

CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the virtual Meeting of the Council of the City of Westminster held at 7.00 pm on
Wednesday 16th September, 2020

PRESENT

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Jonathan Glanz

COUNCILLORS

Heather Acton	David Harvey
Ian Adams	Elizabeth Hitchcock
Nickie Aiken	Adam Hug
Barbara Arzymanow	Louise Hyams
Timothy Barnes	Aicha Less
Geoff Barraclough	Pancho Lewis
Richard Beddoe	Andrea Mann
Rita Begum	Patricia McAllister
David Boothroyd	Guthrie McKie
Iain Bott	Tim Mitchell
Margot Bright	Gotz Mohindra
Susie Burbridge	Eoghain Murphy
Ruth Bush	Matt Noble
Nafsika Butler-Thalassis	Emily Payne
Melvyn Caplan	Papya Qureshi
Maggie Carman	Robert Rigby
Danny Chalkley	Rachael Robathan
Antonia Cox	Tim Roca
Lorraine Dean	Ian Rowley
Tony Devenish	Karen Scarborough
Paul Dimoldenberg	Mark Shearer
Richard Elcho	Selina Short
Christabel Flight	Andrew Smith
Peter Freeman	James Spencer
Murad Gassanly	Paul Swaddle, OBE
Jonathan Glanz	Shamim Talukder
Jim Glen	Hamza Taouzzale
Matthew Green	Judith Warner
Lindsey Hall	Jacqui Wilkinson
Angela Harvey	

1 APPOINTMENT OF RELIEF CHAIRMAN

- 1.1 It was moved by the Lord Mayor and seconded by Councillor Paul Swaddle that Councillor Ian Adams be elected as Relief Chairman.

1.2 Motion put, and on a show of hands, declared **CARRIED**.

2 MINUTES

2.1 **RESOLVED:** The minutes of the proceedings at the Council meeting on Wednesday 24 June 2020 were, with the assent of the Members present, signed by the Lord Mayor as a true record of the proceedings.

3 LORD MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Lord Mayor referred to these as set out on the agenda.

4 STATEMENT ON URGENT MATTERS

5.1 The Leader of the Council, Councillor Rachael Robathan, made an urgent statement and the Council's response to it.

5.2 After Councillor Robathan had spoken the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Adam Hug, replied.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

5.1 Councillor Boothroyd made a declaration in respect of Item 13 that he is the Head of Research and Psephology for Thorncliffe, whose clients were companies applying for planning permission from various local authorities. No current schemes are in Westminster; if there were he would be precluded from working on them under the company's code of conduct.

6 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS, IF ANY

6.1 Councillor Aicha Less presented a petition on behalf of the Church Street market traders calling on the Council to reconsider the increase in street trading charges during the pandemic. The petition will be referred to the relevant Executive Director who will submit a report for decision on the subject of the petition to the relevant Cabinet Member.

6.2 There were no deputations.

7 QUESTIONS

7.1 The questions, supplementary questions and replies are included as a recording on the Council's website.

8 COUNCILLOR ISSUES

Coronavirus

8.1 Councillor Iain Bott spoke and Councillor Tim Mitchell replied.

The Demise of Council Housing in Westminster

Councillor Guthrie McKie spoke and Councillor David Harvey replied.

10 BI-ANNUAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE REPORT: 10 MARCH 2020

10.1 That the full council noted the report.

11 CHANGE TO THE PROGRAMME OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2020-2021

11.1 RESOLVED:

That the council agreed to the following changes to the Programme of council meetings for 2020-2021:

- (i) That the extraordinary meeting (Budget) programmed to be held on Wednesday 11 November 2020 now be held as an ordinary council meeting for the reasons set out in paragraph 3.3 below and
- (ii) That the meeting on the 3 March 2021 be amended to an extraordinary meeting to receive the Leader's Speech and consider budget proposals for 2021/2022.

12 CHANGES TO THE SIZES OF THE PLANNING AND CITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

12.1 RESOLVED:

That the council agreed to amend the size of the Planning and City Development Committee from 14 members to 15 members from the 1 October 2020.

13 NOTICES OF MOTION

13.1 The Conservative Party had selected for debate the Notice of Motion (Enable more of the West End to fully to re-open) as set out on the agenda. The Notice of Motion was moved by Councillor Rachael Robathan and seconded by Councillor Melvyn Caplan.

13.2 Councillor Pancho Lewis moved and it was seconded by Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg that the Notice of Motion be amended, as follows:

Amended motion

"This council notes the need for decisive action to enable more of the West End to fully re-open.

This council welcomes the significant support that businesses in Westminster have received from the Government.

This council further notes that the Westminster economy is the key driver for the London and UK economies and therefore requires even greater support so that Westminster businesses can drive the recovery of the UK economy.

This council believes that the Government should provide increased clarity about people returning to work including improving the messaging around social distancing and providing better access to testing.

The council looks to the Government and other public bodies to lead by example in showing when it is safe for their staff to return to their offices, recognising that situations will differ by organisation, office type and for different staff members.

This council believes that the Mayor should look at offering Congestion Charge exemptions for certain low pollution private vehicles that are visiting key sectors such as theatres and that the Government should look at amending Section H of its bailout terms for TFL and provide additional funding to facilitate such exemptions to be provided.

This council believes that 'building back better' means that, while strongly supporting measures to build confidence and help people return to the West End, things will not be the same as before the crisis. The council will need to effectively manage the change to put tackling the climate crisis, creating living streets and low-traffic neighbourhoods at the heart of a new vision for the West End.

This council resolves to continue to lobby the Government to extend the business rates holiday beyond March 2021, to extend the furlough flexibly for certain sectors (such as the hospitality trade) and to review the rateable value cap for certain businesses in Westminster that have not previously had access to Government grants and it will continue to lobby for reform of the taxation of online retailers to create a more level playing field with West End retail. It will lobby for a better financial settlement from Government that will enable it to protect and enhance services that manage our City and to help Westminster provide greater flexibility over Council rents and market pitch fees.

This council further resolves to seek further support from the Mayor and Government for the council's initiatives to provide increased space for pedestrians and for al fresco dining hospitality initiatives and for Westminster's promotional campaigns Sight See Crowd Free and Inside Out. It will back further initiatives to support Westminster's culture sector, including new spaces for outdoor performance in appropriate places and support for high quality popups in empty units and other initiatives to make the West End even more attractive to visit at this time.

This council also resolves to seek more flexibility around the statutory review of licensing policy to help support those businesses that would otherwise be affected by changes that do not take into the position of these businesses since lockdown.

This council resolves to take a review of the City Plan so that post-inspection the council can look at ways policy may need to evolve further to respond to the long-term impacts of the changes created by Covid-19 both for the West End and the City as a whole, including secondary retail areas.”

13.3 Following debate, The Lord Mayor put the amendment to the motion to the vote and following an electronic poll declared the amendment to the motion **LOST**.

13.4 The Lord Mayor then put the substantive motion to the vote and following an electronic poll declared the substantive motion **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

This council notes the need for decisive action to enable more of the West End to fully re-open.

This council welcomes the significant support that businesses in Westminster have received from the Government. This council further notes that the Westminster economy is the key driver for the London and UK economies and therefore requires even greater support so that Westminster businesses can drive the recovery of the UK economy.

This council believes that the Government should provide increased clarity about people returning to work including improving the messaging around social distancing.

The council looks to the government and other public bodies to lead by example in showing that it is safe for their staff to return to their offices.

This council believes that the Mayor should look at offering Congestion Charge exemptions for certain low pollution private vehicles that are visiting key sectors such as theatres.

This council resolves to continue to lobby the Government to extend the business rates holiday beyond March 2021 and to review the rateable value cap for certain businesses in Westminster that have not previously had access to Government grants.

This council further resolves to seek further support from the Mayor and Government for the council's initiatives to provide increased space for pedestrians and for al fresco dining hospitality initiatives and for Westminster's promotional campaigns Sight See Crowd Free and Inside Out.

This council also resolves to seek more flexibility around the statutory review of licensing policy to help support those businesses that would otherwise be affected by changes that do not take into the position of these businesses since lockdown.

- 13.5 The Minority Party had selected for debate the Notice of Motion (Planning White Paper) as set out on the agenda. The Notice of Motion was moved by Councillor Geoff Barraclough and seconded by Councillor Matt Noble.
- 13.6 Councillor Matthew Green moved and it was seconded by Councillor Robert Rigby that the Notice of Motion be amended, as follows:

Amendment to Motion

“The Council notes the deep concern about the Government’s ‘Planning for the Future’ White Paper expressed by local residents and the widespread opposition to the plans from groups as diverse as Shelter and the Westminster Property Association.

The Council notes that the White Paper makes ~~no explicit~~ insufficient mention of any role for elected councillors, local amenity societies, neighbourhood forums or other residents groups.

~~Where The Council notes separate Government changes to the Permitted Development rules on office-to-residential conversion is appropriate and can bring benefits, the Council supports a that can take place without planning permission or any requirement to contribute contribution towards local infrastructure or and affordable housing. It also notes Government. The Council supports proposals that new the draft City Plan’s commitment to ensuring that developments of under over 1 50 units provide a minimum of 35% of the total residential units as should not have to make any contribution to affordable housing at all on site.~~

~~The Council also notes the supports proposed revisions to Westminster’s annual housing target that are ambitious, while remembering but they must be realistic and feasible could see it rise five fold, leading to badly planned homes with poor living conditions.~~

~~The Council believes that an effective planning system needs to work to provide homes and workplaces to serve society, shaped by the priorities of local residents, and that at present the will work with Government and partners to White Paper does not achieve deliver these goals.~~

~~The Council believes that as currently drafted, the “Planning for the Future” proposals would significantly reduce supports local people’s opportunity to have their say on new developments in Westminster, with no recognition of including amenity issues such as light overshadowing, noise nuisance and sense of enclosure.~~

~~The Council believes that these planning changes could drastically reduce the ability of local authorities to supports the building of the social and affordable homes for rent rent that we need while massively increasing the number of private units and the risk of poor quality conversions.~~

~~The Council resolves to explicitly and publicly oppose the permitted development changes, the proposed new house building targets and the does not support supports proposals in the Planning for the Future document a planning system that would reduce encourages the say of local people, remove fosters the decision making role of elected councillors and undermine secures obligations for developers to support affordable housing delivery.~~

~~The Council resolves to lobby the Government, make statements to the media, collaborate with London Councils and the Local Government Association on a cross party basis, and take all other appropriate steps to demand the Government change course with residents to ensure that the planning process continues to meet their needs.~~

~~The Council resolves to demand that if the Government goes ahead with its White Paper plans, it allows local authorities like Westminster to set any new supports a planning system in which "infrastructure levy" levies at levels that can fully respond to local needs."~~

13.7 Following debate, The Lord Mayor put the amendment to the motion to the vote and following an electronic poll declared the amendment to the motion **CARRIED**.

13.8 In the absence of any objections from the Members present, The Lord Mayor declared the substantive motion **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

"The Council notes the deep concern about the Government's 'Planning for the Future' White Paper expressed by local residents and the widespread opposition to the plans from groups as diverse as Shelter and the Westminster Property Association.

The Council notes that the White Paper makes insufficient mention of any role for elected councillors, local amenity societies, neighbourhood forums or other residents groups.

Where office-to-residential conversion is appropriate and can bring benefits, the Council supports a contribution towards local infrastructure and affordable housing. The Council supports the draft City Plan's commitment to ensuring that developments of over 10 units provide a minimum of 35% of the total residential units as affordable housing on site.

The Council supports revisions to Westminster's annual housing target that are ambitious, but they must be realistic and feasible.

The Council believes that an effective planning system needs to work to provide homes and workplaces to serve society, shaped by the priorities of local residents, and will work with Government and partners to deliver these goals.

The Council supports local people’s opportunity to have their say on new developments in Westminster, including amenity issues such as light overshadowing, noise nuisance and sense of enclosure.

The Council supports the building of social and affordable homes for rent.

The Council supports a planning system that encourages the say of local people, fosters the decision making role of elected councillors and secures obligations for developers to support affordable housing delivery.

The Council resolves to collaborate with residents to ensure that the planning process continues to meet their needs.

The Council supports a planning system in which “infrastructure” levies’ fully respond to local needs.”

The Meeting ended at 10.02 pm

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____