



City of Westminster

Finance, Planning and Economic Development
Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 22 September 2022

Portfolio: Planning and Economic Development

The Report of: Councillor Geoff Barraclough

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- 1. The following key decisions have been made in the period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 28 June:**
 - 20 June 2022 – Pimlico Neighbourhood Plan Decision Statement
- 2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration.**

Overarching Economic Development Strategy for the Borough

Work progresses in the development of an Economic Development Strategy to ensure that Westminster remains economically successful, with sustainable and inclusive growth that benefits all residents and future generations. The strategy will have the following objectives:

- Westminster remains economically successful, with a diverse, sustainable, resilient economy that delivers growth and benefits for all residents today and tomorrow.
- Residents have the best skills to take advantage of the city's employment opportunities and develop fulfilling careers .
- Reimagine and revive Oxford Street and the wider West End, safeguarding its leading status as the nation's best high street and the economic powerhouse of both the London and national economy, ensuring the West End delivers a world class offer and experience to businesses, visitors, workers, and residents alike.
- Support small businesses to grow and remain in the heart of the capital while preparing our local high streets to face the future, helping them to become more inviting, busy, at the heart of their communities and accessible to everyone within the community.

High Streets

High Streets Programme

With £10m of council funding secured to support the recovery and renewal of high streets across the city, the Economy team are working with Place Shaping colleagues to develop proposals. Following steer by Cabinet Members, this programme is expected to focus on developing a 15-minute city

approach to supporting high streets. Cross-departmental programme teams are being established to gather evidence, scope a public engagement exercise to identify opportunities and propose a series of pilot projects for delivery.

Harrow Road

The North Westminster Economic Development Area (NWEDA) is a designation intended to address the needs of the main area of economic renewal in areas with the greatest deprivation in Westminster. It includes Harrow Road, which has a heightened priority under the new administration. We are:

- Developing the Harrow Road Place Plan project programme and costings for Cabinet Member review and the CPSR autumn submission.
- Progressing the design development of the Good Growth Fund projects - public realm improvement works at Maida Hill Market, Harrow Road Open Space and Westbourne Green Open Space. This will involve a full design review of the schemes developed to date to see where additional value and benefits can be brought to the proposals given the heightened priority for this area.
- Submitting a Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 2 Bid to support regeneration efforts linked to the Harrow Road Place Plan. The bid seeks investment to bring forward the complete refurbishment and re-activation of Flamboyant Arts.
- Supporting Paddington Arts with their option scoping and other Harrow Road Place Plan projects.

Development of a Creative Enterprise Zone for Harrow Road

Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ) are a Mayor of London initiative to designate areas of London where artists and creative businesses can find permanent affordable space to work, are supported to start-up and grow, and where local people are helped to learn creative sector skills and access pathways to employment.

The council submitted an expression of interest for the Harrow Road area and was successful at the first stage, with the deadline of 24 October 2022 for Stage 2 submissions. CEZ accreditation provides the opportunity for greater support for Harrow Road's existing creative and cultural community, provide new pathways into employment for residents (including developing new networks between Harrow Road and the creative industries elsewhere in the city) and support for the creation of new affordable and supportive workspaces for creative enterprise.

Paddington

Through the Paddington Place Plan we will bring forward projects to link the neighbourhoods of Harrow Road, Queensway, Westbourne and Church Street to the economic dynamism of the Paddington Opportunity Area and the Central Activities Zone (CAZ). This includes a series of coordinated public realm projects that aim to deliver healthier environments and support better movement for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Council is exploring projects that could be adopted and delivered with funding from Paddington's Place Shaping capital budget (currently £1.8M).

Pimlico

The current Place Shaping capital budget for Pimlico (£1.790m) will be used to deliver the Highways scheme for the Warwick Way and Churton Street town centre. It is expected that this will go to public

consultation in October/November 2022. A timeframe for detailed design and delivery will follow for expected implementation in 2023.

The development of a Place Plan will commence once the scheme for the town centre is agreed. This will build upon the emerging Pimlico Neighbourhood Plan (if adopted) and will be developed together with the Pimlico community.

Open Spaces, Greener Places Programme

This small grants programme was set up to support the objectives and priorities in the policy document, “A Partnership Approach to Open Space and Biodiversity in Westminster” and has been running since 2017, supporting over 25 projects across Westminster. The programme has not run this year while it is being developed and improved to align with the Council’s new emerging priorities. It is anticipated that the programme will run again in 2023/24 to support community greening projects across the city.

West End and Central Activities Zone

Oxford Street District

We continue to work on revising the Oxford District programme to ensure that it meets its key objectives while remaining deliverable within a realistic budget and timescale, working with stakeholders including the New West End Company.

Strand Aldwych

The construction works at Strand Aldwych are in the final stages and due for completion in November 2022 with a launch is being planned towards the end of November. Details of the management model are being finalised with partners to ensure the costs are met through financial contributions and supported by a governance structure and processes. A forward programme of curated activity on the new public space is being developed, drawing on partners’ extensive expertise in this area. A strategy for ongoing monitoring and engagement is being developed to inform ongoing management and future phases of work.

Soho

WCC has confirmed it will fund the waste education/enforcement post requested in the recent ‘Soho Comes Clean’ report produced by the Soho Neighbourhood Forum. This will be a crucial first step to taking forward the report’s main recommendations.

WCC officers have been tasked with completing monitoring works throughout Soho focusing on noise, traffic and air quality.

This work will allow for further understanding of issues and opportunities facing Soho and will be able to corroborate or disprove current assumptions. Officers will soon be discussing the details of proposed monitoring work with Ward Councillors. Following this, a meeting will take place with key stakeholders to ensure proposed monitoring work aligns with local ambitions and previous work such as that initiated by the Soho Neighbourhood Forum.

It is intended that proposed monitoring work will begin soon after the review with Ward Councillors and key stakeholders is completed. Once results from the monitoring work have been analysed, specific decisions will be made around the suitable next steps for future investment in Soho backing

the Soho Neighbourhood Plan. The monitoring work will be completed using the WCC Soho Capital Programme.

Rupert Street ‘Late Night’ Trial

Following a series of successful evening and night-time events, a Rupert Street ‘Late Nights’ trial will allow traders to exploit the West End’s evening footfall beyond the normal operating times, currently ceasing at 18:00, Thursday – Saturday. Following a consultation, this is due to commence in mid-October.

Covent Garden

The Covent Garden Public Realm Framework has been developed as a ‘blueprint’ to help inform and direct future schemes and changes to the public realm. The document sets out an agreed vision, and parameters for future projects, which the council and stakeholders can work towards collectively and will be available on the Council website shortly.

Victoria

The Victoria Place Plan capital budget for 2022/23 is being used to develop the following areas of work and seed fund delivery where appropriate:

Future Victoria

Work on the Future Victoria Masterplan was disrupted by COVID-19. WCC officers are now re-engaging with Network Rail and other key partners to discuss next steps for this work that is aimed at setting out a concept masterplan for the station and its surrounding areas. It is expected that recommencing community engagement activities will be central to this work.

Victoria Street Greening

Officers will explore the potential of permanent greening measures that can be delivered over a medium / longer-term period, capitalising on the investment and change that will be seen through wider projects such as Future Victoria.

Proposals for free standing / above ground tree planters have been rejected because these would have limited impact.

Lillington and Longmore Estate

WCC is committed to delivering the extensive refurbishment of the L&L Estate Community Centre. The project was paused prior to the elections given the need to further engage with the Lillington and Longmore Community Gardens Residents Association (LALGRA).

Following an initial site visit from senior officers, WCC Place Shaping and Housing colleagues are currently reviewing the proposals developed to date. Following this it is expected that WCC officers will meet with LALGRA to review the project and agree an approach to addressing the outstanding issues with the design. Once a final design solution is agreed, WCC will proceed towards submitting a planning application in winter 2022 and finalising the technical design requirements needed for delivery on site.

In parallel with the above, Place Shaping officers are working with Housing colleagues to explore a public realm improvement scheme on St James the Less Church Square.

Central Activities Zone (CAZ) Futures

The Council has been working with Camden, City of London, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and 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 in autumn 2022.

On 25 July, WCC hosted a workshop with businesses, sector reps and strategic partners including CLF, GLA, London and Partners and CAZ boroughs. The workshop sought to better understand the challenges and opportunities relevant to the Retail & Hospitality sectors and Creative & Cultural industries in the CAZ and identify actions to support their recovery and future.

West End Future Occupiers – Direct to Consumer (D2C) trade mission

The council is working in partnership with London and Partners (L&P), to bring together a trade mission of international D2C brands considering investment in retail locations in London. The brands will be hosted in the West End from 17-19 October 2022, as part of West End Future Occupiers Programme to generate economic growth in the West End and drive recovery that is resilient, sustainable and inclusive, by bringing new occupiers to vacant retail, hospitality and leisure spaces and telling a positive story of consistent and compelling narrative about London's West End to international markets.

Employment

Hospitality & Leisure Recruitment Service

The project will be launched in October following design work led by the BID-led partnership. The focus of the new service will be to support businesses to secure local talent for London Living Wage careers and to work with employers committed to providing training and progression opportunities.

We are linking the programme with local projects including the Westminster Employment Service, Westminster Kingsway Colleges, local charities and DWP programmes to ensure a pipeline of talent through to the project.

Westminster Employment Service & London Living Wage

We have taken a decision that the Westminster Employment Service will now only work with employers that pay the London Living Wage. In recent years the Service was already increasingly working with employers that are either London Living Wage accredited or who have roles at London Living Wage which the team advertises. The new approach also builds on s106 guidance for developers, which sets out that the Service will only support recruitment for London Living Wage roles and since 2019, as a condition of the Council's London Living Wage Foundation accreditation, all new Council suppliers must pay Living Wage or London Living Wage. The service's first London Living Wage only jobs fair is being planned for the first week of November. Working exclusively with London Living Wage employers will enhance outcomes and incomes for residents and support the Council's wider advocacy of good work.

Review of WES Coaching Model

The WES Coaching Service will continue to do more than move residents from unemployment into a low paid job and in-work poverty. The focus on supporting entry towards and into good jobs with decent pay and progression remains, however a broader and more responsive lens is needed to effectively navigate and bring together the needs of the individual and the labour market.

A review of the current “coaching model” to determine its suitability in terms of post-pandemic service delivery is underway. The review will consider whether the client type has changed since the inception of the service, the makeup of claimants now and in the future – whether there is a need to move from a “one size fits all” model to enable the service to consider swift, intensive interventions to mitigate against longer term unemployment in the borough population and gauge how agile the current model is to respond to current and future demand.

Alongside the review, the Coaching Service continues to engage with our residents via community outreach to raise the profile of the service. In August, an event was held at the Greenside Community Centre for Ukrainian refugees, the team enrolled 18 Ukrainians for the coaching service referring a number to WAES for ESOL courses where appropriate.

The service is strengthening its response to youth unemployment and NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). In February 2022, Harris Academy approached the WES Coaching youth workstream seeking support for 18 students identified by the school as at risk of becoming NEET, and all 18 students secured college places to study a course of their choice. Harris Academy has confirmed its intention to work with WES to provide the same programme to year 11 students in 2023. They would also like to explore providing early intervention support to ‘at risk’ students in year 10 as well as a programme for Year 9s identified as being at risk of becoming NEET.

Business and Economy

Cost of Living Campaign

Following successful campaigns in recent years to engage businesses in campaigns to support community programmes, including Afghan refugees and the response to the pandemic, the Responsible Economy Team is working with the Communities Team and One Westminster to develop a Cost of Living Campaign which businesses and organisations across the City can support. A menu of activity which businesses can get behind will be introduced by Councillors at the Business Community Partnerships Network meeting on 29th September. All contributions – in-kind time, donations of goods and financial support will be tracked by the Team.

The Council is working with external partners to provide laptops and sim cards to reduce digital exclusion. A long-term strategy is being developed to ensure this programme can continue sustainably. In addition, s106 and CIL funding has been used to provide devices for children entering primary school.

Markets as Business Incubators

A boroughwide scheme is in place to attract more market traders and provide a risk-free option to residents, start-ups, and fledgling businesses to trial trading on our markets. The offer consists of the Council pledging to cover the initial cost of application, subsidise the pitch-fees for a 3-month period, alongside covering the subsequent cost of renewal. The window for applications closes on 31 October, with 5 applications already being received.

We are delivering a free, 8-week programme of vocational learning to residents and disadvantaged groups predominantly in the north of the borough. Initially, the scheme will target 16 – 24-year-olds, offering them free training courses in sustainable business planning and digital marketing skills. Under the supervision and guidance of coaches, they will be assessed on theory and practical

demonstration of knowledge and successful graduates will gain a Level 3 accredited qualification in the Principles of Business.

Reducing our Markets' Environmental Impact

In collaboration with Waste, Climate Change, and Communities colleagues, a series of monthly educational workshops have been delivered over a 3-month period, culminating in October. Topics are led primarily by Veolia and include the importance of proper recycling, the issue of food wastage, displaying recycling correctly, and green planting exercises. The largest of these will be the Big Green Weekend (24 September), where 7 sustainable non-profit organisations will provide sustainable workshops across 3 markets, covering the whole borough.

At the Night Market on 12 October, a revolutionary seaweed and plant extract packaging to replace plastic takeaway food boxes will be trailed. Notpla boxes are sustainable, recyclable, and biodegradable (degrading naturally in 4-6 weeks). 1000 of the products will be disseminated amongst participating traders, all of which are licensed in Westminster, to be later trialled at markets across the borough.

Town Planning and Planning Policy

Key initiatives under way:

Retrofit How To Guides

The first of our ['How To' retrofit guides](#) was published on the council's website in August 2022. This guide focuses on upgrading windows to improve their energy efficiency, with advice on a range of measures including double glazing. This is the first of a series of simple guides for householders designed to enable residents to retrofit their properties to improve their energy efficiency, promote understanding of the planning system and simplify the planning application process for householders, setting out where permission is required and what alterations are likely to be acceptable. A 'How To' guide on air source heat pumps is due to be published in September with future guides including solar panels and green roofs to be published later in 2022.

Retrofit Task Force

Work is progressing to establish a taskforce which will include experts from across the field of historic building retrofit. This will work to bring together local stakeholders from the resident and property-owning communities and retrofit experts with the aim of unlocking the potential of retrofit in Westminster. It will collaboratively identify challenges relevant to the retrofit of Westminster's historic buildings and develop and implement a work programme to address them. This will include developing evidence and pilot projects, recommending policy and process changes and championing best practice. The work programme for the task force will be established following a stakeholder workshop which is due to be held in October 2022. Officers in the Smart City team are working with partners to develop an updated data set on emissions from existing buildings in the borough.

Article 4 Direction

The council negotiated with DLUHC officials to agree on how the Article 4 Direction could be amended to meet the requirements of the Secretary of State that it cover 'as small a geographic area as possible'. A revised boundary, that captures key commercial areas of the CAZ was therefore agreed and it came in to force on 22 July 2022.

Smaller centres outside of the CAZ are subject to a separate Non-Immediate Article 4 Direction, where justification focusses on their role in providing a range of shops and services to surrounding local communities, rather than national economic benefits. The government has confirmed that it supports this Article 4 and the council therefore intends to also 'confirm' that Direction (i.e. bring it into force) in December 2022.

Pimlico Neighbourhood Plan

Since its designation in 2015, the key goal of the Pimlico Neighbourhood Forum has been to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for Pimlico and the Forum has undertaken significant engagement with the local community over several years as the plan was progressed.

The Plan is subject to a Referendum on 22nd September where residents of the Pimlico Neighbourhood Area will be asked if they would like the Plan to be used to determine planning applications in their area. Should the Referendum result in a majority 'yes' vote then the PNP will automatically become part of the council's development plan. Should the Referendum result in a majority 'no' vote the council will offer to support the Forum in exploring what needs to be done to ensure a plan that is more likely to be supported at referendum can be brought forward.

Key Initiatives planned for completion by 2023:

Establishing a Design Review Panel for Westminster

Preparatory work is underway to set up a design review panel for Westminster to provide independent and expert design advice on new development to complement and support that provided by the council's design officers. The panel will support the implementation of our City Plan policy and work to ensure Westminster maintains and enhances its reputation for excellence in design in the built environment. The aim is to have a panel in place in early 2023.

Partial City Plan Review

The City Plan will be subject to a partial review, with initial consultation (formally known as Regulation 18) likely to launch next month. We have taken the decision to partially review aspects of the plan in order to meet the priorities of the new administration. There will be a strong focus on engagement with communities both throughout the formal consultation period but also in between consultation as evidence is gathered to support new policies and they are drafted.