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Portfolio:	Planning and Economic Development
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1. Priorities of the Administration

Economy

Economic Development Strategy

A top priority is the creation of an Economic Development Strategy, and we are currently building out the framework and evidence base for this. The Economic Development Strategy will take a holistic approach to shaping the evolution of Westminster's economy - our people, places, and businesses - ensuring that there is sustainable, inclusive economic growth that benefits workers and residents. The strategy would have a dual focus on supporting Westminster's unique role in the national economy, meanwhile increasing Westminster residents' share of the borough's economic success. It will address structural inequalities in our economy and more fully optimise economic outcomes for residents, whilst also taking a longer-term view, focusing on ensuring sustainable, inclusive future economic growth for the borough.

CAZ Futures Action Plan

Cross-borough working is being progressed with Camden, City of London, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, RBKC, Central London Forward (CLF) and the GLA on a new Central Activities Zone (CAZ) Futures action plan to drive the recovery and adaptation of the CAZ over the next 3 to 5 years. The action plan will be published by CLF autumn 2022. The action plan will focus on the following 6 themes:

- Rethinking office use and workspaces;
- Supporting the retail and hospitality sectors and the culture and creative industries;
- Supporting and enhancing the visitor economy and London's role as a global centre for business and tourism;
- Enhancing the environment and the quality of public realm;
- Opportunities to increase residential use;
- Supporting the cross fertilisation of innovation and business growth.

Each of the CAZ boroughs and GLA have been asked to convene a theme. Westminster City Council is convening the theme around supporting the retail and hospitality sectors and the

culture and creative industries and planning a workshop with businesses and stakeholders from across the CAZ for late July to feed into the development of the action plan.

Ensuring recovery and economic success beyond the West End

Another priority matter is to establish a much-needed focus on economic recovery beyond the priority focus of the West End. The City Council's £10m High Streets Programme aimed to support the recovery and renewal of high streets across the city, will be led collaboratively between Place Shaping & Economy colleagues and proposals are being developed for Cabinet Member consideration. The development of this programme presents a key opportunity to take a different approach to ensure engagement at a much earlier stage with residents and businesses and other key stakeholders to assist in the scoping and prioritisation of high streets across the borough, understanding the issues and opportunities to be addressed. To help WCC resources go further a bid is currently being developed for the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 which will have a geographic focus on Harrow Road and a value if successful of c. £5m.

Proposals are being developed for Phase 3 of the Activations & Meanwhile Use Programme with a dual focus to tackle the rapid proliferation of low-quality occupiers on key high streets across the borough, with a special focus on the current situation on Oxford Street and to enliven and activate vacant units outside of the West End, in our local high streets and district centres, potentially with a greater focus on culture, arts and makers within these spaces. We will continue to prioritise emerging brands and up and coming artists / cultural activations with a connection to the borough wherever possible and activation strategies will align to core values around Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion, Sustainability, Health & Well-being etc.

New enterprise spaces are set to complete this year in priority areas of the borough. Works are in the final stages, with completion and site handover expected shortly for 470 Harrow Road providing a new permanent home for Rebel Business School. Rebel Business School will provide free and alternative business education to emerging entrepreneurs (including a cohort of 60 local residents), who will be supported through a year-long training programme to turn their business ideas into a successful venture. The Lisson Arches enterprise space is contributing to the Church Street Regeneration Scheme providing new light industrial work/production space, with over 11,000 sq. ft of high-quality space available at 70% below market rent. Practical completion is due for December 2022. Additionally, contracts have been awarded for both the operator and main contractor for the Church Street Triangle which will deliver a high-quality workspace, retail, training, and community venue, improve the public realm through greening and street furniture and redevelop the toilet block including a commercial function to support local traders and/or the wider community.

Extending WES's focus to support residents to access higher paid, fulfilling work with prospects

WES provides effective support for residents with the highest need and access to the least support including residents who are long term unemployed often with complex needs including those in temporary accommodation, those supported by the Troubled Families programme (now Supported Families), those with children and or known to social services, those in supported accommodation and those with a physical disability. The service will extend its focus to contribute to addressing in-work poverty, precarious and unfulfilling work and underemployment with support focused on entry towards and into good jobs, with decent pay and progression.

Planning

Key priorities

The following commitments have been identified as being those of highest priority in terms of our ambitions to ensure that planning decisions in Westminster put our residents first and deliver well designed, energy efficient, low carbon buildings that support the needs of our local communities:

- Ensure a greater say for residents on developments that affect them.
- Raise the proportion of affordable housing Westminster delivers from private developments, increase the proportion of affordable housing that is for social rent, and ensure intermediate products help meet the needs of key workers.
- Ensure that rent levels on any new intermediate housing provided on public land are at or below the London Living Rent.
- Prioritising retrofit and refurbishment over demolition and rebuild where appropriate to ensure embodied carbon is fully considered in future development.
- Promote retrofit of existing buildings, particularly historic buildings and those within conservation areas.
- Increase density where appropriate through contextual 'mid-rise' development and seek to prevent the spread of tall buildings beyond current clusters.
- Ensure that established 'tenure blind' principles are consistently applied to all new homes.

To help address these issues, we are currently reviewing options in terms of where existing planning policies need revising, or new policies or guidance produced.

Approach to delivery/progress to date

Community Engagement

The council recently published its Early Community Engagement Guidance and officers are working to ensure that the core principle the guidance identifies, putting communities at the heart of the planning process so that outcomes reflect their aspirations, is embedded across all plan making and decision making planning activities the council undertakes.

Affordable Housing – Tenures

Amendment of the proportion of affordable housing delivered as social rent, and measures to ensure intermediate affordable housing helps key workers, are likely to require review of the existing affordable housing policy in the City Plan. Officers are developing a strategy and timetable for delivery of this key priority.

Affordable Housing - Affordability

Existing City Plan policy, London Plan policy and London Plan affordable housing guidance does not preclude the council from seeking rent levels on new intermediate housing provided on public land at or below the London Living Rent. The priority can therefore be delivered through negotiation by planning officers on a case-by-case basis.

Promoting Building Retention & Embedded Carbon

Following the publication of the Environmental Supplemental Planning Document in February 2022, all major developments are now expected to submit a Whole Life Carbon assessment to demolition that their design is truly sustainable and in accordance with Policy 38 in the City Plan. To support the effective implementation of the City Plan policy and the supporting guidance, the Town Planning service has recently recruited two sustainability specialists to its Design, Sustainability and Conservation Team.

Promoting Existing Building Retrofit

The Town Planning service is developing a number of measures to support increased delivery of retrofit measures to improve the sustainability of our building stock, including historic buildings, which can be more difficult to sensitively retrofit. Officers are developing 'How to' guides to support householders and other applicants to make applications for simple retrofit and sustainability improvements such as replacement of windows and installation of solar panels. The service is also developing proposals to establish a Retrofit Taskforce, which will comprise a high-level group of industry experts. It will work with officers to identify relevant challenges to historic building retrofit in Westminster and develop a work programme to positively address them, providing technical expertise to feed into and develop this.

Contextual Development & Tall Buildings

Existing Policy 41 in the City Plan limits proposals for tall buildings to within specified areas, namely, the Opportunity Areas, at the junction of Edgware Road and the Marylebone Flyover and the Housing Renewal Areas. The expectation elsewhere in the city is that development will be contextual in terms of its scale and height. Therefore, the aspirations for development to be mid-rise in scale and to limit the spread of tall buildings beyond their current clusters can be delivered via existing adopted City Plan policy on a case-by-case basis through planning decisions.

Tenure-Blind Development

Existing City Plan policy, London Plan policy and London Plan housing guidance supports a tenure-blind approach to all housing. Therefore, this priority can be delivered via appropriate application of existing adopted policies and guidance.

Place Shaping

The following priorities have been identified and the team are working with Council departments and Members to incorporate these within various Place Plans:

- Principles of the 15-minute city and projects to enhance sustainable neighbourhoods
- Active travel, emphasis on permeability and intuitive local routes for walking and cycling
- Focus on local high streets
- Emphasis on public-private partnerships to unlock wider place benefits
- Developing a co-creative approach with communities across projects to ensure that places are representative of the demographic they serve

In addition, a Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 2 Bid will be submitted in July to support regeneration efforts linked to the Harrow Road Place Plan.

Smart City

Key Priorities

The top priority for the Smart City programme is to ensure that all residents benefit from digital transformation.

Another priority is to plan for a smarter future for our city with work underway to develop our Smart City Operating System. The Smart City Operating System will be the mission control hub for operating and managing smart city services, making data available to our communities and businesses, and building a digital model.

The programme encompasses four themes – Clean Tech, Empowering People, Extraordinary Experiences, and Innovation Ecosystem – each with their own aims and strategic outcomes that will enable us to build an inclusive Smart City for our residents now and in the future.

Approach to delivery/progress to date

Clean Tech

Ancoris Proof of Concept - Clean Tech staff have attended a number of events and engaged with the Westminster Community to get further feedback on the prototype as well as engage in wider conversations around Air Quality and Climate Change.

Schools Air Quality Pilot Public Portal - The Public portal has been published and shared with the four Primary Schools involved with the pilot on Clean Air Day (16/06/2022).

Smogmobile Event - The Smog mobile is a mobile air quality monitoring lab which can track emissions in real time both inside and outside the vehicle to demonstrate the health risks created by pollution from vehicles and engine idling.

Carbon Audits - The Business Energy Audit Scheme offers support to Westminster-based businesses to assist them to transition to a green economic recovery following the impact of Covid-19. Businesses will receive bespoke recommendations and tailored support to help reduce their emissions and associated costs.

Empowering People

Westminster Innovation Challenge - WIC ideas are being formatted into a presentation to pass on to the relevant departments for feedback and data from them to update the WIC applicant.

Extraordinary Experiences

Virtual Library - We are working with our Library Service to explore new ways to bring experiences to residents and visitors to our libraries by creating new virtual experiences through the Westminster City Council website, creating touch points between the physical and the digital library service with an expansion around events, communities and more.

Innovation Ecosystem

University Collaborations - RCA/Imperial Partnership is a co-delivery project of the 2022 'IMPACT' module in MSc Innovation Design Engineering by Smart City and Place Shaping. The challenge question is: Smart Design for the Future of Westminster's High Streets in a Climate Emergency.

Proactive Pilots - Proactive pilots are focussed on our internal needs as a council by proactively problem solving for our services, and are small scale projects to test a concept or an idea that is primarily funded by the Smart City team. If these small-scale pilots are successful, they can then be rolled out across the council.

City Lions/Smart City Social Engagement Project with Volume Ltd (Proactive Pilot) - One of the challenges City Lions has faced is reaching certain Westminster wards and the aim of this project is to create specific target audience advertisement within these catchment areas. Smart City has appointed Volume Ltd to create an interactive Instagram game that allows young people to explore what City Lions has to offer as well as navigate through the page to discover which offer appeals to them and how to sign up. Volume Ltd will create a dashboard to monitor the performance of the adverts which will provide valuable insights and learnings for Westminster and in turn help to improve future outcomes.

Digital Inclusion

Digital Inclusion Housing pilot - The pilot project is current in the delivery stage and is going well. To date we have received a total of 142 resident contact details who have indicated that they will like digital support. The pilot will run to the end of July, and then evaluations will commence in August.

Friends & Family – two residents focus groups have successfully completed and the outcomes are being evaluated.

Employment - Current working with WES and WAES on how to facilitate employment for residents, including liaising with IT companies for training that will lead to suitable employment.

Community Hubs - NHS Pimlico GP have reached out to collaborate with WCC Digital Ambassadors and initial consultation is ongoing.

Devices - This month we met with an external company that has worked with other Government bodies in the refurbishment of devices. The Social Value team met with stakeholders regarding donations of devices from businesses as part of their social value.

Skills and confidence/Training - The Digital Inclusion Team are currently in discussions with the Organisational Development team for a digital skills support project, this will involve creating online training modules, to assist residents with accessing Council digital services.

Digital Place

Connect Westminster Business Voucher Scheme - The Connect Westminster Business Voucher Scheme is being delivered in Westminster and the West End Partnership area. Businesses within this area are eligible for one voucher per business and vouchers guarantee the reimbursement of up to £2,000 of the capital costs associated with their connection. To date, 899 vouchers have been issued.

Digital Street Markets – This includes the deployment of a free and secure WiFi network for use by eligible market traders operating at Westminster Council's owned markets and a three-year programme of free digital skills training for any eligible business in Westminster.