



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**At the meeting of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission on 26 April 2010
at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors Judith Warner (Chairman), Ian Adams,
Alan Bradley, Angela Harvey, Andrew Havery,
Audrey Lewis and Barrie Taylor

Others present: Councillor Colin Barrow, Leader of Westminster City Council
and Mike More, Chief Executive.

Witnesses: None.

Apologies: None.

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 No apologies for absence had been received.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Colin Barrow (Leader of the City Council) and Mike More (Chief Executive) to the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 2.1 None declared.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 The following issues were raised:
- 3.2 Minute 4.21: Members commented on accountability and delivery in the proposed structure of the Westminster City Partnership and sought clarification as to whether the Leader of the City Council and Cabinet Member would be the only elected representatives on the Westminster Board. Councillor Colin Barrow confirmed that the Partnership would enable the City Council to use its democratic legitimacy to bring partners together, and that the Board would include an elected representative from the GLA. Members

also commented on the value of using census data in planning future funding and in lobbying.

- 3.3 Minute 5.2: Members asked if a written update could be provided on the current plan for IT support for Integrated Street Management and Premises Management.
- 3.4 Minute 5.6: Members asked whether the principle of providing regular Ward Bulletins could be further investigated. The Chief Executive confirmed that the issue of Ward Bulletins was being considered.
- 3.5 Minute 5.8: Members asked if further information could be provided regarding the strategy for knowledge management as people left Westminster or worked on other projects following the reorganisation. The Chief Executive confirmed that details of the provisions for knowledge management that were in place could be referred to the appropriate Policy & Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.6 Members also commented that some information given on the City Council's web site was out of date. The Chief Executive acknowledged the importance of providing accurate information and confirmed that measures were being taken to ensure that the content of the web site was kept up to date.
- 3.7 **Action Points**
 - 3.7.1 The Chief Executive agreed to provide further information on IT support for Integrated Street Management and Premises Management.
- 3.8 **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. POLICY & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10

- 4.1 The Commission received a presentation from Simon Lewis (Scrutiny Research Analyst, Member Services) on the draft Annual Report for scrutiny activity during the 2009 -2010 municipal year. The Report aimed to improve accountability and transparency, by setting out what Westminster's Policy and Scrutiny Committees had done, how the work had been carried out, and what recommendations had been made to improve performance.
- 4.2 The Annual Report also highlighted outcomes, and aimed to show where scrutiny had increased engagement with residents and contributed to positive service improvements by the City Council and its partners.
- 4.3 Members noted that the Report had been designed to be more web-friendly, and included interactive tabs and internal links to related scrutiny reports and Committee papers. Members also suggested that the Report gave greater emphasis to how further improvements could be made.
- 4.4 **Action Points**
 - 4.4.1 The Commission asked that the draft Annual Report be revised to include the

work of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission, together with any further comments from Scrutiny Committee Chairmen.

- 4.4.2 Members also asked that the Communications Department become involved in publishing the Annual Report.

- 4.5 **RESOLVED** that progress in preparing the Policy & Scrutiny Annual Report for 2009 -10 be noted.

5. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH THE LEADER OF WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

- 5.1 In acknowledgement of its responsibility for scrutinising the work of the Leader of the City Council, the Commission had asked Councillor Colin Barrow to attend the meeting to comment on scrutiny activity and related issues and take part in a question and answer session.
- 5.2 The Commission received an initial presentation from Councillor Barrow, which provided an update on the financial constraints that continued to affect Westminster, and which outlined progress in the ongoing transformation of how the City Council worked. The Commission noted that although economic circumstances were beginning to improve, reductions of income and earnings had led to the City Council drawing on its reserves.
- 5.3 The Leader of the City Council commented that the recovery of Westminster's finances would be supported by the internal transformation, which was anticipated to provide savings of £13 million per year. The Leader also suggested that further savings could be achieved through public services working together. The Commission acknowledged the complexities of current funding arrangements between partner agencies and noted changes to the Westminster City Partnership that aimed to simplify processes and make joint working more cost effective.
- 5.4 The Commission noted progress and achievements in Living City projects, which included the findings and recommendations of the Education Commission, City and Family Recovery, and Housing Renewal. Members also received an overview of priorities for the forthcoming year, which included balancing Westminster's accounts, Unified Public Services and continuing to improve education.
- 5.5 The Commission asked the Leader a variety of questions on matters relating to his portfolio and the strategic direction of the Council, to which the Leader responded. Issues raised by the Commission included:
- Future challenges, which included bedding down the new organisation to bring further improvements and efficiencies, and improving Westminster's procurement processes and reliability of major contracts.
 - Commissioning and the value of joint funding and sponsorship.
 - The need for innovation in policies and areas such as procurement and the

importance of reducing the complexity of processes and being less driven by procedure.

- Directing and co-ordinating the work of utilities.
- Acknowledgement that economies of scale with partners were not always cost effective at local authority level, as resources could be sourced locally.
- The role of the third sector in partnership working, and the need to engage with all community, social and charitable organisations that operate in Westminster.
- The difference between targets and outcomes in Living City Projects, and how success was measured.
- The value of the system of Area Forums as a measure of local opinion.
- The continuation of the Go Green agenda to lessen the City Council's carbon footprint, and the value of a Go Green Annual Report.
- The unification of public services, governance and the relationship between a pan-city government and the locality model.
- Central government funding and potential future cuts, and the creation of a stable business environment through improvements in the economy.
- The role of scrutiny at Westminster, scrutinising partnership working and taking forward scrutiny recommendations.
- Learning from scrutiny at other local authorities.

5.6 The Commission thanked the Leader of the City Council for attending the meeting

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Members thanked Councillor Judith Warner for acting as Chairman of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission over the past year.

7. TERMINATION OF MEETING

7.1 The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____