



**CITY OF WESTMINSTER**

# MINUTES

## **WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

Minutes of a meeting of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission held on  
Thursday 21 March 2013 at 7.00pm in Committee Rooms 6 & 7,  
17<sup>th</sup> floor, City Hall, Victoria Street, London, SW1 6QP

**Present:** Councillors Sarah Richardson (Chairman), Ian Adams, Brian Connell, Andrew Havery and Barrie Taylor

**Also present:** Councillor Philippa Roe (Leader of the City Council) and Mike More (Chief Executive).

#### **1. MEMBERSHIP**

- 1.1 No apologies for absence were received. All Members were present.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 2.1 No Declarations of Interest were made.

#### **3. MINUTES**

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2012 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **3.2 Matters Arising**

- 3.2.1 Minute 5: Census 2011 Outputs: Members noted that proposals to stage the next meeting of the Commission at the House of Commons to discuss the 2011 Census Outputs had not been taken forward, as the additional information that was anticipated had not yet been received.

#### **4. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL – BETTER CITY, BETTER LIVES**

- 4.1 Councillor Philippa Roe, Leader of the City Council, presented the priorities and key projects for Westminster that had been set out in the five year plan “Better City, Better Lives”, and responded to questions from Members of the Commission.
- 4.2 The vision for the five year plan had been based upon three major goals:

- **A More Enterprising City** - to ensure that every young person in Westminster had the skills and opportunities to have a successful career.
- **A Safer, Healthier City** - to ensure that everyone in Westminster felt healthy and safe.
- **A More Connected City** - to ensure that everyone in Westminster felt more involved in their local community.

- 4.3 Councillor Roe commented that a core element of increasing employment was to ensure that Westminster's residents came out of education with the appropriate skills to match available jobs. The Commission noted that this would be supported by the recent launch of the Employability Passport, which would seek to help 1,000 young people across Westminster in their search for employment or further training; and by Workplace Co-ordinators who had found over 200 people sustainable employment. The City Council was also working with further education colleges to discuss what skills and courses were needed to match available jobs, and would promote enterprise by increasing its support for smaller and medium sized businesses, and by considering how processes can be simplified. The Commission acknowledged that job opportunities would also become available through regeneration.
- 4.4 Councillor Roe commented on proposals to establish a safer and healthier City, and confirmed that the Your Choice and Family Recovery Programmes would continue. Westminster's relationship with the police would continue to be developed, and Members noted that the City Council would be investing £1 million in CCTV and £300k in the Clean Streets initiative for more litter bins and cleansing. It was also anticipated that recent changes in legislation which gave local authorities responsibilities for Public Health should create better patient outcomes and achieve savings.
- 4.5 A residents' survey carried out in support of the Connected City initiative had highlighted a number of concerns that needed to be addressed, which included parenting and problems between groups. A greater sense of community was also being encouraged through promotion of the 'One Good Thing' campaign, and by a small grants programme.
- 4.6 Members acknowledged that improvements to services were continuing to be achieved during difficult economic times, and that Council Tax had been kept steady through innovations such as Tri-Borough working.
- 4.7 The Commission discussed the Lifeskills agenda, and the role of local authorities in working with partners to collectively encourage the creation of job opportunities, including local recruitment for the police and fire services. Councillor Roe confirmed that the City Council was continuing to promote volunteering, and was encouraging people to do Saturday jobs to develop work skills and gain work experience.
- 4.8 Members discussed the proposals for a more Enterprising City, and sought clarification of how the proposed improvements to GCSE grades could be achieved, if schools were no longer maintained by the local authority. Councillor Roe confirmed that the City Council was continuing to work in close

partnership with schools which were also keen to achieve the improved targets.

- 4.9 The Commission welcomed more direct intervention in the Safer Streets initiative, particularly regarding aggressive begging. Councillor Roe acknowledged that begging was a major issue that was difficult to address, and confirmed that the City Council was working more closely with the British and foreign police. Current policy was also being reviewed, and professional witnesses were being introduced to support prosecutions.
- 4.10 Members discussed the proposal to achieve a 20% increase in the recruitment of adoptive parents as part of a Safer, Healthier City, and noted that a Tri-Borough Adoption Panel was already working towards achieving the improvement, with better matching for placements being made possible through the wider demographics. The Commission also acknowledged that further improvements were being achieved through reducing the court timetable.
- 4.11 The Commission discussed the further savings efficiencies that were being achieved through Tri-Borough working and shared Health Services, and noted that poor mental health was an issue which could in many cases be linked with long term worklessness. Councillor Roe agreed that dealing with worklessness could solve a range of problems that were faced by the City Council.
- 4.12 Members discussed possible risks that could arise from changes in Central Government policy and in future finance, and noted that the 5 year plan set out in Better City, Better Lives would be reviewed on an annual basis. Councillor Roe highlighted the need for Central Government to recognise that Westminster currently incurred £50 million of unfunded costs per year, and that the West End was a premiere world destination and economic hub which needed to be appropriately funded and kept up to a certain standard. The Commission noted that the City Council Working was working with the West End Commission and Central London Forward to looking for a consistency of message in lobbying.
- 4.13 The Commission thanked Councillor Roe for her presentation and for responding to Members' questions.

## **5. HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY**

- 5.1 The Commission received a presentation from Dr Melanie Smith (Director of Public Health) on the current draft Health & Wellbeing Strategy, which set out how the local authority, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), and other partners, would work together to improve the health and wellbeing of those who lived and worked in Westminster.
- 5.2 The current draft of the Strategy focused on five priorities where the Westminster Health & Wellbeing Board believed need was greatest:
- Every child has the best start in life
  - Enabling young people to have a healthy adulthood

- Supporting economic and social wellbeing and opportunity
  - Ensuring access to the appropriate care at the right time
  - Supporting people to remain independent for longer
- 5.3 It was proposed that the draft Strategy would be published on 2 April 2013, and then be subject to a three month engagement period with those who live and work in Westminster, service users; and Westminster's Scrutiny Committees.
- 5.4 The Commission noted that this was the second substantive draft of the Strategy, and that the Shadow Health & Wellbeing Board had considered that an earlier version of the Strategy produced in January 2013, had not been Westminster specific, and had needed to focussed and concentrate on areas in which the Board and its partners could make a difference.
- 5.5 Members discussed the process in which the draft Strategy had been prepared, and highlighted the importance of transparency, accountability and public confidence and involvement. The Commission noted that Health & Wellbeing Boards were being created in part to manage the increased risk arising from commissioning of health by CCGs. The Director of Public Health commented that the success of Health & Wellbeing Boards would depend on good working relationships between partners, and an open willingness to share solutions.
- 5.6 The Commission suggested that the Health & Wellbeing Board could be more ambitious in how the aims of the Strategy were set, and Councillor Philippa Roe (Leader of the City Council) agreed that the aims needed to relate to performance and have tangible outcomes. Members also discussed prioritisation and how success was to be measured, and suggested that consideration be given to including supporting people into healthy adulthood, teenage pregnancy, teenage mental health and eating disorders. Members also commented on the role of Public Health in responding to threats of infectious diseases, and suggested an increased use of Telecare and smart technology by the health service and between institutions.
- 5.7 The Commission discussed the consultation process for the draft Strategy, and suggested that a workshop be arranged for Members. The Director of Public Health confirmed that a two-way process of engagement had commenced, and confirmed that a number of workshops were being arranged, and also confirmed that the suggestions made by the Commission would be taken into account.
- 5.8 Members requested that comments that had been received during consultation in connection with the draft Strategy be brought to the Scrutiny Commission, for a collective review before the end of the engagement period..

## **6. EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICY AND SCRUTINY**

- 6.1 The Commission noted ongoing progress that had been made following changes made to the Scrutiny Process at Westminster in May 2012.

- 6.2 Members agreed that a survey would be undertaken to measure satisfaction with the Scrutiny process. In addition to Westminster's Scrutiny Committees, it was agreed that the survey should be extended to include Cabinet Members, Council Officers, and witnesses who had attended meetings.
- 6.3 Members highlighted the need for Scrutiny Task Groups to receive appropriate support from officers, and commented on the need for a greater awareness of forthcoming Executive decisions. Members also suggested that an opportunity could be given for Committees to question their Scrutiny Chairmen.
- 6.4 The Commission wished to congratulate the Sex Workers Task Group for the work undertaken to mitigate violence against sex workers in Westminster, and to address health inequalities; and wished to record its thanks to Laura Johnson (Policy Officer), who had worked on the project and was now retraining as a social worker. Members also wished to record their thanks to Mark Ewbank (Scrutiny Officer), for his ongoing work in support of Westminster's Policy & Scrutiny Committees.

## **7. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

- 7.1 In accordance with the City Council's Constitution, the Commission received a report which provided details of the three instances during the past year in which the urgency provisions had been used to exclude the opportunity for the possible call-in of Cabinet Member Decisions.

## **8. END OF MEETING**

- 8.1 The meeting ended at 8.23 pm.

CHAIRMAN \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_