



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

## Westminster Scrutiny Commission

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Westminster Scrutiny Commission** held on **Wednesday 20th July, 2022**, Rooms 18.06 - 18.08, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

**Members Present:** Councillors Patricia McAllister, Karen Scarborough, Aziz Toki and Jason Williams.

**Also Present:** Councillor Adam Hug (Leader of the Council), Stuart Love (Chief Executive), Richard Cressey (Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison) and Clare O'Keefe (Temporary Joint Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor).

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Angela Piddock

#### 1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

- 1.1 Nominations for the post of Chair were invited. One nomination was received and seconded. There were no further nominations.
- 1.2 **RESOLVED:** That Councillor McAllister be appointed Chair of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission.

#### 2 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- 2.1 The Chair welcomed Committee Members and Councillor Adam Hug, Leader of the Council) and Stuart Love (Chief Executive) to the meeting.
- 2.2 The Chair stated that she strongly supports the role of Member-led scrutiny in holding decision-makers to account and how it underpins the basic functioning of local government. The Chair noted the importance of a properly resourced and staffed scrutiny function to support this and expressed a hope that Scrutiny would be treated with the esteem it deserves in the future. The Leader of the Council voiced his support to this and the Chief Executive, on behalf of officers, expressed an apology for the staffing issues, noted that steps had been taken to address this, and clarified that the importance of scrutiny is indeed recognised and taken seriously by officers.

- 2.3 The Chair announced that Councillor Aziz Toki was substituting for Councillor Angela Piddock.
- 2.4 The Chair informed the Committee that whilst only three Policy and Scrutiny Committee Chairs were present, (Cllr McAllister of the Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Williams of the Communities, City Management and Air Quality Policy and Scrutiny Committee and Cllr Toki who was sitting for Cllr Piddock of the Children & Adults, Public Health & Voluntary Sector Policy and Scrutiny Committee), Cllr Fisher would be present at all subsequent Committees as Chair of the Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee. This will be confirmed through the normal Constitutional routes for such changes.

### **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **4 LEADER'S UPDATE**

- 4.1 The Leader of the Council provided an update on forthcoming and current issues. The Leader responded to questions on the following topics:
- The importance of regeneration across the borough focusing on the hearts of communities, including ensuring that any reviews of schemes will not incur delays whilst looking to enhance work being done.
  - The importance of having a long-term strategy to deal with the cost-of-living crisis. Furthermore, the importance of connecting out-of-borough residents to schemes they are entitled to.
  - The importance of encouraging residents to respond to Transport for London's (TfL) consultation on proposed bus cuts and to push for a sustainable financial plan from TfL.
  - The importance of sustaining the momentum of enforcement activity regarding candy stores.
  - The importance of engaging with residents on issues, such as regeneration schemes, and the best ways in which to do this, for instance, residents' ballots, to champion residents decision-making.
  - The importance of receiving regular updates in due course on the fair funding review, the census and also the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's finances.
  - The importance of transparency around the remuneration of members of the Future of Westminster Commission as well as having a robust costing strategy, including for potential extension of the project.
  - The importance of members of the Future of Westminster Commission having broad and deep connections to Westminster, with all areas of Westminster being represented.
  - The importance of clear short, medium, and long term aims for the Future of Westminster Commission and finding ways of ensuring wide engagement and opportunities to contribute to workstreams.

- The importance of the Future of Westminster Commission being adequately scrutinised.
- 4.2 Another issue discussed was the different bi and tri-borough services and, in particular, Children's and Adults Services as bi-borough services. Furthermore, the responses to the recommendations for the Marble Arch Mound project were discussed as well as the need for a report on the Council workforce, including data on staff turnover and diversity.
- 4.3 The Chief Executive made a comment on the heatwave and its impact on the City and Council staff. The Committee recorded its thanks to all staff who have worked on the response to the heatwave.

**4.3 ACTIONS:**

1. That an annual report would be presented to the Cabinet on the Council workforce which will, in turn, be presented to the Committee.
2. That officers would confirm that the recommendations from the Mound have been adequately responded to.
3. That the new candy store near Marble Arch as mentioned by Cllr Scarborough would be investigated.
4. That the timelines for regeneration schemes, like Ebury, would be checked and if the timelines had changed from what was initially stated then the Commission will be informed.
5. That officers would look at what more the Council can do to expand access to out-of-borough residents to schemes they are entitled to.
6. That the Future of Westminster Commission membership list would be kept under review to ensure representation across Westminster.
7. That information on the remuneration of Future of Westminster Commission Chairs would be provided offline to Members of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission.
8. That an update on the impact of COVID-19 on Council finances would be shared with the Finance, Planning and Economic Development Committee and a discussion would take place between Cllr Fisher and Cllr McAllister to agree how this topic could be managed between that committee and the Scrutiny Commission.
9. That a discussion would take place, offline, between the Chair and the Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison regarding the minutes of previous Committees.
10. That action would continue to be taken to resolve staffing issues in the Policy and Scrutiny team.

**5 ANNUAL POLICY AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

- 5.1 The Committee heard an update from the Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison on the annual Policy and Scrutiny work programme from the four Policy and Scrutiny Committees and the emerging key themes that have arisen. The Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison responded to questions on the following topics:

- The importance of using the right mechanisms and resources, such as Single Member Investigations and Task Groups, to cover an appropriate breadth and depth of topics.
- The importance of having work programmes which are relevant and add benefit to policies.
- The importance of working out what process suits each Committee, and specifically, whether Chairs would like both Cabinet Members in attendance at each Committee and speaking to the Cabinet Members about this.
- The importance of including emergency preparedness, especially relating to flooding, which might arise as a matter of urgency soon after the time of the Committee. This matter is to be considered at different levels by this Commission and the Communities, City Management and Air Quality Committee chaired by Cllr Williams

5.2 Other issues discussed included the recruitment for the Policy and Scrutiny Coordinator role and ensuring all Policy and Scrutiny officers are adequately trained. It was noted that the Council has good scrutiny networks across many local authorities.

### 5.3 **ACTIONS:**

1. That the Policy and Scrutiny Coordinator role job description be given to the Chair.

## 6 **WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME**

6.1 The Committee reviewed potential items to be prioritised for the 2022/23 work programme, which included focusing on:

- The Council Vision update in October.
- An update on the Future of Westminster Commission in January.
- A report which brings together the staff survey, diversity and inclusion and, overall, a temperature check of the Council in March.
- Reviewing the annual scrutiny report.
- Residents participating in wider priorities, including participatory budget setting, and how this will work in practice.
- Emergency preparedness

## 7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

7.1 There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 20:35

**CHAIR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_