

CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the Meeting of the Council of the City of Westminster held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 20th September, 2023 at Westminster Council House, 97-113 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5PT.

PRESENT

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Patricia McAllister

COUNCILLORS

Concia Albert	Patrick Lilley
Gillian Arrindell	Alan Mendoza
Barbara Arzymanow	Tim Mitchell
Geoff Barraclough	Matt Noble
Liza Begum	Ellie Ormsby
David Boothroyd	Ralu Oteh-Osoka
Nafsika Butler-Thalassis	Angela Piddock
Melvyn Caplan	Ed Pitt Ford
Maggie Carman	Robert Rigby
Laila Cunningham	Tim Roca
Lorraine Dean	Ian Rowley
Tony Devenish	Cara Sanquest
Paul Dimoldenberg	Caroline Sargent
Robert Eagleton	Karen Scarborough
Paul Fisher	Mark Shearer
Jim Glen	Selina Short
David Harvey	James Small-Edwards
Sara Hassan	Judith Southern
Elizabeth Hitchcock	Max Sullivan
Adam Hug	Paul Swaddle
Louise Hyams	Hamza Taouzzale
Ryan Jude	Jessica Toale
Amanda Langford	Aziz Toki
Aicha Less	Jacqui Wilkinson
Iman Less	Jason Williams

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ruth Bush, Md Shamsed Chowdhury and Rachael Robathan

1 APPOINTMENT OF RELIEF CHAIRMAN

1.1 Motion moved by the Lord Mayor and seconded by Councillor Ellie Ormsby, that Councillor Robert Eagleton be elected as Relief Chair.

1.2 Motion put, and on a show of hands, declared **CARRIED**.

2 MINUTES

- 2.1 The minutes of the proceedings at the Council meeting held on Wednesday 28 June 2023 were, with the assent of the Members present, signed by the Lord Mayor as a true record of the proceedings.

3 LORD MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 The Lord Mayor referred to these as set out on the agenda.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 Councillor Jim Glen declared that in respect of 13b on the agenda, the Ecological Emergency Motion, he was a Trustee of the Westminster Tree Trust.

5 STATEMENT ON URGENT MATTERS

- 5.1 There were no urgent matters.

6 COUNCILLOR PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS, IF ANY

- 6.1 There were no petitions or deputations received.

7 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 7.1 Members of the public asked three questions which were responded to by the relevant Cabinet Members. The questions and responses are available on the Council's website.

8 QUESTIONS

- 8.1 The questions, supplementary questions and replies are included as a recording on the Council's website.

9 COUNCILLOR ISSUE

9.1 Social Housing in St. James's

Councillor Louise Hyams spoke, and Councillor Liza Begum replied.

10 PARTY BUSINESS

- 10.1 The Opposition Party selected to debate the topic of Sustainable Travel. The debate would be referred to the relevant Executive Director for consideration when reporting on the subject.

11 REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: COUNCILLORS PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

- 11.1 The Lord Mayor put the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee report to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendations adopted.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Parental Leave Policy for Councillors, attached at Appendix A of the report, be approved and it be adopted into the Council's Constitution as part of an Appendix to the Member's Allowances Scheme.

12 REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: POLICY AND SCRUTINY REVIEW

- 12.1 The Opposition Party had selected for debate the report on the Policy and Scrutiny Review as set out on the agenda.
- 12.2 Following debate, the Lord Mayor put the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee report to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendations adopted.

RESOLVED:

That Full Council approve:

- 1) The replacement of the existing Policy and Scrutiny Committee structure with a revised Policy and Scrutiny Committee structure as summarised in the report, and for this new structure to take effect from 27 September 2023, following the current round of committee meetings;
- 2) A revised Chapter 4 ("Policy and Scrutiny") of the Council's Constitution as set out at Appendix A of the report, including revised terms of reference for Policy and Scrutiny Committees, including the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- 3) The delegation of authority to the Monitoring Officer to make other minor amendments to provisions in the Constitution consistent with the contents of this report.

13 NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion 13a - The Gordon Hospital and a Lack of Acute Mental Health Provision in South Westminster

- 13.1 The Majority Party had selected for debate the notice of motion as set out on the agenda. The notice of motion was moved by Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis and seconded by Councillor Lorraine Dean.
- 13.2 Following the debate, The Lord Mayor put the motion to the vote and following a show of hands declared the motion **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

The mental wellbeing of our residents is of the utmost importance to this Council. We are concerned about the loss of Westminster's 51 acute mental health beds since the temporary closure of the Gordon Hospital at the beginning of the Covid pandemic and the consequences this has had for our residents and our staff. We are concerned that patients have to wait much longer to access an acute bed, often in unsuitable environments such as in A&E. When a bed is finally found, it is outside Westminster, and sometimes very far from Westminster which contributes to the isolation of mental health patients from their families and communities.

The temporary closure of the Gordon Hospital has put immense pressure on other parts of the system. St Charles, the acute mental health hospital in Kensington & Chelsea is finding that Kensington & Chelsea patients are having to move out of borough to make way for Westminster patients. St Mary's hospital is having to host several mental health patients at a time for up to 24 hours in beds that are needed for patients who are physically ill. The police are finding that their resources are tied up in escorting mental health patients in A&E for up to 24 hours instead of fighting crime.

The closure of the Gordon Hospital affects all our communities both directly and indirectly. However, the closure of this acute provision has a particular impact on communities least able to access alternative support, such as those who are street homeless and those households in multiple deprivation.

There is no indication that the need for acute mental health beds is reducing. Our data shows that in 2022/23 our staff assessed 1070 people, 49 people more than in 2021/22. Of those 1070 people, 777 were referred for acute hospital care, which is 103 more people than in 2021/22.

We call on the NHS to reopen acute mental health beds in South Westminster to ensure that the acute mental health needs of our residents are met. We very much value community mental health

services but we don't believe that community mental health services should be funded at the expense of acute hospital beds. We need both types of services to support patients with different needs and at different stages of their patient journey. This is the view we will be expressing formally to the NHS when they open their consultation in the Autumn.

Motion 13b - Ecological Emergency

- 13.3 The Majority Party had selected for debate the notice of motion as set out on the agenda.
- 13.4 A procedural motion was moved by Councillor Cara Sanquest and seconded by Councillor Ryan Jude for the Council to receive a deputation. The Lord Mayor put the motion to receive a deputation to the vote and by show of hands declared the motion **CARRIED**.
- 13.5 Mr Simon Cole, representing the Climate Assembly UK, addressed the Full Council.
- 13.6 The notice of motion was moved by Councillor Ryan Jude and seconded by Councillor Cara Sanquest.
- 13.7 Following the debate, The Lord Mayor put the motion to the vote and following a show of hands declared the motion **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

This Council recognises the importance of a healthy and biodiverse environment that ensures the wellbeing of all who live, work and study here and support Westminster's future prosperity. This Council also acknowledges the 2019 State of Nature report, which found that 15% of UK species are classified as threatened with extinction, and 2% are already extinct.

Westminster declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Council notes that the ecological and climate emergencies are intertwined, as burning fossilised carbon places stress on the ecosystems which regulate the climate. If habitats are compromised or destroyed, this has impacts not only on the decline of local species but also on resilience for more extreme weather events such as heatwaves and floods.

In Westminster, there are 33 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), which cover 22% of the City's land footprint. Some are located on council land, while others are owned by other landowners, such as The Royal Parks. However, the most recent Open Space Audit data that is available found that only 39% of Westminster SINCs demonstrated 'average to rich' or 'rich' species diversity. As well as in our green spaces, there is also significant ability to improve the biodiversity in our built environment and through our planning system. There is an opportunity to learn more about the state of nature in the City of Westminster, and to improve general awareness of and develop actions to reverse biodiversity loss in our City.

We therefore pledge to provide leadership and work with all organisations, departments, partners and our communities to do all that is within the Council's power to reverse the decline in biodiversity and deliver measurable biodiversity net gain within Westminster.

The Council also notes the importance of the work of the newly instated Climate Assembly and the following Cabinet decision to:

- Note the final recommendations from the Westminster Citizens' Climate Assembly.
- Approve the initiation of a programme of cross-council work, led by individual Cabinet Members, to develop responses to each recommendation of the Climate Assembly, identifying what action is possible or where the Council may need to influence stakeholders to take them forward.
- Agree that all recommendations brought forward for implementation will be subject to further financial and legal consideration and, where necessary, individual Cabinet or Cabinet Member decisions will need to be undertaken.

In addition to this, the Council will:

- (1) Declare an ecological emergency, which recognises the global ecological emergency and the local impact this has on the communities and businesses we serve, expanding upon the climate emergency declared in 2019;
- (2) Pledge to act during the first year of the Motion being accepted, to secure future measurable biodiversity net gain for Westminster, building on recent achievements such as the 'Greening Westminster' fund, the 'No Mow May' initiative, local projects which support communities to take action to improve biodiversity, the ban on the use of Glyphosate, the Wild Gardens competition and other initiatives;
- (3) Publish a strategy, within the first year of the Motion being accepted, outlining our approach to improving biodiversity within Westminster, which will formally bring together and build upon work happening across the council to support biodiversity net gain;
- (4) Undertake and publish a Green Infrastructure Audit, to assess the current condition and quality of green spaces in Westminster, including our 33 SINC locations in the City;
- (5) Proactively look for opportunities to work in partnership with local groups and stakeholders, to ensure we are all working together to address the ecological emergency;
- (6) Pledge to develop plans for further action in the second year of the Motion being accepted and beyond, based on a full assessment of the scientific evidence on how best to achieve this goal;

- (7) Declare its full support for the Climate and Ecology Bill, and to write to all MPs with constituencies that contain Westminster City Council wards, to encourage them to also support the Climate and Ecology Bill.

In recognition of this ecological emergency Westminster City Council will:

- Make Council housing estates, parks and open spaces more hospitable to a wide range of plants and animals.
- Encourage community engagement with habitat creation through community gardens, improving biodiversity in our streets and pocket parks.
- Identify how the City's open spaces function as part of a Westminster ecological network and prioritise areas for protection and enhancement.
- Work in partnership with institutions, schools, businesses and community groups, to raise awareness and encourage wider biodiversity action across the City through public engagement and advice to residents and businesses on how to protect and enhance habitats within their neighbourhoods.
- Ensure the delivery of biodiversity enhancements through our planning policy and development control functions.
- Review and increase ambition on the Council's target to increase tree canopy cover by 10% by 2050, including working with Westminster Tree Trust to make it easier for residents to propose tree planting. Work with communities to increase tree planting, and where street trees are not appropriate, install green walls, hedges and planters for smaller trees.
- Design new council housing for net gain of biodiversity and opportunities in the form of integral swift boxes and biodiverse green roofs.

The Meeting ended at 9.40 pm

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____