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**Portfolio:** Business, Licensing and Planning

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

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## 1. Thriving Economy

### West End Recovery- West End Pop-up Project

- 1.1 In March, we delivered three activations along Piccadilly and South Molton Street. They are:
- 12@12 at unit 12 Piccadilly Arcade showcasing twelve separate brands.
  - Take A Moment's multi-media campaign around mental health which will sit below the Piccadilly Lights from 9 March.
  - The third activation will launch within the former Browns flagship located at 23-27 South Molton Street. The Good Store will be delivered in partnership with Ground works and will perform as a design led sustainable department store for UK brands.

Phase 3 of the Pop-up project will work with property owners to tackle the proliferation of candy, souvenir, and other low-quality shops within key locations along Oxford Street. It will also work with property owners to create a tiered financial model and the formation of a support lifecycle for brands that have the potential of becoming long-term occupiers. To achieve this, an extension of the NNDR Localism relief will need to be approved by Cabinet Members.

### West End Recovery - Westminster Investment Service (WIS)

- 1.2 The Concierge Service brings together key business-facing departments and provides a single-entry point for investors and occupiers to access Council and partner services. Recent enquires have included working with Gymshark as they prepare to open their first flagship retail store on Regent Street. Following introductions from WIS, Gymshark are working with the council to host a community recruitment open day at City of Westminster College.

The Investment Service received 7 enquiries from businesses seeking space in Westminster during January and February 2022 and is providing support to these companies seeking to invest. Work is underway to enhance delivery of the service (including a CRM system, Investment Portal and Commercial Property Database), and a WIS Identity Development project will begin in the coming weeks to further develop the service brand and related assets.

### West End Recovery – Marble Arch Mound

- 1.3 The process of removing the structure from Marble Arch is on track. Nearly 3000 plants have been removed and delivered to several local schools and the Groundworks London team for re-use across Westminster housing projects. Sedum has been reused on Parsons House and on St. Joseph's Primary School green roof. Trees from the Mound were taken to a tree nursery for a growing season and will be replanted in Westminster development schemes. All living wall plants from the mound went to Westminster Schools, including St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, St Augustine's CE High School, St

Georges Hanover Square CE School, Queens Park School and George Eliot Primary School, with some earmarked for projects across Westminster Estates.

#### West End Recovery – Oxford Street District

- 1.4 Construction of the Soho Photography Quarter on Ramillies Street and Place, and Hills Place, is planned to be complete in April 2022. This includes the introduction of additional seating and planting, enhanced lighting and new street and footway services. A new artistic programme, led by The Photographers' Gallery, is planned before Easter which is to be displayed in the public realm. This is the first OSD permanent scheme to be delivered through the programme.

## **2 West End Recovery – Westminster Markets**

- 2.1 A pop-up event was held to celebrate Chinese New Year Night on 31 January. Data showed that tube station demand and mobility in the area increased significantly on the previous week on the day of the event. The Market Development Team are exploring the possibility of a new market for Maida Hill Market, "Made in Westminster" where all traders are local and can learn and develop new skills and sell their items on the market. It would start with four stalls operating two days a week, with the aim to raise this to eight. The initiative will target young, hard-to-reach groups, primarily between the ages of 16-24 that are at risk of offending or socially disadvantaged. The aim is to develop the area, activate the market space, and reduce anti-social behaviour which has been a concern in Maida Hill.

#### Westminster Business Unit

- 2.2 The council has received a total ARG funding allocation of £18.8m and is on course to meet the deadline of 31 March 2022 to disperse this. As of January 2022, we had distributed £215m in mandatory grants to 8,500 businesses. On 21 December 2021, the government announced further support for City businesses within the hospitality and leisure sectors. This support provided grants for businesses of up to £6000 in increments relating to rateable value. In addition, the council has distributed a further £9m to 1673 businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors.

#### Business Energy Audits Scheme

- 2.3 We have appointed a supplier to deliver the Business Energy Audits Scheme. A £500,000 contract will support 1,000 Westminster businesses to access carbon audits of their business operations, along with the provision of a detailed action plan outlining steps for implementation to reduce their carbon footprint and energy usage resulting in long-term cost-savings for businesses. Delivery will commence from March 2022 – March 2024.

## **2. Training and Employment**

#### Westminster Wheels

- 3.1 To date, 31 residents have been supported into training and paid employment with Westminster Wheels. This includes 5 trainees who have recently started on the programme in February and are finalising their bike mechanics training. Excluding those currently on placements with the project, 64% of young people starting the project have completed 6-month work placements and training with Westminster Wheels. The team has secured £11,700 for the programme from our partners, and further sponsorship has been pledged by Grosvenor to support training and paid work placements for three of our existing trainees and future trainees recruited to the programme during 2022/23. 75 bikes have been donated to local community organisations to encourage inclusive, active transport and over 8 tonnes of bikes have been diverted from going to waste. Our focus for this quarter is to grow bike servicing income.

#### Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)

- 3.2 WAES has been shortlisted as a National Finalist in the Apprenticeship Awards for the Creative and Design Apprenticeship Provider of the Year. This recognises our work on the Library, Information and Archive Services Assistant Apprenticeship, training future librarians, including those for the City Council. The awards ceremony will take place on 22 March.

WAES is the lead organisation for a new Westminster Digital Hub, which is funded by the Greater London Authority and part of the Mayor's Academies Programme. The Hub launched on 31 January 2022 and is an innovative new partnership of training providers, digital employers, local authorities and third sector organisations aiming to get Londoners into good, well-paid work in the digital sector. The hub will help under-represented groups to navigate and overcome barriers to entering work. The partnership will also help to reduce the digital skills gap in London, with employers benefitting from a pipeline of potential recruits for their hard-to-fill vacancies.

#### Westminster Employment Service

- 3.3** The Westminster Employment Service is on track to support over 500 residents into employment in the period April 2021 – March 2022. This the best performance achieved by the Service since it was established in 2017. A major new grant funded programme to support the hospitality to attract talent into the sector is being announced in March.

### **3. Place Shaping**

- 3.1** Harrow Road: following the completion of the Harrow Road Place Plan in August 2021, we are progressing the design and planning at Harrow Road and Westbourne Green as well as the Maida Hill Market. Community feedback has been gathered on the design proposals and we are now commencing RIBA Stage 3 design. A planning application for Maida Hill Market and Harrow Road Open Space will be submitted in Spring 2022. Work is expected to start on site at Harrow Road Open Space and Westbourne Green in autumn 2022, and at Maida Hill Market in early 2023.
- 3.2** Strand Aldwych: construction work continues to budget and is due to be complete by December 2022. A portion of the costs associated with the new public space on Strand will be met by partners. Agreements are being drafted for review with partners' legal teams. It is anticipated that in-principle approvals within the next few months will be followed by final agreements later in the year. All will be in place for completion of the works.
- 3.3** Soho: the final phase of community engagement for the Vision for Soho is complete. A consultation report summarising feedback is publicly available. Emerging proposals will be reflective of feedback. In May 2022, a formal consultation period will be held allowing all of Soho's communities to review and comment upon the updated plans and projects.
- 3.4** Covent Garden: the Covent Garden Public Realm Framework document has been approved by the Cabinet Member for Business and Planning and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways.
- 3.5** Victoria Greening: work is continuing to explore how enhanced greening can be introduced to Victoria Street. We are awaiting final survey results, but the viability to providing in-ground tree planting on pavements appears very challenging. This has been communicated with residents, and they have indicated that planters would be desirable as a short-term solution. We will now finalise a design proposal for on-street planters.
- 3.6** Lillington and Longmoore Gardens Community Centre: residents have raised that they have been unable to engage with the project because of the pandemic and a dependence on remote meetings. There has been a clear message that more engagement was needed and that future events should take place in person. In agreement with the resident's association and residents who live near the centre, design work has been paused until May 2022. In the meantime, Housing will be holding discussions with the resident's association to address long-standing repairs issues.
- 3.7** Manchester Square: The design for the Manchester Square public realm scheme will be finalised in March with works planned to begin in Spring 2022. It will introduce a pedestrianised space to

the north of Manchester Square, with planting and seating to improve the attractiveness of this space.

#### **4. Vibrant Communities**

##### Gambling Licensing Policy

- 4.1 The Cabinet Member will recommend the policy is formally adopted at Full Council in June 2022. Once approved by Full Council the new Policy would likely come into force on 1 August 2022.

##### Environmental Supplementary Planning Document (ESPD)

- 4.2 The council has published its new Environmental Supplementary Planning Document, which sets out ambitious plans to place sustainability at the heart of the built environment in Westminster. The Environmental Supplementary Planning Document (ESPD) provides guidance for developers on how they can meet the environmental policies within the City Plan 2019-2040, which was adopted last year. The ESPD will ensure the highest possible proportion of development requiring planning permission achieves net zero carbon emissions. To further help in reaching our green ambitions, the council has also recently made the decision to reduce the pre-application advice fees for those seeking specific advice to retrofit their homes.

##### Planning

- 4.3 The application determination performance of the Town Planning Service continues to exceed the level required of the Department for Levelling Up and Communities:  
Percentage of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks:
- Target: 70%, result: **86% (exceeding target)**
- Percentage of non-major planning applications determined within 8 weeks:
- Target: 73%, result: **77% (exceeding target)**

##### Holocaust Memorial – Victoria Tower Gardens

- 4.4 A hearing took place in the High Court on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2022, where The London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust launched a legal challenge to the Secretary of State's decision to grant planning permission. Appearing as an interested party in the inquiry, the trust made a joint case with the Thorney Island Society and the Save Victoria Tower Gardens Campaign. The council is awaiting the outcome of the hearing.

The council has made a provisional Tree Preservation Order under Section 198 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in respect of 51 London Plane trees and one oak tree within Victoria Tower Gardens. The trees make a significant contribution to amenity and to the character and appearance of the conservation area and other heritage assets. Given the risk of harm to the trees because of the approved development and with reference to the duty of the City Council under the terms of section 198(b) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), a Tree Preservation Order is considered expedient in the interests of amenity, and in order to safeguard the preservation, potential replacement and future management of the trees. All parties with an interest in the land have been notified.

#### **5. Cabinet Member Key Decisions**

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

- Adoption of the Environmental Supplementary Planning Document (ESPD).