



City of Westminster

Adults, Health & Public Protection Policy & Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday 27th January 2016

Briefing of: Cabinet Member for Public Protection

Contact Details: Sion Pryse x 2228
spryse@westminster.gov.uk

1 Community Cohesion

- 1.1 I held a follow meeting with Councillors and Officers on the 7th December. There is now a structure to take this work forward and develop clear recommendations and principles for the Council's approach to Community Cohesion.
- 1.2 The group divided the work into four separate strands that each Councillor will be taking forward. I will be looking at empowerment and opportunity. Cllr McAllister will be looking at engagement. Cllr Hug will be looking at Identity, values and faith. Cllr Mohammed will be looking at risk. Again I would like to thank members for making the time to help push through this work and offer their views which have been invaluable.
- 1.3 Each work stream will work with Council teams, partner institution, communities and experts to develop recommendations to improve practice and to further develop key principles for how the council could conduct itself to improve cohesion in the future.

2 Anti-Social Behaviour and Integrated Gangs Unit

- 2.1 Since the introduction of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act in 2014 Westminster's Community Safety team and Anti-Social Behaviour Caseworkers have been working hard alongside housing and police colleagues to take forward enforcement to protect vulnerable victims and those in Westminster experiencing persistent anti-social behaviour. Below is a summary of the successful enforcement taken in the last six months.

- 2.2 Westminster's Integrated Gangs Unit (IGU) was successful in obtaining 11 Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs), all of which related to involvement in drug dealing and serious youth violence. These orders disrupt their offending pattern through exclusion zones and non-associations. Other enforcement taken by the IGU includes two successful injunctions granted at court to protect vulnerable victims in two cases. The IGU also supported City West Homes in obtaining outright possession of a Church Street property where six firearms were found.
- 2.2 Four CBOs are also being actively pursued by the Community Safety Anti-Social Behaviour Caseworkers. The Anti-Social Behaviour caseworkers have also co-ordinated three premises closures, one in the South, one in the Centre and one in the North. The closures were to prevent the drug activity and associated anti-social behaviour. Our Anti-Social Behavior Caseworkers work closely with National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company to input into licence conditions of individuals due to be released back into Westminster's community.
- 2.4 Several vulnerable victims have also been identified and supported through the process of providing statements, giving evidence at court and also into appropriate services.

3 Community Protection Warnings

- 3.1 24 warning notices have been issued by Westminster City Inspectors between May and December 2015: 19 of these were for Rough Sleeping; three for begging, one for environmental offences and one for street trading. The vast majority of these have led to better compliance with only one Community Protection Notice having to be issued to a business who has not complied with the warning notice.

4 City Inspectors

- 4.1 Even over the Christmas period the City Inspectors were hard at work making sure that the city runs smoothly. A full service was provided over Christmas and New Year's. A normal service was provided on Christmas Eve until 10pm. A limited service was provided on Christmas Day. In the past there have been reports of Illegal Street Trading on Christmas Day especially in Whitehall. This was true again this year as officers seized a chestnut brazier trolley on Parliament Square.
- 4.2 A normal service was provided on Boxing Day and the run up to New Year's Eve as the City Inspectors were busy with preparations for the New Year celebrations and illegal street trading. These included:
- Full inspection of New Year's Eve event footprint revealed a number of discarded barriers, cones and other items that needed removal. These were collected by inspectors.

- Illegal Street Trading patrol near Hyde Park resulted in one seizure and prosecution for Illegal Street Trading. (There were a total of four seizures at locations surrounding Winter Wonderland over the Christmas period).

4.3 New Year's Eve is a busy day for the City Inspectors. The team were fully engaged with the preparation for the New Year celebrations. These include:

- Patrols with police encountered a number of ticket touts near the New Year's Eve ticket collection point. They acted to disrupt their activities from the period 3pm until the collection booth closed at 930pm. There were a further five interventions in or around Trafalgar Square with ticket touts during the evening.
- The main activity for the team was an Illegal Street Trading patrol. This resulted in eight seizures.
- All of the 15 street trading concessions with New Year's Eve footprint were closed down at terminal hour of 11pm by City Inspectors.
- Officers visited five off licences that were observed selling alcohol after their terminal hour, these will be followed up in the New Year.
- There were also interventions at two cafés that were observed trading after the terminal hour on their late night café licence; these will be followed up in the New Year.
- We undertook further interventions at a number of licenced premises where there was poor management of outside area.

4.4 On New Year's Day City Inspectors were busy preparing for the New Year's Day parade and cleansing afterwards. These include:

- A further check of the route identified that the crowd was not being managed and there was potential for crushing. This information was passed to the police.

5 Noise Team

5.1 Just like the City Inspectors the Noise team were also busy over the festive period. It was business as usual for the team on Christmas Eve as the team received 17 complaints ranging from neighbour noise and building alarms to street noise from buskers.

5.2 A normal service was provided on Christmas Day, the team received seven complaints over the course of the day. The complaints related to DIY, music from a residential premise, plant and fan noise from commercial premises and two alarms.

5.3 A normal service was run on Boxing Day which was expected to be busy as it fell on a Saturday. The Noise Team received 19 complaints, mostly about neighbour noise.

- 5.4 A normal full 24 hour service was provided by the team in the days leading up to New Year's Eve. New Year's Eve was again a busy period for the team as they received 27 complaints from across the city, the majority of which was from residential premises but also included car alarms, burglar alarms, buskers and building sites. Last year the team received 29 noise complaints. On New Year's Day the noise team received 30 complaints, the previous year we received 37 complaints.
- 5.5 The service provided by the noise was greatly received by residents with the team receiving emails praising their prompt and effective service over this period.

6 Rough Sleeping

- 6.1 November played host to a National Street Count, all outreach workers were accompanied by a volunteer acting as a verifier, and Homeless Link oversaw the whole process as an independent organisation. Strong support from Met Police ensured that data was as accurate as possible. Figures have continued to reduce, a total of 265 were counted. The night saw 132 EEA nationals, down 17% from September's count and a 37% decrease from October's high of 210. The highest fall was amongst the Romanian cohort, down 57% from October. There was also a 65% reduction from September's official count in those belonging to the Romani traveller ethnic group, all of whom were Romanian nationals.
- 6.2 There have been some new approaches taken by the Westminster Hotspot Team throughout 2015 resulting in clear action plans for the rough sleeping hotspots in Westminster. Victoria Cathedral Piazza remains free of rough sleepers despite it previously playing host to around 40 rough sleepers. Some innovative co-ordination from the team has ensured a range of partners have supported a common action plan to reduce the figures. This can also be recognised around Marble Arch and the tunnels of Park Lane, at the beginning of 2015 nearly 100 rough sleepers were found in the tunnels. Careful consideration and excellent coordination with partners has ensured that there is now no one sleeping in and around the area.
- 6.3 The council remains committed to ensuring a robust humanitarian response to extreme cold weather. Serious Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) has now been enacted as of 14th January and will remain in place until 20th January, when it will be reviewed.
- 6.4 On the 18th January I welcomed Marcus Jones MP, the Minister for Local Government. I used the opportunity to highlight the impressive work the Council commissions using the Homeless Prevention Grant. This involved a tour of The Connection at St Martin's. It was also a chance to show the Minister the complex nature of rough sleeping and the challenges the Council face in supporting rough sleepers away from living on the street.

- 6.5 Close engagement with Central Government and Home Office Policy makers has ensured that we can begin trialling new initiatives with Immigration Compliance & Enforcement Officers which has already seen a reduction in numbers and we will continue to work closely with them to ensure an effective outcome.

7 Street Performing

- 7.1 Subsequent to the three month Busk In London trial in the Heart of London Business Alliance Area, which consisted of a BID-funded Busker Liaison Team engaging with performers and responding to complaints. City Inspectors are patrolling Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus daily between 12pm and 10pm under the co-ordination of the local WCC Neighbourhood Problem-Solving Co-ordinator. To date, no enforcement activity has been instigated.
- 7.2 In fact, city-wide, the numbers of complaints relating to street performing dropped significantly between November (243) and December (91). This could be in part due to the wet weather. Feedback from stakeholders at Leicester Square remains mixed so officers are reviewing residual complaints in detail.
- 7.3 HOLBA had agreed to fund the Busker Liaison team until end of January and has indicated it will start again from April when the weather improves and numbers of acts are expected to increase. In the meantime, they have set up a monthly multi-agency working group to monitor complaints and agree appropriate actions.
- 7.4 New West End Company has also adopted the Busk In London approach, advertising five pitches on their patch and managing them largely through their own street-based staff, supported by the Busker Liaison Team and local WCC Neighbourhood Problem-Solving Co-ordinator. Complaints have again dropped but they feel that the response is weaker due to the pitches being more spread out. Northbank is expected to bring more pitches online shortly.
- 7.5 GLA is reviewing the Busker Liaison Team function and West End Busker Forums and convening a meeting of all participating BIDs to review activity to date. This will also help ensure a consistent and fair response across all Council, police, BID and Security teams as the patch covered by Busk In London pitches expands across the West End and beyond. It is hoped that the busking-specific meetings run by HOLBA and GLA can be combined, with all stakeholders invited, so that a shared understanding can be reached and efforts can be combined to greatest effect.
- 7.6 This work will continue to be monitored through the Trafalgar and Leicester Square Officer Working Group which I set up on the 3rd November and

continues to review any outstanding problems highlighted by the Busk In London initiative.

- 7.7 I also met with the Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture, Munira Mirza. The meeting was an opportunity for us to explore the possibility of working with the GLA and opening up the main area of Trafalgar Square to busking activity in order to relieve pressure on prime West End locations and joining up the management of the Square.

8 Night Time Economy

- 8.1 On the 30th November I attended a roundtable event titled “Is Regulation Killing the Night Time Economy.” Although most of those attending hailed from the night time industries, I was able to represent the challenge Westminster has as a local authority in balancing the needs of the night time economy with the needs of our residents. It was also important to highlight the fair and just system in place, our licensing sub-committee, to review the application of licenses. Feedback from the event has been positive and I have subsequently met with a number of attendees separately to discuss the careful management of Westminster’s night time economy in more detail.
- 8.2 Given the majority of those attending were from the night time industry it was important that I was able to get across the needs of the local authority when managing the night time economy. I have also recommended that a number of attendees head out with our City Inspectors to see first-hand the West End at night.
- 8.3 During my meeting with Munira Mirza, I also discussed the management of London’s night time economy and in particular the Mayor’s proposal to appoint a cross party Night Mayor. I emphasised my view that the Night Mayor proposal is an unnecessary burden on the tax payer and may even be deemed an undemocratic mechanism for decision making in the local area; which would be made by individuals with no local connection. I concluded the meeting by reiterating that the Council already has an effective means in which to manage the night time economy in the form of the West End Partnership, as well as our licensing and planning sub committees.
- 8.4 On 18th January I attended a West End Partnership Members Steering Group. The Group allows members to feedback on the strategy of the West End, making sure the views of the local stakeholders are taken into account.

9 Licensing Consultation

- 9.1 Westminster’s revised licensing policy came into effect on the 7th January. The Statement of Licensing policy can be found on the website at <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/statement-licensing-policy>.

10 Stress Zones

- 10.1 Work continues to assess relevant data to decipher where in Westminster it may be appropriate to apply special policies. A draft of the proposal is still expected later in the quarter of this year which will be followed by consultation.

11 Fixed Odds Betting Terminals

- 11.1 Stage One of the new Statement of Licensing Principles for Gambling has been approved by Full Council and will become effective from the end of January.