

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive
Tuesday 18th June 2019 9:30 am

Cllr Peter John OBE was in the chair

Present

Member	Position
Cllr Peter John OBE	Chair
Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE	Vice Chair
Cllr Julian Bell	
Cllr Muhammed Butt	
Cllr Jas Athwal	
Cllr Georgia Gould	Deputy Chair
Cllr Ravi Govindia CBE	Deputy
Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE	
Cllr Ruth Dombey	Vice Chair
Catherine McGuinness	Vice Chair

London Councils officers and Chris Munday, ALDCS/LB Barnet were in attendance.

1. Apologies for absence and announcement of deputies

Apologies were received from Cllr Nickie Aiken, Cllr Darren Rodwell and Cllr Clare Coghill.

2. Declaration of interest

Cllr Teresa O'Neill declared an interest as a board member of Homes for England.

3. Minutes of the Executive Meeting held on 21st May 2019

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 21st May 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. Secure Children's Homes

The Chief Executive introduced Chris Munday, the Director of Children's Services - London Borough of Barnet and the Resources and Sustainability Lead for the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS), who talked about the work produced by the ALDCS steering group, carried out in partnership with the NHS.

Mr Munday introduced the paper, commenting that:

- the report, which was initiated and funded by the NHS, with input from the GLA and Department for Education (DfE), arose out of a requirement for London Directors to consider the issue of placement of children in secure accommodation, which, although rarely done because of the seriousness of the decisions, was nevertheless challenging because of the lack of suitable accommodation nationally, exacerbated by the closure of children's homes;
- as there were no secure children's homes in the capital, children had to be placed nationally, on average 190 miles from London;
- the report recommended the development of two units in London to give increased capacity, although accepting that some placements would still need to be made outside of London;
- it was important that any arrangement shared risks across the capital rather than the authorities in which future accommodation would be located;
- the recommendation was dependent on capital and revenue investment from the DfE

In response to questions from the Chair, Mr. Munday confirmed that the precise locations of the homes would be dependent on the level of capital investment offered and the ability to comply with the regulatory requirements, although the sites were most likely to be in outer London (LB Barking and Dagenham had already made the offer of a site). The average cost of placements depended on the needs of the children but averaged between £500 – 900 a week. It was envisaged that the commissioner of such a resource would probably be a wholly owned entity, the details of which would be addressed at the business case stage of the proposal. Mr. Munday also hoped that the resources could eventually be extended beyond the present proposal to look at other areas which had low incidence but high costs.

Members made the following points:

- There was concern that more demand might be created by the establishment of additional homes;
- The impact on police resources should be considered;
- 'wrap around' support may be more effective than secure provision;
- Step-down provision needed to be in place

Mr Munday responded to these points: incidents of secure home placements among young children were rare, but it was important to provide adequately sized regulated accommodation; in terms of police resources, the low incidence of cases meant this call on resources would not be continuous, but continued emphasis on prevention by all agencies was important; 'wrap around' support was effective with some children but not others in terms of desired outcomes; and that the creation of packages of support were often short term in nature. In addition, Mr. Munday reported that step down provision would be built into the proposals, as well as appropriate and secure arrangements for risk sharing between boroughs.

Members noted the work of the Steering Group and thanked Mr. Munday for attending the meeting.

5. MHCLG Consultation: Future Funding and Delivery of Accommodation-based Domestic Abuse Services

Cllr Athwal introduced the report, informing Members that:

- The MHCLG consultation put forward the possibility of a pan London agreement for a facility to sit alongside existing borough provision, and to take a strategic approach to dealing with the anomalies in that provision;
- The consultation highlighted the statutory duties of the 'Tier 1' authorities, such as the GLA, and the requirement for 'Tier 2' authorities' to co-operate with those at 'Tier 1';
- There were still issues to be resolved to ensure that boroughs both played a central role and coordinated their work, in particular given that the client group were often not housed in the borough in which they lived

In response to a question from the Chair regarding existing funding of domestic abuse services, Cllr Athwal confirmed that while some of these services were currently grant funded, the funding sources were wide and the arrangements often complex; the proposal would move towards a clearer cross borough strategic approach to commissioning.

Members made the following points:

- The proposal concentrated on moving the victims, rather than the perpetrators;
- Funding decisions made at a central level could impact on services at a borough level;
- The role of the GLA was highlighted in relation to discussions about pan London governance;
- There was a need for a solid governance model and cross borough commissioning, which were important because of the different positions of boroughs in terms of funding their domestic abuse services;
- A borough led pan London approach should be explored that had regard to statutory responsibilities;
- The input of the Grants Committee on future models should be sought

The Executive agreed that the London Councils response should seek to explore the potential for a borough led pan London proposition.

6. Next steps for Housing cross sector working

In the absence of Cllr Rodwell, Dick Sorabji, London Councils Corporate Director of Policy & Public Affairs, introduced the paper. Proposals for the establishment of a Task

and Finish Group, involving sector experts, built directly on feedback from members of the Executive when they had previously discussed this issue informally and had ruled out a standing board to explore cross sector issues.

Members commented that:

- The role of Homes for Londoners Board should be considered in relation to the work of the proposed Task and Finish Group;
- The Task and Finish Group needed a clear remit to ensure that it added value;
- The Task and Finish Group presented the opportunity for boroughs to work collectively alongside Housing Associations and private development partners rather than individually, and to present findings to Boards such as Homes for Londoners;
- Resident involvement was important in the work of any Task and Finish Group. This had been valued at the recent housing conference;
- Any sign up to initiatives emerging from the proposed Task and Finish Group needed to be at individual boroughs' discretion;
- The development of a set of pan London benchmarks regarding developer consultation with communities could be of value;
- There was a continued issue about the need to obtain accurate figures regarding the number of new homes to be built by boroughs. This also could be a potential area of focus.

The Corporate Director of Policy and Public Affairs responded to members' points by confirming that:

- The motivation for the proposed Task and Finish Group was, in part, an acceptance of the points already made by a number of the members and that 'pan London' should not be restricted to GLA initiatives;
- The Task and Finish Group's work would need to concentrate on areas of added value to boroughs, which the GLA would not statutorily be able to address;
- The aim of the Task and Finish Group was not to seek commitments from individual boroughs but to provide useful tools for adoption by them;

The policy issues contained in item 5 of the report did not extend to the use of green belt land.

Members noted the report and asked that a further report on the possible focus for such a Task and Finish Group be brought back to a future meeting of the Executive.

7. Borough role in the London Local Industrial Strategy and Skills Employment Vision

Cllr Georgia Gould introduced the report, commenting that:

- Although the first draft of the London Industrial Strategy had not made specific mention of London boroughs it was informed by borough priorities; the issues of subsidiarity had not been resolved within the strategy, however;
- This paper set out a high-level vision of boroughs' roles in the areas of employment and skills both individually and sub regionally;
- There was still a need to make the vision more granular so that there was an understanding of each borough's employment and skills arrangements, the commitments to be made from bodies involved in those arrangements and the role of the GLA;
- A meeting was to be held with London boroughs following this Executive meeting to further these discussions, as there needed to be better consistency and 'join up' among boroughs in terms of engagement with businesses

In response to a question from Cllr O'Neill regarding the feasibility of signing off the work with the Mayor by summer 2019, Cllr Gould commented that the timetable for the Industrial Strategy was a national one, linked to a seven year package of post EU funding, on which a lot of consultation work had already been done with boroughs. The work on the Skills and Employment Vision, although linked, was a more London Councils inspired aspect of the wider work and where there was still an opportunity to agree beyond the summer of 2019.

Cllr Gould also mentioned that the GLA had commissioned some work looking at opportunities for devolution to London in areas like the Apprenticeship Levy and funding for 16-18 year-olds.

In terms of the overall strategy, it was recognised that while there were some themes common to all boroughs, each London local authority would have its own specific issues, and indeed its own approach to the development of its industrial and economic strategies (including sub regional relationships), and that 'ownership' of these issues was important in the strategy's development.

Members discussed whether it might be possible to append some borough strategies to the overall Industrial Strategy document, although accepting that arrangements would vary between boroughs, and that an understanding of those differing arrangements would be important.

The Chair thanked members for their steer on this work and confirmed the intention that the issue was to be discussed by Congress at its July meeting.

8. Consolidated Pre-Audited outturn 2018/19

Frank Smith, Director of Corporate Services, informed members that the provisional figures showed a surplus of just over £3.1m, against the previously reported figure of £2.6m.

There was nothing new to report in terms of variances contained in the body of the report. With regard to reserves, the commitments of just over £10m were slightly higher than previously reported, because of changes agreed at TEC in relation to the 2020 Freedom Pass reissue process which would achieve savings.

Cllr Puddifoot noted the various elements of the picture, including the prudent level of reserves, and commended London Councils staff for their work in this area.

The meeting ended at 10:50 am

Action points

Item No		Action by	Progress
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A further report on the next steps for Housing cross sector working be brought back to a future meeting of the Executive	Corporate Director of Policy & Public Affairs	In progress
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">London Local Industrial Strategy and Skills employment Vision to be discussed at next meeting of Congress	Strategic Lead: Enterprise, Economy and Skills	On agenda for Congress July 2019