



City of Westminster

Adults, Health & Public Protection Policy & Scrutiny Committee

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Briefing of: Councillor Antonia Cox, Cabinet Member for
Public Protection & Licensing

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1 Police and Crime Plan response

- 1.1 A letter, signed by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Glanz and myself, has been sent to MOPAC outlining the Council's response to the consultation. The response addresses a range of topics within the plans, but concentrates on the new processes for local priority setting and our stance against the proposed Borough Command Unit (BCU) merger.
- 1.2 During the consultation process, Westminster has continued to state its strong opposition to the possibility of Westminster's BCU being merged with Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham. Westminster's unique crime profile, particularly around the West End, requires its own local command structure. Additionally, there is a significant risk that the resources available to keep non-West End neighbourhoods safe would be further diluted as a result of a move to a multi-borough BCU structure.
- 1.3 Secondly, whilst we whole-heartedly welcome the removal of the MOPAC 7 and the introduction of locally set police priorities, we do not believe that these can be set at a borough-wide level. The unique characteristics of the West End will inevitably distort the crime picture in Westminster and there is a real risk that residential neighbourhoods outside the West End would not be a priority for policing. Furthermore, there is also a potential conflict between local priorities and high-harm priorities, which require different resolutions in terms of how resources will be deployed to meet London's needs.

2 London Crime Prevention Fund

- 2.1 MOPAC have given, in principle, approval to our London Crime Prevention Fund proposals for 2017/18 and 2018/19. This is subject to the provision of additional details on some elements, specifically on agreed outcomes and targets, and more detailed financial breakdown in some areas. We are awaiting final confirmation of the funding and a full update will be presented in the new report.

3 Night time economy and Licensing Charter

- 3.1 The Westminster Licensing Charter continues to develop positively, with an increased focus on voluntary improvements in standards by licensed premises to protect vulnerable individuals. A series of discussions have been held with the Heart of London Business Alliance BID (HOLBA), where the principles of the Charter were discussed with a range of businesses in the pilot area.
- 3.2 Officers are currently working on the development of a Best Bar None (BBN) scheme, which encourages licensees to assess their operation and identify any areas for improvements. The scheme will also recognise good practice with an accreditation scheme. The introduction of BBN will be the catalyst for the wider Licensing Charter, which is hoped to improve overall partnership working in the pilot area.
- 3.3 Simultaneously, the council has been successful in applying to become a part of the Home Office's Local Alcohol Action Area (LAAA) Programme, using the Charter as the basis of the bid. This is a national programme with three aims; to prevent alcohol-related crime and disorder, to reduce negative health impacts and to diversify the night time economy. Being part of the LAAA programme will give Westminster access to a wider network of support and exposure to new ideas from across the country.
- 3.4 The Charter, which is ran as a pilot in a defined geographical area, will also help inform our wider development of a vision and a plan for the night time economy across the city. As part of this, the council is supporting a 'hackathon' being organised by King's College London, the Centre for Urban Science and Progress (CUSP), New York and the University of Warwick for researchers and students to uncover new insights into Westminster at night. This will build on our own understanding and provide us with another layer of analysis on which to base our future strategic thinking.

4 Gambling

- 4.1 Officers are currently working on the potential developments to the Council's Statement of Licensing Principles for gambling, with a view to implementing

the research findings from the Council's earlier research study in area based vulnerability. This piece of work will continue through to the spring, where it is planned that a new draft Statement of Principles will be presented. The aim will be to release a new version of the Council's Statement of Principles on early 2018, following a public consultation.

- 4.2 Within this, there is also the possibility for a partnership approach, with a national gambling care provider, to be developed. This partnership will enable the Council and the care provider to target areas where there are higher concentrations of vulnerability, with gambling support information and counselling.

5 Tent Encampments

- 5.1 After a review of Highways Act legislation, City Inspectors have carried out a number of proactive operations to target tents pitched on the public highway across the City. The use of tents by rough sleepers has been a developing trend, which has caused particular concern, as often, they can restrict and limit the effectiveness of our outreach engagements, further entrenching individuals in their already vulnerable lifestyle. We are clear that for the individuals, our overall aim to seek to prevent them from becoming further entrenched and that any activity will be coupled with an social care offer.
- 5.2 Since the beginning of February, 34 tents (15 of which have required court orders), have been removed. Operations continue to run on a weekly basis, ensuring prompt removals. In particular, City Inspectors were able to remove a large encampment in Rathbone Place in the same afternoon, after a complaint from the local University.

6 Operation to tackle spice and associated Anti-Social behaviour

- 6.1 An operation is underway to target specific individuals involved in spice use and dealing, as well as other anti-social behaviour across the City. With the use of resources from the police, City inspectors and rough sleeping services, the operation has resulted in: 49 dispersals, 52 stop searches, 2 CPN's and 13 arrests.
- 6.2 Plans are now being developed engage over two hundred problematic individuals and furthermore, victim support plans have also been developed to keep businesses and residents informed of our efforts to tackle spice. Resident and business feedback has also been used to inform a crime prevention design survey, which is being completed by the Police. The survey's aim is to identify measures to improve the physical environment and it is due to be completed shortly.

7 Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) funding

- 7.1 Westminster has been awarded £470,000 of additional funding from the Department for Communities & Local Government to support victims of domestic abuse following a competitive bidding process. This additional funding will deliver two projects to support women and girls at risk of violence.
- 7.2 Firstly, we will deliver additional specialist refuge spaces for Arabic speaking women, with enhanced therapeutic support, at a refuge in Hammersmith and Fulham. This will be run by the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO), with assistance from Women's Trust.
- 7.3 We are also using this funding to support female rough sleepers who have, or are experiencing, violence and abuse. We will provide dedicated emergency accommodation and seek to improve the success of follow-on housing options. A small team of mobile advocates will be recruited to provide intensive support to survivors with multiple and complex needs. Furthermore, we will test the feasibility of adopting the Housing First approach, in order to support women applying for housing support after fleeing domestic violence and abuse.
- 7.4 In addition, we have bid for £450,000 annually over the next three years to enhance our specialist service response to victims of all forms of violence against women and girls. The funding has been made available by the Home Office under their VAWG Transformation Fund and if successful, will provide additional support for, among other things: young people transitioning from social care between 18 and 24 years of age.

8 CCTV Decommissioning

- 8.1 Following Cabinet's decision to decommission Westminster's crime and disorder CCTV network, a programme of decommissioning work has been taking place across the city. Engineers are currently decommissioning specific camera sites following completion of works at the Trocadero. The Trocadero is due to be cleared of all remaining equipment and furniture by the 12th March 2017. The facility will then be handed over to the landlord, prior to our lease expiring at the end of March.

9 Prevent Funding & Delivery 2017-18

- 9.1 Confirmation of funding has been received from the Office for Security & Counter Terrorism (OSCT), for the Council's Prevent programme during 2017-18. This will be a significant uplift on existing funding levels. A proposal for spending, in relation to both projects and staffing has been approved and

submitted to the Home Office for consideration and ministerial approval. This includes a new staffing proposal, which would expand the current team. The project proposal that has been submitted is based on the threat faced by the City. This includes the continuation of existing successful projects and also new proposals.

10 CONTEST (Home Office Counter Terrorism Strategy) update

- 10.1 The Westminster Contingency Planning Team, under the 'Prepare' banner, has recently completed the delivery of 14 training courses to 900 Westminster based Metropolitan Police officers. The training focused on the roles of different services during a major incident, explaining the role of the local authority and outlining the specialist resources available if an incident were to occur. This programme is now being rolled out, in similar fashion, to London Fire Brigade officers. In addition, the teams have completed an extensive business continuity exercise for all Westminster services (Operation Chicago), and recommendations from this exercise are now being implemented.
- 10.2 In relation to Prevent, all of the projects commissioned this year are underway. This includes: 8 series of the Prevent Parenting Programme, Challenging Extremist Narratives and the Youth Mentoring project. The first series of the Gangs and Radicalisation project has been completed and three further cohorts are due to be completed by March.
- 10.3 Additionally, Westminster has worked with the City of Westminster College to commission a play, My Brothers and Sisters, which looks at the risks of radicalisation for young people. The play, which was performed for two weeks in February/March at the College, has been made available to local schools, colleges and youth projects.

11 Safer Westminster Partnership (SWP) Governance

- 11.1 The Safer Westminster Partnership has recently refreshed its governance arrangements and has now incorporated a more problem oriented approach, through the creation of individual Victim, Offender and Location Boards. The boards will focus on addressing the most prolific offenders, work with the highest repeat victims and ensure partners make the best use of resources.
- 11.2 This structure provides a more streamlined approach, which will enable cross cutting themes such as employment and mental health to be discussed in relation to all victims or offenders, rather than separate groups.
- 11.3 In keeping with this new approach and our new community safety strategy, the SWP's agreed vision for 2017/18 is:

- Making Westminster safer, through working in partnership, to reduce the risk and harm of crime and ASB, whilst focusing on protecting the most vulnerable within our communities.

Underpinning this vision will be two cross cutting themes:

- Intervening early with families and young people, in order to reduce their risk of victimisation and prevent future offending.
- Working in collaboration with partners to focus on the key contributing factors that reduce victimisation and offending.

11.4 Action plans are currently being developed for each of the boards, in order to reflect the priorities identified from the Strategic Assessment and a new strategy is being drafted.

11.5 Performance delivery against the priorities will be reported to the Executive Management Team and the Adults, Health and Public Protection Policy & Scrutiny Committee.

12 Westminster Letting Agents Project

12.1 Trading Standards are currently undertaking a project which aims to influence letting agents to comply with legislation that requires them to be members of one of three redress schemes, and to ensure that they abide by obligations to be transparent with their fees and charges. Officers in Public Protection and Licensing have written to over 120 agents, advising numerous agents to make changes in order to ensure compliance.

12.2 We are in the process of taking action against six letting agents, sending notice of our intention to fine them by way of fixed penalty notice (up to a maximum £5,000).

12.3 Westminster Trading Standards sit on the Letting Industry Council and this has helped us to raise the profile of the work Westminster does in ensuring compliance with the legislation and supporting those landlords who wish to comply.

13 Food Hygiene takeaway ratings

13.1 A recent article in the London Evening Standard revealed that Westminster has the best food hygiene takeaway ratings. In a league table of ratings analysed, Westminster was found to be the capital's most hygienic place to

pick up a takeaway, with not one outlet receiving fewer than two stars under the hygiene rating scheme.

- 13.2 Safety of the public is a top priority for the Environmental Health Food Safety Team. Every year, the officers inspect approximately 2000 food establishments and investigate hundreds of complaints to ensure that food sold in Westminster is safe and premises are hygienic.

14 Shisha update - symposium and enforcement activity

- 14.1 On the 22nd February, colleagues from Public Protection and Licensing attended the Shisha Symposium, which launched Westminster's Shisha Strategy. Officers made a short presentation on our enforcement against shisha premises in Westminster. The symposium was an opportunity to share good practice and to understand the challenges face by other local authorities.
- 14.2 City Inspectors continue to target non-compliant shisha premises and there are a number of prosecutions pending in relation to breaches of the Health Act. Officers have also applied for a number of warrants on premises that have been refusing access.

15 Street Entertainment

- 15.1 Following Cllr Aiken's roundtable with street entertainers, BIDs and local councillors in November 2016, street performers have been encouraged to begin development of a Street Performer Association in the Leicester Square area, similar to the one already in place in Covent Garden. This includes engagement with all performers in the local area and with local business/residential interest, in order to develop a relationship between all stakeholders. It is the responsibility of the performers to deliver this and the council strongly believes that it is in the interests of performers to make this approach work.
- 15.2 The Council still continues to enforce against problematic street performers where necessary, using the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Action is taken by the council when any of the following behaviours are exhibited:
- Obstruction (including by the crowd gathered to watch the performance);
 - Threatening any person with violence and/or using abusive, offensive, threatening or intimidating language towards any person;
 - Causing noise nuisance by playing loud and/or amplified music, shouting or singing over the microphone; or
 - Demanding money from members of the public

- 15.3 Where an officer identifies an individual or group of people that is exhibiting any one of the above behaviours, they will speak to the performer to ask them to change their behaviour. If the performer chooses not to change their behaviour, they may be immediately served with a written warning. If they further refuse to modify their behaviour, the officer will serve a CPN if they can evidence that there is a detrimental impact on local businesses or residents.
- 15.4 The council will continue to monitor the impact of this approach closely and will review its effectiveness in the summer.

16 Innovative use of Anti-Social Behaviour legislation to address Rogue Landlords

- 16.1 In the spirit of City for All, Residential Services are addressing Rogue Landlords through the development of an innovative legislative approach, which has already led to a landmark prosecution.
- 16.2 Katia Goremsandu, dubbed the worst landlord in Britain by the media, was handed a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) by Westminster City Council in conjunction with the London Borough of Haringey, after breaching an Improvement Notice.
- 16.3 The CBO, which has been issued in conjunction with the Housing Act 2004, is the first in London and only the second nationally. The power is usually used to manage the behaviour of individuals, such as gang members and repeat offenders who cause alarm, harassment and distress to their victims.
- 16.4 The conditions within the CBO manage her business practice across both boroughs. Lasting for a period of ten years, if breached, Ms Goremsandu could now face a custodial sentence rather than be awarded a fine. In addition to this order, Ms Goremsandu was fined £3,500, along with a £120 victim surcharge, and was ordered to pay £7,645 costs.
- 16.5 In 2015, Ms Goremsandu topped the Ministry of Justice's record of landlords prosecuted for providing poor quality or unlicensed homes after multiple prosecutions by Haringey Council. To date she has been responsible for 48 offences and 9 convictions under the Housing Act 2004 across the two boroughs. In October 2015, Haringey Corner Magistrates found her guilty of wilful refusal to pay £71,000 of fines and costs.