



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

## Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee** Committee held on **Monday 2nd March, 2015**, Rooms 1A, 1B & 1C - 17th Floor, City Hall.

**Members Present:** Councillors Ian Adams (Chairman), Thomas Crockett, Jonathan Glanz, Louise Hyams, Jan Prendergast, Vincenzo Rampulla and Jason Williams

**Also Present:** Councillor Heather Acton, Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Parking

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Karen Scarborough and Councillor Cameron Thomson

#### 1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Karen Scarborough and Cameron Thomson. It was noted that Councillor Jan Prendergast had replaced Councillor Thomson. The Chairman advised the Committee that Councillor Scarborough was unwell and there had therefore not been time to seek a replacement.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3 MINUTES

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 19 January 2015 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record of proceedings.

#### 4 UPDATE FROM CABINET MEMBERS

- 4.1 The Committee received written updates from the Cabinet Member for the Built Environment, the Cabinet Member for City Management, the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Parking on significant matters within their portfolios.
- 4.2 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Heather Acton, the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Parking, to the meeting. The Committee put questions to and received responses from Councillor Acton on the following matters that were relevant to the Sustainability and Parking portfolio:
- 4.3 Cycling safety – The Chairman asked Councillor Acton to set out what the Council was doing in terms of playing its part in the borough being as safe as possible to cycle in. The Cabinet Member replied some of the steps taken included that the Council had produced a Cycling Strategy with the input of the Committee’s Task Group and had spent £1.6m on safer cycling this year and next. It had also worked closely with Transport for London (‘TfL’) on the cycling superhighway proposals and had doubled adult safer cycling training. A new app was being designed which would link cycling with better health, reducing obesity and improving air quality.
- 4.4 East-West Cycle Superhighway – Councillor Jonathan Glanz made the point that he had only become aware of a meeting on the Cycle Superhighway a short time before it had taken place. He asked whether Members representing wards affected by the proposals would have ample opportunity to respond to the consultation process. Councillor Acton stated that she had attended the meeting on Cycle Superhighway 11 (the route is from Park Royal, Brent to Hyde Park Corner) earlier that evening. It had been well attended by the likes of the Royal Parks, the amenity societies and also Councillor Rigby. She added that she would ensure that Councillor Glanz received feedback from the meeting.
- 4.5 Biodiversity and Open Space Study – Councillor Thomas Crockett asked how much the Study had cost and how it was funded. The Cabinet Member informed him that the Council was not funding the Study and she would send the necessary details to him. She emphasised the importance of open spaces which was always a top priority for residents and had a positive effect on both mental and physical health. Barry Smith, Operational Director, City Planning, informed Members that the requirement for a biodiversity strategy/action plan was a statutory responsibility for the Council. A lot of work had been undertaken in recent years, particularly by the private sector, regarding green infrastructure. The Study would contribute to policy formulation going forward and provide an up to date evidence base for negotiating new and additional green infrastructure.
- 4.6 New Contracted Parking Service – Councillor Jan Prendergast expressed concerns regarding the issues that had arisen as a result of the implementation of the new parking contracts. She was aware of a number of customers who had experienced considerable inconvenience and had not been given an adequate apology or explanation. One resident had had to take time off from a demanding job and had been kept waiting on the telephone for almost half an hour. Councillor Acton responded that she was

aware that there was a short period of time of about a week after the change of contract when it was difficult for customers to get through on the telephone system, particularly as a result of the change of interface on the computers. Calling times were now down below a minute. Councillor Acton added that there were customers who were experiencing difficulties with the system that received telephone responses, notably those seeking blue badges or white badges. Others should have received letters of apology. She apologised for the number of customers who had experienced difficulties. It was agreed that Councillor Acton would provide a written briefing to Committee Members on this matter.

- 4.7 Public Health / Sustainability Projects – Councillor Vincenzo Rampulla stated he was pleased to see the Church Street food growing project mentioned in the Cabinet Member Update. It was a great example of making future generations more aware of the types of food that they eat and the effect of the food on their bodies. It also helped children have a greater understanding of their environment and surroundings. Councillor Rampulla asked what strategies could be utilised to influence parents in a positive way. He believed areas that could be improved included greater knowledge of recycling and disposal of refuse and making best use of packaging. Councillor Acton stated that Councillor Rampulla had contributed to the Environmental Sustainability Strategy that would be published as the ‘Greener Westminster Action Plan (2015-2025)’ and the importance of food and recycling would be reflected in the document. The Council was working with schools. There was an interactive website where people would be able to put forward their ideas and there would be school competitions which was potentially a way to link up with parents. She would welcome suggestions.
- 4.8 Parking appeals – Councillor Jason Williams asked whether it was possible to lodge several parking appeals at the same time. There had been a recent instance of an individual having to lodge four separate appeals following receipt of four tickets. Councillor Acton asked for clarification whether they had been received for four separate offences. If they related to one offence then there should only be one appeal necessary. Martin Low, City Commissioner for Transportation, commented that it was his understanding that each penalty charge notice had to be treated separately. However, if there was an appeals process a parking appeals adjudicator might potentially link the cases together. Councillor Acton recommended to Councillor Williams that the details of the case were sent through so that they could be examined.
- 4.9 **ACTION:** The following actions arose from questions raised by the Committee:
- That Councillor Glanz be briefed on the Superhighway 11 meeting held on 2 March 2015 (**Councillor Acton, Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Parking**).
  - That Committee Members and Councillor Prendergast receive a written briefing on the issues raised as a result of the implementation of the new parking contracts (**Councillor Acton and Kieran Fitsall, Head of Service Improvement and Transformation, Parking Services**)

4.10 **RESOLVED:** That the contents of the Cabinet Member Updates be noted.

## 5 **MATTERS ARISING**

- 5.1 Broadband coverage in the borough had been scrutinised by the Committee at the previous meeting in January. It had been recommended at that meeting that the Committee's work feed into a Member led meeting with large property companies, landowners and providers taking place on 5 February. This had been arranged in order to find solutions to poor broadband quality and speeds in Central London which was a very real concern to small businesses and residents and below the levels of international competitors. Councillor Glanz, Lead Member for Connectivity, provided his fellow Committee Members with an update on the February meeting. It had been identified that the drawing up of legal agreements, for property owners to permit their buildings to be served either by fibre to their properties distributed to customers via service ducts or by the provision of roof top equipment allowing faster transfer via a satellite link, was a lengthy process. The providers also had their own terms and conditions and overall it took approximately eighteen months from the identification of an appropriate site until the provision of the broadband at that site. Over 60% of the sites were individually negotiated. At the meeting best practice documentation was proposed which would prevent the need for individual negotiation and that would cut the time for broadband to be provided at a site significantly, potentially from eighteen to six months.
- 5.2 Councillor Glanz stated that BT had not to date enabled four of the eighteen exchanges that serve Westminster to be provided with the necessary fibre optic connection. Virgin had now announced that they would be investing £3 billion on superfast broadband in Central London. At the moment people in London were fortunate if they received broadband speeds of 20Mb which was not sufficient for graphics or tech related businesses. Virgin was claiming to offer speeds of up to 152Mb. It was anticipated that within five years the average user would require 167Mb and it was therefore necessary to be focussing on the requirement for ultra-fast broadband that was available in far eastern cities in order to maintain competitiveness on an international level. Landowners were therefore being encouraged to incorporate ultra-fast broadband into their properties. It would also be necessary to continue to lobby national government on this issue.
- 5.3 Councillor Glanz offered to keep Members updated on developments. He also informed Members that action notes had been taken of the meeting of 5 February and that these could be circulated to the Committee.
- 5.4 **RESOLVED:** That the action notes of the 5 February meeting attended by Councillor Glanz be circulated to Members of the Committee.

## 6 **ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PEDESTRIANS - A DRAFT WALKING STRATEGY FOR WESTMINSTER (2015- 2030)**

- 6.1 Barry Smith introduced the item. The views of Members were being sought prior to the draft strategy being produced. In 2012 officers were set a 'Better City, Better Lives' corporate target of producing a cycling and walking strategy. After discussions with Councillor Argar, the responsible Cabinet Member at that time, it had been decided that the strategies would be produced separately as cyclists and pedestrians had different priorities and the Council needed to respond to the Mayor's recently published cycling strategy. This Committee had played a key role in scrutinising the cycling strategy having been given the opportunity to comment at an early stage in its development. The Cycling Strategy had been published in November last year.
- 6.2 Mr Smith advised the Committee that the draft walking strategy was not starting from scratch as a Walking Strategy had been produced previously in 2004. Priorities and initiatives in the 2004 Strategy had been delivered through services such as highways and street management including public realm improvements, Legible London signage and de-cluttering. It was recognised that there was more to do, particularly as the projected increase in our resident, worker and visitor populations would put more pressure on our already congested streets. The aim of the Strategy would include addressing the needs of pedestrians and making the environment more attractive and user friendly. This would encourage more people to walk rather than using other modes of transport, particularly shorter distances. Mr Smith stated that there were questions in the report for Members' consideration, including whether the Committee wished to establish a task group to provide input towards and scrutinise the draft Walking Strategy as it develops, as was the case with the Cycling Strategy. The Council's strategic policies very firmly stated that the pedestrian is a priority. The timeframe for the Strategy up to 2030 took into account Crossrail 1 opening in 2018 and Crossrail 2 that was proposed to open in 2030. Mr Smith emphasised the fact that the Council had limited budgets with contributions being required from the likes of TfL, public health, Section 106 and potentially Community Infrastructure Levy monies.
- 6.3 Members had provided Peter Hartley, Chair of Westminster Living Streets with an opportunity to address the Committee. Mr Hartley informed those present that there were six members on the Westminster Living Streets committee and it was part of the national Living Streets organisation which represents pedestrians and campaigns on their behalf. Westminster Living Streets had approximately 250 supporters. Mr Hartley stated that the term 'pedestrian strategy' was more appropriate than a 'walking strategy'. He commented that he wanted to work with the Council but expressed misgivings from his experience of his communications with councillors, including Cabinet Members and also officers and their departments over the previous two years. It was his view that the Strategy was essential but he did not believe that the more difficult issues would be discussed whilst it was being developed. Mr Hartley spoke in favour of 20 miles per hour limits for cars and the campaign 'Twenty's Plenty', 'Vision 0' which states that no deaths on the roads are

acceptable, removing a requirement for car spaces with new builds and limiting heavy goods vehicles movements at certain times. The Council needed to do more to prevent deaths and injuries to road users and accidents in general. Some of the reasons he believed more action was not taken was that there was a widespread belief, particularly amongst politicians, that owning and driving a car whenever and whenever one likes is a personal right. Restricting that right would be considered interfering with personal freedoms which Mr Hartley did not accept. He also believed that a large number of the officers in the departments were old fashioned traffic engineers whose priority was car use. He expressed the view that the department dealing with transportation matters was 'not fit for purpose'.

- 6.4 The Chairman stated that Westminster Living Streets was one of a wide range of stakeholders on this topic who would need to be consulted. There had been a public call for evidence prior to the current meeting and contributions had been received from a number of organisations. He appreciated Mr Hartley's point regarding the Strategy being a pedestrian one rather than a walking one. It needed to take into account the different pedestrians' priorities such as whether they were residents, tourists or in the borough on business. They would each interact with their environment differently. He asked Councillor Acton to address Members on how she saw the development of the Strategy progressing, including with stakeholders. She made the point that the working title of the document was 'addressing the needs of pedestrians – a draft walking strategy for Westminster'. Pedestrians' needs were being taken seriously and they are a priority in the Council's policy framework. 90% of journeys in the borough were on foot as people walked to link up with other modes of transport. Councillor Acton stressed that it is necessary to make pedestrians' experience better and safer and emphasise the health benefits of walking. Councillor Acton also informed Members that she had had previous meetings with Westminster Living Streets and she had promised to engage with the organisation and other stakeholders on the Strategy. She believed it would be beneficial if the Committee decided to establish a task group to oversee the Strategy.
- 6.5 Martin Low stated that the Council at both officer and Member level considered road safety to be of paramount importance. All were keen to see a safe transport network in Westminster and work with anyone who could play a part in improving safety. He had provided Westminster Living Streets with a document called 'Table A8: Towards the year 2020: Monitoring casualties in the City of Westminster' and this was also given to Committee Members at the meeting. This was an interim table showing accidents up to October 2014 which had been obtained from TfL earlier in the day. Mr Low stated that it could take up to six months for accident data to appear on the TfL database. There had been three pedestrians and one cyclist killed on Westminster streets from January to October 2014. There had also been forty five fatal and serious accidents for pedestrians and thirty six for cyclists from January to October 2014. Mr Low explained that it was not appropriate to look at statistical comparisons between 2014 and previous years as the data in 2014 was only up to October. It was anticipated that data for the entirety of 2014 would be available in May or June 2015 when TfL produced its report. The

Committee would be provided with the full year's data when it became available.

- 6.6 Members of the Committee made a number of suggestions in respect of the Strategy. These included Members' agreement, as stated by Councillor Rampulla, that it needed to have a strong vision. It was also necessary to take a systemic view and speak to a wide range of agencies. An example given by the Chairman was that near The Dorchester Hotel in Park Lane there was a push button surface level crossing but it was not easy to directly access Hyde Park from there. This was a matter which should be discussed with the Royal Parks. It was queried whether a new path and gate could be installed. Members were also of the view that the aim should be for people to walk not only short distances, in preference to using other forms of transport such as underground trains from Holborn to Covent Garden, but longer distances such as from Hyde Park to The Strand without it being a chore. The transport system needed to be increasingly integrated as will new pieces of transport infrastructure such as Crossrail and the cycling superhighways. There were different road users with different priorities. However, making walking easier had the potential to seduce drivers out of their cars. An extension of Legible London signage should be encouraged, potentially showing how London landmarks could be reached. The Strategy also needed to take into account the requirements of runners and those who walk for health and recreational purposes.
- 6.7 The Committee decided to establish a task group to inform development of the Strategy to account and would be encouraging backbenchers to join the membership. The Committee had a good track record with its task groups including on cycling and sustainability. Members also encouraged officers and the Cabinet Member to consult Ward Members and construct a list of improvements that could be made to improve the pedestrian experience.
- 6.8 **ACTION:** That TfL's accident data for 2014 in Westminster be provided to the Committee when available (**Martin Low, City Commissioner for Transportation**).
- 6.9 **RESOLVED:** That a task group be established to contribute to and scrutinise the Strategy as it develops.

## **7 UPDATE ON AIR QUALITY ISSUES AND MID-WAY PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DELIVERY OF WESTMINSTER'S AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN**

- 7.1 The report received by the Committee included a summary of the key actions and progress since the Air Quality Action Plan had been adopted in April 2013 and provided Members with an opportunity to make suggestions on issues and topics for review during the development of the next Air Quality Action Plan due in 2018.
- 7.2 The item was introduced by Jennie Preen, Project Manager, Air Quality. She stated that reviewing and assessing local air quality and taking action to improve poor air quality is a statutory duty for the Council. The first Action

Plan had been introduced in 2001. This Committee's predecessor had been involved in scrutinising the development of the most recent Action Plan in 2013 and there had been a full public consultation exercise which meant that there was interaction and engagement with a wide set of stakeholders. Ms Preen referred to the potential health problems caused by poor air quality and the predominant causes of poor air quality which are transport vehicles and buildings, including heating and energy plant. The Action Plan focuses on reducing emissions from transport and the built environment and on communicating about air quality issues, including communicating directly to those with health conditions. It also make a commitment to continue to monitor the borough's pollution in order that action can be taken.

7.3 Ms Preen reminded those present that the Mayor of London had his own Air Quality Strategy and the Council only had a limited set of tools to effect change in its area. The Mayor managed the strategic TfL road network in the capital and also buses and taxis, the most significant transport polluters. The Council was able to work with the likes of businesses and schools and had planning policies in place to ensure any new development in Westminster would minimise their impact on air quality. The Council has a very limited budget and would have to fund any actions going forward via government grants and/or TfL funding.

7.4 The Committee asked a number of questions on this topic:

- The Chairman asked which areas referred to in the 2013-18 Action Plan were the Council 'behind the curve' on. **Ms Preen stated that a significant number of actions in the Plan were based around lobbying and working with the Mayor and other stakeholders, in particular those aspects where the Council had limited powers. Whilst not being 'behind the curve', there was a capacity to do more in terms of lobbying the Mayor on buses or taxis. Included within the report was a section on the Mayor's Ultra Low Emission Zone ('ULEZ') scheme and the Council's response to the ULEZ consultation. The consultation response had strongly recommended that improvements to the bus network were accelerated and the feasibility of moving to a non-diesel transport fleet for London was examined. It was not expected that London would meet air pollution standards until 2030 at the earliest. There is a potential £300m fine for the United Kingdom if the standards are not met. Regionally and nationally there was a need to address the failure to meet air pollution standards.**
- Councillor Glanz referred to the fact that in the Ward he represents, West End, the annual pollution limit had been met four days into the new year. He asked whether there was a cost effective method of filtering the air and how much greener were the new fleet of buses compared with the ones they were replacing. Ms Preen replied that the newest buses had engines which complied with Euro 6 emissions regulations. There were questions as to whether when the engines were in operation they polluted more than anticipated in laboratory tests. The buses were hybrid so there was an expectation



**in the future that geo-fencing could take place, using** a global positioning system signal to turn the buses on to electric mode. This would have the potential to significantly reduce pollution levels in areas such as Oxford Street. Ms Preen added that she was not aware of any cost effective method of filtering the air that could significantly reduce Westminster's pollution levels to acceptable levels. She referred to green walls and the use of catalytic materials and spray-on coatings for walls and paving to reduce nitrogen oxide concentrations. It is anticipated that these would not significantly reduce pollution levels in Oxford Street. The emphasis needed to remain on reducing pollution at source.

- Councillor Hyams asked whether the Mayor could be lobbied to provide more taxi ranks and persuade taxi drivers not to make repeat journeys, including along Oxford Street, in order to reduce emissions. Ms Preen advised that the Mayor was looking at options regarding taxi ranks across London. There was an expectation that customers would look at using apps to hail taxis which could minimise the repeat journeys when drivers seek custom. The Council was also looking to improve the way in which taxis queue at railway stations.
- Councillor Crockett enquired whether there was a voluntary code of good practice for taxi drivers in terms of not blocking other forms of traffic and also whether there had been any interaction with TfL to have more buses where they were most needed and reduce the number of buses where there was less demand. Ms Preen stated that there appeared to be inefficiencies in the bus network and the Council had lobbied and recommended to the Mayor that consideration was given to whether bus numbers could be reduced accordingly, especially given that Crossrail 1 was opening in 2018. The Mayor manages the licensing of taxis and has a role in educating taxi drivers.
- The Chairman asked a question on behalf of Councillor Prendergast who had had to leave the meeting. What was the impact of overseas pollution on Westminster? Ms Preen answered that there were regional and local levels of pollution, the latter from sources in Westminster. There were sporadic instances of high levels of overseas pollution such as Saharan sands and emissions from Eastern Europe that spike the background regional levels. It was not possible to reduce the pollution that arrived via weather systems from overseas using local action and it was necessary to focus on local sources.
- Councillor Rampulla asked about the three objectives in the Westminster Air Quality Action Plan and particularly the respective impacts of emissions from transport and those from buildings and development. He also asked what steps the Council had taken about controlling driver behaviour in different parts of Westminster. Ms Preen commented that pollution from particles less than ten microns were predominantly transport based with roughly 75% caused by road transport as opposed to 25% for other sources including building based sources such as heating systems. The main pollutant of concern was nitrogen oxides which was vastly exceeding air pollution standards. Transport and buildings are both

significant sources of the pollutant. Councillor Rampulla asked a follow up question regarding what the Council was doing regarding controlling pollution from buildings. Ms Preen advised that there were planning policies in place to ensure that any new developments minimised the impact on air quality including the requirement for air quality impact assessments to be undertaken. The Council had worked with businesses to reduce their impacts on air quality. In terms of transport, freight consolidation schemes and using staff travel plans were encouraged. Mr Smith and Ms Preen both made the point that reducing emissions from the built environment, through the planning process, was an inherently slow process. Mr Smith also informed Members that buses and coaches were responsible for 47% of transport nitrogen oxides pollution and taxis 11%. For pollution from particles less than ten microns caused by transport, taxis were responsible for 45%, buses 11% and cars 21%. Mr Low informed Members that the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association were keen to work with the Council. They were of the view that taxi drivers were being unfairly discredited when it was TfL who was deciding what vehicle they could have after they had originally invested significant sums of money in the cab. The Council was looking to work together with TfL and the taxi trade to see if there was a different way in which taxis could serve the West End including whether it was necessary to travel along Oxford Street and whether more use could be made of the taxi rank alongside John Lewis.

- Councillor Williams commented in respect of the Westminster Air Quality Action Plan objective, the increasing awareness of air pollution, that there was plenty of policy information on the website but a lack of underlying data. He added that it would be useful to have the data for each ward.

7.5 It was agreed that the Chairman would write to TfL with a package of transport issues, including in respect of taxis and buses, which it was felt needed to be addressed in order to improve air quality in the borough. The Chairman stated that if it was appropriate it would also be helpful if the letter could be written jointly with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Parking.

7.6 **RESOLVED:** That a letter be written to TfL in accordance with the requirement to improve air quality in the borough as set out in paragraph 7.5 above.

## **8 PRESS RELEASES**

8.1 The Chairman advised those present that he had been in discussions with the Press Office regarding a press release for the 'addressing the needs of pedestrians' item. He proposed that this should relate to the work of the task group, which the Committee had now decided it wished to establish, and an interest in hearing a broad range of views from stakeholders on this topic. Members were content with this approach.

## **9 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER**

9.1 The Committee discussed future topics to be scrutinised at the 13 April 2015 meeting and potential items for the Council year 2015/16. Members decided that two-way traffic flows and an update on the Westminster Community Infrastructure Levy would remain on the work programme for 13 April. The Committee decided that water pressure would be included as a future item for consideration. It was agreed that this item should be scheduled for either the June or September 2015 meetings.

### **9.2 RESOLVED:**

1. That the Committee approve the scheduled items for the next meeting of the Committee on 13 April 2015.
2. That an item on water pressure be included on the work programme for the June or September 2015 meetings.

## **10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

10.1 There was no additional business for the Committee to consider.

The Meeting ended at 9.17 pm

**CHAIRMAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_