

London Councils

Minutes of the London Councils Leaders' Committee held virtually on 7 July 2020

Cllr Peter John OBE chaired the meeting

Present:

BARKING AND DAGENHAM
BARNET
BEXLEY
BRENT
BROMLEY
CAMDEN
CITY OF LONDON
CROYDON
EALING
ENFIELD
GREENWICH
HACKNEY
HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM
HARINGEY
HARROW
HAVERING
HILLINGDON
HOUNSLOW
ISLINGTON
KENSINGTON & CHELSEA
KINGSTON UPON THAMES
LAMBETH
LEWISHAM
MERTON
NEWHAM
REDBRIDGE
RICHMOND
SOUTHWARK
SUTTON
TOWER HAMLETS
WALTHAM FOREST
WANDSWORTH
WESTMINSTER

Cllr Darren Rodwell
Cllr David Longstaff (Deputy)
Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE
Cllr Muhammed Butt
Cllr Colin Smith
Cllr Georgia Gould
Catherine McGuinness
Cllr Tony Newman
Cllr Julian Bell
Cllr Nesil Caliskan
Cllr Danny Thorpe
Mayor Philip Glanville
Cllr Stephen Cowan
Cllr Joseph Ejiofor
Cllr Graham Henson
Cllr Damian White
Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE
Cllr Steve Curran
Cllr Richard Watts
Cllr Elizabeth Campbell
Cllr Caroline Kerr
Cllr Jack Hopkins
Mayor Damien Egan
Cllr Stephen Alambritis
Mayor Rokshana Fiaz OBE
Cllr Kam Rai (Deputy)
Cllr Gareth Roberts
Cllr Peter John OBE
Cllr Ruth Dombey OBE
Mayor John Biggs
Cllr Clare Coghill
Cllr Ravi Govindia
Cllr Melvyn Caplan (Deputy)

Ex officio (under the provisions of Standing Order 2.5):

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Cllr Claire Holland

Apologies:

BARNET
WESTMINSTER

Cllr Daniel Thomas
Cllr Rachael Robathan

Officers of London Councils and representatives of the London boroughs were in attendance.

The Chair welcomed members to the first virtually held formal meeting of Leaders' Committee. He also welcomed Cllr Caroline Kerr, the Leader of The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, to her first full meeting and thanked Cllr Julian Bell, who had recently stepped down as Chair of the Transport and Environment Committee (TEC) after six years in that role. He also welcomed Cllr Claire Holland, Deputy Leader of the London Borough of Lambeth, as the new Chair of TEC, and who would be attending in an ex-officio capacity.

The Chair reminded members that the date of this meeting coincided with the fifteenth anniversary of the London 7/7 bombings, and thanked Cllr Rachel Robathan for laying a wreath on behalf of London Councils at that morning's commemoration ceremony. He asked for a minute's silence in honour of the lives lost.

1. Apologies for Absence and Announcement of Deputies

The apologies and deputies listed above were noted.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr Julian Bell declared an interest in that he was a member of the TfL Board.

3. Minutes of the Leaders' Committee 11 February 2020

The minutes of the Leaders' Committee meeting of 11 February 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. Covid-19 Pandemic: Recovery and Renewal

The Chief Executive introduced the report, outlining the existing structures set up in the wake of the Pandemic and on which London Councils was represented at a political level, namely:

- The London Transition Board (LTB), co-chaired by the Mayor of London and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which would focus on exit from the lockdown and re-starting the economy, and which was envisaged to exist for the next six months or so
- The London Recovery Board (LRB), which would focus on medium and long term social and economic recovery issues for London, co-chaired by the Chair of London Councils and the Mayor of London, with Cllr Georgia Gould and Cllr Ruth Dombey taking on key roles driving forward the economic and social task forces respectively. This Board would have a longer lifespan than the LTB.

London local government fed into the work of these bodies via the work carried out by London Councils and also directly via borough officers. London Councils is supporting members on those groups but was also adding value to the recovery work being done by the boroughs.

The Chair thanked all of those involved in the London work responding to the pandemic, including the Co-Chairs of the multi-agency Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) - John Barradell and Eleanor Kelly – as well as Martin Esom for his role in coordinating London local government's work and also Zina Etheridge who, in capacity as chairing the London Chief Executive's group, was now the Convening Chief Executive in terms of input to SCG. Eleanor Kelly, John Barradell and Zina Etheridge were all in attendance at the meeting.

Mr Barradell explained the work that the SCG had undertaken and the important contribution of London local government to that. The transition arrangements now being put in place recognised the importance of being able to stand up such arrangements again quickly in the event of further waves of the virus.

Mr Baradell mentioned that the SCG had already carried out one lessons learned exercise and there would, of course, be further, fuller reviews in the future.at an appropriate point and when greatest use could be made of the findings.

He also pointed out that there would be further calls to boroughs for officer expertise and that he would alert chief executives and Leaders to this.

Members made the following comments:

- It would be helpful to undertake a very rapid lessons learned exercise about London local government's joint working on COVID 19 to date and, in particular, to consider how the political and professional strands of the response operated together. It was hoped that this could fairly quickly highlight some practice and process that could be built upon in ensuring that the response to any further waves of the virus would be a strong one.
- the issue of the inequalities in communities revealed by the Pandemic, and the disproportionate impact of the virus on BAME communities
- there was an urgency regarding the issues of economic recovery and improving public confidence to visit high streets and use public transport services again

The Chair felt that it would be important in terms of future response for there to be a clear, shared commitment to managing and sharing those unavoidable costs that fell across London local government, including mortuary provision, in a transparent fashion.

He agreed with the desirability of a rapid identification of lessons learned and encouraged boroughs to try and be helpful in responding to calls to support transition and recovery work where possible.

The Committee noted the report and agreed that:

- a rapid identification of lessons learned from London local government's joint working in response to the pandemic to date be commissioned in order to help inform preparations for further activity in response to any further waves of the virus;
- there should be a clear, shared commitment to managing and sharing those unavoidable costs that fell across London local government in responding to the pandemic.

5. Local Government Finance – Update

The Director of Local Government Performance and Finance introduced the report. Since it had been written, there had been the opportunity to analyse the June financial returns from boroughs, which increased the overall financial impact for London from £1.8 to £1.9 billion, the total of increased expenditure from £700 to £767 million, and the projected income shortfall, which was now £1.1 billion.

He also reported the previous week's announcement from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the next tranche of funding - £500 million nationally of which it was expected that around £80 million would be designated for London - and the principles for future support. The Government had also made an announcement regarding the support for income loss, although more detail had yet to be published. The Government had also announced, to support the impact of Council Tax and business rate losses, that they would allow deficits in the collection fund to be recovered over three years rather than one, and would address in the autumn Spending Review any further financial support to be made to underpin those losses.

Members made the following comments in response to the paper.

- the Government had gone some way to acknowledging the pressures facing London local government. London should maintain pressure to receive the money it needs..
- there was a lack of detail in the financial information in terms of support for income loss; for example, there was a question about the potential inclusion of leisure deficits
- a summary document had been produced at the request of Executive on the financial needs of London in terms of recovery, and that this document should be used for lobbying purposes
- regarding the investment needed for recovery, because of the need to include digital and green infrastructure considerations, create jobs and address inequality, it was important not just to fund existing services, but be clear about the investment ask.

Members noted the report.

6. NHS Collaboration

Cllr Puddifoot introduced the report, commenting that:

- the report updated members on developments regarding future integration with the NHS, and that in October 2019 Leaders had discussed the opportunities presented by the long-term plan and the new NHS leadership model to improve health and care services through faster integration and local leadership
- the report showed three specific long term commitments which would impact on the nature of collaboration with boroughs: delivering closer and more formalised joint working at the sub regional (Integrated Care System) level; the bringing together of delivery partners at the borough (Integrated Care Partnership) level; and the development of multi-disciplinary population health focused Primary Care Networks
- the report also set out the emerging conclusions from discussions held by the five Leaders representing London Councils on the London Health Board, and that the

intention to discuss these earlier with the wider Leaders' Committee had been disrupted because of the Pandemic

- The report concluded with the need for the five Leaders representing London Councils on the London Health Board to work together to develop a position integration that could be shared with Leaders, as well as guidelines for all boroughs in terms of democratic leadership of local work. He also wanted to write to the Secretary of State on this matter.

Members made the following comments:

- While the ICS level was important, the valuable role played by community GPs, Councils, adult social care teams and local NHS Trusts during the Pandemic at the borough level should not be underestimated
- there was a need to be continually aware of the requirement to close the gap in health inequalities. .

The Chair noted the comments and recognised that as well as developing a common approach to the issue, it was important that Leaders and Chief Executives were involved in discussions regarding potential changes in social care.

Members noted the report and agreed the approach of the five London Councils representatives on the London Health Board developing an approach to health integration that could be shared with Leaders.

7. Climate Change and Green Recovery from Covid-19

Cllr Claire Holland, Chair of the Transport and Environment Committee, introduced the report, commenting that:

- all the political groups were supportive of climate action with some variation on preferred means of delivery
- the report contained eight action points that could assist with a green recovery from Covid-19, and recognised that as well maintaining the momentum on the activities set

out in the joint statement, the global Pandemic had placed a new premium on a green recovery

- recent discussions had strongly suggested that, in terms of a green recovery for London, renewal activity should focus on inequalities as well as meeting climate ambitions, and that there should be a specific focus on developing skills and jobs in the low carbon and environmental goods and services sector.

Cllr Bell welcomed the report and recognised that retrofitting would be a priority. He also felt that there should be lobbying on active travel infrastructure projects, in that the Government were currently investigating further funding with the Department of Transport.

Members also supported the alignment of this work with the broader activity of the London Recovery Board.

Members noted the report and endorsed the eight key action points.

8. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Cllr Elizabeth Campbell introduced the report, stating that:

- the paper updated members on the lobbying activity that had taken place since the report in July 2019
- since that time the case has been made to the Government via a variety of means including public campaigning
- an announcement about future funding arrangements for UASC was made in June, the details of which were still being assessed
- planned consultation on the National Transfer scheme, delayed because of the pandemic, would now commence in the autumn
- UASC remained an issue despite the present Pandemic, and while boroughs remained committed, their requirement was that assistance to UASC should be fully financed.

Cllr Cowan confirmed an expected 39% increase in UASC, and that the majority of children coming into the UK were not arriving by the legal route i.e. the Dublin Regulation and the Dubs Amendment and Government should be lobbied on this. He felt that some draft text should be put together to share with political groups to establish some consensus in this area. Cllr Campbell agreed that should happen.

Members noted the report.

9. Business Plan

The Chief Executive introduced the report, commenting that the plan, which would have been reported to members in March 2020, had changed quite considerably to reflect issues of recovery and renewal. The plan also now reflected a number of changes made, in consultation with portfolio holders and their shadows, that picked up on the consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic for boroughs and the ways in which London Councils should support them.

Members approved the adoption of the business plan.

10. Feedback from Joint Boards

London Economic Action Partnership Board (LEAP)

The most recent meeting had considered:

- The GLA's early investment in economic recovery and the establishment of small business and culture funds
- The Government's requirement for LEAP to improve the speed at which they commit expenditure.

Skills for Londoners Board (SfL)

The Board had discussed:

- the GLA's efforts to stabilise providers and the establishment of a rapid response fund to help FE and adult community learning to respond to unemployment
- A broader ambition about leaving no Londoner unemployed by the health crisis.

Homes for Londoners Board (HfL)

The most recent meeting had:

- considered rough sleeping and the fact that 25% of rough sleepers had No Recourse to Public Funds, which had resulted in a letter to the Minister for Housing and Homelessness
- reviewed the Housing Delivery task force which was aiming for cross party representation
- discussed the new affordable homes programme.

London Health Board (LHB)

The most recent meeting had considered the 'Our Vision for London' document in terms of concerns around the democratic deficit, discussed earlier in this meeting.

11. Proposed Protocol for London Councils Virtual Meetings

The Director of Corporate Governance introduced the report stating that the Coronavirus Act 2020 had allowed Councils to hold decision making meetings virtually, but that the Regulations required a number of elements to put in place to ensure compliance. These had been included in the protocol attached to the report, together with a number of 'etiquette points'. There was also a schedule of revised future meeting dates, with the Joint Committee AGMs now being proposed to be held in the autumn.

Members agreed the protocol and the schedule of dates for 2020/21.

12. Minutes and Summaries.

Leader's Committee agreed to note the minutes and summaries of:

- YPES – 30 January 2020
- Grants Executive – 5 February 2020
- TEC Executive – 6 February 2020
- CAB – 13 February 2020
- GLEF – 21 February 2020

- Executive – 3 March 2020, 19 May 2020

13. Urgency Report

Members noted the report on the appointment of Cllr Claire Holland (Lambeth) as the Chair of TEC.

The Chair agreed to remove the press and public in that the following items were exempt from the Access to Information Regulations, and via Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Section 3) in that the items related to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).