



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

**FINANCE, SMART CITY AND CITY MANAGEMENT
POLICY and SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30 JUNE 2021
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held virtually on 30th June 2021 at 6.30pm **via Microsoft Teams**.

Members Present: Councillors Gotz Mohindra (Chairman), Susie Burbridge, Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, Danny Chalkley, Lorraine Dean, Paul Dimoldenberg, Adam Hug, and Emily Payne.

Also present: Councillor Melvyn Caplan (Cabinet Member for City Management), Councillor Paul Swaddle (Cabinet Member Finance and Smart City), Councillor James Spencer (Deputy Cabinet Member for City Management), Lewis Aaltonen (Policy and Scrutiny Co-ordinator), Gerald Almeroth (Executive Director of Finance & Resources), Mark Banks (Head of Service (Waste and Parks)), Veronica Christopher (Portfolio Adviser), Tony Galloway (Interim Director of Environment at Westminster City Council), Amy Just (Leader's Senior Adviser), Artemis Kassi (Lead Scrutiny Adviser/Statutory Officer), and Raj Mistry (Executive Director of Environment and City Management).

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Committee received apologies from Councillor Pancho Lewis. Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis replaced Cllr Pancho Lewis for this meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meetings held on 19 May 2021 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

4. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND SMART CITY

4.1 The Committee received a written update from the Cabinet Member, who responded to questions on the report and his wider portfolio, which included:

- The Cleaner and Greener 12-month project. The project's initial works would commence in July, but the Committee requested more detail around de-carbonisation, works, and impact on target areas.
- The Agilisys contact centre, including a discrepancy in its Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data included in the written report, staff number and turnover at the contact centre, and the performance of the centre in the recent period.
- The performance and effective response rate of the Agilisys contact centre was being closely monitored, and that measures were being explored to take pressure off the call centre in the longer term.
- Council Tax collection rates, which were lower at present than normal – and whether this reflected the performance of the organisation, or was due to the circumstances of the pandemic and a change in willingness to pay.
- The Responsible Procurement Strategy – particularly that there were paid positions guaranteed for people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), ex-offenders, and the homeless.
- Full-fibre connectivity in Westminster housing stock. The Committee heard that on the Brunel Estate, there were three separate providers putting up fibre connection infrastructure, with a rumoured fourth provider soon to join them and that it was possible that the Telecommunications Act 2003 would frustrate council efforts to simplify commercial activity on estates.
- The Maida Hill Arts and Crafts pop-up, organised by Westminster Employment Service, and whether similar initiatives could help revive other markets in Westminster, particularly Berwick Street.
- The Digital Card trial, which had arisen from a scrutiny task group and which was currently underway, whilst being monitored and adjusted for performance.
- The Report It function, and whether residents would be better directed to use the function online, which might lead to less pressure on the Agilisys Call Centre.
- The Corporate Property Strategy, and whether changes in acquiring and disposing of council property could be expected in the coming year.
- Digital Exclusion, particularly for minority ethnic groups, and whether measures could be taken to improve accessibility for these groups, including for non-English speakers.

4.3 ACTIONS:

1. The Committee requested that an update be given at the next meeting of the Committee regarding progress on the Cleaner and Greener 12-month project.
2. The Committee asked that the Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City provide clarity on a potential discrepancy in Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data for the Agilisys contact centre.

3. The Committee requested further detail on paid roles for people with SEND, ex-offenders and the homeless to be provided at the Committee meeting in September.

5. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CITY MANAGEMENT

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

- The Marble Arch Mound, its 200,000 estimated capacity figure, the price of admission, and whether the Mound demonstrated value for money and return on investment.
- The accessibility of the Marble Arch Mound, and whether preferential access to the attraction would be offered to children and groups of people with disabilities at specific times.
- Electric vehicle rapid charging points, the investment they represented, and their impact on parking spaces in Westminster.
- The importance of green spaces such as Paddington Recreation Ground.
- Access to sports and leisure facilities for residents at Paddington Recreation Ground.
- The Westminster electric scooter trial and what measures the Council could take if E-Scooters were used irresponsibly, and whether monitoring of enforcement was arranged to encourage good behaviour of trial participants.
- The Al Fresco dining scheme, and whether pavement licenses would still apply to licence holders after current COVID-19 restrictions lifted on 19 July.
- The Oxford Street District project, and whether the proposals were adequately communicated to residents, as well as the cost of the project.
- Additional waste cleansing and public toilet provision in the West End, and whether these measures were necessary given reduced footfall in the area.

5.2 ACTIONS:

1. The Committee requested that an update on Solar Power Bins be provided for review before the next meeting of the Committee.

6. REPORT ON WASTE AND RECYCLING IN WESTMINSTER

6.1 The Committee received a written report on Waste and Recycling in Westminster. Raj Mistry presented the report and Cllr James Spencer (Cabinet Member for City Management) answered questions. Questions on the report on Waste and Recycling included:

- What Measures had been implemented to minimise waste, encourage effective recycling and penalise irresponsible waste disposal and dumping.

- The Westminster Food Waste collection trial, which had been broadly successful in the trialled areas.
- The issue of disposable coffee cups, many of which were not recyclable and few of which were recycled in Westminster.
- Clear wrapping and visual design of bins and recycling points, to minimise the mixing of disposed waste.
- The proportion of people employed by Veolia who had disabilities.
- What actions could be taken by the Council to enforce against dumping, fly tipping and irresponsible waste disposal on Westminster streets.
- Data gathering of waste collection, and the issue of litter and waste dumped on the street being collected and counted as household waste.
- The promotion of re-using recyclable waste, particularly cardboard boxes and packages, rather than solely focusing on recycling it.
- The end destination of recycling and waste collected in Westminster, some of which was sent to India and Turkey.

6.2 ACTIONS

1. The Committee requested that further detail on the end destination of waste and recycling collected in Westminster was submitted for review by the Committee.

7. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 The Committee discussed its work programme for the remainder of the municipal year and was advised by Artemis Kassi that the Policy and Scrutiny team would be canvassing over the summer months, in order to submit additional suggestions for the work programme in advance of the next Committee meeting in September.

8. TERMINATION OF MEETING

- 8.1 The meeting ended at 8.40pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____