



Date: Monday 22 March 2021
Portfolio: Business, Licensing and Planning

The Report Of: Councillor Matthew Green, Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning

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1 Summary

- 1.1 As per the new agreed Cabinet Member report structure, this update provides highlights on my City for All priorities, areas of current focus in the Business, Licensing and Planning Portfolio and pertinent performance information.

2 City for All – Business, Licensing and Planning Priorities

- 2.1 The council launched its refreshed City for All vision early in March, to ensure our strategy for improving the city now for future generations is responsive to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thriving Economy

West End Recovery- West End Pop-up Project

- 2.2 A delivery strategy and temporary occupiers' selection criteria is being developed for the Pop-up activation programme. A strategy for the second iteration of voids dressings is being developed in collaboration with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and the Oxford Street District team.

West End Recovery- Westminster Investment Service

- 2.3 We are currently developing an Investment Service Action Plan to encourage outward investment to Westminster, in collaboration with BIDs and Westminster Property Association. A West End specific offer to business is in consultation which will set the scene for future occupiers' campaign activity.

West End Recovery- Westminster Animation Strategy

- 2.4 Work is progressing well on an animation strategy to support the recovery of the West End, working alongside BIDs, Landowners and other external stakeholders, including London and Partners to curate a programme of temporary, cultural and artistic interventions to animate the local area.

Al fresco hospitality

- 2.5 On 23 February, we announced that al fresco schemes will be returning when restaurants, pubs and bars re-open in late Spring. These temporary measures will run until September 2021 as per the licensing conditions set out in the Business and Planning Act.

Kickstart

- 2.6 The council has generated an initial 30 internal Kickstart placements across a variety of departments. The opportunities will be live imminently with recruits anticipated to commence their placements at the end of March/early April. WCC has also successfully submitted its first gateway application to the Department of Work and Pensions, equating to 34 opportunities across 20 employers.

Westminster Wheels

- 2.7** Work is nearing completion at the Westminster Wheels workshop and community shop on Church Street and is scheduled to open for business in March. The team are continuing to work with local business partners to encourage bike donations, with the aim to have refurbished and donated 120 bikes by the end of March.

Vibrant Communities

Licensing Policy

- 2.8** The Licensing Policy came into effect on January. Over the next 6 months a Supplementary Licensing Document will be scoped to further support the City for All priorities and sit alongside the Statement of Licensing Policy.

Street Entertainment

- 2.9** Following approval at Full Council on 9 December 2020, a third, statutory consultation was launched, inviting representations to be made against the designation of any streets contained within the policy. At Full Council on 3 March, the final policy was approved and will come into effect on 5 April 2021.

City Plan

- 2.10** Due to delays in the adoption of the London Plan, the Planning Inspectorate have been delayed in issuing the final City Plan examination report. Adoption of the City Plan, originally scheduled for Full Council in March, will be postponed for a future meeting, later this Spring.

Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)

- 2.11** WAES is currently supporting 19-24 year-old unemployed residents through delivering Kickstart employability support for the WCC Kickstart programmes and have created 100 traineeship opportunities across a variety of sectors. Over Easter, the service will be running workshops for over 1,000 learners focusing on enterprise, employability and wellbeing.

Cleaner and Greener

Environmental Supplementary Planning Document (E-SPD)

- 2.12** The E-SPD is progressing well. In parallel to the E-SPD and in advance of its publication, we have produced an Environmental Technical Guidance note which provides a broader statement of Westminster's expectations of the built environment, to assist planning applicants to align their proposals with the Council's environmental and carbon reduction expectations.

3 Performance Update

Planning

- 3.1** The majority of planning applications are being determined without the need for site visits. Where applications have been delayed due to the need for a site visit, these cases will be prioritised once the current lockdown has ended.
- 3.2** The department currently has 2,590 planning applications that are valid and under consideration. 6,002 applications were received up to the end of January 2021, this compares to 7,816 and 8,360 in the two preceding years. Application numbers were falling on an annual basis for a number of years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of a variety of factors including the increases in the scope of development that can be carried out under permitted development rights and developer uncertainty caused by the period preceding Brexit at the end of 2021.
- 3.3** The Planning Enforcement Team currently have 2,718 live enforcement investigations.