

City Management and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Licensing

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1. Overview of Public Protection & Licensing

- 1.1 Since my last report to the committee, Sara Sutton has been appointed to the role of Executive Director of City Management and Communities. As a result of this move, Annette Acik has been appointed to the role of Director of Public Protection and Licensing on an interim basis.
- 1.2 Following on from my last update on the Effective Neighbourhood Working programme, we have had a successful second round of recruitment, welcoming 23 new starters in December and January. This will bolster our resourcing levels and allow for improved ward coverage and alignment by the Neighbourhood teams. This recruitment drive includes a number of City Inspectors. City Inspector numbers have consequently increased from 74 to 81 including new externally funded posts. A further phase of recruitment is imminent.
- 1.3 Following the feedback session with Councillors in December, it was agreed that Neighbourhood Managers will now be the primary point of contact for councillors. All ward councillors should have now have received the contact details for their Neighbourhood Managers and so have a single point of contact for any ward issues. This will ensure both easier communication between councillors and our teams, and greater management oversight of the teams' work.

- 1.4 We are in the process of reviewing our existing meeting structures and other communication methods to provide councillors with a consistent approach at a neighbourhood level. This will allow ward councillors to have a direct input into local priorities.

2. Fly Tipping and Waste Enforcement

- 2.1 There is currently a fly tip operation taking place across the North and South of the borough targeting the main waste dumping hotspots. City Inspectors are being tasked with taking enforcement action against those found to be dumping waste illegally in these areas. A review of the operation will take place after 4 weeks in order to make sure officers are being deployed efficiently and effectively. As this matter is cross-portfolio I have been meeting Cllr Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Environment and City Management regular to ensure we are acting as one on this matter.
- 2.2 Officers are currently developing a process for identifying and taking appropriate action against the various elements of fly-tipping to ensure City Inspectors are able to appropriately employ all the tools available to them in order to tackle the problem. We do, for example, monitor and respond to reports of rubbish dumping received by social media and our Effective Neighbourhood Working model ensure there is always someone, day and night and on weekends, on the streets to take action against dumping.
- 2.3 We were successful in our bid to the Local Government Association for £25,000 in match funding to test different approaches to changing the behaviour to prevent fly-tipping and improve recycling rate in our city.
- 2.4 A Waste Working Group has been formed, bringing together different teams of council officers in order to achieve the City for All vision of a 'City that offers excellent local services'. The group's membership is substantive – from communications to waste and from policy to parks and City Inspectors. This

team is helping to ensure that all parts of the council are working together as effectively as possible on this issue.

3. Night Safe Project (Soho Angels)

- 3.1 As part of the wider Night Safe Project a pilot of the Soho Angels and Soho Night Hub initiatives were operated on each of the Friday nights starting from the 30 November until the 21 December. These pilots saw the first operational deployment of volunteers (Soho Angels) around Soho between 10pm and 5am to support those who needed assistance or who were vulnerable due to intoxication. The Soho Night Hub, in St Anne's Church, provided a safe space for those who needed it. It enabled people to make arrangements to get home, charge their phone, meet up with people they had been separated from, get water or, if required, receive support to recover, including medical treatment if necessary.
- 3.2 On average there were 10 Soho Angel volunteers working each of the pilot nights, both on the street and within the Night Hub. The Soho Angels supported over 136 people on the street – the support provided ranged from providing information and directions, to supporting them to the Hub and further medical support. The Soho Night Hub had 60 visitors of whom 31 required medical support.
- 3.3 The Council has been working closely with St John Ambulance and London Ambulance Service to provide a level of medical support to enable a reduction in demand to both the London Ambulance Service and local A&E. St John Ambulance volunteers were fundamental in providing a significant level of medical support, which was necessary to reducing that demand. St John Ambulance provided 10 volunteers on each of the December pilot nights who worked within the Hub and provided a response team to assist the Soho Angel teams on the street. The volunteers included paramedics and a doctor enabling an enhanced level of care as and when required.

- 3.4 The on-street identification and support from the Soho Angels combined with the level of medical support provided by St John Ambulance, enabled people to be supported at the Night Hub, who would have likely otherwise required an ambulance. London Ambulance Service also discharged three intoxicated patients to the Soho Night Hub medical team. It is estimated that of the 31 who required medical support at the Night Hub 16 would have needed an ambulance if our service was not available. The project therefore helped to relieve the pressure on our emergency services at this busy time of year, and save a significant (we estimate £8,000) cost to the NHS.
- 3.5 An active recruitment campaign has been running since November 2018, which has led to over 154 requests for an application pack and 61 submitted applications to become Soho Angel volunteers. Officers are now working with the LGBT Foundation and our partners to set up the full operation of this service on Friday and Saturday nights from February.

4. Rough Sleeping: Street Count and Service update

November Street Count

- 4.1 A rough sleeping street count was conducted the night of 29 November into the morning of 30 November. The results of this count are due to be published by Central Government on the 31 of January as a significant part of the broader national picture.
- 4.2 Once again, the rough sleeping commissioning team were overwhelmed with offers of support; over 30 volunteers gave up their spare time (and a night's sleep) to support the process. The volunteers came from a range of backgrounds that included corporate volunteers, local councillors, sector partners and members of the public.
- 4.3 In the 8 weeks leading up to the November count, our outreach services were responsible for a total of 192 successful reconnections and housing outcomes,

an amazing achievement, given the complexity and vulnerability of the rough sleeping cohort.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

- 4.4 SWEP is the protocol agreed to by all London authorities to ensure that rough sleepers have a safe place to stay when temperatures reach 0 degrees Celsius. Delivered in partnership with our frontline services and local resource centres, our providers open spare office spaces, living rooms and dining areas to ensure that everyone has a warm and safe place to sleep.
- 4.5 The Greater London Authority (GLA) have changed their guidance for SWEP this year, which now opens emergency spaces for rough sleepers to come in from the street when temperatures drop to zero anywhere within London (previously this was bound to localised weather reports). We have had two separate activations so far this winter, with a total of 8 days provided.
- 4.6 These activations have been very successful, with our support services ensuring a significant number of SWEP placements have secured sustainable Routes Away From The Street (RAFTS).
- 4.7 We continue to prepare for a repeat of the extreme weather conditions experienced during last winter, with clearer referral pathways for community partners, identified roles and responsibilities amongst our commissioned services and local charities, and pre-identified emergency shelters via the Council's contingency planning team.

Tents, Anti-Social Behaviour and Soup Runs

- 4.8 We continue to be extremely worried about tents, with concerns they present a very clear and present risk to rough sleepers in Westminster, with many being used as waystations for substance misuse and as out of sight areas for the abuse and exploitation of vulnerable people.

- 4.9 Currently, 28 tents have been reported across the borough, 26 of these are on the public highway and are under investigation by the Integrated Street Engagement Unit. 15 of these tents have been issued with Section 149 High Act Notices for removal. All tents reports have been referred to rough sleeping service who visit sites regularly and do their best to provide assistance.
- 4.10 With services often being unable to enter tents to check on occupants, investigate reports of rough sleeping or address anti-social behaviour (ASB) concerns, the risks posed by these temporary structures cannot be overstated.
- 4.11 We have reason to believe the recent influx of tents and other camping equipment in Westminster is primarily due to newer crowd sourced social enterprise models. While those supplying tents no doubt have good intentions, their actions can hinder efforts to help rough sleepers find a sustainable route off the streets.
- 4.12 In response to this trend, the Westminster Rough Sleeping Team are championing a resurgent focus on working with “soup runs” to ensure our missions and goals are more aligned. Specifically that we have routes away from the street for every single person in Westminster and that services and partners should be aligned in delivering outcomes that minimise the time a person spends on the street.
- 4.13 In addition to this work, we will be exploring greater levels of joint working with local faith groups, attendance at the national soup run forum and learning exchanges with councils outside of Westminster.

5.0 Hate Crime

- 5.1 I continue to promote my commitment to leading the UK’s first Local Authority Hate Crime Commission through social media and public speaking events.
- 5.2 My ambition is to have the Commission in place over the coming months, and to help deliver this I have appointed a dedicated Hate Crime Commission Lead

Officer. This post will support the requirements of the Commission, drive forward our Hate Crime agenda and Strategy as it develops, and provide that key missing engagement link for our community, Council Officers, and Members.

6. Gambling Policy

6.1 The Council adopted a revised Gambling Statement of Principles at Full Council on the 7 November 2018. The revised statement came into force on the 31 January 2019. This completed the first phase of the process in meeting the councils City for All commitment of consulting on a new gambling policy.

6.2 Officers are now in the process of developing a consultation document setting out proposals and a call for evidence in supporting a development of a new gambling Statement of Principles that provides greater protections for children and those who are vulnerable to gambling related harm.

6.3 This public consultation will also enable an opportunity to seek views on gambling practices or operation, which are not regulated by the Council, such as gambling advertising, online gambling and gaming machines stakes and prizes. We are aware that there is significant concern about these forms of gambling from local residents and businesses and any responses relating to these areas will further support the Council's lobbying with both the national regulator and government to address these concerns.

7.0 Street Entertainment

7.1 The differences in stakeholder views on how a local authority should manage performers, alongside our reputation and position here in Westminster as the cultural hub of street entertainment nationally and internationally, make the development of the pilot Street Entertainment Policy in Oxford Street, Leicester Square and Trafalgar Square, a high profile policy which is being watched closely by many.

7.2 To ensure we arrive at the fairest solution - that successfully protects our businesses and residents from increasing nuisance as per our City for All commitment, whilst ensuring our streets remain vibrant and open to artistic talents, I deemed that a thorough engagement process was essential.

7.3 Since the end of September 2018 the Council's teams have provided the opportunity for the community and stakeholders to engage with us in many different ways, including,

- **A number of meetings and correspondence with Street Performers, Residents and BIDs:** to understand their position and what they would want to see in any street entertainment policy.
- **Street Entertainment Collaborative Workshops:** in an innovative practice, we chose to bring all the stakeholders together on a number of occasions to offer them the opportunity to listen and understand each other's perspectives and to try and arrive at collaborative solutions.

7.4 Engagement has now concluded and officers are currently reviewing the ideas and outcomes, and are bringing together resources from across the Council to begin designing the policy and operational implementation.

7.5 I will ensure that officers, in continued liaison with stakeholders and Members, take a balanced approach to the draft policy design to secure a better environment for everyone – including considering the development of different approaches in different areas.

7.6 A draft of the Street Entertainment Policy is anticipated in Spring 2019 and will undergo a public consultation.

8. Policing

8.1 In recent months I have received several representations from colleagues concerned about the effectiveness of community and neighbourhood policing in

their areas. The Leader and I have voiced concerns to the police about our residents' perception that there is a 'walk-on by' culture when it comes to low level anti-social or criminal behaviour. In order to ensure our communities' voices are heard we have invited key stakeholders to write to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police to share experiences in their areas.

8.2 We also remain highly concerned about the proposals to significantly cut the number of neighbourhood police in Westminster as part of the merger of Basic Command Units. Crime is rising significantly faster in Westminster than elsewhere in the capital and the hotspots of the West End and St James's wards account for 4.1% of all of London's crime; now is not the time to be cutting policing resources in our city.

8.3 Earlier this year I chaired a meeting with Cllr Acton, Cllr Hug, Westminster's MPs, senior officers and the police to better coordinate our response to the recent increase in youth violence in the north of the city. We have several collaborate efforts in this area, not least the Integrated Gangs Unit, under Cllr Acton and the Serious Youth Violence Task Group. This was a productive meeting and we will continue to work closely with the police on this issue.

9. Short Term Lets

9.1 We remain highly concerned about the extent and nature of Short Term Lets in Westminster. Based on data from Inside Airbnb we understand there are over 8,000 listings on Airbnb in Westminster and many of these appear to be flaunting the 90-day limit for short term lets. We know the various impacts irresponsible Short Term Letting has on neighbouring properties and local communities and receive on average 650 complaints a month on this issue. We are undertaking a variety of work to help us better identify and take action against those irresponsible short-term landlords, including via the establishment of a specific officer team to investigate specific properties about which we receive complaints.

9.2 In the coming months we will be organising meetings with the Great Estates and the industry body: the Short Term Accommodation Association, to see how we best work together on these issues. We will also be updating the information we provide to residents to ensure they know the best way to report and resolve any issues they experience in the area.

10. Moped Enabled Crime

10.1 The scourge of moped-enabled crime has affected the community in Westminster for a number of years. The police have reported that following the introduction of Operation Venice to combat this cross-borough crime concern there has been a reduction of 38.8% (8,355 less offences) during January – November 2018 compared to the same period last year. Due to this success the MPS has decided to continue to resource Operation Venice for the next 24 months which will benefit our city.

11. Markets Strategy Consultation and Fee Review

11.1 On 28 November the Licensing Committee were presented with the results from the market strategy public consultation exercise, which took place from 6 August to 29 October 2018. This consultation included a statutory consultation to review the fees and charges associated with a pitch on a market in Westminster, providing a range of fee options to consider and opportunity for additional comments. As part of the consultation a range of engagement with traders was undertaken, including drop-in sessions, face-to face consultation, and street/on-line surveys. Ninety three traders took part with response rates across markets ranging from 31 to 100%.

11.2 The committee approved all the presented proposals. These included:

- The development of a comprehensive strategy including local plans tailored for each market, to be brought to the Committee scheduled for the 26th March 2019

- A revised set of fees and charges for street trading within markets in Westminster, which include concessions on the fee for charitable and community organisations, those running a start-up business and Westminster Residents

11.3 All licensed traders were notified of the decision of the Licensing Committee in January. The implementation date for the new fees and charges is 1 April 2019.

12. Prevent

12.1 Following on from the Prevent Peer Review in October 2018, the Council has received a copy of final report. Key findings of the review included:

- The Council has a strong approach to Prevent with highly skilled professionals demonstrating genuine leadership and excellence in delivery
- There is real energy and ambition across the team, but needs to have a focus on outcomes
- Tri-borough governance arrangements should be replaced with a Westminster-focused model

12.2 The report included 31 recommendations covering the full range of Prevent activity, of these only one was rejected because it was not applicable to current Council structures.

12.3 Work started on implementing aspects of the recommendations in November and now the full report has been received, an implementation plan is in place to deliver all of the required improvements by the end of 2019.

13. Emergency Planning

- 13.1 An update was provided to the Scrutiny Commission in relation to emergency preparedness, including awareness raising activity and an update on key work programmes.
- 13.2 Following that, a request was received for briefings and training to be made available to elected members. As a result, a guide to emergency planning for elected members has been circulated and discussions are underway to provide suitable training and briefings for elected members.

14. Shisha Premises

- 14.1 Since late December 2018, Trading Standards have visited over twenty shisha premises as part of their focused enforcement of the Tobacco Labelling Regulations. This work will continue in the next few weeks.
- 14.2 All premises visited have been provided with extensive guidance about the legislation applicable to tobacco products and herbal products for smoking, labels for them to attach to the shisha pipes, instructions for use, and further copies of labels to use should they be required. All premises were also urged to ensure that they made themselves aware of the law applicable to their own premises to ensure that products they were using in their shisha pipes met legal requirements.
- 14.3 During more recent visits, it was observed that the vast majority of premises visited previously are now displaying labels on their pipes.
- 14.4 Further visits will continue to take place throughout Westminster to ensure that all premises selling in this particular manner are advised fully of what is expected of them from a Trading Standards perspective, and any follow up enforcement action will be taken.