

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive

Tuesday 16th June 2020 09:30 am

Cllr Peter John OBE was in the chair

Present

| Member | Position |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Cllr Peter John OBE | Chair |
| Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE | |
| Cllr Claire Holland | |
| Cllr Darren Rodwell | |
| Cllr Georgia Gould | |
| Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE | |
| Cllr Muhammed Butt | |
| Cllr Ruth Dombey | |
| Cllr Clare Coghill | |
| Cllr Danny Thorpe | |
| Cllr Elizabeth Campbell | |
| Catherine McGuinness | |

Cllr Ravi Govindia CBE, Cllr Julian Bell and Cllr Gareth Roberts were in attendance.

London Councils officers were in attendance.

The Chair welcomed Cllr Claire Holland, Deputy Leader of the London Borough of Lambeth, to her first Executive meeting.

1. Apologies for absence and announcement of deputies

No apologies for absence were tendered.

2. Declaration of interest

Cllr Bell declared an interest in that he was a member of the Transport for London (TfL) Board.

3. Minutes of the Executive Meeting held on 19th May 2020

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 19th May 2020 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting

4. Covid 19 Pandemic: Recovery and Renewal

The Chief Executive introduced the report, describing the present arrangements for managing Pandemic recovery across London, comprising:

- the London Transition Board, co-Chaired by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Mayor of London, which has been set up to deal with immediate issues around exit from lockdown and transition
- the Recovery Board, jointly chaired by the Chair of London Councils and the Mayor, whose role would cover medium term recovery issues: the Board would also manage two task forces dealing respectively with economic and social recovery, with Cllr Georgia Gould chairing the economic task force and Cllr Ruth Dombey as deputy chair for the social recovery strand.

Feedback had been given to the GLA on the urgent need both to establish clear targets for the Recovery Board and mobilise the two task forces.

The Covid-19 related workstreams for London Councils, approved at the previous Executive meeting, would continue to be reviewed in terms of the outcomes of the Boards.

Members made the following points:

- the Boards should avoid duplication of workloads, and should be responsible for setting their own outcomes and targets as soon as possible
- to make the Boards as effective as possible, some work should take place before the meetings to work out how best contributions could be made from participants, and consideration should be given to setting up subgroups within the Recovery Board
- the Boards needed to be aware of the effective arrangements already in place in boroughs, have an understanding of borough and sub regional relationships, and be aware of parallel work taking place elsewhere, for example the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport's work with the hospitality sector
- a growing number of people who had not previously asked for assistance were now on the cusp of needing help, and this group should be factored in to planning, as well as micro businesses who, up to now, had been able to support themselves, or who were operating in co-working arrangements and therefore not currently receiving support
- the hospitality sector had been one of the hardest hit industries and its revival was crucial in that London depended on tourism. This linked to the need to have transport running effectively
- while a large number of residents could be unemployed as a result of the crisis, there were opportunities for social investment and in retraining people into new jobs linked to London's green agenda
- there were inequality issues arising from the crisis, including the disproportionate impact on BAME communities and people who were digitally excluded
- because of the allocation of discretionary funds according to different boroughs' priorities, businesses may have found that they received different responses from different boroughs.

The Chair also discussed the issue of schools and the issue of their preparedness and ability to be open for all pupils by September, bearing in mind present social distancing rules, which presented difficulties.

Members acknowledged these challenges, commenting that between 40% to 44% of their pupils had now returned to school, many of which had remained open during the crisis. It was also recognised that work needed to be done to restore parental confidence, address the disproportionately smaller percentage of children from BAME households returning to school, and the issue of digital exclusion impacting on home schooling opportunities.

The Chief Executive thanked members for their contributions: he acknowledged the potential for duplication between the Boards which would be addressed by holding 'pre' meeting sessions; the work of the Recovery Board would address the issues of economic and social opportunities and identifying people 'on the cusp'; the linkages between the cultural renaissance of London and the importance of the messaging around transport have featured in discussions with London & Partners; and in terms of the discretionary grants issue, discussions had taken place in other parts of the country on this subject.

Executive noted the transition arrangements set out in the report.

5. Local Government Finance – Update

The Director of Local Government Performance and Finance introduced the report, commenting that:

- the report collated information about the support that the Government had made available to London and the impact on London's authorities since the start of the crisis, and proposed lobbying lines that could be communicated to Government in the coming months
- the largest strand of emergency support provided centrally - £22 billion nationally - had been for business
- £3.2 billion of un-ringfenced emergency funding was the main point of financial support for Covid-19 impact on authorities

- funding for a series of smaller initiatives had also been made available, including £60 million in London for Test and Trace
- in terms of the overall impact assessed by borough survey returns, the total impact for London until the end of the financial year was £1.8billion
- the position to the end of May 2020 was that the total financial pressure across London so far was estimated to be around £600 million. This exceeded the Government emergency funding by around £100 million
- in terms of the Business Rates position the overall impact was £370 million (a correction to the report which stated £30 million)
- regarding the lobbying position, there were three messages; that the money allocated was insufficient; a requirement to stabilise the position of boroughs for the rest of 2020/21; and an understanding that the financial implications of the crisis will last beyond the current financial year
- the Government had announced a plan to ensure financial sustainability of local authorities in the present financial year by addressing the different types of impact, which presented the ability to lobby, noting also that there was a proposed spending review in autumn 2020.

Members made the following comments:

- a short statement should be prepared, setting out why the financial impact on London was different to the rest of the country, citing areas such as tourism and transport as examples; this should be sent to MPs
- the paper should focus on the current financial year and be clear about what London produced for the national economy
- lobbying on this paper should be extended to the party political groups

Members noted the report and endorsed the idea of constructing a brief lobbying paper on the issue.

6. Under 18 Travel Issue (oral update)

The Director of Transport and Mobility provided a verbal update on the changes to under 18 Travel.

Members were informed that:

- the suspension of free travel for under 18s was a condition of an agreement between the Mayor and Department of Transport, with the aim of encouraging more active travel amongst school children, and to reduce the amount of young people using public transport to aid social distancing.
- boroughs had a legal responsibility to provide home to school transport for qualifying pupils but had been able to rely on the free travel provided to under 18s by TfL since 2006
- the Government had confirmed that TfL should continue to meet the cost of boroughs' statutory school travel obligations and that the proposal should be implemented as soon as possible, and by no later than September 2020

A steer was now required from members as to the next steps to be taken, including whether a letter should be sent to the Secretary of State on this issue.

Members made the following comments:

- the free travel option had allowed younger people to have greater mobility across London and the suspension limited their ability to leave their own borough
- the proposals had been introduced before boroughs had the opportunity to hold conversations with parents about the impact of the change on school choices
- a cross party approach to this issue was important
- it would be difficult to achieve the stated aims because no other arrangements for active travel had been put in place
- the interconnectivity of London was important for young people

The Chair thanked members for their comments and asked the Director of Transport and Mobility to draw up a letter to the Secretary of State, which set out the position of supporting a reinstatement of the funding.

7. London Councils – Consolidated Pre-Audited Financial Results 2019/20

The Director of Corporate Resources introduced the report, confirming that:

- the unaudited surplus for the year was marginally over £2.6 million spread across the three committees
- there were uncommitted reserves of £9.7 million, which was a marginally better position than the same time the previous year
- the final figures would be confirmed following the accounts closure, which was carried out remotely this year
- for London Councils the main Covid-19 financial impact had been a loss of income within the Transport and Environment committee budgets, but that there hadn't been no additional expenditure as a result of the Pandemic
- Any changes to the present position as stated in the report would be reported to Executive at its next meeting

Cllr Puddifoot felt that the report showed London Councils to be in a strong financial position in terms of the uncommitted reserves, and he thanked the Finance Team for their work.

Executive noted the detail in the accounts and agreed to receive a further report in November 2020 after the completion of the external audit by Grant Thornton LLP (GT) to adopt the final accounts for 2019/20.

8. Urgency Report

Executive noted the use of London Councils' urgency procedure to approve the appointment of Cllr Matthew Green (City of Westminster) as the Conservative

Party Group Lead Member on Business Engagement, Europe and Good Growth for the period between 1 June 2020 and the Leaders' Committee AGM on 13 October 2020, and the appointment of Cllr Gareth Roberts (LB Richmond Upon Thames) as the new Liberal Democrat Whip, Deputy Group Leader and Liberal Democrat reserve on the Executive.

Cllr Gould asked for an update on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children to be provided to members.

The meeting closed at 10.46.

Action points

| | Item | Action by | Progress |
|-----------|--|---|-----------------|
| 5. | Local Government Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none">a short statement to be written on the financial impact of Covid-19 for London | Corporate Director PaPA | Ongoing |
| 6. | Under 18 Travel Issue <ul style="list-style-type: none">A letter to the Secretary of State to be written setting out the position regarding Under 18 travel | Director of Transport and Mobility | Completed |