



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 14th December, 2023**, rooms 18.01-03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Concia Albert, Paul Fisher, Angela Piddock (Chair), Tim Mitchell, Rachael Robathan, Caroline Sargent and Jason Williams.

Also Present: Councillor Geoff Barraclough (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development), Mark Chalmers (Interim Head of Community Safety and Specialist Services), Libby Harris (City of Sydney), Adam Hug (Leader of the Council), Debbie Jackson (Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning), Michael Kill (Night Time Industry Association), Philip Kolvin (Night Time Industry Association), Councillor Aicha Less (Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection), Amy Lane (Mayor of London's Night Czar), Stuart Love (Chief Executive), Frances Martin (Executive Director of Climate, Environment and Public Protection), Clare O'Keefe (Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor), Kerry Simpkin (Head of Licensing, Place, and Infrastructure Policy), Ezra Wallace (Director of Policy and Projects), Mark Williams (Heart of London Business Alliance) and Mark Wiltshire (Director of Public Protection and Licensing).

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Committee noted that Councillor Paul Swaddle had sent apologies and Councillor Caroline Sargent was attending as substitute.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

- 3.1 The Committee approved the minutes of its meeting on 5 October 2023.

RESOLVED:

- 3.2 That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2023 be signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

4 WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2024

- 4.1 The Committee considered the work programme of the Committee for the final meeting of the municipal year 2023-24 and noted that the City Plan Review item will no longer be suitable for the scheduled meeting on 14 March due to Councillor Barraclough not being in the country at the time, as well as delays to the project timeline.
- 4.2 The Committee noted that at the Budget Scrutiny Task Group meeting on 27 November, it was recommended that the relevant scrutiny committee should scrutinise digitisation and automation.
- 4.3 The Committee noted that the discussions during the Westminster After Dark item included a recommendation to revisit the topic after the consultation has ended and the Committee should focus on hearing from a range of residents and other key stakeholders to ensure a balance of interests is considered in the development of an Evening and Night Time Plan.
- 4.4 The Committee noted that if Members had any other items to suggest, they are welcome to do so at any time.

5 POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATES

- 5.1 The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Climate Action, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Williams. The Committee was updated on the following:
- The Committee heard a Call-In to scrutinise the Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality's decision on the Parking Fee Structure Review. The Committee voted to take no further action.
 - The next meeting of the Committee on 16 January 2024 will receive items on CCTV policy and Highways contract procurement.
- 5.2 The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Fisher. The Committee was updated on the following:
- At the last meeting of the Committee, Compensations Policy and Allocations Policy was examined.
 - The Committee discussed the opportunities and risks posted by the policies and it was felt to be helpful to have an opportunity to scrutinise this.
- 5.3 The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Vulnerable Adults, Health and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Albert. The Committee was updated on the following:
- The next meeting had been postponed to 18 January 2024.
 - The Committee heard a Call-In to scrutinise the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector's decision on increasing

home care workers' pay for a Fairer Westminster. The Committee voted to take no further action.

- The Chair of the Committee also chairs the Inner West London Mental Health Services Reconfiguration Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which first met on 11 December and heard from the NHS, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, HealthWatch, Professor Manthorpe and residents. There are a number of actions to follow up from this.

5.4 The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Young People, Learning and Employment Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Piddock. The Committee was updated on the following:

- The Committee examined the Early Help Strategy and made some useful recommendations.
- Committee Members were able to visit Family Hubs which are something Westminster can be proud of.
- The item was found to be valuable and demonstrated that whilst good work is being undertaken, complacency should not set in.

6 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

6.1 The Committee received an overview of the Emergency Preparedness report from Frances Martin (Executive Director of Climate, Environment and Public Protection), Mark Chalmers (Interim Head of Community Safety and Specialist Services) and Mark Wiltshire (Director of Public Protection and Licensing).

6.2 The Committee asked questions on the following:

- Service development: the recruitment and training of volunteers and whether there is a minimum level of acceptable staffing and resilience.
- Communication: the importance of direct communication with residents to reassure them as much as possible when needed. The role of local Councillors when communicating with residents and ensuring that they receive the information and tools they need to do this.
- Frequency of review: how often Emergency Preparedness is reviewed, and how this is carried out.
- Costs: ensuring that the budget across the Council enables a robust and timely response where necessary.
- Equalities impact: the absence of an Equalities Impact Assessment regarding Emergency Preparedness, and why this is the case.

6.3 The Committee commended the excellent work undertaken in regard to Emergency Preparedness and recognised the importance of this especially in the current climate.

ACTION:

6.4 That the Committee will receive more information about the new Humanitarian Assistance Lead role in due course when appropriate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 6.5 The Committee recommended that Emergency Preparedness remains a bi-annual item on the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.
- 6.6 The Committee recommended that communication strategies are refined as much as possible to ensure promptness, clarity and consistency in all channels, and that Councillors are included in the strategy to recognise the key role they play in disseminating information.

7 WESTMINSTER AFTER DARK

- 7.1 The Committee received an overview of the Westminster After Dark report from Councillor Geoff Barraclough (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development), Councillor Aicha Less (Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection) and Debbie Jackson (Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning).
- 7.2 The Committee heard from local, regional and international examples of promoting or developing an evening and night time strategy as well as engagement with stakeholders, including challenges, outputs and learning. The Committee was pleased to welcome and hear from Libby Harris (City of Sydney), Michael Kill (Night Time Industry Association), Philip Kolvin KC (Night Time Industry Association), Amy Lame (Mayor of London's Night Czar) and Mark Williams (Heart of London Business Alliance).
- 7.3 The Committee asked questions on the following:
- Collaboration: the challenges that have been experienced when working with a range of stakeholders and managing the balance of interests between them.
 - Trust: the trust of stakeholders, particularly that of residents, in the engagement process. Acknowledging that there is a power inequality early on could help foster trust and buy-in for a thriving and dynamic night time economy.
 - Honest brokers: the importance of having feedback from consultees and an honest broker to convene meetings. That broker should be nominated by a majority of stakeholders.
 - Inclusive and diverse stakeholders: whether the City of Sydney managed to achieve the most impact possible by engaging and hearing from an inclusive and diverse range of stakeholders, and if so, how. How have underrepresented groups in London been represented in other night time strategies.
 - Evening offer: increasing the diversity of the offer in the evenings, how this is encouraged and the regulatory, and other, burdens that may be associated with this.
 - Homogeneity: how it can be assured that the Council is not making assumptions about homogeneity of the economy across the City of Westminster as the difference between areas can be distinct, despite being so close in distance.

- Evidence-base for policy decisions: the importance of ensuring that assumptions beyond the impact of COVID-19 and the Cumulative Impact Assessment, which is constrained by regulations, lead to a policy that is appropriate and relevant, and represents a wide range of data-based evidence.
- Balance: the balance of resident's views with those views of non-residents should be carefully considered. The City of Westminster has a lower population than the number of visitors it receives, and these visitors are likely to have a different view, and needs, to residents. How this balance has been achieved in Sydney, how residents' voices have been enabled and finding the appropriate balance.
- Marginalised voices: what is being done to proactively engage with those the Council often does not hear from, particularly the number of those engaged in the LGBTQ+ community.
- Provisions: the market not being the sole determiner of what is being provided and the extent to which the curation of provisions will meet the consultation objectives in the final strategy.
- CCTV: proactive monitoring of CCTV, the areas which the City of Sydney have prioritised, and the buy-in for this monitoring.
- Engagement: the importance of engaging appropriately with residents and key stakeholders.

7.4 The Committee thanked those who attended to speak for their time and noted that it was an extremely productive and interesting discussion.

ACTION:

7.5 That the Committee will receive a list of different channels and organisations that the Council is using to reach out to stakeholders in the consultation and engagement process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

7.6 The Committee recommended that targeted outreach efforts to sectors that may not have been adequately engaged, including marginalised voices, should be considered.

7.7 The Committee recommended that a wide range of stakeholders should be actively sought and involved to ensure they are well-represented.

7.8 The Committee recommended that communication during the process should be considered in-depth.

7.9 The Committee recommended that Westminster After Dark comes back after the consultation has ended and the Committee should focus on hearing from a range of residents and other key stakeholders to ensure a balance of interests is considered in the development of an Evening and Night Time Plan.

8 LEADER'S UPDATE

8.1 The Committee received an overview of the Leader's Update report from Councillor Adam Hug.

8.2 The Committee asked questions on the following:

- Short-term lets: the importance of doing more to make owners responsible for waste dumping and lobbying for this to be considered in a registration scheme. Whether the Council have considered lobbying to keep a percentage of the registration fees if they are significant.
- Regeneration schemes: regeneration schemes, particularly relating to housing developments, can take a long while to come into fruition. The new schemes, including major ones, to continue the pipeline of works.
- Paddington Recreation: the stage the Council is currently at on the Paddington Recreation development site.
- The Gordon Hospital: the formal consultation ongoing at various levels, and whether a meeting with local residents in the immediate area has been arranged, and if the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust does not do this, can the Council organise one. The out-patients facility which stopped before COVID-19 and whether this could be brought back.
- The Middle East conflict: the impact this is having on residents and whether the Council is tracking what is being done to support residents, whether this is working, and acknowledging the limitations of what some institutions can do for residents and how they are feeling.
- Cost of Living: how the Council's spend compares to other neighbouring local authorities, whether the Council learns from others and how the impact of the spend is monitored.
- Housing repairs: ensuring that a focus is on making systems work more effectively and efficiently, especially to reduce the number of reoccurring repairs, and improving contractor performance.

ACTIONS:

8.3 That the Committee will receive a briefing note on new regeneration schemes from the Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Regeneration and Renters, with a view to sitting down with the relevant Executive Director and Director to discuss these further if required.

8.4 That the Committee will receive information on the stage the Council is currently at on the Paddington Recreation development site.

8.5 That the Committee will receive granular details on the support the Council is providing for those impacted by the Middle East conflict.

The meeting ended at 21:13.

CHAIR: _____

DATE _____

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