



City of Westminster

Business and Children's Policy Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday 7 October 2021

Portfolio: Business, Licensing and Planning

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

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City for All – Business, Licensing and Planning Priorities

Thriving Economy

West End Recovery- West End Pop-up Project

- 1.1 We continue to work with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and landlords to fill vacant sites across the West End, create a more inclusive environment for local entrepreneurs and revive our commercial centres. To date, the project has fully activated six units in Piccadilly using creative installations, displaying the work of up-and-coming London-based artists and showcasing innovative start-ups. In partnership with New West End Company (NVEC) and property owners, a call-out was launched in June for pop-up occupiers for up to 10 spaces in Oxford Street, Regent Street and Mayfair. The selection panel chose twelve proposals to activate vacant spaces in NVEC's area. The project envisioned the creation of "The Regent Street Edit" which is a pop-up concept store that showcases six ethical and sustainable brands. This pop-up turned unit 88 Regent Street into a space that brings together the next generation of fashion and wellness brands that are more ethical and sustainable. The project has a further six activations planned by 31 October 2021, when the programme is expected to end. Property owners across the West End are keen to continue to engage in the project and provide a rent-free period to pop-up occupiers to enable more units to be activated with pop-ups through the Christmas period and into March 2022.

West End Recovery- Westminster Investment Service

- 1.2 Following the launch of the Westminster Investment Service at the end of June, we have now appointed a Westminster Investment Service Manager and are recruitment for two Principal Investment Service Officers is underway. The Service continues to welcome new arrivals into Westminster, working with the BIDs, Council services, property owners and partners to identify those who have recently invested. We are currently profiling businesses to showcase recent investments, and we are looking to carry out an Investor Perceptions Survey with investors over the last three years to gain a greater insight into their perceptions of Westminster as a business location. Separately, a Concierge Service has been introduced to support new investors, domestic and international, and we continue to receive short-term, medium- and

long-term enquiries for units, demonstrating the continuing importance of Westminster as we come out of this pandemic.

West End Recovery- Westminster Reveals

- 1.3 Westminster Reveals, which launched in July, is working with partners to showcase the range of activity taking place in Westminster. A curated calendar of events have been designed to attract visitors to central London. Some of the events that have ran this summer include a Pop-Up Painting in Mayfair in partnership with Mayfair Art Weekend and our Inside Out campaign. Over 9,000 people participated in Inside Out's free Sketch on Trafalgar Square sessions recently and 70,000 people visited the Underbelly Festival on Cavendish Square. Skate the Strand temporary skate park (see below). An art installation on Temple Roof Gardens will launch at the beginning of October.

West End Recovery- Future Occupiers

- 1.4 We continue to work closely with London & Partners on the delivery of the programme. We took part in the Virtual Trade mission for northeast Asia - Japan, Korea and Hong Kong in July and future Trade Missions are being planning for Europe this month and North America later in the year. We are also engaging with the Mayor of London and his office to ensure that we're joining-up our shared ambitions to encourage people back into the West End.

West End Recovery – Marble Arch Mound

- 1.5 Over 113,000 people have now been up the Mound. Those visitors are going on to spend money on food, other attractions and Westminster shops – on average £60 per visit. The Mound has been considerably overhauled and now offers an impressive light installation. The Mound is now on track and doing what it was always intended to and we believe this exhibition will encourage even more people to visit the West End. A review is underway to ensure the overspend on the Mound does not happen again.

West End Recovery – Oxford Street District

- 1.6 The Council is committed to supporting the future success of the nation's favourite high street and its surrounding neighbourhoods. The case for investing in the Oxford Street District is even stronger following the pandemic and we remain focused on doing everything we can to deliver on this alongside our partners. Improvements to Oxford Street and the surrounding district have already been delivered through close working with the local community, including new greening and seating on Oxford Street itself, the new Soho photography quarter and improvements for cyclists and pedestrians across the whole area. Moving forward, we want to make sure we consult openly and fully with local groups to ensure that their views can shape any of our proposals or schemes.

After listening to residents and a review of the cost effectiveness of the proposal for a pilot for the Oxford Circus piazzas, we have decided to focus on permanent schemes. The temporary piazzas previously planned to open at Oxford Circus later this year will not now go ahead, along with all associated enabling street works. The engagement and consultation approach and timetable will be shared shortly but in moving forward we are committed to meeting key tests of a clear business case, meaningful engagement, and complete clarity on impact on residents and costs.

Al fresco hospitality

- 1.7 Our al fresco scheme has been a huge success in encouraging people back into Westminster. The current al fresco scheme is coming to an end and barriers and road closures are

programmed for removal by 01 October, when pavement licenses expire. There are six locations where permanent schemes are being developed in consultation with residents, businesses and other partners. These include St John's Wood High Street, Covent Garden, Elizabeth, Eccleston and North Audley Street and Pimlico.

Results so far show strong support in favour of alfresco schemes. 86% of respondents to the St John's Wood High Street consultation supported the development of a permanent scheme, with 84% in favour of keeping the temporary scheme in place until the permanent scheme is implemented. Likewise, 81% of respondents to our two Covent Garden consultations supported the continuation of alfresco dining on Henrietta Street, King Street, Maiden Lane and parts of Southampton Street. 78% of residents told us they supported the continuation of alfresco. Covent Garden proposals were contingent on a second consultation, the Neighbourhood Traffic Management Scheme, which proposed timed closures in the coming 18 months for this area. This consultation has now closed and the results show there is local support for the proposed scheme. The full results will be published in October. Finally, consultations held for Pimlico, Elizabeth Street, Eccleston Street and North Audley Street, which closed on 26 September, also demonstrate the overwhelming local support for alfresco.

All barriers which are not part of schemes consulted on will be removed in the first week of October. In Marylebone Lane the current alfresco scheme ended on 28 August. The road closures were marshalled by Howard de Walden and we have been working with them on a permanent proposal which would allow the continuation of alfresco dining. In order to allow alfresco dining on the pavement and pedestrians on the carriageway the road would have to be closed. For safety reasons this would require a physical barrier which would need managing. We are in discussion with Howard de Walden and provided an agreement is reached the scheme will be consulted on.

Training and Employment

Kickstart

- 1.8 25 Westminster residents have been recruited onto the internal Kickstart Programme and a further five are year to be recruited. The programme is on track. Each young person has been assigned an employment coach, who will be there to help them with any in-work issues that they may have and will be working with them to help them progress into another role, either internally or externally, once their 6-month Kickstart placement has ended. Our Kickstarters are working across council departments.

Westminster Employment Service has also been working with local businesses to support further Kickstart opportunities. 4 young people have been supported with partners to date. A recruitment event took place with Somerset House on 13 September at the Lord Mayor's Parlour where there will be 10 unique creative roles on offer, including in marketing, events management and digital and communications.

Westminster Wheels

- 1.9 To date, 22 young people from Westminster have been trained and recruited through the project. The fourth cohort is completed their training in September and have begun working in the Westminster Wheels shop, located on Church Street. Our original target was to recruit 30 trainees, but we are forecast to recruit 34 in total, so the project has exceeded expectations. We continue to promote Westminster Wheels and have applied for a market pitch in Church Street. A three-month marketing campaign has also been developed which will enable us to continue to engage with businesses and partners to increase the number of bike donations and promote bike sales.

Westminster Adult Education Service

- 2.1** The Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) continues to deliver education and training programmes that support residents. WAES has had a good start to the new academic year, with a range of campaigns run over the summer to encourage residents back into learning, to reskill and upskill in their chosen pathways. We have partnered with the Department for Work and Pensions Job Centre in Marylebone to host one of the 110 Youth Hubs across the UK at Lisson Grove Centre. The Youth Hub will provide tailored wrap-around support and advice on careers, employment and wellbeing for our young people.

We have secured additional funding to host English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support and training in our Integrate Westminster programme. The programme enables learners to practice English in a less formal setting and will be available to support any new arrivals from Afghanistan. Alongside this, we have applied for funding to support British Nationals Overseas that are arriving from Hong Kong. We have strong relationships with the Chinese Community Centre (CCC) and a strong reputation for the delivery of ESOL. The programmes will be delivered at the main WAES sites and at the CCC. This will focus on life in the UK, accessing services, mental health and wellbeing and a host of enrichment programmes and trips focusing on cultural integration.

We have launched a new digital career offer in partnership with Amazon Web Services and Westminster Employment Service. Learners will be able to take part in a 12-week intensive course leading to good jobs as software developers, solutions architect and more. The programme is currently recruiting very strongly.

Place Shaping

Strand Aldwych

- 2.2** The Strand Aldwych project has achieved its first major milestone in converting this traffic dominated, polluted area to a new cultural learning quarter for London. The traffic switch to enable two-way traffic on Aldwych successfully took place on 22 August, creating a new public space on Strand free of through-traffic between Lancaster Place and Surrey Street. To mark the occasion a series of events called "September on the Strand" were introduced, which drew thousands of visitors to the area and included a pop-up skate park which provided 250 free skate lessons.

Construction works will continue following September on the Strand and the Aldwych two-way scheme and Meanwhile Strand are scheduled to complete at the end of 2022. The construction project is so far being delivered to time and on budget according to the £18,090,232 approval gained in December 2020. The total scheme spend to the end of period 5 on the Aldwych two-way and Strand Meanwhile elements of the scheme is £9.938 million. This includes significant design, enabling and construction works to switch the Aldwych to two-way traffic.

The budget allocation approved by Full Council in March 2021 is £30.767 million to take the scheme to full completion. This includes an element of risk and contingency. A CIL funding request due to scheme suitability was highlighted as part of the recent CPSR process. A decision on whether the scheme will receive an allocation will be made as part of the budget setting process over the next couple of months. This will reduce the council funding requirement if successful.

Harrow Road

- 2.3** We are working alongside residents and stakeholders to produce the Harrow Road Place Plan. The project has received a £900,000 funding contribution from the Greater London Authority and Good Growth Fund. This is being matched by WCC to provide a budget of £1.8m to support delivery of three priority projects that have the potential to catalyse wider neighbourhood improvements. The first focuses on Maida Hill Market and will take forward work that was been developed in August 2019 on a vision for Maida Hill Market. The second and third sit at intersections of the Harrow Road, where the high street meets the Paddington arm of the Grand Union canal. These projects will build on the ambitions of Queens Park Community Council, Paddington Development Trust and others. Work is already progressing on design and engagement for each of these projects and work is expected to start on site in Spring 2022. Beyond this, we have been working alongside and local stakeholders to create a masterplan that provides a clear framework for delivering improvement across the area and helps coordinate input across council departments and amongst the community.

Victoria Place Plan

- 2.4** Greening Victoria Street: Work is underway to explore how we can bring enhanced greening to Victoria Street. We are in the process of developing a strategy that explores the various ways greening can be unlocked, given the challenging context of Victoria Street. The Place Shaping Team are identifying a first tranche of permanent projects that can be delivered across the course of the next financial year, using the capital programme to seed projects and working with stakeholders to secure further funding to support delivery.

Lillington Gardens Community Centre: We are leading on a project to renovate the Lillington and Longmoore Gardens Community Centre and develop an Open Spaces and Play Strategy for the estate, with the view of construction beginning in early 2022/23. A budget in the 2022/23 capital programme is ringfenced to seed the construction of this project. We will be working to secure further external funding to cover the cost of delivery.

Future Victoria Masterplan: work on this project has been disrupted by Covid-19. We are looking to recommence community engagement in early 2022 to assist with the completion of the concept masterplan for the station area and the surrounding areas.

Soho

- 2.5** Our Vision for Soho aims to develop a vision statement, set of objectives, and projects – mostly focused upon the public realm – that will address current and emerging pressures facing Soho. We are engaging with Soho’s communities and have held a series of workshops and targeted conversations to understand their priorities. The aspiration is that once completed, the Vision for Soho will sit alongside the Soho Neighbourhood Plan to provide a comprehensive plan for Soho’s future. £1.8 million has been ringfenced within the capital programme to support the delivery of initial projects emerging from the Vision for Soho, once agreed, over the course of 2022/23.

Open Spaces, Greener Places

- 2.6** The Open Spaces, Greener Places programme comprises of a number of schemes to improve the quantity and quality of our open spaces and green infrastructure. Ten schemes were successful in securing funding for 2021/22 including improvements to parks and open spaces, play facilities, and green infrastructure. The programme has secured £65,000 in investment from external sources. The majority of the £375,000 funding for 2021/22 is to be spent in the second half of the year due to the nature of the programme, to be delivered through both internal and external partners.

Paddington

- 2.7 The Paddington Places strategy is being finalised. It is designed to support better movement of pedestrians and cyclists and unlock possibilities for healthier environments for the local community. In the coming months we expect to take forward a number of projects that have arisen as a result of stakeholder engagement.

Vibrant Communities

Gambling Licensing Policy

- 2.8 The Council is required to adopt a Gambling Policy every three years and the current policy will end on 30 January 2022. We have undertaken a review of the current policy which has provided an opportunity to ensure there are adequate controls in place, particularly to manage gambling licensing within the City. A Local Area Profile has been developed which will provide applicants with information on the demographic living in the area and the general risk to gambling related harm. The profile will also include other relevant information associated with local crime rates, hostel locations, schools, other support services for vulnerable adults. We will direct applicants to the Local Area Profile and how they should use that information to adequately risk assess their premises, reduce the impact the premises have on the local community and the licensing objectives. The new policy will better protect residents, especially those who are at greater risk of harm from gambling.

Environmental Supplementary Planning Document

- 2.9 Following the consultation on the Environment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) over the summer, officers are analysing the changes that are required to ensure the SPD takes account of comments received from residents, businesses, developers and other stakeholders. We are also considering how the feedback received will complement the Climate Emergency Action Plan, Code of Construction Practice and our Validation Requirements List for individual planning applications, so that we ensure our strategies that address the Climate Emergency complement one another to be really effective.

Planning

3. The application determination performance (for major and minor applications) of the Town Planning Service continues to exceed the level required by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for the period to the end of August during quarter 1 and quarter 2 of 2021/22. 74% of Non-Major applications have been determined within their target determination date whilst 83% of Major applications have been determined within their target determination date.

2,173 applications were received during June, July and August 2021. This is an increase of 293 applications (+16%) versus the same period during 2020/21, but remains down by 181 applications (-8%) on 2019/20, the last pre-pandemic year. By contrast the shortfall in application numbers between 2021/22 and 2019/20 for April and May was down by 28%. Therefore, the latest figures for June to August 2021 indicate a continuing transition back towards pre-pandemic application numbers, although it should be noted that April and May 2020 were more severely impacted by the pandemic than June to August 2020. It should also be noted that the total number of applications received annually were falling for a number of years prior to the pandemic, as a result of a variety of factors including the increases in the scope of permitted development rights and developer uncertainty as a result of Brexit.

Two of Westminster's Neighbourhood Forums, Soho and Fitzrovia West, received 'yes' votes in their Neighbourhood Plan referendums. This is a real endorsement of their respective

neighbourhood plans from local residents and businesses and once adopted, these plans will carry full weight in individual planning decisions alongside the City Plan and London Plan.

Street Entertainment

- 3.1** Following the launch of the street entertainment policy, we have received 159 licence applications and issued 126 licences. Overall, compliance with the new policy is being achieved. Our first quarterly policy review survey was launched on 31 August. The feedback provided will be reviewed and form part of our busking and street entertainment policy review which will be completed one year after implementation.

Beneficial Ownership

- 3.2** The Government has or intends to have registers of beneficial ownership for three different types of assets: companies, properties and land, and trusts. In June Group of Seven (G7) Finance Ministers agreed to implement and strengthen registries of company beneficial ownership information. The Government is yet to publish the detail. We continue to wait for on the Government to bring forward legislation, and as set out in June, it remains premature to formulate how it might be used to limit access to planning services.

Smart City

Digital Planning Tools

- 3.3** The planning comment moderation service that was introduced for online comments in March 2021, along with a new protocol setting out the standards to which comments will be held, continues to operate effectively. Only six comments have been reported and all but one were found to be unoffensive when assessed against the protocol. Officers are continuing to develop a digital strategy for Place Shaping and Town Planning to ensure that appropriate digital planning tools are identified, prioritised and implemented to meet the department's City for All objectives to make the service easier for residents and service users to interact with and to make planning applications simpler to understand.

3.4 Cabinet Member Key Decisions

Since the last Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee, I have formally approved the following key decisions:

- Harley Street Area Partnerships BID Ballot
- Revision of the Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003
- Queen's Park Neighbourhood Plan
- Westminster CIL and S106 – Project Allocations