



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Communities, City Management and Air Quality Policy and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Communities, City Management and Air Quality Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Monday 31st July, 2023**, Rooms 18.01 - 18.03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Jason Williams (Chair), Melvyn Caplan, Lorraine Dean, Robert Eagleton, Mark Shearer, James Small-Edwards and Hamza Taouzzale,

Also Present: Councillors: Paul Dimoldenberg (Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality) and Aicha Less (Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection). Officers: Francis Dwan (Policy and Scrutiny Advisor), Amy Jones (Director of Environment), Frances Martin (Executive Director of Environment and City), Kerry Simpkin (Head of Licensing, Place and Investment Policy), Mark Wiltshire (Director of Public Protection and Licensing) and Pedro Wrobel (Executive Director of Innovation and Change).

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Committee noted that Councillors Tim Mitchell, Laila Cunningham and Judith Southern sent their apologies for the meeting.
- 1.2 The Committee noted that Councillors Melvyn Caplan, Lorraine Dean and Robert Eagleton stood in as substitutes.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

- 3.1 The Committee approved the minutes of its meeting held on 15th June 2023.

3.2 RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2023 be agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

4 PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

4.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Aicha Less, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, on priorities for the portfolio and any updates that have arisen. The Cabinet Member then responded to questions on the following topics:

- Restructure of Public Protection and Licensing (PPL): when Members were going to receive the full details of the restructure of PPL and what the likely impact would be on days works and shift patterns of City Inspectors.
- City Inspectors: whether, after the PPL restructure, dedicated ward City Inspectors would be retained.
- CCTV: Members asked for more detail on the scope and cost of the consultant set to examine the current surveillance infrastructure across Westminster. Members then asked specifically what the procurement and the consultant themselves were going to cost the Council.
- Opportunity for local CCTV schemes: what the CCTV consultant research might mean for local schemes, including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funded schemes, that can utilise the best of local knowledge, but have previously been blocked. Further clarity was sought on standalone and cloud-based network cameras as to why they had not been permitted and whether they would be possible going forward.
- Safer neighbourhood panels: the cost and current funding split of the safer neighbourhood panels. Members also asked for the timescale of when they could expect more information about this.
- Pavement licences: the direction of travel and what is set to happen with regards to the future of pavement licences that will soon expire. Members questioned why the extension was announced for six months and not any longer.
- Turnaround plan: how the Cabinet Member felt about the turnaround plan and what ways the Council could better engage with the Met police with, for example, working in schools.
- British Summer Time – Hyde Park music festival (BST): the impact of the BST festival on noise complaints and the outcome of them. Members then asked what could be done to improve the community offering provided by BST in terms of tickets for local people, youth clubs and community groups and whether there might be practical or technical work experience that could be provided.
- New violence duty: Members asked what would change following the new violence duty announcements and whether this was an already existing relationship. Members asked for more information on the serious violence

definition and what the impact of the changes proposed by the Council, around the night-time economy, would mean to other partnership organisations and stakeholders.

- Noise and nuisance: what work is going to be done to improve residents' faith in the noise team and trust in the service that is provided. Members asked when positive impacts from the changes should expect to be noticed.

4.2 Actions

1. The Cabinet Member to identify what the total cost to the Council is set to be for the procurement and employment of the consultants set to examine the current surveillance infrastructure across Westminster.
2. The Cabinet Member to confirm the reasons why cloud-based network cameras are not being permitted and when this ban will come to an end.
3. BST Concert, the Cabinet Member to consider writing to BST organisers about offering local people, youth clubs and community groups opportunities in future.

5 PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR CITY MANAGEMENT AND AIR QUALITY

5.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg, Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality, on priorities for the portfolio and any updates that have arisen. The Cabinet Member gave an update that since publication of the report, the consultation on Regents Street had received over 2000 comments, mainly from the online portal, which represented a positive start. The Cabinet Member then responded to questions on the following topics:

- Nine Elms Bridge in Wandsworth: whether conversations with Wandsworth Council were happening about the reports of the creation of a bridge in Nine Elms and the latest on these reports.
- Boundary road virtual permits: querying the impact of virtual permits on those that live on boundary roads and whether parking marshals from neighbouring authorities are able to access this database.
- Electric vehicles (EVs), what more the Council can do to help residents make the switch to electric vehicles.
- Food-waste bins rollout: Members suggested the Council consider recording levels of contaminant or other milestones to add a competitive element to increase and incentivise participation in separating food waste.
- Dockless bike parking bays: acknowledging the emails that went to Councillors for local intelligence on best places to include or exclude, Members asked how the decision-making process worked when ward

Councillors had not replied to the emails. It was also asked whether City Inspectors had fed into the decisions made by officers. Members also asked whether the consultation comments are going to be reviewed by the Cabinet Member and eventually made public.

- Waste collection trucks: following announcements of the addition of electrically powered waste collection trucks, Members asked whether this now meant the entire fleet was electric. Members also asked that the Council acknowledge the cross-party nature of this initiative, that was initially started by the previous administration.
- CCTV at dumping hotspots: the number of registrations caught, and the number of fines issued as a result of the CCTV cameras installed at waste dumping and fly-tipping hotspots. Members also asked whether it was likely that offenders would park directly in front of them and whether the scheme represented value for money.
- Cycle hangars: the intentions for the cycle hangar scheme going forward after specific areas have seen applications declined in recent months and whether housing estates would see the installation of anymore. Members then asked if the number of cycle hangars in Westminster by ward and the waiting list could be shared.
- School streets: what the locations for the next set of school streets was and what exactly the criteria are for adjudging school street eligibility.
- Rapid EV chargers: whether the Council was still taking suggestions for locations for rapid EV chargers and whether these could be prioritised over slower ones.
- Cycle lanes: Members enquired specifically about the C43 and C51 cycle lane routes. Members asked about consultation responses being made public and the publication of the exact routes and how they fit into the wider network. Members also asked for a version of the overall planned grid in a form that could be shared.
- Waste dumping CCTV pilot: Members asked for theories as to why there was such a prolific range in the number of 'false triggers' at the different locations on the CCTV camera trial to tackle waste dumping and how they could be corrected.

5.2 Actions

1. The Cabinet Member and officers to consider ways to make food-waste recycling more competitive, such as lowest contamination rate, between different areas and blocks to encourage participation and engagement.
2. To make available to Members of the Committee what criteria are considered for the purpose of designating a 'school street'.

3. Cycle Hangars, to provide the list of cycle hangars in each ward and the respective waiting lists they currently have.
4. Cycle Lane Network, the Committee previously received the cycling network which was not for publication. The Committee have asked if they could now receive the planned cycle network (as a whole) in a form that can be shared.

6 STREET ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING POLICY CHANGES

6.1 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, Councillor Aicha Less introduced the report emphasising the complicated nature of the issue, the change in challenges post Covid and the need for a collaborative approach. The Cabinet Member asked the Committee whether the report accurately and comprehensively reflects the situation, whether the proposals sufficiently tackle the issues highlighted and whether there was any additional information that Members wished to add. The Cabinet Member, supported by specialist officers, then took questions on the following topics:

- Collaborative approach in Leicester Square: the scheme had been launched, two years ago, as a collaborative approach; but this has not worked in terms of complaints and the licence conditions do not go far enough to safeguard local amenity. Members asked whether it was a fair observation to question whether some buskers and street entertainers aren't totally aligned with the Council in ensuring residential amenity.
- Amplification ban: whether the Council was serious about considering a ban on amplification, if it felt like it was the right move forward and challenges with enforcement of that. Further queries were asked about the challenges of performers bringing their own amplifiers and how this can be managed.
- Legislation: whether fines could be issued on the basis of sound and going above a particular decibel threshold, whether City Inspectors could be provided noise recording equipment and how effective this might be.
- Consultation period: Members asked why the consultation has gone on for as long as it has done, having identified some information dated back to May 2022.
- Street markings: Members highlighted that some street markings have been worn out and asked whether something more durable, such as vinyl, could be used.
- Complaints generated: given the 2,200 complaints a year, 50% of which relate to noise, with most in and around Leicester Square, how seriously the Council is treating this issue and again whether amplification would be removed.
- Police support: Members emphasised the need for police support, particularly as they are essential to confiscation if necessary and even to gather names of potential offenders, which the Council does not currently do.

- Seasonal approach: given the rise in complaints over the summer months, it was asked whether a seasonal approach might be considered, or perhaps bespoke seasonal conditions attached to the licences.
- Age restrictions: what the impact of age restriction on licenses might be and whether effectively banning under 14s was the right approach, allowing for welfare considerations. Clarity was also sought on the policy brief which implied that 17-year-old performers would need parental or guardian consent and whether it was felt like this was an appropriate age to set. One Member expressed a strong belief that 16 to 18-year-olds should be allowed to apply for a licence without the need for parental or guardian sign-off.
- Vulnerabilities considered: whilst age had been identified and the policy had welfare considerations on that basis, Members asked if any other potential vulnerabilities had been identified and catered for, for prospective applicants.
- Licence holder: clarity was sought on whether the licence of an under 18-year-old, who would need consent, would be in their name or in the name of their parent or guardian.
- Defining street entertainers: the range of applicants for street entertainers and whether individuals who forcibly sell items like roses constitute as street entertainment and if they are licensed.
- Designated pitches: what can be done to ensure better compliance of performers to the location of the pitch they have been designated. Members suggested considering a more creative approach and possible attractive methods, like street art, which might help draw in more people.
- Understanding regulation: Members asked about the religious preaching that frequently occurs outside stations and whether this kind of activity might need to be licensed under the proposals. Street and stone artists were also asked about.
- Bespoke approach: Members suggested considering amplification being allowed only at certain pitches or certain times.
- Other local authorities: Members asked how other comparable local authorities were dealing with these issues and what could be learnt from their approaches.

7 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

- 7.1 The Work Programme was discussed, and the substantive planned for the next Committee, namely a look at the Queensway and Edgware Road Strategy Group Models.
- 7.2 Consideration was given to changing the start time of the December Committee.

7.3 The Committee was consulted on possible substantives for September's meeting, and it was agreed that options on what might be viable would be presented in the proceeding few days.

7.4 Actions

1. To consult with the full Membership to evaluate possibilities for substantives in September.
2. To push back the start time of the December Committee, to allow Members to attend other Council events.

The Meeting ended at 20.32.

CHAIR: _____

DATE _____