

<b>Date:</b>	24 March 2021
<b>Report of:</b>	Councillor Paul Swaddle OBE
<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio</b>	Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City
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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 Finance and Smart City Portfolio and pertinent performance information.

## **1. Budget 2021 - 2022**

At Full Council on 3 March, the Council voted to support the Cabinet Report dated 15 February and corresponding appendices setting the Council's budget for the 2021 – 2022 offering a brighter future for our City.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer also presented the national budget on 3 March setting out how the Government will support the economy during the easing of lockdown measures. We expect a more comprehensive assessment of spending will follow in the Autumn Spending Review giving more financial certainty and plans on reducing the nation's deficit. Uniquely, there will also be a separate 'Tax Day' on 23 March where we expect to see some of the measures that were not addressed in the national budget on 3 March by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Council has already proactively considered what this means for the Council but it remains clear that public spending will remain under considerable pressure for some years to come.

## **2. City for All Vision and Strategy (2021 – 2022)**

At the start of March, we launched our refreshed strategy for 2021 setting out how we will support communities to help them to recover from the pandemic and become stronger, healthier and greener.

### **2.1 *Thriving Economy***

As the city begins to re-open after lockdown, we will continue welcoming visitors from around the globe to experience the diversity and unparalleled culture and history Westminster has to offer.

#### **2.1.1 *Support for Cultural Institutions***

On 8 February, we launched our Cultural Strategy for 2021 – 2025 to empower the the culture and creative sectors to rise to the challenges that the global COVID-19 pandemic has unexpectedly placed at our door step and use arts and culture to leverage the creative expression, healing and sharing of common humanity that is so vital in these times.

#### **2.1.2 *West End Recovery – Animation Strategy***

We are working on an animation strategy to support the recovery of the West End, working alongside Business Improvement Districts (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.

### **2.2 *Greener and Cleaner***

#### **2.2.1 *Reduce Carbon Emissions - Decarbonisation of operational estate***

At the end of February, we received notification that we have been successful in our bid for funding from the BEIS Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme administered by Salix Finance. This grant will fund steps to decarbonise our operational estate and is payable through Section 31 of Local Government Act. At the start of March, the Cabinet Member Report entitled 'Energy Efficiency Programme - Retrofit Accelerator' confirmed our partnership approach in delivery with Salix and our new Re:Fit consultant to take this forward.

#### **2.2.2 *Environmental Performance – Procurement Code***

At the start of March, approval was granted to update the Procurement Code so that it reflects the transformational changes to the Procurement and Commercial Services operating model as well as new Council priorities and objectives, including City for All and our Climate Emergency commitments. The updated

Procurement Code sets out the expectation of officers ‘to embed innovative approaches to service design, specification and demand challenge in pre-procurement activity and to influence suppliers and supply chains through the tender process and post contract management’ as part of our commitment to be net carbon zero as a Council by 2030, and a City by 2040.

## **2.3 Vibrant Communities**

### **2.3.1 Re-purpose buildings – Property rationalisation**

At Full Council on 3 March, we reconfirmed our commitment to transform and enhance facilities at Seymour and Queen Mother Leisure Centres. By Summer 2021, we plan to share our accelerated renewal plans for both leisure centres for consultation within the community. Our accelerated renewal plans for both centres will be informed by the lessons learnt from the pandemic about how we can deliver services in different and better ways.

## **2.4 Smart City**

We have committed to become a smart city – a global centre of innovation, empowered by creative partnerships that work with residents and communities to deliver a better quality of life for all. For us, becoming a smart city is a process, not an end goal – therefore our approach matters. Smart in Westminster means being inclusive, innovative and participatory. We recognise the only certainty is change and by working with our local businesses, both big and small, we can adapt quickly while also inviting in new ideas to tackle our challenges and create opportunities. So, we are calling on trusted and innovative partners that share our ambitions to be part of this new era in Westminster’s history. On Wednesday 17 March, we will be hosting our ‘call for ideas’ event to hear from partners on their proposals on how we can collaborate together to deliver our City for All vision.

### **2.4.1 Facilitate Connectivity**

Throughout lockdown, the Council has continued to work with our partners to facilitate full-fibre broadband to our housing stock. As of the end of February, 70% of our housing stock has been connected to full-fibre capability.

We are also working with Ontix, our small cell concessionaire, to install small cells on Council-owned street furniture. Ontix have also secured a contract to deliver a free Wi-Fi network for the New West End Company (NVEC) covering Oxford Street, Regent Street and Bond Street. The main benefit of the technology that will be deployed is that it enables seamless roaming between other Passpoint/Hotspot 2.0 networks meaning residents, visitors and workers can seamlessly roam between council-operated Wi-Fi networks and those owned by NVEC, without the need to re-enter passwords. We expect the six street market areas to have access by end of May 2021.

### **2.4.2 Driving Digital Equality – Digital Inclusion programme**

Our areas of digital inclusion in the City are clustered around our most deprived wards with common factors such as age, disability and deprivation being associated with increased digital exclusion. The digital needs have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The Council is continuously working on aspects of this agenda in terms of providing connectivity and access to our residents. We will continue to coordinate and deliver our response under our Digital Inclusion programme and work with our partners and communities to develop and deliver these. Through our evidence-led collaborative approach, focused on need, we will be able to develop the digital skills, confidence and motivation of those digitally excluded to support them to make the most of opportunities of being online.

## **3. Cabinet Member Decisions (January 2021 – March 2021)**

Since the start of the year, as Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City, the following decisions have been made:

- Additional Restrictions Grant Scheme - Proposed Revised Criteria and Top-up Roll-in;
- Nova Place, Victoria – Section 106 Agreement;
- Energy Efficiency Programme - Retrofit Accelerator; and
- Huguenot House – Conclusion of Consultation and Decision on Preferred Way Forward.

## **4. Key Performance Indicators**

As of period 9:

- 79.3% of Council Tax has been collected; and
- 74.87% of Business Rates has been collected.

As of quarter 3:

- 6.5% of calls to our Agilisys contact centre abandoned; and
- 0 incidents attracting fines under the new GDPR legislation.