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Classification:	General Release
Title:	Chief Executive's Update
Report of:	Stuart Love, Chief Executive
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Leader of the Council
Policy Context:	City for All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides Westminster's Scrutiny Commission with an update on the key issues since the last committee meeting, including elements of the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Key Areas for Commission's Consideration

- 2.1. The Commission is asked to note the report.

3. Al Fresco Dining Scheme

- 3.1. Helping our hospitality sector reopen safely has been a priority for Westminster City Council. Westminster was the first UK local authority to launch al fresco dining, which pioneered the use of temporary road closures and parking bay spaces to create al fresco dining areas.
- 3.2. Following the easing of lockdown, we re-launched the scheme from April 2021 and have issued nearly 700 pavement licences across Westminster. This has equated to 13,000 additional covers.
- 3.3. Accessibility of the street space has been a focus. We know that accessibility is an issue in Soho. We've listened to feedback from Transport for All and are making changes to improve access across the West End. Ramps are being trialled across the area and we will continue to assess their suitability with the aim of rolling them out to many more locations.
- 3.4. Our City Inspectors and Marshalls continue to engage with businesses in key areas in a daily basis to help support COVID compliance.

4. COVID 19 – Testing and Vaccinations

- 4.1. Increasing local access to the COVID-19 vaccine and testing has been a priority for Westminster.

- 4.2. We have set up the Bi-Borough Roving Vaccine Bus with RBKC, which helps us engage with harder-to-reach communities by targeting locations where low take-up has been identified. So far, it has visited locations such as Church Street, Paddington Recreation Centre and Leicester Square.
- 4.3. We also have our mass vaccination sites, which are currently located at Marble Arch (ETC Centre) and Little Venice Sports Centre, in addition to a variety of community pop up clinics.
- 4.4. Following phone calls to all unvaccinated residents in the first nine JCVI cohorts (over 50s and high-risk groups), we have sent letters to follow up those whom we were unable to reach by telephone.
- 4.5. Westminster now undertakes all contact tracing of positive cases in Westminster. This has led to an increased rate of successful contact to an average of over 80% of all cases contacted.
- 4.6. We also offer rapid flow COVID testing at three community testing sites in the borough and work with high-risk settings to provide testing to vulnerable residents.
- 4.7. Vaccination rates in Westminster remain low in comparison to the rest of the country and London. This is particularly the case in our residents over the age of 70 and remains an area of constant focus for the Council, in ensuring that the NHS and our health partners prioritise our most vulnerable residents.

5. Virtual & Hybrid Meetings

- 5.1. Emergency legislation allowing virtual council meetings ended in May. Since then, the council has moved to a hybrid format where key decisions are made, such as Cabinet and Planning meetings, in line with the law.
- 5.2. This involves a quorum of elected Councillors attending meetings physically and everyone else (officers and members of the public) having the ability to attend virtually. Physical space is also offered to members of the public who would like to be there in person, within COVID restrictions.
- 5.3. The first hybrid planning meeting took place successfully on 11th May.
- 5.4. The pandemic has completely revolutionised how we work, including how we conduct our council meetings. We have found there has been much better public participation to meetings since the shift to working remotely. Therefore, where possible we will continue to facilitate non-decision making meetings in a virtual format to ensure they are accessible as possible to our residents.

6. Oxford Street District

- 6.1. In March, following a 4-week engagement process, we began delivering the first phase of the Oxford Street temporary public realm improvement scheme. When completed by end of June, the designs will bring to the district 40% more trees, over 1,500 new plants from 65 species and double the amount of seating.

- 6.2. We are also making good progress on permanent works in the district, with work starting on our Soho Photography Quarter and Zero Carbon Demonstrator schemes.
- 6.3. Work is progressing well on Marble Arch Hill, our new temporary visitor attraction for the Oxford Street District. The 24-metre-high climbable hill will create a new visitor experience in the West End and deliver sweeping views of Oxford Street, Hyde Park and surrounding areas.
- 6.4. Subject to social distancing and the appropriate guidance, the project will be open for six months and is expected to attract approximately 200,000 visitors, generating significant cumulative spend in the area.

7. Supported Recruitment

- 7.1. In June, the Council welcomed three new members of staff who have been employed through our supported recruitment programme.
- 7.2. This programme aims to get Westminster residents with learning disabilities into work.