



**Business, Planning and
Transport Policy and Scrutiny
Committee Briefing**

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Briefing of: Cllr Robert Davis MBE DL, Deputy Leader and Cabinet
Member for Business, Culture and Heritage

Please contact: Daniella Bonfanti ext. 5371
dbonfanti@westminster.gov.uk

1. Apprenticeships

- 1.1 From 1 April 2017, Westminster City Council will pay 0.5% of its total annual pay cost as an apprenticeship levy. The levy fund can be used to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment against an approved apprenticeship standard for both existing staff and for new apprentice recruits.
- 1.2 People Services will support each Directorate to identify how their levy contribution can be used to pay for the professional development of existing staff and to offer apprenticeship opportunities to new recruits to help fill future skills gaps and tackle recruitment and retention issues.
- 1.3 On 20th July the Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) hosted an Employer Breakfast event at Heddon Street Kitchen. The event was well attended and employers were able to get first-hand information about the changes in apprenticeship funding and delivery from industry experts.
- 1.4 In addition, WAES launched its *Apprenticeship Advisory Service* which is aimed at supporting employers in:
 - Demystifying Apprenticeship Funding
 - Apprenticeship Recruitment Management
 - Apprenticeship Training
 - Levy Management
 - Sub-contractor management
 - Management coaching and support
- 1.5 The event was supported by a speaker from the Department for Education (DfE), with a focus on raising awareness of the support packages available to employers, to increase the number of employers recruiting young people and adults who have a learning difficulty or disability.
- 1.6 Following the event, WAES has met separately with the DfE representative and plans are underway to develop a project in partnership with NHS England to provide targeted training and recruitment support for our learners.

Westminster City Council Apprenticeships

- 1.7 Entry level apprenticeships will continue to be offered for new starters, The focus is on making opportunities available for Westminster residents, including the long term unemployed, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and care leavers.

- 1.8 An apprenticeship recruitment day was held on 3rd July 2017. The event was attended by 21 prospective apprentices and six applicants have now been made offers. This approach will now be rolled out across all departments of the council seeking to employ an apprentice with the support of WAES.

2. Broadband

Connect Westminster

- 2.1 The Economy Team recently secured a successful European Regional Development Fund bid to deliver a three year Connect Westminster Programme. This programme will support at least 1000 businesses to connect to superfast or ultrafast broadband over the next two years and represents £2.8m in new investment to benefit local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Micro businesses.
- 2.2 The aim of Connect Westminster is to provide a voucher to subsidise the infrastructure. The businesses will then choose their own content supplier on a commercial, non-subsidised basis.
- 2.3 The supplier registration process opened on Friday 23rd June and closed on 24th July. The Council received an overwhelming response from suppliers and to date 110 suppliers have registered on the scheme to date. These suppliers can provide the physical infrastructure including the fibre to buildings.
- 2.4 Small businesses within Westminster and the West End Partnership area will be able to apply for the scheme from the 24th August 2017. There is £2.5m available for SMEs and the funding will be available on a first come first serve basis or until March 2019.
- 2.5 Through the Connect Westminster Scheme at least 1,250 SMEs will receive access to gigabit capable broadband. It is anticipated that the project will deliver new jobs, additional turnover and reduce cost to the firms that participate.

Openreach

- 2.6 A further 62 cabinets have been connected to fibre which provides an additional 14,500 premises with superfast broadband. This is part of a commitment by Openreach to deliver an additional 142 cabinets serving approximately 40,000 premises.

Community Fibre

- 2.7 An organisation called Community Fibre is working with City West Homes to provide connectivity to the Council's housing stock. The Economy Team is currently exploring an offer by Community Fibre to provide free or low cost connectivity to the long term unemployed to support them with job search activity.

3. Westminster Business Unit

- 3.1 The Westminster Business Unit aims to make it easier for businesses to navigate their way through council services and get the information, advice and guidance they need.
- 3.2 In the financial year to date the Business Unit has handled 81 business enquiries, at a resolution rate of 98%. The most common enquiries include business advice, licensing and business rates.
- 3.3 On the 27th June the Business Unit held its second drop-in session at Paddington Street Library. These drop-in sessions are designed to provide one to one support for business owners on a wide range of business related issues from advice on sources of finance, networking opportunities, and business mentoring. Drop-in sessions have been scheduled up until mid-December with the next ones taking place on Tuesday 29th August at Paddington library and Wednesday 30th August at Pimlico library.

4. Business Rates

- 4.1 In the Spring Budget, the government announced several changes to Business Rates, including:
- A supporting Small Business Rate Relief scheme;
 - A £1000 allowance for public houses with a rateable value below £100,000;
 - A Discretionary Fund for local authorities to assist businesses adversely affected by the Revaluation rateable increases.
- 4.2 The Council has now billed the 171 Public Houses that may be entitled to the Public House Allowance and the 97 businesses that could be entitled to the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme. The Council is consulting with local businesses and other stakeholders on the Discretionary Relief Scheme.

5. Employment

Westminster Employment Service

- 5.1 The Westminster Employment Service (WES) provides free assistance and advice to unemployed residents who need help training for and finding a job.
- 5.2 The website for WES went live at the end of March; the site has received over 2,000 views in July alone.
- 5.3 On the 13th of July I hosted a breakfast event to formally launch the service at the House of St. Barnabas in Soho, one of the service's key partners. I was delighted to be joined by over seventy employers at the event representing a wide range of

businesses from hoteliers and restaurateurs to BIDs, visitor attractions, charities, creative industries and council contractors.

Recruit London

- 5.4 Recruit London is a free local recruitment service for businesses. Workplace Coordinators train and place out of work residents into jobs across central London.
- 5.5 The service is delivered in partnership by the City Council, Cross River Partnership, and other local stakeholders.
- 5.6 Over the past two months Recruit London has secured new ties with companies such as Kate Spade, Michael Cors, Gordon Ramsey: Heddon Street Kitchen, Guess, Furla, The Westbury Hotel, The Langham Hotel and Focus Logistics.
- 5.7 Recruit London has supported Veolia with a recent round of recruitment and has secured positions for five people who started work on 21st August. Veolia has also opened up their recruitment to include roles in their Customer Service Centre and Business Analysis team.

6. Creative Employer Forum

- 6.1 On the fifth of September I will be hosting a Creative Employer Forum at The Courtauld Institute of Art at Somerset House. This is the first in a series of events to support the City's creative businesses.
- 6.2 The event will provide a platform for members of Westminster's creative industries to be involved in a strategic discussion with officers from the City Council and hear from a panel of industry experts who will provide invaluable sector insight.

7. Bond Street Public Realm Improvement Scheme

- 7.1 The public realm improvements on Bond Street commenced in April and are programmed to be completed by July 2018 ahead of the arrival of Crossrail 1 in December 2018.
- 7.2 The aim of the scheme is to improve the public realm throughout Bond Street and provide a safe and secure environment for pedestrians. Wider pavements will improve accessibility, while the use of natural materials in a high quality design will emphasise the importance of Bond Street as a destination.
- 7.3 A temporary works compound has been sited on the south west of Berkeley Square to ensure the delivery of the improvements to Bond Street along with the adjacent works in Brook and Davies Street and the north side of Berkeley Square itself. The placing of the works compound at this site has not resulted in any loss of parking.

8. Brook Street and Davies Street Two Way Project

- 8.1 Work to convert Brook Street and Davies Street into a two-way system began earlier this year. When completed the two-way will improve accessibility, allow easier traffic movement and provide some shorter journey times.
- 8.2 Work undertaken so far has included undertaking traffic signal changes at junctions with pedestrian crossing improvements, kerb alterations and footway improvements, new carriageway surfaces and altered road markings necessary to be ready for two way traffic movements.
- 8.3 The switch to two way traffic will take place in September and there will be a comprehensive communication exercise prior to the switch to prepare drivers for the change.

9. Oxford Street District Transformation

- 9.1 The City Council, Transport for London (TfL), and the Mayor of London are working together to transform Oxford Street and the surrounding streets.
- 9.2 Westminster City Council (WCC), the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Transport for London (TfL) held a first joint consultation on the transformation of Oxford Street from 24 April – 18 June.
- 9.3 Approximately 12,000 responses were received and officers are currently analysing all responses in order to produce a detailed Consultation Response report.

10. City Promotions, Events and Filming

- 10.1 The last two months have brought with them the usual variety of events and filming activity being successfully managed by the team.
- 10.2 Filming for the motion picture Johnny English took place at multiple locations throughout the City and premiers of the motion pictures Dunkirk and Detroit took place in Leicester Square.
- 10.3 The showcase event for Formula 1, Pride London Festival, Ride London and the British 10K all took place over the summer, all road closures and clear up operations took place within the time agreed by event organisers.
- 10.4 Notting Hill Carnival took place over the August bank holiday weekend (Sunday 27th and Monday 28th August). The Carnival, now in its fifth decade is a celebration of London's culture and diversity.

10.5 The Notting Hill Carnival is organised by the London Notting Hill Carnival Enterprises Trust Ltd (LNHCET), not Westminster City Council. The City Council worked closely with the event organisers, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the Metropolitan Police and other emergency services to facilitate the event and manage its impact.

Mud Soldier

10.6 In the lead-up to the UK national commemorative events to mark the centenary of Passchendaele the City Council, in conjunction with VISITFLANDERS, unveiled 'The Mud Soldier' on the 25th July 2017 in Trafalgar Square

10.7 The sculpture was crafted by the artist Damian Van Der Velden, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Arts of The Hague, with sand mixed with mud from Passchendaele. The sculpture was installed for just four days; during the course of this time the sculpture slowly dissolved as it was exposed to rain.

11. Green Plaque Scheme

11.1 There are now 119 green plaques around Westminster to celebrate the life and works of individuals and organisations that have made contributions that have, in many cases, extended well beyond our borders.

11.2 Upcoming unveilings:

- Gold Brothers at 43 Carnaby Street to commemorate the site of their Lord John Boutique. The shop was an instant success and is considered as one of the main factors in Carnaby Street enduring popularity and fashionable reputation and is also famous for its psychedelic mural. Currently scheduled for installation in November 2017.
- Carlo Gatti on Villiers Street to mark the bicentenary of his birth (1817-78), Gatti introduced the penny ice cream to the UK as well as founding many restaurants and theatres; his son, Sir John Gatti was Mayor of Westminster in 1911 . The unveiling of this plaque will take place in the autumn.
- Captain Colyer-Fergusson VC was born in Portman Square in February 1896 and was a recipient of the Victoria Cross, the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces. A plaque adjacent to Portman Square is scheduled for installation in 2017.
- Anthony Powell at 9 Shepherd Street where he lived and worked. Powell was the author of the acclaimed twelve volume work 'A Dance to the Music of Time', as well as working as a celebrated critic and reviewer. Installation and unveiling to be confirmed.

- William Somerset Maugham at 2 Wyndham Place. Somerset Maugham was a novelist and playwright and lived at the property from 1919 until 1923.