



City of Westminster

Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Date: 22 March 2022
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Title: Leader's Update
Report of: Cllr Rachael Robathan

1. Refugees in Westminster

- 1.1. Approximately 260 Afghan evacuees have moved from their bridging accommodation in Westminster, with 330 remaining in the hotel. There have also been 15 people (four families) move out into settled accommodation since last week's moves, and another 13 (three families) with offers awaiting a move in the coming weeks, including a second family to be housed in Westminster after one family was successfully housed in January.
- 1.2. Evacuees will be transferred to bridging accommodation across the UK; in the first phase evacuees from Westminster's bridging hotel moved to 15 other hotels. The hotel team have been working with leads in the receiving local authorities to discuss the handover process and what families can expect when they arrive at their new hotels. Information sharing with young people's new schools has begun where these are known, and medical records have been transferred.
- 1.3. Following the recent invasion of Ukraine, we are in touch with Home Office and DHLUC colleagues as the government develops further guidance for refugees and for local authorities. In the meantime, we have set up a web page to signpost support resources for our Ukrainian residents and their families, which can be viewed here: [Ukraine Crisis Help and Support](#).

2. City for All

- 2.1. On 3 March, the Council launched a refreshed City for All strategy for 2022/23. It sets out how we will support our communities and businesses to recover from the pandemic and build a stronger City for All.
- 2.2. It also focuses on building a city fit for future generations that guarantees smarter technology, tackles the climate emergency, and ensures our diverse communities are ready to thrive.
- 2.3. The strategy document can be viewed here: [City for All Vision and Strategy 2022/23](#).

3. Staff Awards

- 3.1. The Westminster Way Staff Awards 2021 are taking place on Monday 21 March 2022 at the QEII Conference Centre after the event scheduled for December was postponed due to Covid-19. The event will also be lived streamed.
- 3.2. In 2021 a record breaking 424 nominations from staff across the 11 award categories. The winners for ten out of the 11 categories were selected by a judging panel and the Staff Choice winner is voted for by staff. Winners will be announced at the ceremony on 21 March 2022.

4. Pay Awards

- 4.1. This year's annual pay award has been agreed at an increase of 1.75%, effective from Thursday 1 April 2021.
- 4.2. Employees who are entitled to the increase will see the new rates applied in their March salary, with back dated arrears also paid in March.
- 4.3. Those staff on spot salaries such as former City West Homes staff and Apprentices will also receive an increase of 1.75% and will be back dated to Thursday 1 April 2021 with the new salary and arrears applied in March.

5. Government relations activity

- 5.1. Paul Scully, Minister for London, wrote to the Leader in December asking for the top three issues and opportunities currently facing Westminster, which we advised were West End recovery and long-term prosperity (including the introduction of an online sales tax), the climate emergency, and homelessness and rough sleeping. The Leader will meet with the Minister in mid-March to discuss these issues in more detail.

- 5.2. The Government has recently announced their online sales tax consultation which we are preparing a response to. We are working closely with BIDs and other partners to ensure our position represents the interests, and has the support, of businesses in Westminster.
- 5.3. The Leader has recently written to Nigel Huddleston MP to reiterate our position around short-term lets and to highlight aspects that should form part of the government's call for evidence and consultation. Through the consultation, the council will be seeking new powers to target owners through the registration scheme, and powers for local authorities to introduce exemptions for high impact areas. The letter also received coverage in the Financial Times and the Evening Standard.
- 5.4. The Government have asked us to re-think the areas across which we are applying our Article 4 directions. Officers are re-working a more targeted proposal alongside DHLUC officials to refine our Article 4 to secure protection for commercial land uses in the CAZ from permitted development rights.