

City Question Time – 22 May 2025

Chris Hayward – Policy Chairman (CH): Well, a very good evening to you, ladies and gentlemen, and a warm welcome to our Livery Hall here in Guildhall.

And thank you, first of all, to all of you for joining us tonight for our second City Question Time of the Year.

Just a quick housekeeping note before I go on. I'm told I have to advise you that there are no fire drills planned this evening.

So if the alarm does go off, please can you make your way to the closest exit and we'll all exit together. But hopefully that won't be necessary this evening.

I know a lot of familiar faces in the room who've been to these Question Times before.

You're particularly welcome. But of course, welcome to those of you who are here for the very first time at this Residents' Question Time.

And for those who don't know me, I'm Chris Hayward, the Policy Chairman and the political leader of the City of London Corporation.

And this evening, each of you hopefully will have been given a new publication we've just produced, which is a directory of residential services available to you over the summer.

If there isn't one on your chair, we will be making sure that before you leave this evening, you take one of these.

And I hope you will find it a useful resource.

It's another new initiative in our attempts to continue to engage with our residents and to show them what's available.

So it's a Resident Services Directory, and I hope you'll all take one home with you this evening.

I think it's right to say that our last City Question Time, which was a February Finance Special Question Time because we were at the Budget Cycle, we had really fantastic feedback from that.

And so we thought we would try to use this evening's forum for another special event and put a theme around it.

We did finance last time, a presentation and a question and answer session about our new Cultural Strategy.

And that is going to be followed by a shorter general panel addressing questions you may have about what's happening around the City of London.

And I'll be joined then by a number of other committee chairs who can answer your questions around a whole range of services that the Corporation provides for you, our residents.

But let me just turn to say a few words quickly about the delivery of culture.

It's an incredibly important element of our work here at the City Corporation.

And this is delivered not only through the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee, but also through our Barbican Centre Board and of course the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

I'm delighted that I'm supported this evening by three very distinguished chairs of those organisations and I want to thank all three of them for those committees for joining us this evening.

And I'll shortly be handing over to Brendan Barns who is our new Chair of Culture, Heritage and Libraries to introduce the culture portion of tonight's event.

And this will include a presentation given by our Senior Responsible Officer for Culture, Dr Emma Markiewicz and a Q&A which will be chaired by Jacqui Webster, our Lead Member for Residential Engagement.

And I want to particularly, as I mentioned, the three chairs, I mentioned Brendan, but let me also welcome in the front row here Sir William Russell who is the Chair of the Barbican Centre Board.

William, do you want to stand up and take a bow?

And Emily Benn who I'll also ask to stand up and take a bow, she is the Chair of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Brendan, I didn't invite you to take a bow, but as you're going to speak you can bow when you stand up and speak, so that will be fine.

I think I'm following this, as I say, Jacqui will introduce our regular Question Time panel which she will chair joined by myself and the chairs of Planning and Transportation, Port Health and Environmental Services, Community and Children's Services Committee.

So I hope you'll all be as excited as I am about our new Cultural Strategy which we are going to develop.

It's going to be very exciting for the Square Mile and I'm thrilled that you will have this evening another opportunity to feed into this Strategy's discussion when we get to the Q&A bit of it.

So feel free to put your questions and your views on what you want to see in terms of the desired outcomes.

On top of that we have an open online consultation which I know is ongoing, so if you want to participate in that please, please do so.

So without further ado, Brendan, you can take your bow now and over to you.

Brendan Barns (BB): Thank you. Thank you Chris for that introduction and the invitation to speak at City Question Time.

It's great to be here as the newly elected Chairman of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee which is overseeing the formulation of our new Cultural Strategy.

And I know many of you knew Mark Bostock, the late, great Mark Bostock.

I hope he's looking down and smiling on the progress that we're making.

The Square Mile boasts an extraordinary concentration of cultural assets making it an unparalleled destination, enriching the lives of everyone who lives, works and spends time in the City.

Our Cultural Offer is so rich and varied and its future will be guided by the Cultural Strategy.

As Culture, Heritage and Libraries Chairman, I lead the committee responsible for the City Corporation's activities and services in the fields of culture, heritage and visitors.

The committee oversees a huge range of cultural spaces from the City's public reference and lending libraries to the London Archives, the Guildhall Art Gallery, London's Roman Amphitheatre, the City of London Heritage Gallery, Billingsgate Roman House and Baths, the Monument, City Information Centre, the Harold Samuel Collection at the Mansion House.

I could go on and on.

Under the capable guidance of Dr Emma Markiewicz, who is both the Director of the London Archives and the Senior Responsible Officer for Culture, the development of the Strategy is now well underway and we look forward to launching in early 2026. But before that there is lots of consultation with a lot of people from the Barbican to City workers and of course you, the City's residents.

You've chosen to live here and you add so much to our City's thriving cultural scene.

I'm really delighted the Policy Chairman has put the Cultural Strategy firmly on the agenda today and I'd now like to invite Emma to say more about why we're here, where we're going and what you can do to get involved.

Emma will then be pleased to take your questions on the developing Strategy before handing to Jacqui for the general Question Time panel.

So please give a warm welcome to Emma.

Emma Markiewicz (EM): Thank you Brendan.

Thank you as well to Chris for the introduction and the invite to speak today.

Good evening everybody and thank you for joining us. As Brendan has said, my job is two-hatted at the moment.

So in my main role, I'm the Director of the London Archives.

I hope you've all had the opportunity to visit us near Farringdon. If you haven't, you'd be very, very welcome.

I'm not here in that capacity today.

I'm here with my second hat which is the Head of Profession for Culture.

Although with my first hat I'm very interested to hear what I've got to say.

So we're here today to hear about how the City of London Corporation is developing a new Cultural Strategy for the Square Mile.

I'm here particularly to share where we've got to.

This is still a relatively early stage in the process so I'm not about to unveil or launch anything new.

We're very much at the sort of early stages of the process.

If you could bear that in mind as well, especially when we're thinking about the questions, we're probably unlikely to have really concrete answers to things at this stage.

It's much more that we're really keen to hear your views and what you think about how a Cultural Strategy can deliver what you need.

I'd also like to tell you some of the things we've already heard from our residents because we have already run a focus group.

And to understand whether or not what we've heard already resonates with you here today in the room and any other thoughts or ideas you might have.

So the first question I suppose to ask is what is culture in the City?

It's a very, very big question and everyone will have numerous different responses to that I'm sure of it.

So we can't tell you the answer but it's clearly a really important part of the Strategy is to define what that means to us and to create the definition collaboratively.

So culture means different things to different people and we need somehow through this process to come up with a shared vision that everyone can believe in. We want everyone to see the relevance to them and to their community.

That's really important otherwise we won't be able to deliver any of it.

We also know that we have to align with our existing policies, of course Destination City which is the major growth strategy for the Square Mile.

And culture is also standalone and has longevity. I think that's super important.

But it can't be separated from everything else we do, it doesn't exist in a vacuum.

So we have undertaken an extensive policy review from inside the City but also across London and nationally to try and build a clear evidence base demonstrating the needs, the aspirations and the benefits of culture in the City.

Where does it fit in relation to the rest of London? Where does it fit in relation to the nation?

And of course there's a critical international element as well being the City of London as we are.

We can't hide from that, indeed we mustn't shy away from that.

So we're really clear that the Strategy will link with the City's Corporate Plan, 2024 to 29. There are some brilliant objectives in that plan that fit really well with culture.

So not least of which there's the diverse and engaged communities objective, vibrant thriving destination, flourishing public spaces and excellent services that meet local needs.

I don't know how familiar you are with that plan but it's certainly available for everyone to have a look at and I hope when you see it you'll really see these things popping out at us where culture is super important and it all comes back to place.

So what do we want to create and why do we need to do it?

Well at the moment we have a vision that we will create something to be delivered by a set of key cultural priorities.

They'll be shaped by evidence and they'll be shaped by the lived experience of the people who live, who work, who visit and critically who want to visit the City but perhaps don't at the moment.

And from these priorities we'll have an action plan and it will have steps and timelines and responsibilities and it will be clear about how we're going to make it happen and how we're going to measure it.

We can't deliver everything ourselves. We'll need to have a really clear set of recommendations to help our partners help us to deliver.

And in order for that to happen we need to create this Strategy together with the partners.

So I'm really clear that through leveraging and raising up all of the brilliant work that already sits in the City's cultural landscape that Brendan's already mentioned we can create something achievable as well as something visionary.

And I think the last point I just wanted to cover off before we go to the Q&A is how we've got to where we've got to so far.

So the process is being led by the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee.

I've been appointed as the Head of Profession for Culture to oversee the work and the City Corporation has also commissioned Things Made Public to help deliver the development of the Strategy work.

So I want to introduce Sarah and Lauren from Things Made Public. If you wouldn't mind standing up.

These guys are here to help answer any questions as well and I also have with me Omkar and Laurie from the Culture Team within the Corporation.

You just say a quick hello to everyone. Thank you.

And we're here this evening to gather any views and answer your questions.

Because of the importance of partnership working as I mentioned and because of recognising and amplifying the City's existing rich cultural heritage and infrastructure is so important and we are very clear that we don't want to create and develop new things when we already have so much that would require work.

We want to create the Strategy together. It's the only way that it will be fit for purpose and it will be fit for the people that it serves, amongst which is you in the room and something which is actually deliverable.

So we've been through four clear phases or we're going through four clear phases in this development work.

The first one is research. So I mentioned the policy review, looking at best practice from other cities, the planning infrastructure that we already have existing, creative industries, thinking about employment, key cultural moments that will be coming up in initiatives in the next few years.

So the obvious one is the opening of the new museum and the Barbican Renewal Project.

We've analysed the grants and the funding landscape.

We've assessed the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities of the wider Corporation and we've done a piece of audience analysis to better understand who engages with cultural activities right now and who doesn't.

The next stage is around consultation of which this evening is a big part.

So possibly the most significant part of the work, I would say, and certainly the most time consuming and the reason that we're here today.

Other activities we've undertaken through the consultation process and we will continue to undertake in the coming months are some themed focus groups.

We've had a series of one-to-ones with City, with London and with national organisations.

We've run some artist residencies and you can see the output of one of those behind me now.

They've been delivering creative activity out literally on the streets and talking to people on the streets, which is really important because often it can be hard to reach those people.

We're developing some go-see cultural visits. We're taking special visits to cultural venues in the City.

We're running some out and about visits as well with people and groups and organisations who would like to be involved.

So we are going to them. We are coming to you as much as we can.

Aside from the discussion this evening, there are some further ways specifically for you to be involved as well, which will be you can participate in one of the go-see events.

We have a sign-up sheet over there for you to register if you're interested.

We have a light touch survey that is open to the public at the moment.

There are copies over there as well or a QR code if you prefer to scan it and do it online.

We also have a suggestion box where you can go wild with any suggestions and comments that you perhaps don't have a chance to voice tonight in the room.

So then we'll be coming to the Strategy development itself.

We'll be taking all of this information, which will be a lot of words and a lot of information, and trying to turn it into something that will facilitate members and officers and partners and City communities to shape the Strategy with us.

We've got a Cultural Strategy Development Group, which will be sharing and responding to key moments over the development of the work, which makes sure that we're not just doing it in isolation, that we're always testing and checking and listening throughout the entire process.

And that way is how we'll create something that everyone can get behind.

And then finally we'll have the Strategy delivery.

So that will be something that will be inaccessible and easy to read.

Necessarily it needs to be written down, it needs to be a document or something online, but it will be the vision for culture.

And we'll keep that as punchy and as clear as we can.

But it will also sit alongside a practical roadmap, where that's how we set out what is achievable, how we're going to do it, and how we're going to measure it.

And that is anticipated to launch in early 2026.

So far, so theoretical, I can hear you thinking.

But there is some tangible stuff here tonight as well, which is why we were really keen to hear what we've already heard from residents around the Cultural Strategy.

And we really want to check in on this with you tonight and hear what you think about it, whether or not it resonates.

There's another version over there on the boards in the room and some of the other things that we've been hearing from the focus groups.

If you've had a chance to have a look, that will give you an idea of the feedback that we've been hearing.

So there are four things, I think, that we can boil down residents' comments so far, you can see on the right-hand side of the board here.

The first one is that culture should be designed from the perspective of people, growing from the ground up, being driven by people and not top-down decisions from institutions, that the Strategy should be driven by the voice of its communities.

The second is that the City needs to take risks and stop trying to be so perfect and pristine, that we should be less controlling and cautious, and that's the way we'll open up to a more vibrant and spontaneous cultural landscape.

That communication is currently a barrier to cultural opportunities, that there's a lack of clear, consistent communication about what's happening and people are missing out because they can't find the information.

And finally, access. So access is at the heart of all of the planning that we need to do, and that's accessibility in terms of physical, but it could also be financial or having spaces that feel exclusive.

We're not always welcoming.

So I think we're really interested to explore these ideas with you tonight in the Q&A and the discussion afterwards, if there's time.

Just have a think about what your priorities are for culture and what a Cultural Strategy would do for you.

So just a quick recap then, there's a lot of things, ways you can participate.

So fill in the survey online or in print. Go and join one of the events that you can sign up if you put your email down on the sign-up sheet over there.

There's a creative workshop which will be for residents to attend, which will be running on the 11th of June.

So if you're interested in that approach, then please again sign up with your email address over there and we'll contact you, or drop a comment or an idea into the suggestion box which is on the table at the back.

And of course we will be updating through all the usual ways as well through Mark and the team.

Thank you. I think that's kind of what I wanted to say, but very interested to leave as much time as possible for your comments and questions if we want to start that now.

Thank you.

Jacqui Webster (JW): Thank you, Emma. Thank you.

Would you like to join us here on the panel?

So we're going to jump straight into questions because we've only got 15 minutes.

But if we could keep it to questions and not statements because we've only got 15 minutes, please wait for the mic to turn up because we are filming, so that makes it much easier for people watching the recording to hear, but also for everybody in the room to hear.

So without further ado, I think the gentleman there in the back had your hand up first.

Thank you. And the lady behind with the grey, yes, will come to you second.

Resident: Thank you very much for doing this. We appreciate it.

In order to have a meaningful strategy, you have to exclude certain things.

Otherwise you try and boil the ocean and nothing gets delivered. What isn't in the Cultural Strategy?

What have you decided to exclude so that the strategy can be meaningful? Thank you.

EM: Do I need to press?

Okay, yes, brilliant question and kind of a terrifying one because you're absolutely right.

And especially as we've taken the approach of co-creation and speaking to so many people, in many ways that does make it harder to think about what to exclude.

I think that's why we're taking an approach that will probably end up with a vision and a statement around what we stand for, what our principles are, what culture we want culture to look like in the Square Mile, and that's a really long-term thing.

And then sitting underneath that would be that kind of really deliverable element of the action plan where we identify through all the things that we've been hearing, all the different priorities for culture, and we take what we know we can achieve, we work with our partners, and we start like that.

And we think about our existing infrastructure and the existing assets that we have, and as I said, not kind of creating new things that will then be a continuous revenue and funding issue.

And we think about how we can grow working together with outside of the kind of Corporation immediate family.

Who else can we bring into that kind of other organisations that can really add to the richness?

So in terms of themes and topics, I wouldn't want to say at the moment what we will be leaving out.

But really what is kind of emerging as really hot topics is obviously things around planning, things around funding, things around enabling and growing innovation, and that piece that we sort of have in the background around accessibility.

Thank you.

Resident: Thank you.

I'm Jane, I live on the Middlesex Street Estate.

I wanted to ask a question, if I may, about the prospect of having more things that have a European language dimension in the culture of the City.

The City of London is one of the most international of places, but as somebody who read modern languages at university, I don't see that many cultural events that I can go to that are actually based on the mainstream European languages.

I would be absolutely thrilled if we had a festival of German films or a series of French plays, but we don't seem to have very much that's actually to do with modern languages.

Even classes in the City have actually been cut back really strongly.

The Bishopsgate Institute used to do a range of languages and they've now really cut back.

But I would be so pleased if we had things that were in German or French that I could go to.

And yet we don't really seem to have very much.

Languages as a subject are taking a terrible battering in academia.

University departments are closing and courses are being dropped.

JW: Thank you.

Resident: So what can we do?

JW: Okay, thank you.

That's a really good question. I'm going to move straight to the answer.

EM: Again,

I'm not here to make any promises just to listen to what you've got to say, so really helpful to hear that point about languages.

I don't know if that's come up in any of the other focus groups, but I do know that it does fit in as far as I can see into that piece about inclusivity and accessibility and creating something where all of the nationalities and groups and communities who are living and working and visiting the Square Mile feel that there is something for them, the specifics of which obviously are yet to be identified.

However, you know, some of our existing cultural centres do have amazing programmes that kind of do feature international audiences and thinking about the Barbican Centre in particular, but thank you for the comment.

Thank you. I think Brendan, you want to start?

BB: I just wanted to say we have the City Information Centre, which is one of the few places in London you can go to and speak many languages.

So do pop in and have a conversation with them.

Also, I've been to some marvellous things at the Barbican that have been in different languages. It does exist.

Perhaps it's not enough for you, but I think that there are some things out there.

JW: Thank you. The next question. I think that was David. Yeah, thank you.

Resident: Oh, hi. Thanks.

I went to focus group and that was really, really good and very interesting and well facilitated and so on.

And inevitably in the Strategy, it's going to be quite a lot of focus on particular places and events, venues and so forth.

And you wondered how you could design into it the informal as well, because one of the attractions of the City obviously is our streets, spaces, the embedded culture, if you like.

And I wasn't clear from the focus group how that would actually work.

I mean, I recall when Culture Mile was launched, there was a look and feel strategy.

And in that, it had various imagined user journeys of how somebody would turn up, different people would turn up for the day and where they would go and so on.

So what you're doing is supporting a whole experience, if you like, of visiting the City.

And I wondered whether there's a way, if that counts as culture and whether there's a way of designing that in.

EM: I would say that fits straight into the Destination City priorities around connectivity and linking things up.

It's something that we've heard an awful lot of through this process already, as you can imagine.

It seems like a really potentially easy win to do a lot more of that kind of cross communication between everything.

So yes, it is part of the whole.

It's perhaps what I would go back to Destination City on that one and how Culture can then deliver on those priorities.

JW: OK, Brendan, do you want to?

BB: As long as I've been elected, which is a few years now, we've been talking about way finding.

And I think we can do it a lot better because the fact is you can't really get lost in the City.

It's a relatively small place, but we all tend to stick to our preferred routes.

And certainly for the bulk of people, they tend to be the main routes.

The culture that flows through our City is like the blood that flows through our veins. It's everywhere.

So I really want to encourage us to explore and find somewhere new because I think the reality is we all know-- I'm probably preaching to the converted here-- that there's culture absolutely everywhere within this City.

And yet most people would think of ourselves as being a financial and professional services city.

And I'm not saying we should change that. I'm just saying we should raise the profile and awareness for the things that we already have.

We don't need to build them. Some of them have been here for over 1,000 years.

We just need to draw more attention to them. And I think we need to do that through way finding, which is not just talking about it, doing something about it.

JW: Thank you. If we could-- the lady there. And then I had Helen. You were next.

And you were next. And then Alina. Yeah.

Resident: Are there any-- have you thought about-- are there any plans to revive the City of London Festival, which when we first moved here was a wonderful event.

And it was a brilliant way of showcasing the Livery Halls, the churches, quite small events, not expensive, very inclusive.

And it stopped a few years ago when it sort of went-- they tried to make it bigger, bigger events and more expensive.

But I think that was a brilliant way of showcasing-- oh, a lovely cultural event.

EM: I'm wondering if that might be one for Laurie.

Laurie Miller-Zutshi (LM-Z): Thank you.

And certainly, kind of the wider cultural program is something we're absolutely looking at as part of the development of the Strategy.

So both what the Corporation can look at delivering, but also really working in partnership with other organizations, both inside and outside of the City, so we can bring really exciting content in, and that the Corporation can be an enabler and a facilitator of that activity.

JW: Thank you. I got a bit ambitious there.

So we'll go to Helen, and then we'll just do a time check, because we do need to move into the next session.

Thank you.

Resident: Now, it seems to me that there is an elephant in the room, so to speak, in so much as in the City, one of our great stars is the architecture of the City and the architectural heritage of the City.

And I haven't heard that mentioned at all. So what is done in terms of architecture and the way it affects other pieces of other buildings is really important.

And it seems to me it should be part of the Cultural Strategy.

Have you got any comments about that, please?

EM: Just to say that this is something that's really, as I sort of indicated, is really one of the big hot topics that has come up and will continue to come up, how we work with planning, how we work with the cultural planning framework, and how we might be able to use the Cultural Strategy to enable and influence some of that is absolutely on the agenda.

JW: Thank you. David, we've got a question here, and then we'll go to Helena, and then I'm afraid that's it for the Cultural Strategy is here at the front.

Thanks, David.

Resident: Hello. Hi. It's more of a comment.

It's just to ask you guys to think about the provisions for our youth and for our teenagers.

We are seeing a lot of crime with our teenagers in the area, and I think the main reason for this is because they don't have enough activities.

They don't have enough things that are interesting to them.

So maybe thinking about what can we do to attract those teenagers?

So after school, they have activities, and we can put education and culture inside of them instead of drinking beer in the corner.

JW: Thank you. Thank you. At the front here. Yeah.

Resident: Thank you. My name is Alina. I'm a City resident. I'm deaf.

And the moment we have two residents who are deaf in the City, thank you so much, I got so much help for support from Social Services, for some personal things. But the other person, they don't have no help at all. If it's a City Social Services, see social workers send the email where it needs him to read the email and to understand it and to send back response to them.

I said, this person doesn't understand no email. He needs a support on that.

And this has been delaying from last year, October till now.

I've been waiting, but I want the new social services who come to work for City to learn about deaf training.

And I said, if I have any support, because it's not much, you know me, everybody knows me.

I'm fine with that. But another person is not getting all that I couldn't possibly have.

They need to come from them.

JW: Thank you. We've probably got one more culture question. David's saying no. Okay.

We're going to bring that into the panel because I'm just looking at my colleague Judith, who I think is probably best placed to answer that one, Alina.

I'm really sorry, but we have run out of time and we do need to move into the next session of Question Time.

So I'm going to invite the panel to come up. Thank you very, very much.

If you wouldn't mind staying, but maybe take a seat. Oh, fine.

Yeah, just in case we have any more questions. Thank you very much, Emma. Fantastic. Thank you, everyone.

Thank you.

So thank you, Emma and Brendan.

So I will now invite the Policy Chairman to re-join the panel.

Thank you, Chris, as well as our new Chairman for Port Health, Peter Dunphy, and for Planning and Transportation, Tom Sleight.

As well as continuing chair of Community and Children's Services, Helen Fentimen. Thank you very much.

Right. So we're going to go straight into questions because we don't have a lot of time left.

Again, if we could just keep them to questions and not statements, that way we can ask more questions.

So I'm going to stop talking and go straight to questions.

I can see a hand there. Thank you.

Resident: Hi, this is for Chris Hayward.

We just heard from culture that maybe they would try to interact with planning in terms of protecting cultural heritage.

The Barbican, for example, is an iconic part of our cultural heritage, and it's a brutalist masterpiece that's in the middle.

The Barbican Centre is deeply embedded within it.

It is an incredibly important part of the cultural offerings.

I would say one of the crown jewels of the cultural offerings in the City.

And like I said, I want to know, what are your plans to work with historic heritage and cultural concerns to protect the iconic landmark of the Barbican and its architecture?

CH: Well, thank you very much. It's a really good question.

So you're right, of course, on both counts about both the Barbican Estate and about the Barbican Centre.

And they are unique jewels in the crown of the City of London Corporation.

As far as the Barbican Estate is concerned, we have dramatically, I think, improved our servicing to residents on the Barbican Estate in a recent year or so.

I think that's been incredibly important. But in terms of the Barbican Centre, we have-- well, when I say under-invested in maintaining the Centre as a Europe's foremost cultural institution, I'd be making an understatement.

The reality is the Barbican Centre has been there for 40 years, and we spent no money on it.

And the problem when you fail to invest in your estate over a long period of time is it then all hits you at once, and you don't see it coming.

And so we were faced in the Corporation very recently with a crisis moment, which was we were not able to potentially fulfill our health and safety obligations at the Barbican Centre.

And I was told very bluntly that unless we could find almost immediately 200 million pounds for the beginning of the new Barbican Centre development, how to bring it into the 21st century, we would have to close it.

So the Corporation have found that money. We've also asked the Barbican Centre to make a fund-raised contribution towards it as well.

And we're now on a very exciting journey to do that first piece of the work.

But let me say this to you. That won't be enough.

That won't be enough to keep and develop the Barbican Centre as Europe's foremost arts centre.

We need to spend considerably more than that in future phases.

And the reality is we can only spend that if we partner with the private sector.

And so we will look for the second stage and the third stage of developing the Barbican Centre to private sector investment and expertise.

We are doing something quite unique with the redevelopment of the Barbican Centre at the moment.

We're actually forming its own committee or not committee, its own group to actually oversee that development with huge professional expertise on it.

So we're not relying upon local politicians like me to do it. We're actually bringing in people.

So my commitment to you is that both the Barbican Estate and the Barbican Centre represent cultural heritage, a significant proportion of the cultural heritage in the Square Mile.

And we need to make them work together. We need to make sure that we look after both of them.

We need to give them TLC and treasure them and develop them in that spirit.

JW: Thank you, Chris. I'm just going to go back to the question that we had from Alena, because I know that Judith Finlay will be able to answer that one for us.

Apologies that I didn't go straight in with that question.

Judith Finlay (JF): Alina, thank you for your question.

Good to see you.

Very helpful suggestion about putting on deaf awareness training for our staff.

So we'll make sure that that's in place in the coming year and we'll reach out to the young man that you mentioned specifically just to make sure that his needs are propagated for.

Thank you.

JW: Thank you, Judith. So if we could go...

David's on his way with the microphone, Jane.

Thank you. Thank you.

Resident: Thank you. This is sort of a follow-on to Chris's answer.

The City's Local Plan, which is currently being inspected by the planning inspectors, has a requirement in it that big developments should include a cultural offer.

And some of those cultural offers that the big developments have done have been fantastic, like the Mithraeum and the Bloomberg Building.

But some of them have been, frankly, underwhelming, a sort of community room that nobody knows about.

And if you do know about it, the email doesn't answer and it's only open during office hours.

Anyway, one point that the Barbican Association and the Neighbourhood Forum for Barbican and Golden Lane have been advancing is, and it relates to what you've just said about funding the Arts Centre, is it might be better if an option for developers was to make a contribution, pool those contributions and use it to fund existing and new cultural offers.

Because there's lots of good culture in the City already. And some of it needs a bit more funding.

The churches came along to the examination and made the point that they're open seven days a week.

They provide concerts, parameters and professionals and community services as well. And they could do with a bit more money.

You might get more bang for your buck if you pool that money rather than ask each individual big building to do something separate and disparate.

Perhaps you could consider it.

JW: Thank you.

I'm going to go to Tom, Tom Sleigh, new chair of Planning and Transportation.

Tom Sleigh (TS): Thank you for your question. And you're quite right.

Our Local Plan, which has been signed off by the Common Council, is now being inspected by the government, which is an independent process.

And that will conclude later in the year. And that sets the kind of planning framework, the primary planning framework for us within the City, although we operate within a London and national context as well.

And you're quite right, actually. There is a strong cultural element to it. It ties in with Destination City.

And although Destination City as a political document doesn't carry any particular weight in the planning process, it's still obviously something that we're keen to see progressed through the planning system.

And as it happens, I suspect you're not alone in what you've suggested.

Indeed, in conversations I've had with those who are seeking to build developments in the Square Mile, they've given us similar feedback, which is, frankly, they've made a really good effort and best endeavours to put in cultural activities in their developments.

But speaking as a former chair of the Barbican, not everyone wants to go and see a play in an office block.

And so actually, the idea of a slightly smarter consolidation, slightly more strategic approach from our side so we can at least guide them, or perhaps be a little more active, as you say, and think about the consolidation of the funding, does a lot kind of make, to me, logical sense.

And that might require us to think about how we structure our Community Infrastructure Levy pooling and how that's distributed.

But the mechanisms could, in theory, exist. So I think it's certainly something we should be looking at, because I think, as you say, we probably get bigger bang for our buck.

JW: Thank you, Tom. I'm going to take the next question.

Can I go to people that haven't asked a question yet, and if this time I'll come back?

Yes, thank you. The gentleman over here. Thanks. Thanks, David.

Resident: Hi, thank you. Hi, my question is regarding the 0-2 provision at Aldgate Nursery. So as a quick background, the Aldgate Nursery is the only one immediately outside of the Barbican Centre, which makes it quite accessible for us.

It's also associated with the only primary school in the City. And due to funding changes for the childcare provisions, it's now at risk of not being able to provide these services.

My question is really, how is the public's opinion being taken into account as a quick background?

I think March last year there was a consultation which somehow managed to miss any responses from users at the school somehow.

And then when the parents at school found out in September, there were following petitions, there were two newspaper articles that came out following it, and then there was a committee meeting in January to vote on continuing funding or stopping funding.

And those options were given to members prior to the meeting.

And I attended the public session. When it went into private, the options were changed, and it was decided to temporarily fund it without any clear reason on why that option was changed once it went private.

And straight after that, we are now being reached up to again with a second questionnaire about defunding the nursery.

JW: Can we move to the question?

How are the parents and the community in general, how their response has actually been used because it just feels like a campaign to drive supporters of the school to exhaustion because we just get repeatedly asked to vote on the same thing and then asked again.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'm going to pass it to Helen. Thank you.

Helen Fentimen (HF): Yes, thank you. There is absolutely no doubt that there is a huge amount of concern about the child care provision in the City of London, and that I'm very thankful for all of the responses that we've received over the last several months, from letters from parents, from general response from the community, and of course members of the Corporation as well have got very keen interest in this.

You're quite right. We had our meeting earlier this year.

There was a debate in public, and members then felt that they needed to move into non-public session because there was some detail in those papers about financial arrangements, which for good reason, because they were very specific to the school.

We were not in a position to discuss in the public part of the meeting.

We, if you recall, deferred the decision after that meeting because it was quite clear that there was more work to be done on considering what our next steps should be.

One of those was a consultation which concluded earlier this month.

The detail of the findings from that are being analysed now, and they will come together in a report for the June meeting where we will consider again what a policy should look like for subsidised childcare, and what arrangements we might want to put in place in the future.

I've made it absolutely clear as the chair of the committee that I want that debate to be in public, not in non-public.

We've taken advice, and my understanding today is that we will be able to do just that, so I'm very pleased to be able to say that that's the case.

When we have some clear recommendations, clearly people will need to know about it.

I've already started talking to the Communications Department in the Corporation to make sure that our recommendations or approval is made absolutely clear, and that the communication will be certainly to parents and through the school, but to all of those who participate in the consultation, we will post it as widely as we possibly can to make sure that everybody knows what the committee's conclusions are and how we will take those steps in the future.

One final point is because we were not able to make a decision earlier this year, the arrangements at Aldgate School have stayed as they are until September 26, so that we're not pre-empting a decision that will come.

We've given ourselves time to work out what the right thing to do is and then move to an implementation phase.

So Aldgate School will continue our days until September 26.

JW: Thank you Helen.

Yes, I can see you on the back. Shirley, thank you.

Resident: Sorry, I've just been told to stand up. Hello, I'm Shirley.

You're used to me asking random questions at these meetings.

So this random question now is having recent discussions with the residents regarding walking aids.

So walking aids, this is around sustainability effectively and recycling.

So there appears to be in London and the City nowhere to recycle.

If you break your fragile leg at a hospital, you can go back to a specific hospital maybe to return it.

If you get something from Social Services, they can take it back.

But right now, the only place to recycle or reuse something is a charity in Scotland where you can book in and they will send the stuff abroad to a different country that might need it.

Can we do better?

JW: Thank you. Very good question. Thank you.

I'm going to hand over to Peter Dunphy. Yeah, thank you.

Peter Dunphy (PD): Yeah, thank you very much.

I mean, I know that there are all sorts of different things that we recycle in the City.

I've been with the teams that sort them out and the very specific items that you're talking about.

I'm going to have to go back and see and talk to officers about what arrangements there may be and what may be possible.

Because obviously, what we don't want to do is simply collect things if we don't know that we can give them to the right people with a specialist expertise to do the recycling of those items.

So it's a very specific question.

If it's possible for you to maybe email that in as well, that would be very helpful so that we can deal with it.

But I would need to talk to the officers about what can be done with that very specific item that you mentioned.

JW: Thank you, Peter. Any more questions? Alina, would you like to ask a second question?

Resident: I have an issue in Middlesex Street Estate, which is with the car park and the gate where a lot of people can get out from there.

And it's quite a big issue, that problem, it can't go up or anything like that.

How we can solve this, what is possible.

JW: Okay, thank you.

I'm going to pass to Helen on that.

HF: Thank you. Yes, thank you. And thank you again for raising that question.

I hadn't realised that there was a problem currently as of now.

But I do know that over the recent months and probably years, there have been intermittent problems sometimes for quite a few days at a time when there's been a lot of difficulty with access and exit to the car park.

Shutters have been dealing with that every time there is a complaint.

They are trying to deal with it. I know that new parts have been fitted to the shutter system in the car park, and that had made some difference.

But there is still, I think, Alina, what you're saying is that there's an ongoing and current problem.

Is it a basement issue? So it's the shutter system in the car park?

Resident: The shutter. Yeah. Yeah.

HF: Yeah. The shutters, I know there have been intermittent problems. And each time there's a problem and it's reported, contractors are asked to repair it.

The repairs have not always been carried out as promptly as we'd like, but officers have been taking that up at every opportunity.

If there is a new and current problem, then Judith, who is the Executive Director, will I know feed that straight back to officers and ask for some more urgent action to be taken.

JW: Thank you, Helen. Thank you. I think there was somebody... Yes, thank you.

In the second row, David, thank you.

Resident: Just put my glasses on. I don't see much without them these days.

Hello, good evening. I would like to ask about a local issue.

It's actually a fairly personal issue that's relevant in a way to the Culture Mile and remains unresolved. I'll try to briefly outline the issue here.

The Smithfield Market has a long history, but the more recent and dangerously polluting large refrigerated HGVs do not. In 2019, the Corporation's City View magazine described newly discovered links between traffic air pollution and health, such as causing asthma in children.

These are HGVs, so I'd refer to them as that. These are the sort of particularly large ones.

Use the double yellow lines outside 1-9 West Smithfield every market night and often several of them at a time.

During parking, they go into defrost mode, which means they run at their highest revs, which as you can imagine is very loud, very, very serious vibrations directly into the residential building, which is on 1-9 West Smithfield.

Many of my neighbours have complained about this.

It's technically a statutory nuisance under part two of the Environmental Health Act 1990.

There are allocated market loading bays, and these are what should be used.

The problem has become worse in recent years, most especially since work to the Museum of London has meant that half of the market's loading bays have been removed.

This issue was not covered in the appraisals and plans for the Museum of London.

JW: I'm sorry, this is a very important question. Thank you.

Resident: I've actually, it's not going to be much longer. I'm sorry about it.

JW: Thank you, because we've got a couple more people and we have got a bit too much time.

Let me conclude. In 2022, I made a representation at the subcommittee for the planning application for the Museum of London, and the chairman said, "This is a serious matter."

When I described the issue, he asked me if I would accept a meeting to resolve the matter.

I said, "Yes, depending on the result of the meeting."

A site meeting was soon organised, but the City representatives from various departments concluded that an absent party was responsible for the matter, and therefore there was no resolution.

Then, after eight months of attempts to correspond with the absent party, the Highways Department, I was met with a dismissive response suggesting that it was a matter for the Smithfield Market Constables.

So I'm nearly finished. When I pointed out the chairman's comment in reply that it was an important matter, then, this is now July 2023, the Parking Department informed me that a loading restriction was to be put in place on the double yellow lines, which was great.

But there would first, in two weeks, be a public inquiry.

I found out a month later that the loading restriction was cancelled.

There was no public inquiry because they were to propose a plan for loading bay changes.

It was sad to find that the new loading bay plan did not address my concerns.

There would not be any measures to divert from the double yellow lines to the new, less accessible loading bays that were proposed.

I measured the existing loading bay opposite these double yellow lines and made written comments on the proposed new loading bays to the Highways Department.

I stated that there's space for two HGVs in the loading bay opposite, not just one, which should only have been one in at least 15 years that I've known the area.

This would compensate, two HGVs there would compensate for the double yellow lines in question not being used.

JW: Can we move to the question if that's possible, please?

Resident: This is the background to the question. I actually have really nearly finished now.

One more, very short, four lines now.

JW: What I would suggest is we've got Ian Hughes here and we've got Chair of Planning and we've got Peter Dunphy from Port Health.

Resident: I received no reply. I think it's really important to put the context in but I'm also conscious there's lots of other questions we want to get through.

JW: We could also take this off outside.

You've got two chairs of committees here that can be responsive immediately this evening, straight after Question Time.

That just allows us to ask other questions as well.

It's not taking any gravity away from a really important question. Thank you. You're right, the context is important.

Resident: I received no reply on my comments. What do I do?

JW: It sounds very stressful.

I would suggest that we take this afterwards, Peter, Tom and Ian, if that's okay.

I think it's clearly very distressing. Peter, do you want to have a quick word before we move on?

PD: Absolutely, in terms of that individual situation, we need to take that forward individually.

What I can do is talk about our commitment to air quality and a couple other things.

Firstly, you mentioned HGVs coming into the Smithfield Market area and it is a contributory factor towards our decision to essentially not carry on operating at

Smithfield Market is precisely because we don't want HGVs, which largely are not electric and are polluting, coming in and out of that part of Central London.

We've taken view for some time that it's an inappropriate location to have a wholesale market and so that within three years will be moved out.

That will help in terms of long-term issues. A couple of other things.

We were the first local authority to bring in a 100% electric vehicle fleet of our own vehicles, which again is enormously helpful in terms of air quality.

The third thing is that we have adopted the World Health Organization's targets in relation to air quality, which go well beyond national targets for air quality.

We do have the issue that we're small geographical areas surrounded by London and it's densely populated but we are making great strides.

One of the things that has helped enormously in terms of air quality is that in terms of transport usage, we've just seen a statistic whereby there are now more cycle journeys coming into the City than vehicle journeys coming to City for the first time ever.

In terms of general terms, we're doing a lot for air quality but in terms of your very specific issue, we definitely need to look into that but you'll excuse us if we can't answer directly and in detail right now.

But it is absolutely, but we need to look at that specifically offline if you like.

JW: Thank you, thank you Peter and thank you for the question.

We've got time for one more question so we have a hand that went up.

Thank you, yes, there you go. Thank you.

Resident: Thank you very much.

It seems to me that inevitable that there's a tension within the City's strategy between the desire for commercial development, because it's a commercial centre of course, and the desire to make it more broadly attractive from its cultural offering and so on as well.

And I wondered whether the panel would see some way to deal with those tensions, you know, for example, other authorities have an independent review procedure and stuff like that, or whether you reckon that you can resolve these perhaps almost disputes between planners and cultural supporters.

Particularly I'm thinking not just of preserving the wonderful cultural icons that exist in the City, but also their setting and I remember a long time ago Paternoster Square was a big debate and no doubt it'll come up again and again.

I just wondered if you could comment on that, thank you.

JW: Thank you for the question.

I'm going to hand to Tom on that one.

TS: Thank you for the question.

And yes, I mean the history of this City has always been of multiple tensions between different things and in particular between the kind of the preservation of heritage assets, cultural assets and the constant revision of the built environment and the pressure from modernity. In terms of your specific question, do we need, I think we might call them design panels or an additional layer.

I don't think that's necessary. I mean, the first part of my answer to that is we have a phenomenal award winning planning team here in the City who are incredibly collaborative with applicants, but also make sure they bring the many different heritage groups into the conversation very early.

So we have a fantastic relationship with Historic England or a statutory consortee on many of our schemes because of the size and the potential impact that they have.

Historic England, I think they opine on something like eight.

I think they're asked to review about 18,000 nationwide applications every year.

And I think they object to 2% of them. That is still one every day.

We'd probably like to work with them to reduce the number. We have a collaborative relationship.

I know in the case of the Barbican Arts Centre, they've been brought into the conversation right from the very beginning of the Barbican Renewal Project.

And I suspect we will see that as their applications come through the planning process brought through as well.

But we don't always see eye to eye. It's worth remembering that bodies, whether they're statutory or not, these heritage bodies ultimately have particular objectives and they often really are expressed in objections or concerns about planning applications.

They're particularly interested in the preservation of the context of individual heritage assets.

I think as a Planning Committee we have to consider many, many more things.

And of course it's our responsibility to weigh their considerations against other broader public benefit as well.

So I don't think we need new layers of bureaucracy in our decision making.

But I do think we need to carry on listening very hard to those voices because if the City, if had no heritage, wouldn't be as interesting and exciting as it is.

And although some people think that there is a tension between needing new office space and protecting our heritage assets, I think it's quite the opposite and they support one another.

That actually investors and people who work here and businesses that want to set up here come because of our heritage assets and the way we mix and we interplay the two together.

It's a fine line and the balance is one that the Planning Committee have to consider every month.

But I think broadly speaking we get that about right.

JW: Thank you Tom.

And I'm afraid that's all we've got time for. So thank you very much for coming along this evening.

I'm going to hand over to Chris for some closing remarks. Thank you very much.

CH: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much indeed, Jacqui.

And thank you all once again for joining us this evening for this Culture Special City Question Time.

I'm very keen to get feedback from the audience as to whether you like the format of having a different theme each time.

We've done finance, we've done culture, there's many more themes we can take forward.

I think it makes it a little bit more exciting and interesting than just all general questions.

But always we will leave time for those general questions that you've raised and we'd like your feedback because I want these City Question Times to respond to what you want, not what we want.

This shouldn't be about us telling you, it should be you asking us and putting your views to us because you're very important stakeholders to us.

So I just want to thank you, Jacqui, the wonderful Jacqui Webster, who is our lead member for residential engagement and does so much now and is such an important cog in the wheel of bringing us closer together as One City, residents, City of London, one team.

I hope you will join us through the store on the left here for refreshments, which we are now going to provide for you.

And there's some stalls in there as well, information stalls. I hope you'll find an opportunity to visit those.

I wish you all a fantastic summer. I hope the sun shines on the City of London this summer.

We will hope so. And I look forward to seeing you all at our next City Question Time, which will be held in September this year.

So thank you. Safe journey home. Come and enjoy the refreshments. Thank you very much.