



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

## Environment, Highways and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Environment, Highways and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 11th June, 2020**.

**Members Present:** Councillors, Tony Devenish, Ian Rowley, Antonia Cox, Barbara Arzymanow, Paul Dimoldenberg, Aicha Less and Pancho Lewis.

**Apologies:** Councillor Peter Freeman

**Also Present:** Councillor Heather Acton, Cabinet Member for Licensing and Public Protection and Councillor Andrew Smith, Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment.

#### 1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Chairman sought any absences, apologies or substitutions to the committee's membership. There were no changes to the membership of the Committee.

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 The Chairman sought any personal or prejudicial interests in respect of the items to be discussed from members and officers, in addition to the standing declarations previously made.
- 2.2 There were no declarations made.

#### 3. MINUTES

- 3.1 There were no changes to the minutes.
- 3.2 **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the City Management and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 September 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record of proceedings.

#### 4. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC PROTECTION AND LICENSING

- 4.1 The committee received a portfolio update from Councillor Heather Acton, Cabinet Member for Licensing and Public Protection. Councillor Acton provided an overview of the portfolio, highlighting recent areas such as rough sleeping, mortuaries and markets. Councillor Acton praised the wraparound services and she advised that the service alongside St Mungo's and Passage have worked extremely hard in supporting rough sleepers to move off the streets. Councillor Acton discussed WCC mortuaries, advising that due to a rise in Covid-19 cases a temporary mortuary was erected. She advised the committee that the temporary mortuary was being taken down, as due to the reduction in cases it was no longer required. On markets, Councillor Acton advised the committee that WCC markets remained opened for the sale of essential goods. Councillor Acton thanked staff for supporting markets to open safely whilst observing social distancing.
- 4.2 Members of the committee queried the liaison with the WCC BCU and referred to an incident with a young boy with mental health issues. Members also raised concerns regarding antisocial behaviour (ASB) specifically rough sleepers causing difficulties for residents, domestic violence (DV) and the Black Lives Matters (BLM) demonstrations and the implications this might have for some of the City's statues. Members sought clarity on the council's position regarding air quality and queried if the council intended to review strategically, the easing of social distancing and more people returning to the city. Members also enquired if the council had considered reviewing the decision to increase the market trader fees given the current pandemic. Members queried whether the council intended to review the licencing policy in light of the pandemic, in order to help traders recover lost revenue.
- 4.3 Councillor Acton advised that she and council officers were working closely with the Police ensuring that the council's messaging around DV support was very clear. She advised that she recognised that there had been some ASB and action had taken place to resolve issues between residents and those placed in temporary accommodation, she also advised that extra security had been provided in some circumstances. With regards to the BLM demonstrations, Councillor Acton advised that the demonstrations were unsafe due to COVID restrictions.
- 4.4 Councillor Acton informed the committee that a huge amount of work had been undertaken to encourage walking and cycling in the borough. She advised that the Leader had also undertaken a large amount of work on climate emergency and will be taking advantage of the current opportunities. Councillor Acton informed the committee that the Market trader fees had not been increased for some time and she did not see this decision being reversed. Councillor Acton advised that there was some discussion coming from the government regarding relaxing some areas of licensing and planning regulations. She advised that these changes this would likely relate to regulations regarding outdoor tables and chairs. However, she would not be supporting any changes that resulted in vertical drinking.

## **5. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS**

- 5.1 The committee then received a portfolio update from Councillor Andrew Smith, Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways. Councillor Smith provided an update on the work movement strategy, temporary cycle lanes and the next phases. He discussed the hospitality sector, specifically outdoor dining advising that more details would be made available in the coming days. Councillor Smith discussed the excellent job the Waste Service had done, and also highlighted the outstanding job of the Parks Service in ensuring that all WCC parks remained opened through the pandemic. Regarding zero carbon, Councillor Smith was very pleased to announce the introduction of electric vehicle infrastructure of more than 1,000 charging points across the city.
- 5.2 Members of the Committee raised queries regarding the widening of pavements in light of social distancing, and the improved statistics for waste management. Members also queried the transformation Street Scape project and queried how it would be properly monitored and coordinated. Members of the Committee raised further queries regarding Airbnb, the climate change agenda, the Soho redevelopment and further plans for “Electric Avenues” for the entire borough.
- 5.3 Councillor Smith advised that the improved waste statistics were partly due to less commercial waste relating to lock down measures. He also advised that the widening of pavements would be critical to enable social distancing. These measures would be in place for some time, particularly as large queues outside shops will become more common. He advised that the extra space would prevent road safety issues. Councillor Smith informed the committee that the Movement Strategy would be developed alongside residents, businesses, council officers and inspectors. Responding to queries regarding Airbnb, he advised that himself and others were putting huge pressure on the government for more regulation.
- 5.4 Councillor Smith informed the committee that the council had rolled out its plans for more electric vehicles, electric avenues and electric charging points. He informed the committee that he was working on a waste review and building sustainability.

## **6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The chairman opened the discussion with the committee members seeking suggestions for the work programme including agenda items for the next meeting. Committee members suggested focusing on the movement strategy, with regular updates and an open transparent approach. Members were also keen on reviewing telephone boxes as it was felt that telephone boxes were being misused and created an anti-social behaviour problem. Members discussed the Cabinet Members for Highways and Environment writing to BT and working with BT to move the issue forward. Members were also very keen to review the Mayor of London’s Street Scape project and

expansion of pavements, expressing that there may be conflict with Edgware Road.

The Meeting ended at Time Not Specified.

CHAIRMAN: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**4 MINUTES**

**5 CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC PROTECTION AND LICENSING  
UPDATE**

**6 CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS UPDATE**

**7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

The Meeting ended at Time Not Specified

**CHAIRMAN:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** \_\_\_\_\_