



Westminster Scrutiny Commission

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Title:	City for All 2021/22 context and governance
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Cabinet Member Portfolio	Councillor Rachael Robathan
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City for All
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council's City for All corporate strategy was published in March 2021. Due to impacts of COVID-19, Brexit and wider high street decline, the Council adapted its strategy from last year to incorporate economic recovery and tackling health inequalities.
- 1.2 As part of this, it created a new, fourth pillar to the strategy named "Thriving Economy". This outlines a programme of economic recovery work benefitting residents and businesses, complementing the existing "Greener & Cleaner", "Vibrant Communities," and "Smart City" pillars. With the addition of Thriving Economy and the increased emphasis on tackling health inequalities, the scope of Vibrant Communities was also amended accordingly.
- 1.3 The development of this corporate strategy typically involves a period of collaborative engagement that includes service managers, senior officers, representatives of residents and businesses, and Council Members to ensure Council strategy addresses its key challenges and reflects the needs of local residents clearly and consistently. An enhanced process of evaluation will follow to help the Council understand its overall impact, risk and success, and indicate where policies and services can be better co-designed with residents in future to achieve maximum impact.

- 1.4 Officers responsible for financial planning, strategy development and programme and project management continue to work together to ensure i) City for All's strategic priorities are driving financial planning and service delivery priorities and ii) the delivery of the strategy achieves desired outcomes and offers value for money.
- 1.5 Progress of City for All delivery is reviewed regularly by senior officers and Members. To make it easier for everyone in the Council to understand what City for All is trying to achieve and facilitate collaborative working, officers are articulating a set of shared, key City for All outcomes. These will form an important part of an enhanced evaluation framework to holistically understand our progress and success.
- 1.6 Aligning financial planning and strategy development, along with stricter programme and project assurance, and all of this aligned to shared, key outcomes supported by an evaluation framework, will help the organisation to be more efficient and effective.

2. Key Matters for the Commission's Consideration

Commission members are requested to provide their views on the following questions related to future City for All strategy development:

- How can the City for All strategy be more widely promoted to local communities to maximise their engagement with it?
- Are there any other areas of City for All the Commission would like to explore in depth?
- How can we ensure further local resident and business engagement in strategy development going forward?

3. Background and progress so far

- 3.1 In March 2020, shortly before the first COVID-19 lockdown, the Council launched a re-designed City for All vision and strategy for 2020/21 that outlined its vision, objectives, and key programmes of work across three pillars: Greener & Cleaner, Vibrant Communities and Smart City. Sections 3.2 - 3.4 and 3.7 – 3.11 below outline key areas of focus in City for All 2020/21 and 2021/22, respectively. This includes an extract of the Council's pledges that demonstrate the breadth of services each pillar covers. The full list of pledges under each pillar can be found in the strategy documents in the Background Papers section at the end of this report. Lead officers will provide verbal updates on City for All delivery.
- 3.2 Greener & Cleaner focusses on tackling climate change, improving air quality, maintaining street cleanliness and excellent open spaces. The outcome we want to achieve is a net zero carbon Council by 2030, and a net zero carbon city by 2040. The work the Council had pledged to deliver includes:

- Establishing a Climate Action Group to review the Council's carbon footprint.
- Completing a policy audit and publishing a green gap report that sets out how it will achieve clean energy, greener homes, and jobs, green communities and become carbon neutral.
- Adopting an Environment Supplementary Planning Document.
- Promoting sustainable modes of transport.
- Implementing the main findings from the Air Quality Plan consultation.
- Reducing waste, transforming recycling facilities and enhancing the Council's environmentally friendly and low emission waste collection service.

3.3 Vibrant Communities focusses on building affordable homes, place-making, supporting economic growth, improving living standards, providing education and employment opportunities, and supporting vulnerable residents. The outcome we want is to keep Westminster an inclusive place, reduce inequalities and provide care to those who need it the most. Key pledges include:

- Opening Beachcroft care home.
- Improving Oxford Street and its surrounding area.
- Continuing engagement with residents for place-making schemes.
- Adopting a new approach for housing repairs and major works.
- Working to make sure business, suppliers and developers create opportunities for residents through community initiatives, employment, or training.
- Ensure adults and children at every age can stay healthy through our partnership approach to education and healthcare with agencies, voluntary sector organisations, libraries, sports and leisure, GP surgeries and other care professionals.

3.4 Smart City focusses on making Westminster a well-connected city, creating a new website for easy interaction with the Council, and using technology to enhance communities' and the Council's capabilities. The outcome we want to achieve is that we harness modern technology to demonstrably improve service provision and value for money. Key pledges include:

- Creating a new Council website.
- Facilitating full-fibre broadband to social housing properties by the end of 2021 and ensuring new affordable housing is built with access to it.
- Trialling smart city technologies such as road sensors, 5G infrastructure and electric vehicle charging points.
- Ensuring IT provision across libraries and that no-one is left behind by not having technology at home.
- Implementing the Digital Street Market project of rolling out Wi-Fi and digital training to Westminster markets.
- Develop and pilot work in Oxford Street with the ambition to be the smartest high street in Europe.

3.5 Throughout the year 2020/21, COVID-19 impacted residents' health and socio-economic wellbeing significantly, and the combination of lockdowns and social distancing requirements has threatened businesses' survival and viability.

- 3.6 COVID-19's impacts on Westminster and its communities have been compounded by the longer-term trend of high street decline. Further, lockdowns and travel restrictions have highlighted Westminster businesses' reliance on visitors. The decline in footfall has typically been greater in cities than their surrounding areas, with Westminster remaining an outlier and reflecting the extreme end of poor recovery of footfall. In Westminster, mobility in retail and recreation locations was still down 55% (compared to pre-pandemic levels) 22-23 May, in comparison to only 28% in Greater London and 19% nationally. While non-London cities also appear to show a greater drop in mobility compared to surrounding areas, this difference is much less pronounced. For example, mobility was only down 29% in Manchester City Centre, compared to 20% in Greater Manchester.
- 3.7 Recognising that the impacts of COVID-19, Brexit and wider economic change were not reflected in last year's City for All 20/21 strategy, the Council re-launched City for All in March 2021 emphasising economic recovery and tackling health inequalities – two key issues that COVID-19 brought into focus. To clearly show the importance of economic recovery for the city and its residents, a fourth pillar called Thriving Economy was added, along with a programme of work that showcased how the Council and city would innovate to take advantage of economic opportunities. City for All 21/22 has also maintained a focus on the Council's net zero emissions targets, with its net zero ambitions reflected across the four pillars. Details about the four pillars and their areas of focus are outlined in sections 3.8 – 3.12.
- 3.8 Thriving Economy outlines a vision in which Westminster's high streets and West End model a sustainable economic recovery and continue to be vital to Westminster neighbourhoods and to the rest of the country. High streets will continue to support their communities, and residents and local businesses will be prepared for future economic change. The outcome we want to achieve is to have an economy that supports businesses and communities through employment, training, and leisure opportunities. Key pledges include:
- Create talent for businesses' growth by up-skilling local employees.
 - Address youth unemployment by extending and improving our youth engagement and skills offer, and by providing and connecting young people and young adults with employment.
 - Take action to stimulate the West End's recovery by supporting new investment and using our convening power to make a case for tailored government support.
 - Facilitating cycling, walking and innovations in movement.
 - Nurturing the creative economy.
 - Leveraging our investment in the Oxford Street District to transform Westminster's retail, cultural and hospitality economy and to test low carbon growth.
- 3.9 Greener and Cleaner maintains its focus on tackling climate change, improving air quality and maintaining street cleanliness and open spaces. It continues to deliver long-term pieces of work originally outlined in City for All 20/21 such as: Creating a net zero council action plan adopting an Environment Supplementary

Planning Document; responding to demand for sustainable transport; implementing the Air Quality Action Plan; supporting schools through improvements to local roads and green infrastructure; and reducing, increasing recycling and minimising collection service emissions. New pledges include:

- Working with residents and businesses to develop a Climate Emergency Action Plan for the city.
- Improving tenants' homes' energy efficiency and seeking funding to decarbonise the Pimlico District Heating Undertaking.
- Working with industry and businesses to reduce, re-mode and re-time their freight, servicing, and deliveries.

3.10 Vibrant Communities continues to include building affordable homes, place making, improving living standards, providing education and employment opportunities, and supporting vulnerable residents. However, it no longer includes economy-related work (as this is reflected in Thriving Economy), and it has added a new focus on tackling health inequalities. New pledges include:

- Improving community resilience, tackling inequalities in life expectancy, empowering residents to access further learning opportunities and demonstrating our impact through our public health report.
- Supporting people's physical and mental wellbeing by creating active environments through our leisure centres, parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities.
- Continuing to build on Westminster Connects to create a new level of civic engagement.
- Enhancing community and environmental facilities, in consultation with residents and estate action plans.
- Introducing an additional licensing scheme to raise standards in private rental housing
- Embracing the use of digital tools to widen and improve participating in and understanding of the planning process.

3.11 Smart City's focus remains similar, though it has a stronger emphasis on digital inclusion, innovation, and more effective use of data. It continues to deliver against the pledges outlined in City for All 20/21, and some new pledges presented in City for All 21/22 include:

- Ensuring digital inclusion to address digital inequality by empowering communities and businesses to develop their digital capabilities and access digital services.
- Using insights and analytics to enhance outcomes and experiences for our customers, and inform future decision making.
Adopting OpenActive to harness open data to encourage more people to take up physical activity.

4. Reflecting an understanding of local places in setting City for All priorities

- 4.1 In Autumn 2020, the Leader identified a need to refresh Westminster's City for All strategy to acknowledge the events of the past year and how the Council's priorities have changed to address the impacts on its residents and businesses. The resulting strategy development process was collaborative, involving Cabinet Members and staff across the Council. Policy officers and service managers helped create a structure for the strategy document by identifying service-specific priorities, the needs of their service user cohort(s), and proposed interventions to address these. This was also informed and challenged by intelligence and analysis to ensure that those priorities are underpinned by an evidence base.
- 4.2 At various stages in the December to March period, Cabinet Members and senior officers iteratively shaped the City for All strategy together to ensure that:
- it appropriately addresses the Council's strategic challenges.
 - the needs of residents and their perspectives are clearly and consistently reflected.
- 4.3 To enhance the assurance mechanism around City for All delivery, officers are improving the strategy's evaluation framework and the insights gathered for this. In addition to providing delivery assurance, the framework is intended to enable consistent reporting of information across the Council and help make City for All outcomes more tangible to all officers (more in section 6.2). The framework will be built using data on: City for All progress, financial and non-financial benefits of pledges and other projects, key service activity performance indicators, internal datasets (e.g. resident surveys) and external datasets (e.g. air quality, unemployment, city-wide carbon emissions). By bringing these datasets together, a more holistic view of City for All impact and value for money will be enabled.

This is part of the council's journey to be more data- and evidence-led by using data more effectively, making data more accessible across the Council, and shifting people to the mindset of wanting and using data to drive decision making and ensure we are delivering the best outcomes possible for our residents, communities, and businesses.

- 4.4 The Council has outlined its desired outcomes in City for All. However, it is recognised that the Council will not always have direct control over these outcomes, and some of them – such as improved air quality and net zero city-wide carbon emissions – are impacted by the activities of others. As a result, securing progress against these outcomes will always present a challenge. Despite this, these outcomes will continue to be included in the evaluation framework because they are strategically important to the Council and enables officers and Councillors to reflect on progress and our role in achieving that.

5. Financial planning and viability

- 5.1 Finance officers work with services to manage and set their budgets, and the Council strategy reflects work that services are delivering or plan to deliver resourced by those budgets. Moving forward, financial planning, programme and project management and strategy development will be further aligned, so that:
- financial planning with services is driven by the Council's medium term strategic outcomes and the need to deliver on those efficiently and effectively;
 - The evaluation framework outlined in sections 4.3-4.4 will incorporate an assessment of financial and non-financial benefits of Council activities, thereby also highlighting the relationship to City for All strategic outcomes and the medium term financial plan.
- 5.2 The Council also delivers projects with external funding, and actively seeks other opportunities for external funding. For example, the Digital Street Market project was partly funded by the EU Regional Development Fund.

6. Organisational leadership and governance

- 6.1 The Executive Leadership Team meets regularly to review the Council's direction of travel against its strategic outcomes, including oversight of key projects, risks or challenges. As part of these discussions, a horizon scanning element informs future risk and opportunity and informs how the organisation will need to innovate to respond effectively.
- 6.2 To help ensure the City for All strategy is fully embedded and tangible to all parts of the organisation, a set of shared, key outcomes will be articulated that can be communicated to all Council employees (and delivery partners) to:
- Make it quick to understand what City for All seeks to achieve.
 - Highlight how officers across the organisation are working toward these same goals.

These will be based on the existing City for All strategy narrative, and will be championed by senior leaders, who can ensure officers are joined up in their approach to City for All delivery.

- 6.3 These key outcomes will be agreed in the second quarter of the financial year 2021/22. Following this, accompanying measures will be identified to track progress against the outcomes. These measures will be a key part of the strategic evaluation framework and will form the internal and external datasets outlined in section 4.3.
- 6.4 Additionally, an internal audit of how the Council scrutinises its service delivery performance has been commissioned. The review will assess the internal governance of how we report and act upon performance information, and it will identify how effective these arrangements are.

6.5 City for All progress is also discussed at weekly Cabinet Member briefings, which senior officers, service leads and policy officers attend.

7. Capacity to deliver

7.1 As part of improving financial planning, value for money and strategy alignment, officers are more strictly reviewing the programmes and projects delivered by the Council. This will enable officers to consider City for All delivery in a holistic way, and prioritise and control programmes to align with City for All's desired outcomes and ensure the Council's capacity to deliver is aligned accordingly.

7.2 Establishing shared outcomes that all officers recognise will be key to prioritising effectively and ensuring we have the capacity to deliver on the right issues because mutual goals help to optimise efficiency. The evaluation framework will also enable the Council to determine the extent to which this is happening e.g. from highlighting key issues and understanding the reasons for performance.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact
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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

This section is for any background papers used to formulate the report or referred to in the body of the report.

- [City for All Vision and Strategy 2020-21](#)
- [City for All Vision and Strategy 2021-22](#)