



Business, Planning and
Transport Policy and
Scrutiny Committee
Briefing

Date: 12th April 2018

Briefing of: Councillor Tim Mitchell, Cabinet Member for
Finance, Property and Corporate Services

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1. Apprenticeships

- 1.1 Westminster City Council pays 0.5% of its total annual pay cost as an apprenticeship levy. The levy fund can be used to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment against an approved apprenticeship standard for both existing staff and for new apprentice recruits.
- 1.2 WCC has engaged the Westminster Adult Education Service as its employer-provider to manage the delivery of apprenticeships under the new apprenticeship levy arrangements.
- 1.3 There are currently 54 apprentices' engaged throughout the City Council. A further round of apprenticeship recruitment will take place in April for eight roles across a variety of departments.

2. Broadband

Connect Westminster

- 2.1 The Connect Westminster Programme helps local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) to secure superfast or ultrafast broadband by providing up to £2,000 towards the capital cost of their connections. All connections must deliver speeds of at least 30MB/s but have the capability of being configured to deliver gigabit speeds.
- 2.2 The table below is an update on consequential improvements to business connectivity in Westminster since Connect Westminster launched in August 2017.

Number of SME applicants	258
Total funds committed to date	£445,582.17
Download speed uplift for new applicants (%)	2,235%
Upload speed uplift for new applicants (%)	17,027%

- 2.3 As a direct consequence of the voucher scheme, Hyperoptic, a proactive broadband provider in the borough, has accelerated the rollout of its fibre network within Westminster. The new deployment has enabled the firm to offer affordable broadband to every eligible SME within Westminster.

3. Business Improvement Districts

Renewals

- 3.1 On the 23rd February, Westminster City Council announced the result of The Northbank Business Improvement District renewal ballot.
- 3.2 Ninety-four percent of the levy-paying community voted in favour of the Northbank BID's next five-year term (2018-2023).

4. Business Information Points (BIPs)

- 4.1 Business Information Points (BIPs) are based at four libraries across Westminster and offer free of charge business support, resources and services. The four locations are Westminster Reference Library, Church Street, Pimlico and Paddington. The aim of the Business Information Points is to provide local Westminster businesses with free access to business information.
- 4.2 Within the last financial year, forty-nine business events have been held across the four libraries, attracting almost 300 participants and handling almost 7,000 business enquiries.

5. Recruit London

- 5.1 Recruit London is a free local recruitment service for businesses. Workplace Coordinators train and place out of work residents into jobs across central London.
- 5.2 The service is delivered in partnership by the City Council, Cross River Partnership, and other local stakeholders.
- 5.3 Since the beginning of the financial year and up to the end of Quarter 3 Recruit London has helped 151 residents into employment with employers such as Debenhams and New Look.
- 5.4 Recruit London is also supporting the delivery of an internal target set by the City Council to provide 30 work related opportunities for unemployed residents by the end of March 2018.
- 5.5 Over recent months, Recruit London has secured new ties with companies such as Picturehouse Cinemas, Cotswold Outdoors and Buckingham Palace Visitors' Centre.

6. Westminster Employment Service (WES)

- 6.1 The Westminster Employment Service provides free help to unemployed residents who need help training for and finding a job.

- 6.2 Since the beginning of the financial year and up to the end of Quarter 3, 551 residents have been supported into employment by the Westminster Employment Service; of those 272 were long term unemployed.
- 6.3 The Westminster Employment Service has also been working in collaboration with the City Council to help support thirty people with disabilities and health conditions into roles in departments across the City Council.
- 6.4 The Registrars team has provided 10 residents with a range of supported employment needs into roles, all of which should be in place by the beginning of April.

Outreach & referrals

- 6.5 Our new delivery hub at the City of Westminster College's Maida Vale centre and our presence in neighbourhood venues across the City including libraries and Children's Centres is leading to greater awareness of our service and more people being supported through our team or by our partners.
- 6.6 The Westminster Employment Service continues to run weekly drop-in session for residents of the Ebury Bridge Estate. The service is being promoted through posters and flyers at GP surgeries, health centres, supermarkets and faith and children's centres.
- 6.7 Our employment coaching team also provides support for residents living in temporary accommodation through the Homelessness and Employment Learning project (HELP). Our evaluation shows that clients supported via the HELP project are 3 times as likely to be in work, earn £1,000 more and have £300 less rent arrears than comparable Westminster residents not engaged in the project.