



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

BUSINESS AND CHILDREN'S POLICY & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 FEBRUARY 2021 MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Business and Children's Policy & Scrutiny Committee** held virtually on 1 February 2021 at 6.30pm **on TEAMS**.

Members Present: Councillors Karen Scarborough (Chairman), Geoff Barraclough (Deputy Chairman), Richard Elcho, Christabel Flight, Lindsey Hall, Alesha Less, Eoghain Murphy and Tim Roca.

Co-opted Members: Maria Coleman.

Also present: Councillor Tim Barnes (Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning), Councillor Lorraine Dean (Deputy Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning), Councillor Mathew Green (Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning) and Councillor Robert Rigby (Deputy Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning).

Apologies: Ryan Nicol, Alix Ascough, Mark Hewitt and Wasim Butt

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

- 1.1 Nominations for the post of Chair were invited. One nomination was received and seconded for Councillor Karen Scarborough. One nomination was received and seconded for Councillor Geoff Barraclough. There were no further nominations.
- 1.2 The committee officer put both nomination to the vote. Councillor Karen Scarborough received five votes and Councillor Geoff Barraclough received three votes.
- 1.3 **RESOLVED:** That Councillor Karen Scarborough be appointed Chairman of the Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Geoff Barraclough be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

2. MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Timothy Barnes (Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning and Councillor Matthew Green (Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning) to the meeting.
- 2.2 The Chairman also welcomed Gill Fizhugh, Queen's Park Community Council, Jace Tyrrell, NWECC/Soho Forum Steering Group and Nicholas Bailey, Fitzwest Forum who took part on the discussion on Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Forums.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

- 4.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2020 be approved for signature by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

5. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: CABINET MEMBER BUSINESS, LICENSING AND PLANNING

- 5.1 The Committee received a written update from the Cabinet Member who responded to questions on the following topics:
 - the employment opportunities for young people through the Kickstart programme and the possibility of recruiting and training young people in bicycle repair, gardening and plumbing.
 - the important role that the Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) was playing in engaging communities hardest hit by COVID with their refreshed community learning programme.
 - the eligibility of businesses for business grants and the lobbying of government for the continuation of the business rates holiday until 2022.
 - the enforcement of the Busking and Street Entertainment Policy.
 - the change of use from commercial to residential use of premises.
 - the rapidly changing look of high streets with much of retail now online.
 - the recovery of the West End as part of the City for All ambition to revitalise and restore economic opportunity and prosperity in the West End.
- 5.2 **ACTIONS**
 1. That a briefing note be sent to members containing data on the number of:
 - i) new planning applications received in the last nine to twelve months compared to the number of applications received in the previous year

- ii) the number of planning applications that have not been determined
 - iii) the number of ongoing planning enforcement cases.
- The Committee requested that these figures be included in all future Cabinet Member Updates.

2. That details regarding the eligibility of businesses for business grants be sent to the Committee.
3. That details of the Westminster Investment Service be sent to the Committee.
4. That the Council's policy regarding gardening in tree pits be sent to the Committee.

6. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

6.1 The Committee received a written update from the Cabinet Member who responded to questions on the following topics:

- the successful delivery of laptops to children and young people who attended Westminster schools, which included those that are not Westminster residents, and the Council's partnership with the Young Westminster Foundation to support disadvantaged children to have better access to digital devices and stronger broadband connectivity.
- the continuation of free school meals being provided by weekly food parcels or through voucher schemes and that families eligible for free school meals would again receive free school meal vouchers during the February half term.
- the importance of teaching young people about nutrition and healthy eating.
- the continuation of falling school rolls in primary schools and the detailed analysis being carried out of school capacity and budgets in collaboration with all schools and the Catholic and Church of England Dioceses.

6.2 **ACTION:** That the Cabinet Member Update details the continuation of the falling roles in Westminster primary schools for the next meeting.

7. REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS IN DEVELOPING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS:

7.1 The Committee received a report providing an overview of how the Council proactively encourages designated forums to carry out planning activities. The Committee noted that it was the Council's 'duty to support' forums as set out in statutory requirements and this included two specific roles: taking decisions at key stages in the neighbourhood planning process; and providing advice and assistance to the neighbourhood forums preparing neighbourhood plans.

- 7.2 The Committee received a presentation 'A Guide to Neighbourhood Planning in Westminster' [LINK](#) and welcomed Gill Fitzhugh, Queen's Park Community Council, Jace Tyrrell, NWEC/Soho Forum Steering Group and Nicholas Bailey, FitzWest Forum who explained their journey in forming their neighbourhood forums. Nicholas, Gill and Jace further gave their views and responded to questions on the opportunities, benefits and difficulties of setting up a neighbourhood forum.
- 7.3 The key themes that emerged from the Committee discussion were:
- the need for a review meeting at the start of the process to signpost communities to key people and information such as climate/air quality, transport and affordable housing.
 - the importance of collaboration, good governance processes and consistent officer support within the Council.
 - the need for detailed information on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), funding opportunities, member training on CIL, and key meeting dates.
 - the importance of sending out the 'Guide to Neighbourhood Planning in Westminster' to all Neighbourhood Forums and making it accessible to all.
 - the need to improve communication between the businesses and forums and to engage and consult with businesses throughout the drafting of the neighbourhood plan and not just during the ballot process.
- 7.4 The Committee acknowledged all the dedicated work of the Neighbourhood Forum members and congratulated them on their commitment to their communities and local issues.
- 7.5 **RESOLVED:** The Committee concluded with the following comments, which would be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning:
1. The Committee commended the work that officers had undertaken to support neighbourhood forums and the proactive actions being taken by the Council in its neighbourhood planning responsibilities.
 2. The Committee emphasised the importance of having a collaborative and close working relationship between the Neighbourhood Forums and Council Services.
 3. The Committee encouraged the Council to continue evaluating the effectiveness of the Council's community engagement to enable further meaningful community involvement.
 4. The Committee requested that the Council provide detailed information on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to the neighbourhood forums as well as the information being accessible and promoted to all throughout Westminster.

8. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

8.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee review safeguarding and the education recovery of schools at their next meeting.

9. TERMINATION OF MEETING

9.1 The meeting ended at 8.44pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____