (Chair, Westminster Libraries Advisory Board) and Mike Clarke (Director of Libraries, Archives & Registration Service) presented the report of the Independent Libraries Advisory Board, which had been established to provide the City Council with external advice on the long term future of the library service. The Board had considered internal and external challenges and opportunities, and had made recommendations for how the Council and library service could best prepare for the future, making the best use of resources and expenditure to deliver key outcomes.

6.2 The report had been made against a background of cuts and the statutory duty for local authorities to support local libraries, and had been framed on what libraries could offer that would contribute to City for All. It was acknowledged that the libraries paid for by the City Council were used by many people who were not residents of Westminster. The library service included the Archive and Music Library, which were important resources that could be better promoted and supported by national as well as local funds and sponsors. The Committee noted that Westminster's libraries had greater resources than other boroughs with a higher level of spend; and acknowledged that the City Council needed to ensure that there was effective joined-up working across the portfolios and priorities that were covered by the service. It was recognised that some of Westminster's libraries had been inherited historically and were not fit for purpose.

6.3 The report had intended to create a vision rather than a delivery plan. Although the report had not included a recommendation for the best model, the recommendations that had been given acknowledged and reflected the capacity for libraries to act as a key driver for all five of the core City for All themes. The recommendations were that:

Libraries help make Westminster a city of opportunity – focusing closely on libraries' primary, traditional purpose of encouraging reading and education in a range of forms; and on an improved digital offer and focus on supporting local enterprise and the business community. The Board recommended that Westminster should define a package of employment support to be delivered at

each library, which would offer a range of basic support that included job search; CV and application writing; and presentational skills.

Libraries help support a city that provides excellent local services – by providing a place that helps make things happen. The Board recommended that libraries could act as a key enabler for driving efficiency in other services, while also looking at commercialisation and fundraising opportunities.

Libraries become a visible advocate for a caring and fairer city – being accessible and trusted places that foster community spirit and can play a key role in tackling loneliness. The Board emphasised the importance of providing support for some of the most vulnerable in society, such as those who were not in a secure housing situation; and of becoming dementia friendly spaces. The Board also recognised a potential need for physical changes to buildings and suggested that this could be facilitated by alternative funding sources.

Libraries help make a healthier and greener city – by working with partners and acting as a key resource for social prescribing and referrals. The Board's recommendations included trialing fresh approaches for effective community-based treatments for adult and adolescent depression, dementia and Alzheimer's disease; and providing targeted 'pop-up' services to support development and learning among families with young children. The Board also felt that libraries could impact on the City Council's 'greener' aspirations through activities such as community gardening; and by acting as a key agent for behaviour change.

Libraries and archives should be focal points for celebrating citizenship, heritage and community based arts and culture - the Board recommended that libraries continued to encourage local arts and culture, making use of digital services and engaging those who might not otherwise access these types of opportunity. It was suggested that the City Council could identify a dedicated budget and programme to foster and support local creative talent through libraries.

- 6.4 The Committee also received a presentation from Sergio Dogliani (Deputy Head of Idea Stores in LB Tower Hamlets) on Idea Stores, which were successful community centres that offered library services along with adult learning courses and other activities. In 1998 LB Tower Hamlets had reviewed the low level of participation in its libraries. Although Tower Hamlets had the highest number of libraries per head in London, participation had been 18% compared with 50% in other boroughs. A comprehensive market research exercise had indicated that residents wanted libraries to provide learning and information services, and it had been agreed that Tower Hamlets would provide a network of seven Idea Stores, which would reflect the seven distinct neighbourhoods across the borough. Five Idea Stores had been established to date, with the first opening in 2002 and most recent in 2013.
- 6.5 The Idea Stores sought to be more informal with longer opening hours, where

people could socialise, access new books and attend classes. Tower Hamlets had also looked at retail design and how books were sold in the private sector. Idea Stores now offered about 800 courses a year within libraries which included spaces designated as Learning Labs. The model was for there not to be a central place, but for all Idea Stores to be of equal importance, and it was hoped that traditional libraries in the borough would turn into Idea Stores when the best location became available. The Committee noted that income gained from the Idea Stores had been considerable, and that the number of enrolments and learners had risen by 400%. Although users of the library service had previously been older people, visitors to the Idea Stores mirrored the community in age and ethnicity, with efforts continuing to be made to involve more people over 65.

- 6.6 Over the last ten years, the Idea Stores had followed community plans in Tower Hamlets and focussed on health and employability. It was intended that they would now move from one stop shops to digital services, which would offer greater efficiencies and savings.
- 6.7 Mike Clarke (Director of Libraries, Archives & Registration Service) agreed that one of the key themes of Connecting Libraries had been how the City Council could make better use of the library service to achieve some of its wider goals and aims. It was important to ensure that libraries were sustainable, as the services they provided could contribute to the wider agenda across the City Council and help achieve savings. Libraries offered support to people in the community who were isolated and vulnerable; and could help other services in supporting schemes such as books on prescription, in which people could read about their condition. The City Council was continuing to encourage greater partnership working in the library service, and to look for sources of funding additional to that already received from Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery. Mike Clarke confirmed that engagement towards developing a 5 to 10 year strategy was ongoing, and that Action Plans would be drawn up by the end of the year.
- 6.8 Councillor Iain Bott (Cabinet Member for Sports, Culture & Community) thanked everyone who had been involved in producing the Connecting Libraries report. Staff consultation on the report had now finished, and a Members' engagement session had been scheduled in the coming week before the meeting of full Council. Councillor Bott informed the Committee that implementation of the strategy would not be quick, as it was important that it was thorough and done well. The Committee asked to receive details of the action plan, which was to be developed during the current year.
- 6.9 The Committee discussed the need to improve the access to culture in Westminster which could be co-located with libraries, and noted that the Cultural Task Group had been considering the development of a universal card that could combine the comprehensive delivery of arts and leisure. It was acknowledged that the additional service would have implications for costs and staffing, and Members suggested that the City Council could apply to the Mayor of London's Community Infrastructure Levy for funding.

- 6.10 The Committee acknowledged the relationship of trust that libraries had with the community that could encourage people to engage in local services and activities; and welcomed the provision of services in libraries such as memory cafes and specialised media suites. Committee Members also considered whether the Housing Information Service would be better delivered from libraries; and suggested that the proposals could be better delivered in phases or packages, rather than through incremental change over time.
- 6.11 The Committee welcomed all of the recommendations set out in the report, and suggested more detail was provided on access for people with disabilities. The Committee also considered libraries becoming healthier and greener to be a welcome theme, but believed some of the actions were not as strong as those in other sections. It was suggested that further consideration be given on how the example of books on prescription could be built on, and how libraries could best be used to make it happen.
- 6.12 With regard to the overall vision of Connecting Libraries, the Committee acknowledged the relationship of trust that existed with the community and agreed that people needed to be encouraged to make use of the wide range of services and activities that were available. The cross-portfolio nature of the services that could be provided by libraries would require clear strategic management, together with clarity on where money should be spent to provide more accessible services. The Committee asked to receive the findings of the library staff survey; and encouraged Members to take part in the staff engagement days being held by the City Council.
- 6.13 The Committee thanked Chris Cotton, Mike Clarke and everyone involved in the team for the substantial piece of work. The Committee also thanked Sergio Dogliani for his presentation on Idea Stores.
- 6.14 **RESOLVED that**
1. Cabinet Members note the comments and responses made by the Committee, as a key consultee, to the Connecting Libraries report and in shaping the long term strategy for library services in Westminster; and
 2. A site visit to the Idea Store in LB Tower Hamlets be arranged.

7. MOBERLY SPORTS CENTRE FIRST YEAR

- 7.1 Andy Durrant (Director of Community Services) and Dominic Wilde (Senior Development Manager - City Management & Communities) presented the Committee with a report and short film on the new Moberly Sports Centre following refurbishment. The Sports Centre supported the Active City theme in Westminster's City for All priorities, and offered a wide range of facilities which

included a new 6 lane swimming pool; an 8 court sports hall with 500 retractable spectator seats; and a fitness suite. The Centre also included community rooms; a café; and a Changing Places facility suitable for disabled users and their carers.

- 7.2 The Committee noted that 2018-2019 had been a very successful year for the new Sports Centre. In the final year before the Moberly and Jubilee Sports Centres closed, the total number of visits per annum across both of these facilities had totaled 285,000. Over the first 10 months since opening, Moberly had significantly surpassed its usage targets with a total number of 444,000 visits. Twenty-nine clubs currently used the Centre on a regular basis; and the City Council had formed close partnerships with local schools who were actively using the new facility.
- 7.3 The Committee commended the work that had been undertaken in connection with the new Sports Centre, and asked to receive details of the original proposal and funding which would provide a record that the City Council had delivered the scheme on schedule.
- 7.4 Committee Members discussed the level of use of the Sports Centre by Westminster's residents, and noted that 60% of people who had gym membership were from Westminster, with 40% from other locations. Andy Durrant acknowledged that over time, the majority of users would not be Westminster residents.. Although the City Council was already in contact with schools in Westminster to promote the new sports facility, it was acknowledged that more needed to be done.
- 7.5 Other issues discussed included ensuring that free swimming lessons for Looked After Children would be extended to disabled young people up to age 25; the success of the contract with Everyone Active; and the launch of the App and website in the autumn that would be key in publicising Active Westminster.

7.6 **RESOLVED that**

1. The report be noted;
2. A breakdown be provided of the percentage of people that used the Moberly Sports Centre who were residents of Westminster, compared to those who were from LB Brent and other boroughs;
3. Written confirmation be provided setting out how the original project plan and specification had been successfully delivered; and
4. A site visit to the Moberly Sports Centre be arranged.

8. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

- 8.1 Artemis Kassi (Scrutiny Officer) presented the Committee's Work Programme for 2019-20.

8.2 The Committee discussed the agenda for its next meeting in October; and agreed that the future Work Programme should include a comparison of Westminster's digital offer with those of other Councils.

8.3 **RESOLVED that**

1. The next meeting in October would focus on Westminster's Call-Centres, and include an update on progress in implementing the recommendations arising from the report of the Independent Libraries Advisory Board; and
2. Site visits be arranged to the Idea Store in LB Tower Hamlets; and to the Moberly Sports Centre.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 The Committee congratulated Councillor Tim Barnes on his recent appointment as Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Education & Skills, which would come into effect on 1 July. Members noted that a new Chairman would be appointed for the Communities & Customer Services Policy & Scrutiny Committee.

The Meeting ended at 9.22 pm.

CHAIRMAN:_____

DATE:_____

COMMITTEE ACTION TRACKER

Meeting on 10 July 2019

Report:	Action	Status
Cabinet Member Update: Sports, Culture & Community	Data to be provided on the age and ethnicity of people using Westminster's sports and leisure facilities.	Completed.
Cabinet Member Update: Customer Services & Digital	Committee Members to submit any comments or questions arising from the written update to the Cabinet Member.	Completed.
Libraries Service – Report of the Independent Libraries Advisory Board and Future Strategic Direction	A site visit to the Idea Store in LB Tower Hamlets to be arranged.	To be reviewed
Moberly Sports Centre First Year	A breakdown to be provided of the percentage of people that used the Moberly Sports Centre who were residents of Westminster, compared to those who were from LB Brent and other boroughs.	In progress.
Moberly Sports Centre First Year	Written confirmation to be provided setting out how the original project plan and specification had been successfully delivered.	In progress.
Moberly Sports Centre First Year	A site visit to the Moberly Sports Centre to be arranged.	To be reviewed