



City of Westminster

**Finance, Planning and Economic
Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

Date:	26 September 2023
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 20 July 2023:

- 04 August 2023 – Adoption of Westminster’s Statement of Community Involvement
- 30 August 2023 – Maida Hill Market, Public Realm Improvements

2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress since my last report:

Economy

2.1 North Paddington Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ)

North Paddington has been designated a Creative Enterprise Zone by the Mayor of London. Launched in 2018, CEZ designates 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 which help to find them jobs. The award comes with £70,000 of seed revenue funding and £100,000 of capital funding, and was announced at an event held in partnership with the Mayor of London at the YAA Centre on 13 July (a video from the event is available [here](#)).

We want the North Paddington CEZ to be a place where deeply rooted creativity and culture is celebrated and protected. Where creative production grows, is sustainable, and accessible for all. And where people are empowered to develop their talent and reach their potential. Our proposals were developed in partnership with local organisations (including Paddington Arts, Avenues Youth Project, Grand Junction, Octavia Foundation, Rebel Business School, and Westminster Adult Education Service) and include commitments from wider arts and cultural institutions to align their participatory and outreach work (including from Somerset House, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Donmar Warehouse, The Photographers Gallery, and University of Westminster). A dedicated Creative Enterprise Zone Programme Manager joined the Council on 21 August to lead delivery of the 3-year action plan.

2.2 Employment

Westminster Employment Service

Connecting Communities – Central London Forward, European Social Fund

Westminster Employment Service have continued delivery of the Connecting Communities programme for a further 6 month period (July – December 23). The extension provides an additional £132,000 of funding to support young people aged 18-24 years who are either unemployed or economically inactive. The extra funding will enable WES to work with an additional 50 young people and support into education and jobs, the funding is welcomed as it can be used to cover equipment costs and course fees which young people often struggle to afford themselves.

Social Value Impact Report

In July, we published Westminster's first Social Value Impact Report (available [here](#)). This records, in one place, the total impact of all the employment, skills, greening and other community commitments made by property developers and the Council's own suppliers, as part of their social value programmes. Some of the outcomes referred to in the report include 560 Westminster residents securing work, 9,800 volunteering hours being provided by partner businesses, and the spending of £6.8 million in the local supply chain by partner businesses, as well as details of individual programmes.

Place-shaping

2.3 High Streets

North Paddington Programme (NPP)

The Cabinet decision of 13 February 2023 commenced the four-year place-based pilot, based in Harrow Road, Queen's Park and Westbourne wards, for a value of £20m over four years. These wards are among the most deprived in the City, with significant income and health inequalities. The North Paddington Partnership Board was established in late February and includes stakeholders such as Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, the Police and NHS. It sets out the Programme's commitment to:

- Develop and sustain strong partnerships with local stakeholders, including opportunities to build their capacity and work through existing relationships, structures and forums;
- Widen our relationships with North Paddington communities through proactive outreach;
- Give people the choice to engage with the Council in the way and to the extent that they wish to;
- Capture and share insights gained through community engagement and community dialogue to affect change both to the shape of projects and to service delivery.
- Provide feedback to those involved in any consultation, highlighting where changes have been made as a result of engagement.

The NPP complements other areas of work to address inequality in the borough, notably the #2035 programme which aims to address the life expectancy gap.

A Cabinet Member Report will follow in the coming weeks to establish priorities for the first year of delivery and to approve the revised governance arrangements. The priorities and programme of work have been developed in collaboration with the Partnership Board and other Council departments, and further details will be provided in the Cabinet Member Report.

Good Growth Fund – Maida Hill Market

A Cabinet Member Report for the Maida Hill Market construction works has now been approved and Phase One works will commence on site in late September 2023. These will focus on addressing the current drainage and ponding issues.

In January 2024, Phase Two works will commence, delivering the planting, seating, lighting and wider public space improvements. The project is expected to be completed in June 2024 when it will provide an inviting, greener and more accessible public space for a wide range of activities at the centre of North Paddington. Council officers will be sharing further information on the project and the construction programme with the public in late September.

An extensive public consultation showed strong support for the public realm plans but many residents pointed out the need to better manage the area, especially after dark. The pause in usage during the construction works will give us time to implement a more robust management plan.

High Streets Programme (Paddington and Bayswater)

The first phase of public engagement for the High Streets Programme (Paddington and Bayswater) ran from June to 11 September 2023. We wanted to gather views from residents, visitors and business-owners about how they feel and what they value most on these high streets, as well as to identify key opportunities, challenges and priorities for investment, whilst building long-term partnerships to support the development of the programme.

Over 900 people filled out our surveys and a further 200 comments were received by the online platform. In addition, we ran three pop-up engagement hubs at Edgware Road, Praed Street and Westbourne Grove / Queensway, which collected over 1800 comments between them. The focus on the remaining weeks of this engagement phase will be on conducting specific surveys to business in the area and online promotion focused on young and global majority demographics.

After analysing the inputs and insights from all these activities, the team will plan a series of projects for further consultation and delivery next year.

2.4 West End and Central Activities Zone

Soho

The tender process for the Soho Monitoring commission has now completed. This will provide data on air quality, noise and traffic across the Soho area. The successful consultant

will be meeting with the Soho Community Advisory Group in September to discuss the proposed work programme and in more detail. It is expected that monitoring work will begin in late September / early October with the first data sets available three months from this date.

Oxford Street

The Full Business Case for Oxford Street and Oxford Circus was approved by Cabinet on 11 September 2023. This decision allows additional funding of £7.767m to be drawn down from the programme capital budget to progress the designs for Oxford Street and Oxford Circus and cover programme overheads, including staff costs.

A six-week period of active engagement ran from 17 July to 31 August, which included a public questionnaire, open events on and near Oxford Street, and small group engagement sessions with key demographic groups.

At the last Committee meeting, I was asked about the dirty money campaign. The Westminster Scrutiny Commission will meet on 5 October and receive an update on Fair Tax and Economic Crime in Westminster, specifically: to review progress made towards the Fair Tax Pledge and the 'Westminster Against Dirty Money' campaign, as well as provide an opportunity for the Commission to make recommendations and steer the direction of the schemes. A copy of the report will be circulated to this Committee following publication.

Meanwhile On: Oxford Street

[Meanwhile On:](#) is the third phase of the Council's meanwhile activation programme. It was launched in partnership with the New West End Company and focuses initially on Oxford Street. The programme gives small businesses the opportunity to take over a shop on Oxford Street for six months, rent-free.

The programme aims to support small businesses and high streets in line with the Fairer Economy Plan, as well as helping to meet the Council's ambition of removing American candy stores and other low-quality occupants on Oxford Street.

Applications for brands to apply for the programme opened on 19 July 2023 and ran until 30 August 2023, and 827 applications were received. The media response to the announcement exceeded expectations, with over 130 pieces of coverage, most linking to the application page and with overwhelmingly positive sentiment. This included national (The Times, Forbes, BBC News), regional (City AM (frontpage in print), Evening Standard, Manchester Evening News, Yorkshire Live) and trade outlets (Estates Gazette, Retail / Property Week, Rail Gazette). BBC London News also broadcast live from Oxford Street on the day and it was covered on Radios 2, 4 and 5 along with LBC News, TalkTV and Times Radio.

The team are in active conversations with property owners and commercial agents to secure the first unit(s) for the programme.

Town Planning and Planning Policy

2.5 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD

The POAH SPD must respond to a series of commitments in the City Plan that it will include guidance on a number of issues, such as carbon offsetting and income thresholds for intermediate housing. SPDs can only provide guidance on policies already included in the City Plan and cannot create new areas of policy.

The new Draft SPD has been viability tested to ensure the planning obligations do not make development unviable, and officers have worked with the Greater London Authority to ensure the SPD is as far as possible in line with the Mayor of London's policies and guidance. [Consultation](#) on the proposed SPD was launched on 15 August, and runs until 29 September. Adoption is anticipated in October/November 2023.

Key updates to the document include:

- Encouraging new housing available at intermediate rents to be affordable by households on lower to average incomes - between £25,000 and £60,000. The council is also discouraging shared ownership.
- Updated guidance on affordable workspace and employment and skills contributions.
- Occupiers of new residential developments will no longer be entitled to an on-street parking permit.
- The carbon offset payment, due where developments do not meet zero-carbon standards, is increased from £95 to £880/tCO₂.
- Revised S106 monitoring and late payment fees.

Environment SPD

A review of the guidance within the council's Environment SPD (ESPD) was launched in 2022. The council has been gathering evidence to support guidance which goes further to meet our climate change ambitions. A new draft will be consulted on in early 2024. At present the team is focused on drafting and collating evidence. These evidence pieces are:

- The Green Infrastructure Audit: An inventory of natural habitats, ecosystems, and green spaces in Westminster as well as a baseline biodiversity status of the borough. It will be used to form the Green Infrastructure.
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Viability Testing: The ESPD will have guidance on the implementation of national BNG requirement of 10% on new developments that becomes statutory from November 2023. The ESPD will incorporate a Westminster specific target. Viability testing from consultants will explore a range from 50% to 10% BNG.
- Retrofit Topic Paper: A research paper stemming from Westminster statistics, along with various other boroughs, and a case studies compilation of retrofitting with LETI retrofit targets. This will be used to incorporate circular economy, whole life carbon (WLC) and energy saving recommendations into the ESPD.
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment: A strategic document that will shape the flood risk section with the most up to date information.
- Local Area Energy Plan: A plan and report from consultants that will be used to map out, in the ESPD, an expansion to District Heating Networks.

Smart City

2.6 Smart City Operating System

Introduction

The Smart City Operating System will enable the management of the Council's data ecosystem by aggregating, processing and enabling data sharing within the Council, partners and third parties. The initial focus is on sharing environmental data, with two 'product lines' being developed, one looking at air quality data and the other on building emissions data.

Air Quality data platform

The Air Quality data platform collates disparate air quality data sets from across the city and presents them in a user-friendly, freely accessible place via the Council's website: [Air quality data | Westminster City Council](#). Prior to a soft launch, the platform was presented to various external stakeholder groups including residents and was well received with positive feedback. Notably Simon Birkett, Clean Air in London, said: "Well done to Westminster for launching this marvellous new resource to build public understanding of air pollution. It is especially helpfully to see the data relative to the World Health Organisation's new air quality guidelines...".

Work to date is foundational but beyond increasing public awareness, benefits are already being realised for example where we can quickly identify sponsors' monitoring sites that are faulty/have become inactive and liaise with relevant third parties accordingly. However, the main aim at this point is to support core elements of the draft Air Quality Action Plan by for example:

- Helping to deliver the Fairer Westminster Principle of Openness and Transparency
- Empowering our communities to reduce their exposure to bad air quality by feeding the data aggregated on the platform into future proposed Clean Air Walking Route solutions
- Supporting air quality initiatives within and around schools, such as the expansion of the healthy commutes project which has achieved 20 % reduction in children travelling to school by private car at participating schools.
- Establishing a rich set of benchmark data that can be used to help measure both public engagement and the impact/value of air quality initiatives and interventions over time

Further releases are planned to include publishing raw data through a file download and via an application programming interface (API) to allow direct and real time ingestion and use of the data by third parties. This will support innovative uses of the data. We also intend to include a greater breadth of historical data as well as new contemporary data sets such as that from the Strand – Aldwych monitoring sites.

Building Emissions Management – Digitalisation of the Sustainable City Charter submissions

In 2022, the Council and the Westminster Property Association launched the flagship Sustainable City Charter. The sign-up process for the Sustainable City Charter currently relies on a significant non-digital element, which complicates record-keeping and requires more officer time to monitor applications.

Officers from the Smart City and Climate Emergency teams have collaborated to fund and develop a digital solution to automate elements of the charter reporting processes. The portal would also provide a platform to host the charter toolkit as this expands over the coming years. In addition, energy consumption data captured through the digital portal would become a starting point to construct a council data store on carbon emissions from non-domestic buildings in Westminster.

Indoor Air Quality Monitoring project

The Indoor Air Quality Monitoring project is currently in its discovery phase. The project aims to raise awareness of indoor air pollution through community engagement and 'citizen science'. Indoor air quality monitors will be purchased and provided to various stakeholders free of charge, empowering and enabling them to make data-driven decisions as to improving air quality within their indoor environments. The ingestion of this data into the Smart City Operating System will also provide the council with a wider insight into indoor air quality within the borough.

Conversations with potential suppliers are ongoing to ensure satisfactory market coverage and procurement of the most appropriate monitor. A number of monitors have been provided for evaluation purposes. Testing is currently underway to determine which may be most suitable for the project. Next steps include completion of stakeholder mapping, and an assessment of suppliers from a technical perspective.