



City of Westminster

Cabinet

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	19 June 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Council Response to the Future of Westminster Commission Report and Recommendations
Wards Affected:	All
Fairer Westminster:	A Fairer Westminster begins with a Fairer Council
Key Decision:	Non-key
Financial Summary:	There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The recommendations in Appendix A will be subject to the standard financial planning and budget setting process.
Report of:	Stuart Love, Chief Executive

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In July 2022, Cabinet agreed to establish the Future of Westminster Commission (“the Commission”) to review and make recommendations on key council services to help deliver a Fairer Westminster for residents.
- 1.2 The Future of Westminster Commission convened a core group and established four workstreams with additional Commission members (Housing, Economy & Employment, Energy & Green Transition, Fairness & Equality).
- 1.3 For full details on the establishment of the Commission, including the membership of individual review groups please see the [Future of Westminster Commission Cabinet Report](#) first published in July 2022 and listed in the background papers to this report.
- 1.4 This report provides a response to three workstreams of the Commission, Economy and Employment, Energy and Green Transition and Fairness and Equality and represents a conclusion of the Commission’s work.
- 1.5 The Council response to the Housing Review was considered at a previous [meeting of Cabinet in May 2023](#).
- 1.6 **Appendix A** sets out the recommendations proposed by the Commission and outlines the Council’s responses to those recommendations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the initial responses to the Commission’s recommendations across the three remaining reviews (**Appendix A**) and to agree that all recommendations brought forward for implementation will be subject to further financial and legal consideration and where necessary, individual Cabinet or Cabinet Member decisions will be undertaken.

3. Reasons for the Decision

- 3.1 The Future of Westminster Commission was established to advise the Council on areas of policy that are critical to the future success of the City and central to the delivery of a Fairer Westminster. The Commission has now delivered its final report and recommendations, please see **Appendix B** of this report.

All recommendations have been considered individually (as outlined in **Appendix A**), with a view to accepting, rejecting, or otherwise considering each. The proposed responses are put forward with due regard to the strategic priorities of the council and with the recognition that, where required, further financial and legal consideration will have to be undertaken before implementation.

4.1 Background, including Policy Context

4.1 Bringing together experts from a wide range of private and voluntary sector organisations to review the existing work of the council, the Future of Westminster Commission examined some of Westminster's biggest challenges: the delivery of truly affordable housing, responding to the climate emergency, delivering economic opportunities for all, and supporting our most vulnerable residents.

4.2 The Commission was led by Neale Coleman CBE (*Member, National Infrastructure Commission; former GLA Director of London 2012; former Board member London 2012 Bid Company, Olympic Delivery Authority, London Legacy Development Corporation*) as Chair with four co-chairs each supporting their own review. These reviews were:

Fairness and Equality: Advise on policy approaches and initiatives that will enable and deliver a fairer, more equal, and inclusive city.

Economy and Employment: Advise on how the Council can enable more Westminster residents to share in the economic successes of the city.

Energy and Green Transition: Advise on ways to enhance and accelerate climate action supported and delivered by the Council to achieve the objective of achieving net zero Westminster by 2040.

Housing: Advise on increasing the supply of genuinely affordable housing to meet housing need in the city. As a priority, advise on options for improving the way the Council responds to homelessness and housing need, and the quality of services provided to the Council's own tenants and leaseholders.

4.3 In addition, the main Commission considered several cross-cutting issues such as the impact of the most recent Census on the council's future funding prospects.

4.4 As mentioned above, the Housing Review has delivered its recommendations separately and will not be considered as part of this report.

4.5 The Future of Westminster Commission

4.6 The Commission first met in public in July 2022 with a commitment to holding further meetings in public throughout Westminster. Three further meetings were held with the last taking place in March 2023.

4.7 At each of these meetings the Commission heard updates from the review Chairs and discussed current issues with a view to advising on the approach currently being pursued by the council. These issues ranged from the development of a cost-of-living strategy, the census and early results, the

development of a community investment strategy and changing the approach to consultation.

4.8 Fairness and Equality

4.9 The Fairness and Equality review sought to work with the council to advise on approaches and initiatives that would enable and deliver a fairer, more equal and inclusive city. The five areas prioritised by the review group were:

- The cost-of-living crisis, including food and fuel poverty, access to advice and advocacy and food support for families and children.
- Early years provision and access to affordable childcare.
- Young people and access to early help, including support for vulnerable families, youth services and addressing gangs and serious youth violence.
- Improving the quality of life in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of our city, including addressing anti-social behaviour and crime, access to sport and leisure and improving the local environment.
- Building healthy communities and addressing health inequalities, including improving the physical and mental well-being of older residents, and tackling loneliness and isolation.

4.10 The review group held a series of evidence-based panel sessions on each subject. They heard from the council about current service delivery and engaged with service users and external organisations to understand what more could be done to support the most disadvantaged communities in the city.

4.11 Economy and Employment

4.12 The core focus of the Economy and Employment Review was to advise on how the council can enable more Westminster residents to share in the economic successes of the city.

4.13 The review group agreed several priority areas to examine, namely:

- High Streets – explored initiatives to support local high streets allied to promoting economic and other opportunities for neighbouring residents with an initial focus on Harrow Road.
- Skills and Employment – considered the best strategic approach to skills and employment and how economic opportunities could be opened up for the city’s residents, particularly those with the highest needs and those from disadvantaged communities.
- Social Value – working with pro bono consultancy, Bloomberg Associates, the review group examined how the Council’s social value and business community partnership approach could be strengthened to increase residents’ share of economic success.

- Business Support – considered what could be done to support Westminster’s businesses at a time when they are facing unparalleled challenges.

4.14 Half-day ‘Deep Dives’ were organised for each theme with a meeting of a sub-group held beforehand to look in detail at data provided primarily by council officers and to help guide the discussion at the deep dives.

4.15 Energy and Green Transition

4.16 The Energy and Green Transition Review had a core focus on examining the routes to reduce emissions from buildings in Westminster, given that 86% of the city’s emissions are produced from the energy used in homes, hospitals, shops, offices, hotels, and other buildings. The topics considered by the review group were:

- Domestic Buildings Retrofit
- Non-domestic Buildings Retrofit
- Energy Advice and Fuel Poverty
- Decarbonisation of Heating and Heat Networks
- Energy Data and Smart Energy
- Green Finance

4.17 The review group met on a monthly basis and in addition to the input of the review group members, industry specialists also volunteered their time on specific areas being examined by the review group.

5. Review of Recommendations

5.1 The Future of Westminster Commission has provided the council with the opportunity to work with a wide range of industry professionals, gaining their insight and expert opinion on both the challenges and opportunities that are faced by Westminster. These conversations and the advice that has followed has acted as a catalyst to deliver on Fairer Westminster ambitions.

5.2 The Commission’s report (delivered during June 2023) has been well received, with the majority of the recommendations being agreed. The Council’s response to the headline recommendations is set out in **Appendix A**.

5.3 It is anticipated that many of the resulting actions will now be taken forward by Cabinet Members and senior officers as part of existing and planned programmes of work, which will in turn be monitored and reported to Policy and Scrutiny and other committees as appropriate. Where there are initiatives requiring statutory consultation or formal decision making, these will require separate reporting to Cabinet, the relevant Cabinet Member or senior officer for approval.

6. Advising in real time - Delivering the Fairer Westminster Strategy

6.1 Many of the Commission's recommendations were delivered in "real time" meaning that many of the recommendations suggested have already been incorporated into existing programmes of work or have helped to shape the delivery of key strategies.

6.2 Key programmes of work already underway or set to begin are outlined below. The Commission's recommendations were delivered before the creation of the new Housing and Commercial Partnerships Directorate. Work to disaggregate those recommendations currently assigned to the previous directorate of Growth, Planning and Housing is on-going.

6.3 The Future of Westminster Commission

6.4 Anchor Institutions

With the support of Bloomberg Associates, whose help the Commission secured, the council is working to develop an Anchor Institutions policy which will deploy collective resource to benefit local communities.

6.5 Economy and Employment

6.6 The Fairer Economy Plan

The Economy and Employment review group has helped to shape the Fairer Economy Plan, which launched on 20 June 2023. The plan sets out clear priorities and commits to the principles of building a strong, diverse, and growing economy that benefits all residents and businesses.

6.7 North Paddington Programme

The Economy and Employment review group elected to conduct a deep dive into local issues and challenges in the North Paddington area. Their findings and feedback supported the development of the North Paddington Programme which was approved by Cabinet in February 2023. The programme aims to reduce the socio-economic and health inequalities across the wards of Westbourne, Harrow Road and Queen's Park (North Paddington).

6.10 Fairness and Equality

6.11 #2035

Looking at how to drive down inequalities, especially those related to health and wellbeing, was a core objective of the Fairness and Equality Review. The conversations had between the review group and officers and the resulting recommendations have helped to further embed the work of the #2035 programme across the council.

6.12 Poverty Reduction Strategy

The focus given by the Fairness and Equality Review to the cost-of-living crisis, building healthy communities and tackling inequalities has helped to shape a holistic and proactive approach to tackling poverty in Westminster. Work is underway to identify ongoing need and gaps in current service provision with a view to potentially developing a Poverty Reduction Strategy.

6.13 Energy and Green Transition

6.14 North Paddington Net Zero

The Commission recommendations are currently being built into the design and development of the net zero North Paddington programme of work. This Programme will be underpinned by comprehensive community led engagement and insights, which will inform the vision, strategy, and priority implementation activities to support achievement of net zero at local level. A joint community and council project team is being established and Carbon Offset Funding is being considered to support the programme.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 7.1 For recommendations that have been incorporated into existing programmes, progress will be monitored and managed through existing reporting mechanisms. Recommendations that are agreed but sit outside the scope of an existing programme will be taken forward through the respective services' business plans and through future iterations of the Council's Fairer Westminster Delivery Plan as well as other corporate delivery and reporting mechanisms.
- 7.2 In adopting the council response to the recommendations, the Cabinet has committed to undertake a one-year review of the recommendations put forward by the commission with a view to monitoring their progress.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Recommendations incorporated into existing programmes will be delivered from the programmes agreed budget. Recommendations that are agreed but sit outside the scope of existing work streams or programmes will be subject to further financial scrutiny and if pursued taken through the budget setting process.

9. Legal and Equality Implications

- 9.1 **Appendix A** contains a number of initiatives Cabinet is asked to approve, some of which will require adherence to statutory provisions in order to implement, to include statutory consultation.
- 9.2 Consideration will also be given to the requirement to undertake consultation and Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) to ensure the Council considers its Public Sector Equality Duty on an ongoing basis for each initiative.
- 9.3 Legal Services and other corporate services will be engaged at an early stage, as appropriate, as recommendations are taken forward. Where necessary decisions will be taken to Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members and follow the agreed governance process that all decisions are subject to.

10. Carbon Impact

- 10.1 There are no direct carbon implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Individual carbon assessments will be carried out as needed on a case-by-case basis as recommendations are adopted through new or existing programmes of work, in line with current organisational practices.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 Resident and Member consultation will be undertaken through the adoption of new and existing programmes of work in line with current organisational practices.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact: Daniella Bonfanti, Cabinet Manager, dbonfanti@westminster.gov.uk

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Council Response to the Future of Westminster Commission Report Recommendations
- Appendix B – Future of Westminster Commission Report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Future of Westminster Commission – report to Cabinet – 11 July 2022](#)

- [Council response to the Future of Westminster Housing Review Recommendations.](#)