

Date:	31 October 2022
Portfolio:	City Management & Air Quality
The Report of:	Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg
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- 1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 13 September:**
 - 27/09/2022 – PSSP Concept Design
- 2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration.**

2.1 City Management

Operation London Bridge (Cleansing)

Immediately after the announcement of HM Queen Elizabeth II death on 8 September we deployed an additional 10-15 sweepers per day to increase cleansing in the St James's area. The Mall and area immediately outside Buckingham Palace was cleaned by Royal Parks (the Council focussing on routes from Victoria/Green Park Stations) An additional 30 Veolia staff also worked on the full-dress rehearsal day.

We received very positive feedback from the military on the preparations (sanding to stop horses slipping etc) and clean up afterwards. The route used for the funeral procession, and the path for the hearse (travelling to the Palace of Westminster) was thoroughly cleaned and cleansing vehicles followed behind the journey to clean up the carriageway. Outside of the actual event days, we provided intensive cleansing for the large crowds queuing to see the Queen lying in state and for those camping out in the area for the funeral on 19 Sept. I would like to thank all our staff who carried out these activities and our contractors Veolia and FMConway for all their help and support during this time.

Public Conveniences – During Mourning Period

From 9 September – 19 September Parliament Street public toilets were open 24/7 free of charge due to crowds travelling to Westminster. Additional temporary toilets were also deployed at 4 locations around the Millbank area (organised by the DCMS) with further temporary toilets in the Royal Parks. In anticipation of large crowds from 17 – 19 September we made all Westminster public toilets free entry. On that weekend (17 – 19 Sept) the Council did not deploy the usual weekend temporary urinals/portaloos across the West End as we would not be able to service/empty them

due to a potential health hazards. A large numbers of litter bins etc were also removed around the wider event area to remove obstructions for visitors.

Public Conveniences Update

From 6 October Weekend urinals and portaloos in the West End will be deployed from Thursday afternoons through to Monday mornings. High visibility lamp-post signs will be printed to highlight these facilities. The Council website will also be updated in the upcoming weeks. The complete refurbishment of the Broadwick Street Auto Toilet is also nearly completed and is scheduled to re-open on 17 October.

Dumping Hotspots in Westminster – Waste Action Squad

Plans for our Waste Action Squad trial are currently in progress for our October launch due to delays from the Queen’s funeral preparations. The trial will begin with hotspots located in the North of the Borough. Our partners at Veolia will be able to help make immediate improvements to street scenes during walkabouts and with extra deep-cleansing resources whilst half the team engage with residents. We will be sharing more communications via email with Ward Councillors and social media closer to the launch.

The key objectives for the multi-agency team are: To provide a highly visible operation that shows this is an area of focus and that we are acting against persistent problems. To engage residents in a meaningful conversation about waste problems in their neighbourhood and gather insight into how they think these could be tackled together and educate on the best ways of disposing of their waste to keep their streets clean and tidy, and to create an action plan following this engagement to tackle these issues.

Food Waste Roll-out in Westminster

Food Waste Roll-out continues at place throughout the City. Due to delays caused by funeral preparations, roll-out in Maida Vale recommenced on 21 September. Roll-out in Little Venice ward will begin in mid-October after engagement with Ward Councillors, media announcements and distribution of caddies etc.

City Inspectors

In conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Communities & Public Protection, I am responsible for the deployment of City Inspectors for all non-regulatory enforcement activities (illegal dumping of waste, littering and other street based anti-social behaviour issues such as dangerously placed dockless bikes).

Edgware Road Strategy Group

On 29 September I met with officers and stakeholders to discuss the issues that matter the most to our residents including highways work, public realm improvements, licensing for tables and chairs, tackling noisy vehicles, and enforcement for fly-tipping. In addition to wider group meetings set quarterly fortnightly operational meetings have been established. These include officers from a range of services and is aimed at focusing activity on the ground. We continue to work collectively with our partners to revitalize our highstreets and make Westminster a clean, safe and welcoming place for all.

Queensway Strategy Group

On 13 October the inaugural session of Queensway Strategy Group was held with Lancaster Gate and Bayswater Ward Councillors along with Officers and stakeholders. The group confirmed the boundary area of focus, updated on activity currently in progress in the area and identified / agreed priorities. We plan to meet quarterly and will share updates with this Committee after every session.

Dockless Bikes in Westminster

The Council continues to remove and seize dockless bikes left in a hazardous or obstructive way both on the street and on the pavement. We encourage operators to remind users to park bikes in a safe, designated location, cap the number of bikes in the City and increase fines for dangerous parking. Discussions are ongoing and a more substantial update will be available for the next meeting of this Committee.

Tree Pits and Guerrilla Gardening in Westminster

Community gardening in tree pits, also known as “guerrilla gardening”, can be defined as the introduction of planting such as flowers, grasses, or shrubs to existing tree pits on the public highway by individual residents or groups of residents. In line with our commitment of creating a greener City officers are currently working on guidance for interested parties to ensure gardening practises are safe, and without hazard for those travelling on the pavement, as well as gardening advice for plants and shrubs.

St John’s Wood High Street – Public Realm Improvements

The public consultation on public realm improvements to St John’s Wood High Street will begin on 28 September and run through 29 October following informal consultation with Ward Councillors and the St John’s Wood High Street Society. Proposals include more opportunities for alfresco dining, junction improvements, new informal crossing points, trees, benches, and traffic calming measures while increasing the levels of accessibility and ease of pedestrian movement.

In addition to a new website created for the scheme (www.sjwhighstreet.co.uk) with visualisations, and a link to the on-line survey, officers plan to drop c.3600 letters to addresses in the vicinity of the scheme, hand out flyers, place statutory notices on lamp columns, more social media announcements, and pending approval use a shopfront on the High Street for display of scheme boards.

Westminster’s Gas Lamps

Due to a delay caused by HM Queen Elizabeth II funeral and mourning period our planned engagement of residents, stakeholders and interested parties will now commence from 20 October – 20 November. As part of the review the Council would like to hear views on how the new upgraded lights maintain the heritage look and feel as accurately as possible.

The proposed evening site visits for interested stakeholders to view our proposed Gas effect LED lanterns on Queen Anne’s Gate are on 25 October, 2 November and 10 November. Here officers will discuss the extensive works undertaken to date in developing the gas mimics, gain feedback and see first-hand the gas effect LED lanterns in operation.

2.2 Update on Air Quality in Westminster

Engine Idling

The demand for local authorities to enforce against vehicles unnecessarily engine idling has become increasingly necessary due to concerns regarding air quality. Currently there are two avenues to enforce idling. The most common via Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) under The Road Traffic Regulations 2002. The level of fine officers' currently issue is £20, increasing to £40 after 28 days of issue and can be challenged via the Magistrates' Court. No signage is required to enable enforcement, but in order for an FPN to be issued, the driver must volunteer their name and address to the authorised officer.

We are currently seeking renewed legal advice on how to enforce engine idling throughout the borough and are looking to increase communications about these restrictions which will include possible Marshal leafletting and more widespread signage.

Schools Clean Air Fund (SCAF)

Schools' Clean Air Fund relaunch (previously set for late September) has been postponed due to the mourning period for HM Queen Elizabeth II. Over £700k still available to schools across the borough to undertake air quality improvements.

Defra Air Quality Grant Programme 2022/23

We have recently submitted three bids to the Defra Air Quality Grant Programme 2022/23. More details and updates on this (including on whether we were successful) will be brought to this Committee once available.

- a) **Bid title:** Clean Air Walking Routes
Bid type: Solo application by Westminster (Funding of £75k requested)
Summary: The Clean Air Walking route tool is an enhanced navigation tool to support users in reducing their exposure to air pollution in central London. Building on previous clean air walking route projects, we aim to utilise hyperlocal air quality data sets from air quality monitoring sensors installed across the borough, in addition to linking to mapping applications already installed on mobile devices, to simplify the user experience and increase trust and engagement in the tool.

- b) **Bid title:** Smarter Greener Logistics
Bid type: Cross River Partnership led bid, Westminster lead partner. 14 boroughs involved (Funding of £1m requested)
Summary: If successful, this project will reduce harmful NO2 emissions from freight movements in central London. SGL will support a network of Mini-Freight Hubs that are serviced by Zero Emission Last Mile Deliveries. Westminster has chosen the Victoria area (specifically the GLA designated Victoria Air Quality Focus Area) as our strategic location to be the focus of this project.

- c) **Bid title:** AirTEXT update/replacement
Bid type: Partnership bid led by Merton, pan London. Funding requested TBC
Summary: This project is looking for funding for a new health messaging scheme to update/replace airText (airText is a free text message alert scheme for air pollution). This

funding bid will look at options to make air pollution forecasting services more accurate, targeted, and more useful for residents across London.