

MINUTES OF THE NEW BERMONDSEY INQUIRY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19 December 2017 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Barnham, Bill Brown, John Coughlin, Maja Hilton and Simon Hooks.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor John Muldoon and Councillor James-J Walsh.

1. Election of Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor Chris Barnham be elected Chair for the Municipal Year 2017-18.

2. Declaration of interests

None were made.

3. New Bermondsey Surrey Canal Report

The report was introduced by the Chair who explained the background to the inquiry which arose following serious allegations made about the proposed New Bermondsey CPO and monies pledged to the Surrey Canal Sports Foundation Trust. Various claims had been made that officers and elected members had acted improperly which had attracted widespread publicity. Such allegations clearly could not be left unaddressed, and in response the Mayor and the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny had both agreed that an Independent Inquiry be set up.

The Inquiry and its terms of reference had been agreed by Council in February 2017. Subsequently the Bar Council appointed Lord Dyson, a former Master of the Rolls and Supreme Court member to head the Inquiry. Lord Dyson had now completed his Inquiry, publishing his report on 28 November 2017.

The Committee was next addressed by the Executive Director for Children & Young People who had served as the lead officer for the Inquiry. She explained a covering report and a proposed report to Council in January 2018 had been produced for members consideration. She advised the Committee that the Inquiry had operated within its Budget and the likely final cost would be in the region of £250,000.

Member debated the report and began by praising the conduct of officers as highlighted by Lord Dyson. They considered adding an additional recommendation acknowledging the professionalism of officers. Upon receipt of advice from the joint Acting Deputy Monitoring Officer pointing out their strictly limited terms of reference, the Committee concluded that adding such a recommendation was not required.

Members considered in depth whether there were lessons that could be learned from the report. They determined that they did not wish to evaluate the report but concluded that it might have a role in continuous improvement and learning. The Committee unanimously accepted a suggestion from the Chair that he agree with the Executive Director for Children & Young People, subsequent to the meeting, the text of a possible additional recommendation noting the Council could use the report to inform continuous improvement and learning.

RESOLVED that:

(1) the proposed attached report on the New Bermondsey/Surrey Canal Independent Inquiry to the Council Meeting be approved for inclusion in the agenda papers for the Council Meeting on 17 January 2018; and

(2) the Chair and the Executive Director for Children and Young People be authorised to agree the text of any additional recommendation to Council noting the possible use of the report to inform continuous improvement and learning.

The meeting closed at 6.55pm