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Portfolio: Business, Licensing and Planning
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1 Business and Enterprise

West End Recovery

- 1.1 Work has commenced on the economic recovery of the West End, as part of the City for All ambitions to revitalise and restore economic opportunity and prosperity in the West End, following the COVID-19 Pandemic. Through collaboration with major partners, such as London and Partners (L&P) and local Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), a number of projects have started to be scoped to feed into this wider ambition.

West End Pop-up Project

As part of the recovery ambition, work has begun to identify vacant units in key shopping and tourist districts of the borough to foster exciting opportunities for businesses to host "Pop-ups."

- 1.2 Introductory meetings with Westminster's BIDs have been held to ensure that our approach is aligned to each BIDs' vision, existing frameworks and future schemes. Based on these discussions, we have started to work on the development of context responsive activation concepts that will enable the creation of differentiated approaches for each area. Our aim is to provide each BID with a targeted series of Pop-up proposals that address each area as a whole and captures its character and unique qualities. We have worked closely with HOLBA and have developed activation concepts that align with their Art of London and Cultural strategies.
- 1.3 We are working with the BIDs and stakeholders including The Crown Estate to identify the units that are suitable for pop-up activity. NWECC have conducted a voids audit which they are continually reviewing and discussing options with property owners to identify the sites that can be earmarked for pop-up uses. Marble Arch and Paddington BIDs have already identified eight vacant premises that subject to property owner agreement can be activated with pop-up ventures. HOLBA are working on a void analysis to identify suitable premises which will help us to determine the activation concept that will fit best

based on each premise's location, size, and use class.

- 1.4** Our approach and the timing of implementation will need to be incredibly flexible as the extent to which we can implement pop-up activity will be wholly directed by the path of the pandemic and associated lockdown/Tier arrangements in place at any given time. A somewhat steady state needs to be reached to give pop-up occupiers the best chance of success. As such, we are currently working to a revised end of April/beginning of May target date.

Westminster Investment Service

- 1.5** A key priority as part of the recovery ambition is to encourage new investors, both internationally and domestically, to choose Westminster as a home for their business, paying particular attention to businesses who may have previously not considered Westminster as an option. The second strand of this programme will focus on Westminster's indigenous businesses, with the aim to provide wrap around support and tailored expertise to keep their businesses viable during this period of uncertainty. A 'Concierge Service' for new investors and already established businesses will feed into this provision of support.
- 1.6** A timeline for priorities and delivery between January to March 2021 has been scoped, outlining the early priorities to be delivered. Work is underway with each BID to identify key collateral and messaging to feed into the overall Post-COVID West End Vision and investment proposition, with a series of neighbourhood and district profiles, characterising the individual assets of each locale.
- 1.7** Following the Lord Mayor's confirmed interest in supporting this programme, discussions have taken place with the Lord Mayor's office to identify a number of forthcoming and annual civic engagements which will offer opportunities to promote the new investment service. This includes events and meetings with London's Embassy network. A plan identifying these opportunities and proposed timelines is now in preparation.
- 1.8** *The Westminster 100* will identify and pro-actively engage with Westminster's most strategically significant employers, ensuring a two-way relationship of intelligence sharing and support. Following a team workshop on the Westminster 100 on 15 January, wider internal consultation will take place on the draft list. Protocols and CRM arrangements, including the initial outreach to the Westminster 100, are in development. This will include consultation with the Cabinet Member and WCC Senior Leaders to encapsulate existing relationships and strategic management of the most significant companies.
- 1.9** A workshop has been held with London & Partners specifically on the West End Future Occupiers Programme while offering an opportunity to discuss the overall input of the Westminster Investment Service to the ongoing work of London & Partners' inward investment function. This has identified the roles and responsibilities of WCC and London and Partners from a programming and investor perspective, including how these roles dovetail to the BIDs and landowners as key partners. Roles and responsibilities have been mapped diagrammatically across the 6 phases of the Investor Journey as follows: pre-journey, live enquiry, pitch, location, settle and growth to show each partner's added value to investor requirements.

Westminster Animation Strategy

- 1.10** We will also be leading a process to pull together an animation strategy – with a strong focus on delivery – for the next two years for the West End. This will build upon work already

carried out by HOLBA and is strongly supported by HOLBA and NWEA. The purpose will be to situate well known events in a broader canvas of eye-catching and surprising opportunities that position the West End as an imaginative, world leading and adaptive city centre.

- 1.11** Our planned arts festival, *Inside Out*, will also go ahead this year, following postponement in 2020, providing visitors the unique opportunity to sample our cultural institutions. Government COVID-19 restrictions permitting, the festival include a light display, outdoor performances and an outdoor gallery.

Employment Opportunities

Kickstart

- 1.12** This is a joint initiative led by the Business & Enterprise Service and Westminster Employment Service. On 30 December 2020 we were notified our Kickstart funding bid has been approved by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for the City Council to become a Kickstart employer, we are also listed as an official gateway to act as an intermediary for SMEs wishing to participate in Kickstart but unable to commit to the required 30 jobs to hold a direct grant agreement with DWP.
- 1.13** Westminster City Council (WCC) will lead by example in creating an initial minimum of 30 high quality, London Living Wage Kickstart jobs for 16-24-year-old residents in receipt of Universal Credit, within WCC. It is anticipated that interest in this programme and the ambition of the City Council will be to grow the number of Kickstart job opportunities with the City Council substantially. We hope to work with the Council's supply chain, partners, developers and SME and Micro businesses in the local business community to encourage them to create Kickstart jobs within their own organisations as part of our intermediate employer partnership.
- 1.14** Our Kickstart offer will contribute to the council's ambition to increase the proportion of Westminster residents amongst our workforce by working with DWP to ringfence our Kickstart opportunities to eligible Westminster residents. We will also ensure it reflects the council's commitment to building an inclusive culture and increasing the diversity of our workforce by working with DWP to ensure roles are designed and recruited to through inclusive recruitment practice and the achievement of diverse and inclusive shortlists of candidates suitably supported and prepared to apply for these opportunities. Furthermore, we will set diversity and inclusion targets for the programme which WCC and DWP will develop a partnership approach to meeting.

Westminster Employment Service

- 1.15** The team's current focus is working with the NHS to support recruitment of over 220 roles to support the mass vaccination programme in Westminster and RBKC. The testing sites will be in Edgware Road, Marble Arch (Westminster) and Exhibition Road (RBKC). The Westminster hubs are scheduled to open on the 1 February 2021.
- 1.16** All roles are paid at rates above the London Living Wage and are for varied shift patterns - part time and full-time roles are available. To date we have received over 500 applications which the whole WES team is assessing for the NHS. Suitable candidates will be screened and uploaded on to the NHS system by 22 January and notified by the NHS if successful.
- 1.17** Other emergency response roles and recruitment which WES is supporting is for Mass Testing Roles (above London Living Wage). The team has supported 39 residents into roles to date, including 13 long-term unemployed. Currently, the majority of onsite staff

in symptom-free testing centres are Westminster residents, with some volunteers and WCC Public Protection and Licensing staff supporting.

- 1.18** One of the residents who had been out of work for 8 years said, “Thank you for selecting me for the test processor job. I found the job interview process was fairly easy and I was selected for the position quickly. As I haven’t been working for a while I was very excited to start the job. so far it’s been great helping the community and I am enjoying it very much.”
- 1.19** Through the roles with the NHS and profiled outcomes for residents, the Service anticipates achieving our job target for the year which is to support 350 residents into employment.

Westminster Wheels

- 1.20** In December, four trainee mechanics completed their first period of work and City and Guilds qualifications. All of the team are 18 and 23 and from Westminster – two participants are BAME; one participant is a care leaver; two have complex family backgrounds, one participant has a learning disability. All trainees have been loaned a bike and provided with cycle safety training. As further suitable donations come in, they will refurbish their own bike to keep.
- 1.21** The 5th member of the Wheels team – our courier - is placed in the North Paddington Foodbank. He is supporting in their warehouse. We are using the newly purchased electric cargo bike to deliver food to low income families whilst helping the foodbank to avoid congestion charging, rental fees for vans and reduced carbon emissions.
- 1.22** With a team now in place, our target is to refurbish and donate 120 bikes in the next quarter. We are developing donation criteria with existing “hardship” programmes within Westminster to ensure our process is fair and transparent. We will be focused on criteria that promote: cycling participation in under- represented groups; cycling for health; for commuting to training and employment. The latter will be the immediate focus during lock down, to enable people to commute without use of public transport
- 1.23** In response to a review of our 1st cohort recruitment and the current lock down, we have revised the process for the next spring cohort with more online assessments (1-2-1), followed by practical assessment in late February. 6 people will be selected for the City & Guilds training running from the 8 March to 29 March and employment opportunities with the team will start from the 30 March. We are continuing to prepare our site on Church Street, with electrical safety works completed. We anticipate that this new workshop and retail space will be fully open in mid-February.
- 1.24** In December, we reached out to local groups and the Church Street Community Champions within the Church Street area. Through this, we were able to donate 3 children’s bikes to the Marylebone Bangladeshi Society and an adult bike for use by one of the local community champions.

WAES

- 1.25** This year WAES launched a refreshed community learning programme that focussed on expanding its reach into communities, particularly those most impacted by COVID19. The delivery has the following target areas:
- Employability
 - Digital Skills

- Health and Wellbeing
- Literacy/Numeracy
- Creative and Arts
- ESOL

1.26 From October onwards, good progress had been made in re-engaging residents in these community-based programmes. However, the venue restrictions that were introduced in the latter part of 2020 and the current lockdown and has significantly impacted on the number of residents able to engage in learning. In term 1, we engaged with and delivered community learning to 431 residents, whilst this is positive for those that are engaging, this represents a reduction of 150 residents compared to the same period last year prior to Covid-19.

Accredited and employability programmes

1.27 The majority of our mainstream accredited programmes recruited strongly in September, with 90% of targets on programme in term 1. A key focus of our accredited programmes is to help residents to gain the skills required to support the rebuilding of the economy and gain access to employment opportunities in relevant sectors. A significant development this year has been the collaborative work that we have undertaken in partnership with the Westminster Employment Service and the Department for Work and Pensions. This has enabled us to deliver short intensive employability programmes for residents, with most of them securing employment at the end of their programme through the support received from the WES Employer Relationship Manager and the Employment coaches.

1.28 From 5 January 2021 all learning at WAES went back online in response to the lockdown and government guidance. WAES was better prepared and had already ensured that current learners had experience of online learning, so that it would be easy to make the transition. However, many of the learners studying at WAES have primary and secondary school aged children, who are now being home-schooled. This has impacted their attendance to their online lessons. In addition, some new learners that were due to start in January have not been able to join their programmes due to a lack of IT equipment.

1.29 The employability programmes that were due to start in January have been deferred to February as many of these are for learners who also have no IT skills or equipment. However, from those that attended our public sector course in October and November, eight have entered employment at the Mass vaccination centres and one person has started work with WCC. We will resume these programmes as soon as restrictions are eased.

1.30 WAES is taking an active in part in both the recruitment, induction and training of those that join the City Council's employment through the Kickstart scheme.

Apprenticeship Offer

1.31 WAES has a redefined apprenticeship offer, which is currently recruiting new apprentices this year. There are currently new cohorts starting the Librarianship Apprenticeship. In addition, new apprentices for the Outdoor Activity Leadership have been signed up with Sayers Croft. The first group of libraries apprentices are due to complete and finish in March and are all employed in the City Council libraries.

1.32 From our recent sector based work academy in November which had 8 residents training in construction, 3 of those have secured apprenticeships with Morgan Sindall. Others are working with WES on securing permanent employment.

2 Licensing

- 2.1 The portfolio has now widened to merge licensing with existing business and planning responsibilities to ensure that our major regulatory functions are able to respond agilely to the difficult circumstances many businesses in the city are facing.

Licensing Policy

- 2.2 The revised Statement of Licensing Policy, which was agreed by Full Council on the 9 December 2020, came into effect on the 7 January 2021. The revision to this policy was intended to implement the findings from the Council's Cumulative Impact Assessment, which has recently been published as well as provide a general update and minor improvements to the policy framework.
- 2.3 The Policy approach has generally remained unchanged. However, following the findings of the Cumulative Impact Assessment Queensway/Bayswater, Edgware Road and the area to the East of Covent Garden are no longer designated as Cumulative Impact Zones. The policy now only has one Cumulative Impact Zone in the West End. A new policy will now be applied to areas that were previously designated as Cumulative Impact Zones or have been identified with heightened levels of incident rates surrounding licensed premises. These areas have been designated as Special Consideration Zones and applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have taken into account the issues in the area and put forward mitigation to address them for their own premises. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality sector it is intended to undertake a further review of this policy within the next 12 to 18 months.
- 2.4 Over the next 6 months officers we will work on producing Supplementary Licensing Documents (SLD) that will further achieve the City for All milestones and sit alongside the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy. The SLD will provide greater clarity on the technical requirements to meet aspects of the policy, provide best practice examples or initiatives that can be employed by individuals or groups of businesses and set out enhanced businesses practices that the Council would like to see which cannot be imposed or enforced under the licensing regime, e.g. environmental practices. However, the SLD's will not implement further or amend existing policies within the Statement of Licensing Policy.

Street Entertainment

- 2.5 Following two years of engagement with stakeholders and the community and including two public consultations (where collectively c.1700 responses were received), the finalised Policy has been drafted. The policy includes:
- Our City wide code of conduct: which is a set of clear guidelines on what the council considers as responsible busking
 - The Busking and Street Entertainment Forum: which would become the direct avenue for our ongoing engagement with the busking community
 - Our support for Street Performers' Associations (SPAs): who can play a vital role in managing performance activities, as well as engagement with the wider busking community
 - Maps of the regulated area for licencing: across the centre of the City
 - 26 designated pitches: within the regulated areas
 - The Standard Licence conditions: and pitch terms and conditions
 - The Application process: including the procedure to vary the standard conditions
 - And our commitment to keeping the policy under close review: during and after the first full calendar year of implementation

- 2.6** Following approval at Full Council on 9 December 2020, the final consultation (a legal requirement) commenced on 10 December, where representations to be heard from stakeholders and statutory agencies who may wish to provide comment or object for operational reasons against the streets to be licensed under the scheme.

The Consultation is running until 31 January 2021. A report on the results will then be brought to the Cabinet Member for consideration on any amends

- 2.7** Following this, the report shall be heard by the March Full Council and they will decide whether to agree amendments and adopt the Policy. If this decision is made, the council must allow for a 28 day notice period before implementing the scheme. Implementation is therefore anticipated on 5 April 2021.

The impact of Covid-19

- 2.8** Busking and street entertainment has been significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with the necessary containment measures leading to the suspension of activities for many months. As social distancing rules are adapted based on current risk level, widespread uncertainty remains and footfall from those who work and visit our City remains lower than typically expected.

- 2.9** Whilst the Council considers not only the financial impact on the buskers and street entertainers who cannot recover loss in earnings, and the wider social impact on the art and culture industry as a whole, it however cannot be ignored that adverse impacts as a result of busking and street entertainment continue to persist. 505 complaints have been received since April 2020 lockdown and social distancing measures were introduced and continues to drive our need for control and regulation to ensure those who live and work here are protected from adverse impacts particularly as our City and economy begins to recover.

- 2.10** Irrespective of the Council's proposal to introduce a policy, buskers and street entertainers (as well as their crowds) must ensure they comply with the social distancing guidance set by government or risk police enforcement action under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

3 Planning

City Plan

- 3.1** Following the public hearings in October 2020, the Planning Inspectors concluded that the Plan can be found sound with proposed modifications. Public Consultation on the main modifications that the Inspectors consider necessary launched on 31 November 2020 and closed on 18 January 2021.

- 3.2** The Inspectors will consider the consultation responses and determine if further amendments to the plan are required. We expect to receive the Inspectors' final report in February 2021, closing the examination. Once the examination is closed, the Plan can start to be used to determine planning applications. The Plan will be formally adopted at the next Full Council.

Place Shaping

Future Victoria Master Plan

- 3.3** In October 2019, the Victoria Partnership, formed of Westminster City Council, Victoria Business Improvement District, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London and landowners, appointed a multi-disciplinary team tasked with delivering the 'Future Victoria' masterplan.
- 3.4** The core objective of this commission is to develop a concept level masterplan that ensures the challenges linked to the station area are considered as a whole and a framework can be agreed that guides future development. This commission will set out what future development within the opportunity area may look like and how additional benefits can be unlocked to respond to the three pillars of City for All. The projects key aims are:
- Make the station and interchange easier to use
 - Improve the quality of the streets and spaces around Victoria Station
 - Set out a framework which guides good growth so that it brings benefits to the area
 - Enhance perceptions of Victoria, making it a place that you want to go to
- 3.5** Work has progressed over the lockdown period to resolve some of the viability and technical challenges that this project presents; notably how improvements can be made to the transport and movement network, how the station and interchange can become more intuitive and where initiatives can be introduced to address the Climate Emergency. Work on these items are due to complete in March 2021.
- 3.6** At this point there will be a pause to allow the Victoria Partnership to consider how stakeholder engagement, that has been interrupted by Covid-19, can safely resume. This is essential to ensure that the ideas and proposals within the emerging masterplan are tested for alignment with local appetite and ambition.

Greening Victoria Street

- 3.7** The Place Shaping team are working alongside key stakeholders on the delivery of 'greening' across Victoria Street. There is political appetite to see improvements delivered at pace, working towards City for All objectives (in particular Cleaner and Greener) and Climate Emergency targets.
- 3.8** The Place Shaping team are in the process of appointing a consultancy team to develop a strategy for how greening across the area can be introduced whilst also developing initial 'quick-win' projects on key Victoria Street sites that are capable of immediate delivery; inspiring and kick-starting wider environmental improvement. WCC will be working with various stakeholders, from landowners to resident groups, to encourage outside investment and help facilitate greater ownership over aspects such as long-term maintenance. It is intended that a consultant will be appointed by February 2021 with initial greening projects delivered on key sites by May 2021.

Harrow Road Place Plan

- 3.9** The Place Shaping team are continuing to develop several projects emerging from the Harrow Road Place Plan. Of particular focus is the delivery of projects relating to our successful Good Growth Fund application; each of these projects are being pursued as they will directly respond to all three pillars of the City for All programme.
- 3.10** In early 2020 WCC secured £900,000 towards the delivery of Harrow Road Place Plan from the Greater London Authority's Good Growth Fund. This funding is being matched by WCC to provide a total project budget of £1.8m. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant delay to the original programme, but the team have now commenced a

procurement exercise that will see, an architect-led, consultant team appointed to the project by late March 2021.

- 3.11** To begin with, the consultant team will work alongside WCC and local stakeholders to draw together a wealth of existing work into a holistic and coherent masterplan. This will provide a clear framework for delivering improvement across the area and help coordinate input across council departments and amongst the community.
- 3.12** Once this strategic work is completed, the consultant team will be tasked with the detailed design and delivery of three key projects that have the potential to catalyse wider neighbourhood improvements. The first focuses on Maida Hill Market whilst the second and third sit at intersections of the Harrow Road, where the high street meets the Paddington arm of the Grand Union canal.
- 3.13** These projects will build on ambitions of key stakeholders including Queens Park Community Council and Paddington Development Trust and will take forward work that is already taking place on a vision for Maida Hill Market. This is being co-produced with local people and will be completed by the end of February 2020. The Place Plans governance structure will be reviewed as part of this process to ensure it is operating efficiently and inclusively.
- 3.14** There has been a delay to the WECH garden due to issues between WECH and its contractor, however we have been working hard to mitigate the delays. Whilst there is a time delay, the situation is not presenting WCC with any additional financial costs. We are liaising closely with WECH to understand how long the delay will be, but once the delay has been ended, the project will be 8 weeks away from completion.

Lillington and Longmore Community Centre Redesign

- 3.15** The objective of this project is to bring new life to the community centre, transforming it into a vibrant place that better meets the needs of the local area. This includes addressing key issues such as accessibility, letting in more natural light and natural ventilation, improving the offer to the community and contributing to wider wayfinding and sense of safety across the estate. The project has been heavily supported by ward councillors who have assisted the team in developing an estate-wide Community Survey to gain resident views and ideas to support the redesign. This insight has informed a brief that has been used to appoint an architect-led consultant team to develop the design alongside further engagement.
- 3.16** Design development and engagement will take place between January and March 2021. A planning application will be submitted in April 2021 and we are targeting Winter 2021 for starting on site with project completion in Spring 2022. Alongside the design work, the Place Shaping team will be working to identify and secure external funding to deliver the project on site.

Operational

- 3.17** The Town Planning department continues to function using digital tools during the ongoing period impacted by Coronavirus and this has allowed business to largely continue as usual in terms of assessing and determining applications. The latest national lockdown has necessitated a review of the site visit protocol and this now precludes visits in most circumstances until current restrictions are eased, at which time the protocol will be reassessed.
- 3.18** The impacts of Coronavirus are being taken into account when making planning decisions where these are a material planning consideration, for example when assessing proposals

that support entertainment uses, such as tables and chairs applications and physical alterations to buildings to allow businesses to operate in compliance with current restrictions.

3.19 Town Planning are continuing to work collaboratively the City Plan team to assist with the development of planning policy and guidance to support the forthcoming new City Plan.