



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Westminster Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Westminster Scrutiny Commission** Committee held on **Thursday 22nd March, 2018** at 7.00pm in Room 23.1, 23 rd Floor, Portland House, London SW1E 5RS

Members Present: Councillors Brian Connell, Tony Devenish, Jonathan Glanz, Andrew Smith and Barrie Taylor

Also Present: Councillor Nickie Aiken (Leader of the City Council).

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 There were no changes to Membership. All Members of the Commission were present.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 No declarations were received.

3 MINUTES

- 3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2017 were approved.

4 THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

- 4.1 Councillor Nickie Aiken (Leader of the City Council) provided an update on current and forthcoming issues within her portfolio, which included progress in the My Westminster Programme; City for All; the Don't Be Idle campaign; and the West End Partnership. In response to a request made at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 30 November 2017, the Leader also provided further information on the evidence that had been gathered by the Community Cohesion Commission to inform its report and recommendations.
- 4.2 The Leader commented that it had now been a year since the Westminster Bridge attack, and that the City Council had continued to liaise with the police

who remained on alert. Council tax had been frozen and the Westminster Voluntary Contribution scheme for Band H properties introduced, with £15,000 having already been received from residents.

- 4.3 The Westminster City Lions Club had been successfully launched, and an initial group of 100 young people from the borough aged 13 to 16 were gaining work experience through organisations such as London Zoo. The City Council was working closely with the Westminster Youth Council to take the Lions forward, and the Commission noted that the term of office for the Westminster Youth MP had now been extended to two years.
- 4.4 The Task Force established to tackle irresponsible or unlawful nightly letting was also now in operation, with officers obtaining evidence to enable the City Council to prosecute rogue landlords who were breaking the government's clear 90-night limit on short-term letting.
- 4.5 The Leader also commented on the successful lobbying for increased police resources in Westminster; the need to educate young people about knife crime; and progress in the review of Oxford Street and the West End Partnership, which would be discussed in more detail later in the agenda (Minute 5).
- 4.6 Forthcoming issues highlighted by the Leader included the continued importance of affordable housing; air quality; and opportunities for young people to ensure a City for All.
- 4.7 Members discussed the role and effectiveness of the Community Cohesion Commission, and highlighted the need for the increased involvement of business and residential communities; with recommendations being implemented to encourage and maintain confidence. Members also commented on the value of events such as the annual Street Bake and community celebrations on My Westminster Day; and highlighted the need for the economic development team to work with isolated women.
- 4.8 The Commission discussed the changes that could take place in local government over the next five years. Stuart Love (Chief Executive) considered that Westminster would continue to become more digital, and that the City Council would continue to develop its role as a facilitator rather than a provider. Funding options would also be different, and changes could be made in policies for planning and the provision of housing.
- 4.9 Other issues discussed included the need for services inspected by the Care Quality Commission to target an 'outstanding' rating, rather than 'good'.

5 WEST END PARTNERSHIP - UPDATE ON ACTIVITY SINCE MAY 2017

- 5.1 Deirdra Armsby (Director of Place Shaping) presented a report on recent activity undertaken by the West End Partnership (WEP), which included funding options following the unsuccessful bid to Government for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

- 5.2 The WEP Board had discussed the issues that were central to achieving the vision for 2030, and had agreed that individual Board members would lead Task and Finish Groups that could focus on particular programmes and projects. Five work streams had been established:
1. Good Growth in the West End - chaired by the representative from London First.
 2. Promoting the Cultural Offer of the West End – chaired by the City Council’s Cabinet Member for Business, Culture & Heritage.
 3. Management of the West End/Resident and Business Dividend – chaired by the representative from the West End Community Network.
 4. Delivering increased income/charging/alternative financial models – chaired by the advisor to the WEP Board.
 5. Lobbying and policy comment/communications and marketing – chaired by the City Council’s Director of Policy, Performance & Communications. A further work stream, Digital West End, had been added in response to the importance of connectivity and resilience in the Broadband network.
- 5.3 The Commission discussed alternative funding for the WEP investment programme, which included utilising the City Council’s Capital Programme; together with possible packages from the GLA and Transport for London (TfL). The Leader highlighted the need for effective management to continue after the improvements to the West End had been completed, and for Westminster residents to be job-ready when employment opportunities became available. The Commission noted that the Oxford Street consultation had been extended until 6 April.
- 5.4 Stuart Love (Chief Executive) commented on the importance of promoting the cultural offer of the West End in response to changes in the retail market; and the Leader highlighted the need for the City Council to gain the trust of its partners in order to secure the long-term future.
- 5.5 RESOLVED: That the Commission receive a further report on funding options for the WEP after discussions had been developed.

6 POLICY AND SCRUTINY - INDUCTION

- 6.1 Andrew Palmer (Senior Committee Officer) presented a report which proposed that the first meeting of Policy & Scrutiny Committees, following the local election, should include an induction on key issues within the relevant service areas and Cabinet Member portfolios.
- 6.2 A comprehensive induction programme for new Members was being prepared for implementation following the Council Elections in May. Within the programme, Scrutiny would be covered as part of two sessions. The first would be included the session on Governance, which would cover how

Executive Decisions were made and how they could be called-in. The second session would consider the importance of scrutiny and best practice, and would include:

- principles of good scrutiny
- selecting topics and work programming
- questioning skills, and
- the importance of external witnesses

6.3 As the Governance and Scrutiny sessions would not cover details of the key issues within Cabinet Member Portfolios, it was proposed that in the first cycle of meetings of 2018/19 each Committee would receive a report from Chief Officers and Cabinet Members detailing the service areas and key issues within their Terms of Reference. This could also assist the Committees in developing their Work Programmes for the year.

6.4 The Commission commented on the value of induction sessions being led by senior figures such as the Leader and Chief Executive; and highlighted the need for induction to be ongoing and refreshed, after new Members had gained an understanding of the City Council and its functions. The Commission also commented on the value of involving the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) in the induction process, and of sharing best practice with other local authorities.

6.5 The Commission also commented on the value of mentors for new Councillors, and of a skill audit of elected Members to identify areas of knowledge and expertise. It was also suggested that Members of the Commission should promote scrutiny, and engage in scrutiny conferences.

6.6 The Commission agreed that Policy & Scrutiny Committees should consider that the first cycle of meetings of 2018/19 focus on an induction detailing service areas, and on key issues within their Terms of Reference.

7 CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES - CALL-IN

7.1 In response to the requirement set out in the City Council's Constitution, Andrew Palmer (Senior Committee Officer) presented a report that reviewed the operation of the 'call-in' and urgency procedures. The City Council's Constitution required that the operation of the procedures for call-in should be reported to the Commission on an Annual basis; together with details of the times when urgency had been used to exclude the provisions for call-in. The Commission noted that call-in and urgency had each been triggered three times over the last four years.

7.2 The Commission discussed the 'call-in' function, and agreed that notifications of Executive Decisions that were sent to Scrutiny Committees should be clearly titled, and should include a brief summary of the proposal together with details of an Officer contact should Members require further information.

7.3 The Commission also agreed that the urgency procedure should be reviewed, and provide for the Chief Executive to consult with the Chairman of the

appropriate Scrutiny Committee before agreeing to exclude the provisions for call-in.

8 HEALTH & WELLBEING CENTRES TASK GROUP

- 8.1 Councillor Barrie Taylor presented the report of the Health & Wellbeing Task Group, which sought to assist in the continuing development and shaping of integrated health care in Westminster. The report and recommendations had been formally launched on 19 March at an event attended by a variety of stakeholders.
- 8.2 Members agreed that the Commission should receive a regular update on the Task Groups that had been created by the Policy & Scrutiny Committees, and on progress in the implementation of recommendations. It was also suggested that the updates should include links to final reports

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Meeting ended at 8.50pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____