



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

## Westminster Scrutiny Commission

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Westminster Scrutiny Commission** held on **Thursday 28th June, 2018**, Room 3.6 and 3.7, 3rd Floor, 5 Strand, London, WC2 5HR.

**Members Present:** Councillors Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, Adam Hug, Melvyn Caplan (Chairman), Tony Devenish and Jonathan Glanz

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Karen Scarborough

#### 1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 **RESOLVED:** That Councillor Melvyn Caplan be elected as chairman.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.2 No declarations were received.

#### 3 MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2018 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

#### 4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

4.1 Stuart Love (Deputy Chief Executive) provided an update on matters of corporate interest, which included (1) Oxford Street; (2) Planning Review; (3) CityWest Homes Review; (4) the Transition from Tri-Borough to Bi-Borough for the Shared Adult Social Care, Children's and Public Health Services and (5) an Update on the Transfer of Managed Service's Finance, Payroll and HR Services from BT to Hampshire Integrated Business Centre.

4.2 The Chief Executive explained that an update on Health/Adult Social Care Integration had not been included in his report, contrary to its reference in the executive summary, as there had been little movement since the commission received an update on it at its last meeting.

- 4.3 With regards to the review of CityWest Homes (CWH), the Chief Executive informed members that a report from consultants Campbell Tickell was expected at the end of August which will inform a report to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services. The Chief Executive was informed that a task group of the Housing, Finance & Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee into CWH had been established and he agreed to ensure that the decision report is not issued until the task group had reported its finding to the committee on 27 September. He suggested that the task group may wish to invite a representative of Campbell Tickell to one of its meetings to assist members in their considerations.
- 4.4 Members commented that concerns over air pollution has influenced to a greater degree than need to improve Oxford Street. A range of developments in transport practices and technology, both positive (freight consolidation, electric taxis) and negative (motorised pedicabs), were coming forward. Members sought reassurance that such issues would be taken into account when developing new solutions to improve and transform the Street. The Chief Executive commented that pedestrian safety is another important factor that has influenced the need for a new solution for the entire district. He explained that Crossrail stations at Tottenham Court Road and Bond Street will open in December 2018, however, the impact of the additional passenger numbers will not be evident until a year later. The Council will shortly be undertaking a safety audit on the measures that need to be put in place immediately when the stations begin operating and again in December 2019.
- 4.5 Members commented in relation to the Planning Review that whilst development requires a degree of regulation any changes to the service needed to be measured and not burdensome for applicants. The Chief Executive advised that any proposals will be widely consulted upon. The Council will ensure that its reputation of having a fair and user-friendly planning service is not jeopardised. He further stated that the Council's planning, licensing and parking services generate significant income for the Council and any changes will need to take this into account.
- 4.6 The Chief Executive was asked whether the impact of the Grenfell Tower Fire on the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) was likely to have an effect on Bi-borough arrangements. Stuart Love explained that RBKC had separated this work from other parts of the Council and that day-to-day there was very little impact on Children's and Adult Services. He further explained that he has regular discussions with his counterpart Barry Quirk on issues of common interest so that he is kept abreast of any important developments.
- 4.7 The Commission asked the Chief Executive to forecast other issues that were likely to have an impact on the Council over the next few years. In response he provided updates on (1) the Council's Digital Transformation programme, (2) Police and NHS Resources, (3) future funding and (4) Business Rates - devolution and the impact of revaluations.
- 4.8 With regards to the Council's Digital Transformation programme, members raised concerns about the technical problems with the online 'Report-it' function that has led some users to abandon it and report matters via other

methods. They also stated that the requirement to register as a user will limit its use and they suggested that this should be optional. The Chief Executive advised that the programme, which had been running over the last 3 years, had initially been driven by customer preferences but had been expanded to deliver efficiencies to internal processes. With regards to the 'Report-it' function, he acknowledged that it needed to be made more mobile friendly. Experts were being brought in to facilitate this. He agreed to ensure that councillors form part of the group that test any new feature and to revisit the requirement for users to register to use it.

- 4.9 The Chief Executive explained that a consequence of a reduction in police numbers was a reduced visibility of police on the street. This had resulted in previously addressed problems re-emerging. He stated that given the further reductions expected in police numbers the Council will need to work closely with them to mitigate such issues. On the subject of the NHS, he stated that the £20 billion additional funding for the service in England by 2023/24 that had been announced by the government was not expected to include any money for Adult Social Care. He stated that in the absence of any new legislation or funding the ability of the local authority to deliver public health services would remain challenging.
- 4.10 The Chief Executive advised that like all local authorities the Council will face ongoing budgetary challenges due to demographic and inflationary pressures. He stated that savings had been identified in the current financial year and the following.
- 4.11 With the recent store closures announced by the House of Fraser and Waitrose in mind, the Commission asked about the Council's lobbying of government on business rates. Stuart Love advised that as part of the Leader's priorities the Council's lobbying agenda will be refreshed. He advised that the Council needed to look beyond retail as being the only offer for the high street. This will require looking at the Council's planning policies and land use designations. Members commented that restaurants as well as retail was struggling. Although demand for some services remained high rent increases were leading to businesses becoming commercially unviable.
- 4.12 Members also asked about funding for Council projects and schemes that was provided by or contributed to by the GLA and any changes to these. The Chief Executive advised that the Council was reviewing the forward looking programme and identifying where projects or schemes might be at risk. He advised that Transport for London had indicated that they would be reducing funding for some highway works, however, the risks were smaller than initially thought. He stated that there were a number of projects that the Council undertakes in conjunction with the GLA and it is in both organisation's interest, as well as for London regionally, for these to continue.

## **5 WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19**

- 5.1 Aaron Hardy (Policy & Scrutiny Manager) presented a report on the Work Programme for 2018-19 and invited Members to review the list of suggested items at Appendix A to the report and decide which of these items or other topics it may wish to include on the work programme.
- 5.2 The Commission supported receiving reports and future meetings on emergency planning, staff survey, MyWestminster Programme and progress in implementing the Community Cohesion Programme.
- 5.3 **RESOLVED:** That the agenda for the meeting on 29 November 2018 should include a question and answer session with the Leader of the Council and a report on emergency planning and preparedness.
- 5.4 **ACTIONS:** To facilitate its responsibility for the management and coordination of the policy and scrutiny function, Members would like an overview of each policy and scrutiny committee's work programme and a summary of their activities. (**Action for: Aaron Hardy, Policy and Scrutiny Manager**).

The Meeting ended at 7.42 pm

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

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