



City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title:

Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date:

Thursday 20th July, 2023

Time:

7.00 pm

Venue:

Rooms 18.01 & 18.03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP

Members:

Councillors:

Md Shamsed Chowdhury
Paul Fisher (Chair)
Sara Hassan
Patrick Lilley

Alan Mendoza
Ian Rowley
Paul Swaddle



Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion Part 1 of the Agenda

Admission to the public gallery is by ticket, issued from the ground floor reception. If you have a disability and require any special assistance please contact the Committee Officer (details listed below) in advance of the meeting.

If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor.

**Email: fdwan@westminster.gov.uk
Corporate Website: www.westminster.gov.uk**

Note for Members: Members are reminded that Officer contacts are shown at the end of each report and Members are welcome to raise questions in advance of the meeting. With regard to item 2, guidance on declarations of interests is included in the Code of Governance; if Members and Officers have any particular questions they should contact the Head of Committee and Governance Services in advance of the meeting please.

AGENDA

PART 1 (IN PUBLIC)

1. MEMBERSHIP

To note any changes to the membership.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations by Members and Officers of the existence and nature of any pecuniary interests or any other significant interest in matters on this agenda.

3. MINUTES

To approve the minute of the Committee's previous meeting held on the 14th June 2023

(Pages 3 - 8)

4. PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND COUNCIL REFORM

To receive an update from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform, Councillor David Boothroyd

(Pages 9 - 16)

5. PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To receive an update from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Councillor Geoff Barraclough.

(Pages 17 - 24)

6. ADOPTION OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

To receive a report on the proposals to adopt participatory budgeting through the 'Communities Priority Programme'.

(Pages 25 - 30)

7. WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

To discuss and shape the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2023/24.

(Pages 31 - 40)

Stuart Love - Chief Executive

12th July 2023



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 14th June, 2023**, Rooms 18.06 & 18.07, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Barbara Arzymanow, Md Shamsed Chowdhury, Paul Fisher (Chair), Sara Hassan, Patrick Lilley, Ed Pitt Ford and Ian Rowley

Also Present: Councillor Geoff Barraclough (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development) and Councillor David Boothroyd (Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform). Officers: Stella Abani (Director of Economy and Skills), Gerald Almeroth (Executive Director of Finance Resources), Deirdra Armsby (Director Place Shaping and Town Planning), Haylea Asadi (Head of Business and Enterprise), Gaurav Choksi (Enterprise Meanwhile Spaces Programme Manager), Francis Dwan (Policy and Scrutiny Advisor) and Ed Humphries (Head of Responsible Procurement and SRM).

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Committee noted that Councillor Paul Swaddle and Councillor Alan Mendoza sent their apologies for the meeting.
- 1.2 The Committee noted that Councillor Ed Pitt Ford and Councillor Barbara Arzymanow 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 4th May 2023.

3.2 RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th May 2023 be agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

4 PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND COUNCIL REFORM

4.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform, on priorities for the portfolio and updates that have arisen since the last meeting. The Cabinet Member referenced the taxpayers' alliance report on council tax rates, an issue with the annual accounts that has meant delaying of the publication of accounts and that the budget review, a manifesto commitment, was advancing. The Cabinet Member referenced upcoming decisions on appropriation of development sites and right to light. The Cabinet Member then responded to questions on the following topics:

- Interest earnings, whether interest earnings were offsetting budget pressures arising from inflation. Whether relative price distortions had been factored into expected inflation budget setting.
- Delay in the publication of the accounts, Members asked what had caused the delay in publication of the Council's accounts and how serious it was considered.
- Insourcing, Members asked for more detail about efforts on insourcing.
- Removal of right to light, what support the Council is providing to residents who might have their right to light removed particularly in terms of mental health.
- Council tax rates, whether it was necessarily beneficial for certain council tax rates in Westminster to be the lowest in the UK and whether there could be a knock-on effect on the quality of service that the Council can provide.
- Impact of pay disputes on Council finances, how strikes by the GMB Trade Union and consequential pay negotiations will affect Council finances and how prepared the Council is.
- Traffic marshal incentives, how remuneration in traffic marshalling works and what ways it could be tweaked to produce different outcomes.

4.2 The Cabinet Member also introduced the supplemental paper on the Responsible Procurement Strategy thanking the previous administration for the work they had done to start the process. Supported by the Council's Head of Responsible Procurement and SRM, Ed Humphries, the Cabinet Member answered questions relating to it on the following topics:

- New Council roles, what the launch of the strategy had meant internally in terms of paid Council staff and contractors.
- Unintended consequences, Members asked how much thought had gone into potential unintended consequences that might arise from adapting the policy,

such as higher costs, lower levels of services, weaker supplier options and whether it was the Councils place to grow Westminster's economy.

- Local job opportunities, clarity was sought on the premise of 'local people for local jobs', what was meant by this and how could such a practice be considered legal.
- Social value, how progress on social value provided by suppliers was going to be monitored by the Council.
- Cost of the strategy, what the budget and cost of running the strategy, including staff costs, amounts to.
- Large contracts being reviewed, whether large contracts, like the waste contract, would be re-negotiated as a result of the Responsible Procurement Strategy.
- Bi-borough contracts, how bi-borough contracts would be affected by adaption of the policy and whether partners, like Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, were onboard with it.
- Reducing barriers to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), the strategy highlights how there will be better opportunity for SMEs bidding for contracts by reducing barriers. Members asked what specifically was happening and for examples as to how this approach was working out in practice.

4.3 Actions

1. The Cabinet Member was asked to provide additional information on insourcing efforts which details how successful efforts have been.
2. The Cabinet Member was asked for additional detail on reducing barriers to SMEs by adaption of the responsible procurement strategy.

5 PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, on priorities for the portfolio and updates that have arisen since the last meeting. The Cabinet Member highlighted progress on the Oxford Street Programme, working to acquire funding from the private sector, the upcoming economy plan launch and the Carbon Fund launch which will help businesses become more environmentally sustainable. The Cabinet Member then responded to questions on the following topics:

- Combatting deprivation, Members asked what work was being done and planned to help improve economic outcomes for those in the most deprived wards of Westminster.

- Oxford Street Programme, questioning the approach being taken and how decisions were being made.
- Carbon Fund, how the Carbon Fund operates and where the money for it originates from.
- Public conveniences, the plans for re-opening of public conveniences and the planning restrictions in place for repurposing.
- Private sector funding on Oxford Street Programme, the likelihood and risk of certain businesses operating on Oxford Street not contributing to the programme and benefitting as a free rider.
- Planning obligations and affordable housing supplementary planning document (POAHSPD), how the viability testing of the POAHSPD was done and what the outcomes were.
- Marks and Spencers, whether the Council had received an update from the Secretary of State on called-in plans for the planned demolishing and redevelopment of Marks and Spencers and when to expect an announcement.
- Economy and skills, Members asked for more detail on the Council's economy and skills work and what it entails.
- Berwick Street, whether the 'community Saturdays' scheme operating at Berwick Street was acting as a pilot scheme for a wider scheme set to be rolled out across Westminster. Members also suggested that Berwick Street should operate both food and non-food rather than one or the other, more frequent pop-ups than monthly and the Council's promotion of market events needs to be stronger.

6 MEANWHILE ACTIVATIONS PROGRAMME (FORMERLY POP-UPS)

6.1 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Councillor Geoff Barraclough, introduced the report. After this, Gaurav Choksi, Enterprise Meanwhile Spaces Programme Manager, outlined the programme through the use of some slides. The Cabinet Member, supported by specialist officers then took questions on the following themes:

- Matching trends, whether the programme was doing enough to match the current trends, beyond traditional retail, that are sought and what analytics are done to understand youth trends.
- Tax-free shopping, Members asked what the opinions were about the removal of tax-free shopping for international tourists and what could be done to reinstate it.

- Cost breakdown, clarity was sought on the financial models in the paper and how exactly the cost structures work out. Members also asked about the revenue structure and how it might change when occupiers are brought in.
- Promotion, whether the Council helps promote brands that take-up the spaces and how it could be improved. Members suggested the Council consider taking on external public relations or commercial consultants to improve this.
- High Street usage, the processes of removing 'undesirable' tenants in premium spaces, with some evidence of potential ties to money laundering in some instances and how joined up the Council is with the Police and National Crime Agency.
- Professional experience, the degree to which Council staff have retail venture capital experience was asked and what experience of operating businesses.
- Project budget, the total financial liability of the programme was asked and whether more funds might be required in the future.
- Monitoring change of use, how high streets in Westminster have changed their use and how this compares to other high streets in the UK and internationally.
- Market research undertaken, Members asked what market research is available in terms of high street visitors and a demographic breakdown of international visitors to London High Streets and Oxford Street specifically.
- Financials, understanding the burden imposed on landowners of vacant listed buildings who bring in a brand and how onerous that is. The financial return from the first two phases was also enquired about.
- Understanding high street vacancies, Members asked for an explanation as to why major brands are not taking up the spaces that are being offered. Having heard the explanation, Members asked whether it was realistic to expect the brands being offered meanwhile activations to ever be in a position to afford the spaces.
- Long-term impact, Members asked how many brands that have taken up meanwhile activations or pop-ups in the earlier stage have been retained either in Westminster or in the space or high street they set up in.
- Treating the symptoms not the causes, attention was drawn to the fact that ventures like the Meanwhile Activations Programme are unlikely to solve the issues of high-street decline and vacancies on high streets like Oxford Street.
- Shifting focus, it was suggested that the Council look at both sides of Oxford Street and draw on successes that happen across the high-street.
- Programme scope, whether the programme operates in Soho and if it was planned to expand.

- Marketing strategy, Members suggested that vacancies be advertised to international brands.

6.2 Actions

1. Members asked what market research is available in terms of high street visitors and specifically, whether the Council had any information about international footfall and visitor demographics in London High Streets (/Oxford Street specifically). If data exists outlining international visitors by nationality, this would also be sought.

7 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

- 7.1 The work programme was discussed, and Members highlighted a desire to explore insourcing and to look at the elements relating to this Committee from the Future of Westminster Commission.

The meeting ended at 21.05.

CHAIR: _____

DATE _____



City of Westminster

Finance, Planning and Economic
Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 20 July 2023
Portfolio: Finance and Council Reform
The Report of: Councillor David Boothroyd
Report Author and Contact Details: Maria Burton, Portfolio Advisor,
mburton@westminster.gov.uk

1. The following key decisions were made in the period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 14 June 2023:

- 23 June 2023 - Future Plan for the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement contract
- 23 June 2023 – Coroners Court Refurbishment and Extension
- 03 July 2023 – Appointment of a Main Contractor for Works to the Tresham Centre

2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date:

2.1 Statement of Accounts

The Annual Accounts for the Council were published on 16 June. While they did not meet the deadline of 31 May set by the Government, the council outperformed the majority of local authorities in publishing in the middle of June. We are currently in the period of public inspection. I have been advised that officers see no reason why the external audit should not be completed by its deadline.

2.2 Revenue Collection

Revenues collection in 2022/23 was good.

NNDR “In year” collection rose from 91.8% in 2021/22 to 95.5% in 2022/23. This is a very good outcome given the insolvency of a large number of companies following the pandemic. The service is well placed to improve collection further in 2023/24, indeed collection in the first couple of months of 2023/24 is on a par with the Council’s best ever collection percentage of 97.6% achieved just before the pandemic.

Council Tax collection also achieved a good result increasing “in year” collection from 91.5% in 2021/22 to 93.6% in 2022/23, although this remains below the pre-

pandemic collection level of 96.7%. The achieved collection level was especially pleasing given that significant resources were diverted to administer the government's £150 Energy Scheme during 2022/23. The government's scheme also meant that Council Tax recovery had to be halted for a large part of the year. It is expected that the service will deliver further improvements in collection in the future, providing there are no more government schemes to administer. Collection in the first couple of months of 2023/24 is showing further improvement.

Both revenues met their business plan in year collection targets.

There are three main reasons for council tax collection being lower in 2022/23 compared to pre-pandemic levels:

- Economic fallout from the pandemic and cost of living crisis
- Reduction in collection resources as resources had to be re-directed to administer the government £150 Energy Scheme.
- Reduction in recovery action. The administration of the government's energy scheme meant that recovery had to be suspended for a significant part of the year.

In line with Fairer Westminster objectives, the Council transitioned to an Ethical Recovery process partway through 2022/23, with the new process outlined below. It is not considered that the Council's new Ethical Recovery process has had any significant effect on the 2022/23 collection level, although the 2023/24 financial year will enable a proper analysis of the effect on Council Tax collection.

Ethical Recovery is made up of four standards: -

- a) Pro-active promotion of the Council's 100% Council Tax Support scheme for residents struggling to pay their Council Tax
- b) Long-term payment arrangements being agreed, i.e. no longer insisting that Council Tax debts are paid in full by 31 March.
- c) Increased use of Council Tax Hardship (Section 13A) allowances for residents with exceptional circumstances / current inability to pay. £200k was allocated to Council Tax Hardship funding as part of the Council's initial Cost of Living £1m funding, the majority of which was utilised in 2022/23. Initial funding of £150k has been allocated for 2023/24 and the requirement for further funding will be kept under review.

- d) Ensuring that the removal of goods by the Council's enforcement agents can only take place for Council Tax debts where the debtor has the ability to pay but is refusing to pay, i.e. "won't pay" residents. Authorisation for all Council Tax removals by the Council's enforcement agents must be approved by the Director of Finance & Resources or the Director of Revenues & Benefits – to date the Council's enforcement agents have made no such requests for Council Tax debts.

2.3 Cost of Living Support

The Council's approach for spending the £3,9m Household Support Fund for 2023/24 was approved in May 2023. The areas of focus will include vulnerable families, vulnerable young people, households receiving benefits, referral-based schemes and food charities. This funding has been topped up with £247,000 of Council funding. It is anticipated that 41,000 people will be supported through £4.1m of spending over the year, with targeted help towards families eligible for free school meals, vulnerable young people and households receiving Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support. Letters with £150 supermarket gift cards will be sent in the coming days to about 2,400 households who are known to have low incomes but are not eligible for the Government's Cost of Living payment.

2.4 Council Reform

Council Meetings

The 28 June Council meeting was the first held since the rules were changed to allow greater and more flexible public participation. Anyone who lives, works or studies in Westminster is now invited to pose a question or present a petition in-person at Ordinary Full Council, this can be about a local issue or a wider question about the council. Petitions can be presented if they receive at least 100 signatures, and any presented to Full Council will receive both a verbal and written response.

As Members will be aware, the public participation on 28 June was a great success. Six residents raised a wide variety of issues affecting the City of Westminster, and Cabinet Members gave helpful replies. Those who participated were given the opportunity to speak briefly afterwards to give their views on the process; I encourage everyone to watch those videos on the Council's Youtube channel.

2.5 Digital and Innovation

Cabinet responsibilities for the digital service were reassigned on 29 June when Cllr Sanquest was appointed Cabinet Member for Resident Participation, Consultation Reform and Leisure. She has taken over responsibility for:

- The corporate contact centre;
- Corporate Complaints;
- The digital transformation of the Council's services in collaboration with other Cabinet Members and partner agencies where necessary;
- Applications, core digital tools and platforms which enable public engagement with the Council e.g. the website, Report-It and other such functions.

I will retain responsibility for:

- The Infrastructure for the Council's Information and telecommunications systems;
- Cyber security;
- Architecture and data

IT Disaggregation

Progress on the disaggregation continues, with services migrating gradually to ensure adequate staffing and resilience in the system. Updates will be provided to the Committee as the programme progresses.

Report-it

We have recently published a web page to help keep Westminster communities engaged and informed on the transformation of the report-it service. The new webpage will be updated to inform on engagement events, recent changes and enables those interested to contact the team directly to be first to hear about updates. You can find this page at: [Report it review | Westminster City Council](#).

Although this is a crucial tool for the team to work transparently and out in the open it will not replace in person engagement as the team keep those who are not online considered in this process.

As part of making the reporting experience easier and faster, the team have provided updated digital journeys for reporting problems with abandoned dockless bikes and electric vehicle charging points. These include clearer explanations of when to use Report it and when to contact to operators directly, with quick links to do so.

The report-it team have undertaken several rounds of testing with residents on improvements to the Report It landing page and improvements to the noise reporting journey. These improvements will be released iteratively to deliver maximum value for the communities with improvements to the current reporting experience for noise expected by the end of Summer this year.

Whilst the team are completing these 'quick win' changes they are also working to re-design the entire end to end reporting experience to re-imagine new outstanding reporting experiences. Delivery of this new experience will begin in early Autumn with an aim to have the three priority journeys (Waste, Highways, Noise) completely optimised for users by the end of this year.

Corporate Contact Centre

The Council's in-house corporate centre handles around 11,000 calls per month, this is 96% of the total demand with online form requests and emails accounting for 4% of the volume. Performance has been particularly strong across the last three months with an average of 97% calls answered (target 92%) and 89% of calls answered within service level (target 70%).

All customers calling the contact centre can opt into a post call survey and in May 91% of customers were satisfied with the overall quality of the service provided. This is influenced by an improved first call resolution at 71%. The contact centre continues to see positive improvements across all measures in post call surveys and the team have recently received refresher training in the customer service standards expected.

Since January, we have continued to see a month-on-month improvement in the average time taken to handle calls, this is currently 5:29 minutes which has reduced the total number of calls abandoned (<4%).

Emails and online form processing requests are currently being handled well within the targeted service levels and the team are on track to deliver against all the key performance indicators.

Corporate Contact Centre	Trend	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	AVG	3 Months AVG	YTD
Calls Offered		11,367	11,017	12,934	10,217	11,160	11,339	11,437	56,695
Calls Answered		10,618	10,415	12,525	9,803	10,864	10,845	11,064	54,225
Calls Answered (%)		93.4%	94.5%	96.8%	95.9%	97.3%	95.62%	97%	95.6%
Service Level (target 70%)		72.7%	80.2%	88.9%	88.2%	90.5%	84.08%	89%	82.7%
Average Handle Time		05:38	05:37	05:27	05:24	05:21	05:29	05:24	05:29
Customer Satisfaction		88.9%	90.6%	87.9%	89.9%	91.2%	89.7%	90%	89.29%
First Contact Resolution		70.6%	68.3%	68.8%	69.2%	70.7%	69.5%	70%	69.80%

The Westminster Employment Service have secured funding to allow the placement of 5 Westminster Residents in the contact centre to be extended until 30 September with the additional resident securing permanent employment in the Council. This has allowed 6 residents to benefit from obtaining the skills required to work in a customer service environment, the associated training and development whilst also benefiting from the employment placement.

Emergency Out Of Hours - Agilisys

Agilisys handle approximately 6,000 out of hours calls a month to the emergency out of hours service with around 50% of calls relating to emergency housing repairs.

Performance has been steady since January averaging 93.31% of all calls being answered.

Performance reduced in March due to several issues across the month including: blocks reporting no heating/hot water including an ongoing issue across a weekend; increased call volumes relating to homeless/temporary accommodation requirements mainly due to the cold weather and activation of SWEP; technical issues with the repairs contractor system resulting in increased outbound calls.

Agilisys offer the same post call survey as the corporate and housing contact centres with performance levels for customer satisfaction and First Contact Resolution encouraging. The number of verbatim comments left has resulted in some very positive feedback which has been fed back to the individuals.

Out Of Hours	Trend	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	AVG	3 Months AVG	YTD
Calls Offered		6,338	5,394	6,483	6,467	6,530	6,242	6,493	31,212
Calls Answered		5,940	5,068	5,885	6,139	6,108	5,758	6,044	29,140
Calls Answered (%)		93.72%	93.96%	90.78%	94.92%	93.54%	93.3%	93%	93.4%
Service Level (target 70%)		74.2%	76.8%	68.1%	76.7%	72.6%	73.7%	72%	73.7%
Average Handle Time		06:34	06:56	08:02	07:05	07:20	07:11	07:29	07:11
Customer Satisfaction		98.0%	98.5%	81.3%	94.2%	97.2%	93.8%	91%	93.8%
First Contact Resolution		100.0%	83.9%	87.5%	100.0%	91.2%	92.5%	93%	92.5%

Revenues & Benefits (Capita)

The Council Tax Energy Rebate (£150) increased the call volume into the R&B contact centre considerably. Capita have worked extremely hard to increase the % of calls answered within service level and are now back within target, performance continues to be closely monitored.

Revenues & Benefits (Capita)	Trend	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	AVG	3 Months AVG	YTD
Calls Offered		14,518	12,464	16,251	17,536	19,390	16,032	17,726	80,159
Calls Answered		13,695	12,207	15,851	17,162	18,980	15,579	17,331	77,895
Calls Answered (%)		94.3%	97.9%	97.5%	97.9%	97.9%	97.11%	98%	97.2%
Service Level (target 80%)		58.98%	72.83%	74.53%	79.90%	87.85%	74.82%	81%	74.8%
Average Wait Time		06:52	02:01	02:28	02:34	02:59	02:40	02:40	02:40
Average Handle Time		07:28	07:31	07:14	07:51	07:32	07:31	07:32	07:31

Parking (NSL)

Parking went live with a new back-office systems in April. This has resulted in high call volumes which in turn has impacted wait times and the % of calls answered. The

team are working closely with the development team to resolve the issues driving contacts and the contact centre is in the process of deploying additional resources to meet demand.

Parking (NSL)	Trend	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	AVG	3 Months AVG	YTD
Calls Offered		9,717	8,821	10,362	14,211	12,853	11,193	12,475	55,964
Calls Answered		8,273	8,254	9,100	8,188	9,881	8,739	9,056	43,696
Calls Answered (%)		85.1%	93.6%	87.8%	57.6%	76.9%	80.21%	74%	80.2%
Service Level (target 70%)		55.21%	64.01%	58.61%	10.29%	36.37%	44.90%	35%	44.9%
Average Wait Time		02:05	01:16	02:03	10:58	04:59	06:00	06:00	06:00
Average Handle Time		05:29	05:37	05:09	05:56	06:23	05:42	05:49	05:42

Housing

The Housing Contact Centre team handled 95% of calls against a target of 92% of calls answered across January to May. Service level was 75% against the target of 70% delivering a strong performance. Due to a significant increase in training delivery in April performance dipped but has since returned to normal levels. Average Handle Time increased slightly over April and May, as expected, whilst agents embedded the training.

Housing (WCC)	Trend	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	AVG	3 Months AVG	YTD
Calls Offered		19,140	16,277	20,575	15,144	14,987	17,225	16,902	86,123
Calls Answered		18,238	15,918	19,253	13,710	14,476	16,319	15,813	81,595
Calls Answered (92%)		95.3%	97.8%	93.6%	90.5%	96.6%	94.76%	94%	94.7%
Service Level (target 70%)									0.0%
Average Wait Time		00:42	00:23	00:58	01:33	00:31	01:00	01:00	01:00
Average Handle Time		11:18	11:02	11:27	12:27	12:15	11:41	12:03	11:41

Housing Solutions (RMG)

Changes to the allocation scheme in March 2023 contributed to a 29% increase in calls during the month compared to February 2023. Over the 5-month period January 2023 – May 2023 there were a total of 34,456 calls to HSS, an increase of 14% compared to the 30,140 calls over the previous 5-month period August 2022 – December 2022. Over the period the % of calls answered and calls resolved at first point of contact have declined as call volume has increased. Average wait times have seen a small increase too as a result of the increase in volume.

Housing Solutions (RMG)	Trend	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	AVG	3 Months AVG	YTD
Calls Offered		5,243	6,441	8,342	6,648	7,800	6,895	7,597	34,474
Calls Answered		4,720	5,353	6,818	5,625	6,061	5,715	6,168	28,577
Calls Answered (%)		88.0%	83.0%	81.7%	85.0%	82.0%	83.95%	83%	83.9%
First Point Of Contact (%)		93.00%	87.00%	86.00%	85.00%	82.00%	86.60%	84%	86.6%
Average Wait Time		03:15	04:19	04:21	04:07	05:13	04:33	04:33	04:33
Average Handle Time		04:12	04:29	04:29	04:12	04:26	04:21	04:22	04:21

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City of Westminster

Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	20 July 2023
Portfolio:	Planning and Economic Development
The Report of:	Councillor Geoff Barraclough
Report Author and Contact Details:	Maria Burton, Portfolio Advisor, mburton@westminster.gov.uk

- 1. No key decisions have been made in the period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 14 June 2023.**
- 2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress since my last report:**

Economy

2.1 Fairer Economy Strategy

Our Fairer Economy Plan 2023 – 2026 was launched on 20 June at an event held at Somerset House. The plan builds on the key strategic outcomes from the Fairer Westminster Strategy and Delivery Plan and the draft recommendations from the Future of Westminster Commission. The plan sets out the key challenges being faced and how the council proposes to respond within the next three years – this includes current delivery as well as new activity to be explored and developed. The Plan is the start of a longer process to co-develop a strategic vision for a fairer economy with stakeholders including employers, training providers and residents.

There are three key sections:

- 1) Resilient Businesses and High streets;
- 2) Vibrant West End; and
- 3) Employment Opportunities for All.

There has been extensive internal engagement with four cross-departmental workshops and briefings with Cabinet Members, ward councillors and the Leader. There has been some external engagement as part of the plan development, but most of the engagement will take place now the plan has been published.

2.2 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

The West Fitzrovia BID ballot has been deferred by the Fitzrovia Partnership from 11 July until 31 October 2023.

The St. James's Occupier and Property Owner BID ballots are proposed to take place on 27 and 28 November respectively, with the declaration of result scheduled for 29 November 2023.

2.3 Westminster Investment Service

There are currently 28 live enquiries from business across a range of sectors that want to locate in Westminster. The highest number of enquiries comes from Retail, Hospitality and Leisure, and Creative and Cultural sectors. Within the last 12 months, two businesses have 'landed' in Westminster through direct WIS activity, and 45 via London & Partners.

Officers are developing a clear, focused and confident campaign identity and a new name for the Westminster Investment Service. Whilst the primary focus is on finding new businesses to move into the borough it is important to still speak clearly and confidently to those already within Westminster and those who are within the relocation process. The brand needs to speak to high-growth companies without alienating the micro-businesses that make up so much of the area's diversity and identity. The objective is to reinforce a reputation that Westminster is the place to be for sustainable businesses with an innovative and experimental mindset.

2.4 Employment

Westminster Employment Service

North Paddington 18-25 years Employment Needs Action Research

Paddington Development Trust (PDT), the Young Westminster Foundation (YWF) and the council commissioned research to provide insight into the disconnect between young job seekers in North Paddington and the labour market on their doorstep. The research was conducted from late January to May 2023 and engaged 18–25 year-olds living in and around the three wards of interest (Westbourne, Harrow Road and Queen's Park). Respondents completed an online survey which informed further enquiry through four Focus Groups and two 1:1 interviews.

The report reflects on the common themes emerging from the research and once finalised will be shared with stakeholders. It is anticipated that the research and recommendations will support the youth employment strand of the broader North Paddington Programme.

Connecting Communities Programme

Westminster Employment Service (WES) ceased participation in the Connecting Communities Programme, an ESF funded employability programme managed by CLF with 12 participating boroughs on the 30 June 2023 due to the end of the programme. The programme ran for fifteen months with Westminster Employment Service awarded Outstanding Job Start Performance as well as exceeding their job sustainment and education targets.

2.5 Markets

Berwick Street Community Saturdays

'Berwick Street Community Saturdays' diversify the weekend market offer within the West End, embracing and celebrating the street's rich history of fashion, fabric, and arts.

Stalls included upcycled fashion items, sustainably conscious brands, quality fabrics, live sketches, handmade crafts, wellness products, and jewellery. Priority was given to local Soho SMEs and community organisations (such as Soho Parish Primary), who occupied over a third (37.5%) of stalls of the inaugural event in April. Following a generally very

positive reception, the Markets Team extended the Saturday market, organising the final one on 9 September rather than 1 July as originally planned. 49 out of 67 participants respondents stated that they would be interested in returning for the other Community Saturday Events, whilst 50 would consider becoming a licensed trader in the borough which again demonstrates the success of the programme.

Raze Sustainable Bag Pilot

To help achieve Westminster's net-zero target, the Market Development Team has partnered with Raze to circulate reusable, carbon neutral, and eco-friendly paper bags to market traders for use in place of single-use plastic.

15,000 bags have been handed out to traders and customers on Church Street market, offsetting a total of 871,275g of Co2e. As part of the next phase, we are offering local businesses and Council departments to use the advertising space on our bags. On average each bag is reused 7 times over a 20-day period and is seen by 530 people, which is up to 11 times more effective at diverting web traffic than online other advertising methods.

Place-shaping

2.6 High Streets

North Paddington Programme

Good Growth Fund – Maida Hill Market

In April 2023 an intensive two week, on-site, engagement exercise was carried out at Maida Hill Market regarding the public realm proposals. 629 surveys were completed with users of the space, 79% of whom were local residents. 82% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the design proposals.

While there were strong levels of support there remain concerns that the anti-social behaviour issues that have blighted the square could continue or be exacerbated by some aspects of the proposals. Specific feedback on this was received from Karen Buck MP, the Maida Hill Neighbourhood Forum and the Metropolitan Police. As a result some design changes were introduced to mitigate these concerns. The alterations further improve visibility across the space by reconfiguring the planters and reduce the volume of new seating. It is also now proposed that work will take place in two 'phases' with additional street furniture introduced only once there is confidence behaviour concerns are being managed. Officers responsible for the design of the public realm improvements will continue to work closely with colleagues overseeing the development of a Management Plan for the space.

A Cabinet Member Report for this project will be shared in late July 2023 and work is expected to begin on site in September 2023.

Good Growth Fund – Queens Park and North Paddington Canalside

Successful public exhibitions for these two projects were carried out in May. The feedback received has been incorporated and work is progressing on the detailed design proposals. This will allow detailed construction programmes to be developed to provide firm dates for work to begin on site.

The tender exercise on the appointment of a contractor to carry out the canal wall repairs at Queens Park is in its final stages. Work on this is expected to start in Autumn 2023 with the wider public realm works for the two sites following this.

Wider Place Shaping Work

The Placeshaping team are now engaging with wider council departments to develop

projects that have been prioritised under the North Paddington Programme. In broad terms projects in this area are being organised under three broad headings – High Street, Canalside and Neighbourhoods. Further detail will be reported on this as projects develop and in line with the North Paddington project governance.

High Streets Programme

The Council has allocated £10million of capital funding to support the resilience and vibrancy of Westminster's high streets outside the West End. Following a thorough assessment of existing challenges and opportunities and historic lack of investment, Edgware Road, Praed Street, Queensway and Westbourne Grove were identified as the first areas for the programme to focus in the next three years.

Public engagement is taking place from June until August 2023, including in-person and online surveys and workshops, and pop-up engagement hubs in three locations. This will be followed by a prioritisation of aspirations and actions considering the findings from the engagement and alignment with the Fairer Westminster Strategy and Delivery Plan outcomes.

Greening Westminster small grants programme

The programme's key aims remain to increase and improve the quantity, quality and impact of open spaces and green assets across the City, with £350k of capital funding to support projects in 2023/24. Workshops were held to help applicants in the process, two on-line and one well-attended in-person workshop, along with 1:1 feedback sessions for more targeted support. 19 applications were received by the deadline on 9 May. Following scoring and review, 15 applicants have been offered Greening Westminster grants, 13 of which are community organisations.

Mechanisms for delivery are being worked through, with many community organisations likely to be offered support from professional landscape gardeners. Projects must be completed within 1 year. A communications plan is in place and successful projects will be documented throughout their progress and delivery.

2.7 West End and Central Activities Zone

Soho

Tender returns have been received for the Soho monitoring study from four consultant teams. Place Shaping, alongside officers responsible for Highways, Air Quality and Noise, are currently reviewing these documents and the technical proposals that sit behind them.

This work is requiring a detailed assessment with our term contractor WSP due to some differing methodologies having been proposed. There is a need to cross-reference the implications of these varying approaches with current policy requirements and the technical feasibility of supporting some proposed items of monitoring equipment on street. Officers are planning to report to senior officers and Cabinet Members on a recommendation in July 2023.

Oxford Street

The Full Business Case for Oxford Street and Oxford Circus has been developed and is currently undergoing internal council review. This business case will accompany a Cabinet report planned for the Autumn 2023 which will allow additional funding to be drawn down from the programme capital budget. These funds will be used to progress the designs for Oxford Street and Oxford Circus and cover programme overheads including staff costs.

Stakeholder engagement with residents and businesses has been ongoing in parallel with the development of the Stage 1 (feasibility) design for the Oxford Street project. This has involved meeting and presenting the Oxford Street project concept to NWECC member businesses (locally and internationally) as part of the discussion to secure 50% of funding for the scheme.

In July, the Oxford Street Programme will embark on a 6-week period of active engagement which will include a public questionnaire, open events on and near Oxford Street, and small group engagement sessions with key demographic groups. The feedback received during this period will be carefully recorded and considered for planning and implementation of future programme phases.

Paddington Place Plan

Paddington Public Realm Strategy

Paddington Public Realm Strategy seeks to transform Paddington's fragmented neighbourhoods into a vibrant, healthy, and inclusive area by rebalancing the environment to enable legible and safe pedestrian and cycle movement, and to create great public spaces. The strategy sets out an urban framework and programme of public realm projects across either side of the Westway, from Royal Oak to Edgware Road stations. The strategy document has been published in April 2023: [Paddington Public Realm Strategy | Westminster City Council](#).

Priority projects for 2023-2026

Projects considered as priority for 2023-2026 are key to deliver on the objectives of creating safer, accessible, and more attractive routes and places within the area. These key projects starting in 2023 include: (1) Warwick Avenue station & environs; (2) Canalside (Rembrandt Gardens and Stone Wharf); (3) Paddington Green & Churchyard Gardens; and (4) Bishop's Bridge & the Harrow Road Gyratory. Officers are currently engaging with key stakeholders and Ward Councillors to collect their views to refine the initial strategy for the areas and transform them into a solid project brief. At the same time, we are working with procurement on a route to appoint consultants for the design and further delivery phases that will follow. Projects design development should start in Autumn/Winter 2023.

Meanwhile Activations Programme

The meanwhile activation team continue to work closely with NWECC, building momentum around the programme and shortlisting units on Oxford Street to prioritise initially. Selection is based on the location, condition as well as the current occupancy situation. There are also a couple of units that are on the radar of the enforcement team. There is lot of interest in the programme as preparations continue for the launch of phase 3 in July with an application call out to brands to express interest to participate in the programme.

Town Planning and Planning Policy

2.8 City Plan Review

The first formal stage of consultation (Regulation 18 consultation) ended on 18 November 2022 and 47 responses were received from a wide cross-section, including residents, resident groups, charities, developers and businesses.

Feedback has been largely supportive of the Council's aims on affordable housing, retrofit and refurbishment, and site allocations, and officers are considering the responses be. Evidence has been commissioned to understand our housing needs and work is well underway to understand the evidence needs and policy options for the retrofit first policy. Officers are also reviewing all of the potential sites to assess which ones are suitable to take forward as allocations. The Council intends to undertake informal engagement on the draft policies and site allocations in advance of the formal consultation (Regulation 19) which will take place in very early 2024.

2.9 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

Public Realm SPD

The Public Realm SPD will replace and consolidate the outdated 2011 'Westminster Way' SPD and other old Supplementary Planning Guidance to set out technical guidance on the council's approach to making, changing, and managing the public realm. It will help ensure consistency in the design, delivery and maintenance of such spaces in a manner that ensures places are welcoming, healthy, and safe for all users, and make a positive contribution towards the climate emergency.

A draft document is in production and officers have undertaken a period of targeted informal engagement with key external stakeholders to further inform this. It included engagement with Neighbourhood Forums, Amenity Societies, Accessibility groups and the BIDs, to better understand their current experience and aspirations for the public realm in Westminster, or views on the existing guidance to be replaced. Statutory 6 week consultation on the draft SPD is then anticipated to take place in the Autumn, with adoption later in the year.

Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD

The POAH SPD must respond to a series of commitments in the City Plan that it will include guidance on a number of issues, such as carbon offsetting and income thresholds for intermediate housing. SPDs can only provide guidance on areas of policy covered in the City Plan and cannot create new areas of policy.

Under the previous administration a Draft of the SPD was consulted on in March 2022. It has subsequently been redrafted in response to feedback from the consultation and Cabinet Members, as well as to align with the Fairer Westminster Strategy and Future of Westminster Commission.

The new Draft SPD has been viability tested to ensure the planning obligations do not make development unviable, and officers have worked with the Greater London Authority to ensure the SPD is as far as possible in line with the Mayor of London's policies and guidance. Following further internal steer, a new consultation period will take place in the summer months, with the adoption of the SPD expected in Autumn 2023.

Environment SPD

A review of the guidance within the council's Environment SPD was launched in 2022. The council has been gathering evidence to support guidance which goes further to meet our climate change ambitions. A new draft will be consulted on in early 2024.

2.10 Statement of Community Involvement

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a document the council is legally required to publish to explain how we will inform, consult and involve communities in drawing up local development or other statutory planning policy documents, such as the City Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents, and in dealing with planning applications and appeals.

Public consultation on the new SCI took place in January to March 2023 and the document has been revised as a result of the feedback received. We intend to adopt it this summer.

2.11 Design Review Panel

Design review is a requirement in national and London Plan policy and the Design Review Panel will provide an independent voice to promote design excellence, providing access to a wide, expert skill-set to ensure innovative and sustainable design solutions in new development which will help deliver on wider Fairer Westminster objectives.

The Westminster Design Review Panel was established earlier this year to provide an expert, independent voice to promote exemplary, sustainable design standards and to negotiate design improvements to major planning applications. Panel Members have now been recruited and the terms of reference agreed, and details of both will be published on the Council's website in due course. The fees and charges have been approved and will be reviewed after six and 12 months to ensure they are set at the correct level.

Smart City

2.12 Smart City Operating System

The Air Quality data platform will collate disparate data sets from across the city and present them in a user-friendly, freely accessible place. Following its development, the platform has been presented to various external stakeholders for consideration and feedback. This has included the Forum of Forums, Marylebone Forum Air Quality subgroup, Mums for Lungs, peers across local government and Resident Panels.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive but also helped identify areas to be refined or addressed prior to a soft launch planned in late July.

The soft launch will focus on interactive Air Quality reports being published via the Council's website, with further releases planned that will include publishing raw data through a file download and via an API.

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Finance, Planning & Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	29 June 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Participatory Budgeting Proposal
Report of:	Serena Simon, Director of Communities, Jake Bacchus, Director of Finance
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cllr Boothroyd, Cllr Butler-Thalassis, Cllr Sanquest (formerly in the portfolio of Cllr Less) www.westminster.gov.uk/cabinet)
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Fairer Communities, Fairer Council
Report Author and Contact Details:	Christine Mead, Head of Community Partnerships cmead@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- The participatory budgeting approach forms a key part of the council's Fairer Westminster commitment to meaningfully engage residents more in decision making. The aims of this are to enable residents and communities to play an active role in defining what matters most to them, and having a voice in how money can be allocated against this. If residents are part of the decision-making, then the services which are commissioned will be more likely shaped to meet residents' needs.

Participatory budgeting has been developed over the past two years through the Community Priorities Programme, a grant making programme where residents are supported to decide the priorities, assess bids and make the decisions about which projects are funded.

This paper looks at how we can build on that experience and move over the next three years to more hyper local projects and a combination of area-based community assemblies and ward panel pilots. The proposal includes extending and developing the capacity of the community to do participatory

budgeting, and learning from different methods of implementing it what works best in terms of outcomes for the community and models of delivery.

The Community Priorities Programme forms part of an increased programme of grants for organisations and grassroots projects being offered throughout Westminster. There are plans to streamline and simplify for additional community benefit.

Key questions for consideration are:

- Clarifying the next steps for participatory budgeting, including a transitional approach to the development of capacity
- The stages for moving towards an area level approach, through creation of community assemblies across Westminster
- Defining distinct application and decision approaches for Participatory Budgeting for the smaller and larger community organisations, and for hyper-local projects and area or city-wide projects
- Establishing a two-year community involvement and funding cycle for the Community Priorities Programme, enabling participation in priority setting every two years and two-year funding agreements

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- Does the move to develop participatory budgeting capacity make sense?
- What do we want residents to experience through taking part in these decisions?
- How can we ensure the VCS is supported and engaged through this process?
- What are the barriers to participation in participatory budgeting?

3. Background

3.1 Overview

The Community Priorities Programme uses a participatory budgeting approach to define priorities and fund local projects in areas effected by deprivation. £300k is committed to this programme on annual basis from the Public Health Department, and £300k from the Communities Department. It is open to Westminster-based individuals and organisations.

Its funding criteria is based on qualitative community research undertaken in 2021 for the first round, and further engagement with 200 residents in the south as part of the programme expansion in 2022. Projects are shortlisted with residents and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) representatives and final allocation is decided at delegated authority level.

The programme funded 26 projects in round 1 and has now funded 51 projects in round 2. An evaluation report of the first round is due in July 2023.

In the development of the programme, we have learned from approaches used in other councils, including Newham, Brent and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

3.2 Lessons to date

- The programme is based on a community development approach, which embeds training and support at every stage so that the people participating have the skills and confidence to engage fully with the process;
- Feedback from community organisations who have been through the application process has recommended different application and decision-making processes for the very small projects and organisations and for the established VCS organisations who are able to run projects across multiple wards;
- Training to support community panels in assessment process and training to make the decision is vital;
- Managing risk through compliance processes needs to be done before bids are sent to panels or assemblies to make a decision;
- There are many residents and community organisations who value being engaged in this process and want to contribute to their community in this way;
- Partnership opportunities and peer learning were welcomed by community providers in previous rounds of the CPP.
- One year project funding leads to starting and stopping projects too quickly, so we are moving to funding projects for two years;
- Running priority setting processes every year is costly in time for all involved, so we are moving to a two year cycle of priority setting.

General plan 2023 – 2026

	Capacity building	Decision making	Project grants	Development and engagement
2023-2024	<p>Recruit and train residents and community organisation for community assemblies and decision panels. (NB community assemblies in this context refer to the coming together of residents and agencies for a common purpose: to identify the most important needs and aspirations of the local community)</p> <p>Support community organisations with thinking through their projects and bid writing</p>	<p>Run 3 community assemblies to determine community priorities</p> <p>Run a combination of community assemblies and community panels to decide on the grants, including residents, VCS organisations and ward councillors in the processes</p>	<p>Define guidelines and application process and decision making for small community organisations, individuals, and hyper-local projects</p> <p>Define guidelines and application processes and decision making for established VCS organisations</p> <p>Run a CPP grants programme for 2 years of funding for projects</p>	<p>Engagement with residents, community organisations, ward councillors to ensure broad and diverse representation in the assemblies and panels. Leverage existing networks through resident associations and Neighbourhood Forums to achieve this.</p> <p>Engagement with community organisations to support the development of both hyper-local and area and city-wide projects.</p> <p>Extend the Register of Active Residents to maintain a database of all residents with interest and training in this area</p>

2024-2026	Build capacity in residents to engage in monitoring and evaluation	Run Community Assemblies in 2025-2026 to review priorities Run decision panels/assemblies for further project decision	Award project grants for 2 years Monitor and evaluate projects Annual impact reports	Discuss with ward councillors the opportunities for ward level pilots for ward panels
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Key timelines:

- **August – September 2023**
Plan and recruit for local community assemblies for priority setting.
- **October – November 2023**
Deliver community assemblies. Set up local community working groups/panels for next stages.
- **December 2023 – January 2024**
Begin application process, including capacity support and engagement with community groups and organisations.
- **January – February 2024**
Conduct community-led decision-making process (combination of panels and voting assemblies as outlined above)
- **March 2024**
Finalise community decision making and award grants for 2-year funding.
- **April 2024 – March 2025**
Project delivery, monitoring, support and learning.
- **April 2025**
Begin new phase of community priority setting with renewed approach based on learnings and scoping of opportunities for ward level pilots.

Learnings from Community Priorities Programme evaluation of pilot round (2021-2022)

The evaluation commissioned for this programme focussed on the public health and social wellbeing impacts that were delivered as a result of the community projects funded. This is currently in draft and not yet published. A bullet point overview of the key recommendations in the paper can be found below:

- Continue funding place-based projects with expansion to reach other wards.
- Increase networking opportunities to build partnerships between project providers.

- Create more shared learning opportunities for residents involved in participation.
- Continue to invest in a community development approach.
- Continue to embed co-production in the evaluation strategy for future rounds.
- Develop support for marketing and promotion of community projects once funded.

Learnings from Newham Council:

The current plan laid out for participatory budgeting is built on the previous rounds of Westminster’s Community Priorities Programme and also is informed by the approach of Newham’s Community Assembly Programme. In Newham, each neighbourhood/geographic area in the borough is allocated an amount of funding to spend on improving the area. Residents and community groups are invited to develop project plans to meet the priority needs they have identified in their area. Citizens set the priorities through assemblies and in the first cycle, used resident working groups to decide on projects that have been put forward for funding by the public. In the second cycle they have opted to use a combination of digital and in person voting. A key learning taken and embedded in the above programme outline is Newham’s move from a one-year to a two-year programme, emphasising that the first year should focus on deliberation, project application and participatory budgeting then the second year should focus on project delivery and evaluation.

Key outcomes of the proposed approach:

- Enable residents and communities to define what matters most to them and how funding should be allocated against this.
- Develop community-led solutions that deliver on priorities decided by residents.
- Invest directly in projects that realise positive impact for local communities.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Christine Mead at cmead@westminster.gov.uk



Finance, Planning & Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	20 July 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	2023/2024 Work Programme
Report of:	Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison
Cabinet Member Portfolios:	Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development.
Report Author and Contact Details:	Francis Dwan fdwan@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1. This report asks the Committee to discuss topics for the 2023/2024 work programme. The proposals set out in Appendix 2 have been developed in consultation with Members, senior officers and members of the Executive (Cabinet) on their plans for the year ahead to ensure scrutiny is focused on those areas where it may have most impact.

2. Meeting Dates for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year

- 2.1 The Committee is advised that the next scheduled meeting dates for the 2023/2024 year are:
 - 26 September 2023;
 - 12 December 2023;
 - 04 March 2024; and
 - 02 May 2024.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Policy and Scrutiny team has been supporting the Chair and Committee Members to consider the work programme for the next municipal year. The process for this included; consultation with the Cabinet Members, consultation with Executive Directors and relevant Heads of Service, following up on previous items and commitments from previous meetings, consideration of forward plans in the Cabinet Portfolios and challenges identified across the Directorates.
- 3.2 The aim of this process has been to culminate in a work programme which:
- Focuses on what is important;
 - Focuses on areas where performance might be improved;
 - Focuses on services which are important to residents;
 - Focuses on where scrutiny can make a difference and add value;
 - Proactively feeds into policy development by contributing to pre-tender considerations or strategy development for example; and
 - Uses the insight of backbench Members to act as critical friend to services of the City Council and our partners thereby enabling good governance and excellent services.

4. Work Programme for 2023/24

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to consider the work programme for the municipal year, 2023/2024, set out in Appendix 2. The Committee is requested to discuss the proposed topics listed as well as provide comments and suggestions.
- 4.2 When considering the work programme, and agreeing an overall programme of scrutiny activity, the Committee should have regard to whether the work programme is achievable in terms of both Officer and Member time, taking into account that the Committee is scheduled to meet six times per year. Members are also reminded that it is advisable to hold some capacity in reserve for any urgent issues that might arise.
- 4.3 Each Committee has discretion to establish Task Groups to examine key issues in more detail and also to commission Single Member Studies. The Committee is asked to consider whether they would like to establish a Task Group or commission a Single Member Study. The Committee should be advised that both Members and Officers will only be able to successfully take part in and support a finite number of Task Groups at any one time.

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact Francis Dwan.

fdwan@westminster.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference
Appendix 2: Work Programme
Appendix 3: Action Tracker

FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMPOSITION

Seven (7) Members of the Council (four (4) Majority Party Members and three (3) Opposition Party Members).

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(a) To carry out the Policy and Scrutiny functions, as set out in Chapter 4 of the Constitution in respect of matters relating to all those duties within the terms of reference of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform.

(b) To carry out the Policy and Scrutiny function in respect of matters within the remit of the Council's non-executive Committees and Sub-Committees, which are within the broad remit of the Committee, in accordance with paragraphs 18.2 and 18.3 as well as section 19 of Chapter 4 of the Constitution.

(c) Matters, within the broad remit of the Cabinet Members referred to in (a) above which are the responsibility of external agencies.

(d) Any other matter allocated by the Westminster Scrutiny Commission.

(e) To have the power to establish ad hoc or Standing Sub-Committees as Task Groups to carry out the Scrutiny of functions within these terms of reference.

(f) To scrutinise the duties of the Lead Members which fall within the remit of the Committee or as otherwise allocated by the Westminster Scrutiny Commission.

(g) To scrutinise any Bi-borough proposals which impact on service areas that fall within the Committee's terms of reference

(h) To oversee any issues relating to Performance that fall within the Committee's terms of reference.

(i) To have the power to scrutinise those partner organisations that are relevant to the remit of the Committee.

(j) To consider any Councillor Calls for Action referred by a Ward Member to the Committee.

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Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24

ROUND 3 26th September 2023		
Agenda item	Purpose	Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Oxford Street Programme	To review the Oxford Street Programme and proposals for its future following publication of the business case and further information on the Programme's costs.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Bernie Flaherty, Deputy Chief Executive Westminster City Council
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

ROUND 4 12th December 2023		
Agenda item	Purpose	Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Lessons learnt from insourcing	To review lessons learnt from insourcing, using contact centres as a case study, twelve	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform

	months on from them being brought back in-house.	Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Economic Development Plan	To review proposals for the Economic Development Plan.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

ROUND 5 4th March 2024		
Agenda item	Purpose	Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Place-Shaping Schemes	To review place-shaping schemes of note in Westminster.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Planning Policy Changes and City Plan Review	To review proposed changes to planning policy and how this ties in with the City Plan review.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Pedro Wrobel, Executive Director of Innovation and Change Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

ROUND 6 2nd May 2024		
Agenda item	Purpose	Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Westminster Employment Services	To review the outputs of the Westminster employment services.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Corporate Property Portfolio	To receive a report on the Corporate Property Portfolio with regards either the operational estate or the commercial investment property portfolio.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

Unallocated Items

(N.B these will be considered as substitutes, should the situation merit it. They can also be used for consideration by the Committee, though other options not listed may also be presented or considered):

Westminster Works 2024	To review the Westminster Works Programme.
IT disaggregation	To review the ongoing process of disaggregation of IT services from shared-service and review the costs/savings realised.
Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD	To review planning obligations and the affordable housing SPD before the decision is taken in July 2023.
Council Tax Collection	To review the Westminster's rate of council tax collection, what efforts are in place to improve it and to support vulnerable residents.

Understanding major planning applications fall is being addressed – efficiency savings	To review the Council’s efforts in attracting appropriate infrastructure investment in the form of major planning applications following a lull in the volume of applications.
Preserving world heritage status	To review the Council’s efforts to sustain Westminster’s world heritage status.
Review of Westminster Investment Service	To review the Westminster Investment Service.
Evening and Night-Time Economy	To review the Council’s work on facilitating Westminster’s night-time economy whilst ensuring safety and respect to both visitors and residents.
Working with BIDs	To receive an overview of BIDs in Westminster. To better understand how they work, their processes and how the Council interacts with them. The Committee could receive a case-study of a joint working scheme with a BID, to review how the Council might work better with the BIDs.
London Living Wage and Third-Party Contracts	To review the progress made in implementing the Council becoming a Living Wage accredited organisation in respect of its employees and suppliers and the impacts arising from this.

Appendix 3 - ACTION TRACKER

Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

ROUND 6 4 th May 2023		
Agenda Item	Action	Status/Follow Up
Update from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development	The Cabinet Member, through his next Cabinet Member Update to provide additional information on the digital connection vouchers scheme for residents.	Included in July's CM Update
Update from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform	Committee to receive an update on: 1) Population survey statistics. Updates periodically on: 2) Insourcing. 3) Corporate Property portfolio. 4) IT disaggregation. 5) Council Reform. 6) Report It review.	Ongoing.

ROUND 1 7 th June 2023		
Agenda Item	Action	Status/Follow Up
Update from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform	Reducing barriers to SMEs, to provide examples of SMEs that have benefitted from the new opportunities arising from the Responsible Procurement Strategy and how it can help them to grow.	Response Provided by the relevant Officers to all Members.
Finance and Council Reform	Insourcing, the Cabinet Member to provide additional information on insourcing efforts and how successful efforts have been.	To be provided in CM Updates when relevant & a substantive paper planned for Committee in December 2023
Meanwhile Activations Programme	Members asked what market research is available in terms of high street visitors and specifically, whether the Council had any information about international footfall/visitor demographics in London High Streets (/Oxford Street specifically).	Response Provided by the relevant Officers to all Members.

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