

## Westminster Scrutiny Commission

### THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

#### Meeting on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May

#### City for All

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 As Members will be aware, I launched this Council's new three-year City for All vision at the Council meeting on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March.
- 1.2 It is a vision for Westminster to be an unrivalled city of choice, heritage and aspiration, where connections amongst residents, businesses and visitors get stronger as everyone plays their part in, and benefits from, Westminster's continued success.
- 1.3 The City for All vision represents this Council's total commitment to offering the best and most efficient services, making it as easy as possible for people to speak to and do business with us and creating opportunities for all, while maintaining low tax, clean streets and supporting those that need our help most.
- 1.4 As the squeeze on public finances continues, our response to the challenges that we face must continue to evolve. This Council has saved £100m from its budget over the past three years, but there is a further £100m to find by 2018. We are therefore calling on everyone in Westminster to play their part through the City for All vision:
  - It challenges **the Council** to prioritise its resources on those who need help the most and maintain the standards expected by the city;
  - It provides opportunities for every **resident** to take responsibility for themselves and their communities and play a bigger role in local decision-making;
  - It invites every **business** to contribute to their communities and play their part in helping young people and those with poor health into rewarding jobs; and
  - It calls on every **visitor** to respect our neighbourhoods and heritage while working in, or enjoying, our city.

## 2 Commitments and Priorities

2.1 City for All is a blueprint for the Westminster of 2018, with 18 headline commitments set out under the themes of 'Aspiration', 'Choice' and 'Heritage' in terms of what this Council will deliver:

- i. We will invest £60m over the next five years to build new and better homes, including 1,250 affordable homes
- ii. With our partners, we will build the city's first University Technical College
- iii. We will continue to back local businesses and help create jobs, including creating a new enterprise space for small and growing businesses in Church Street
- iv. We will give extra support to people to buy their first home
- v. We will work with, and challenge, our partners to reduce by a third the 10,000 residents who are long-term unemployed
- vi. Through the West End Partnership, we will set out a 15-year plan to focus hundreds of millions of pounds of investment in the West End to secure the future of one of the most vibrant and exciting places on the planet for generations to come
- vii. We will invest more than £1m a year in services to tackle obesity and help people live a healthy lifestyle
- viii. We will reward those who volunteer in their communities with up to 50,000 credits over the next three years to 'spend' on activities such as cinema visits and sport
- ix. Libraries will become centres of information and community activity at the heart of our neighbourhoods
- x. We will help families deal with problems the first time to prevent as many children as possible from going into care
- xi. It will be easier than ever to contact the Council and use our services online
- xii. Older people will have more choice and control over their care and, with the NHS, we will provide more people-focused, coordinated care so that they can stay in their own home
- xiii. Our new City Inspectors will take to the streets to tackle anti-social behaviour and clamp down on irresponsible business practices
- xiv. We will invest £7m with our partners in new public realm schemes, including walking and cycling improvements, and road safety schemes
- xv. We will continue to prepare for the introduction of the first phase of Crossrail in 2018
- xvi. We will continue to commemorate the centenary of World War One through community events, and we will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City of Westminster
- xvii. More than 500,000 people will enjoy our best ever West End LIVE event celebrating world-leading West End theatre
- xviii. We will introduce a new basements planning policy in 2015

- 2.2 Beyond the headline commitments, the City for All vision will be embedded across all Cabinet portfolios and Departments in terms of priorities, business planning and service delivery. It will drive the Council's activity over the next three years, while also calling on everyone – residents, partners, businesses and visitors – to play their part.

### **3 City of Aspiration**

- 3.1 Westminster is home to one in every 40 jobs in the UK, contributing 15% of London's economy and 3% of the economy of the entire country. Under the **City of Aspiration** theme, our priority will be to ensure that communities are able to share in the economic prosperity of our city.
- 3.2 Our track record in this area is already impressive. Between 2010 and 2013, more than 50,000 new jobs were created in the Westminster economy, while from August 2010 to August 2014, the rate of Job Seekers Allowance claimants dropped by 40%. This is an indication of Westminster's successful economy benefiting residents who have been able to access jobs in the local labour market.
- 3.3 Since 2010, more than 2,185 residents have been supported into some form of paid employment through Council-commissioned programmes alone, with 75% of those having previously been benefits claimants. That figure includes almost 1,000 people supported into employment through our Workplace Co-ordinators, a service that has recently been rebadged as Recruit London.
- 3.4 This year, we will implement a radical new employment scheme using the £11m of funding leveraged under the Growth Deal through this Council's leadership on employment issues across central London. I have briefed this Committee previously on the Growth Deal, but that scheme will target nearly 4,000 people in central London who have been out of work for long periods of time, in many instances due to problems with their mental or physical health.
- 3.5 This is part of our pledge, under City for All, to reduce the 10,000 long-term unemployed in Westminster by a third.
- 3.6 Under the City for All vision, we are also committed to bringing about a step-change in the contribution that employers make to equipping people with skills for the future. We are working with BT to provide 100 young people with traineeships and 60 residents over the age of 18 with work placements. We will also provide a further 90 apprenticeships to young people working in partnership with UK Power Networks.
- 3.7 We have committed to creating 30 supported employment opportunities a year as a Council for people with learning and physical disabilities, sensory impairment or mental ill health. We will also work with employers and partners to support 500 residents with significant barriers closer to work.

- 3.8 And, of course, the city's first University Technical College will be opened, offering a new centre of excellence for transport engineering and construction, through which 550 students each year will be trained for real jobs and careers.
- 3.9 Under the City of Aspiration banner, we will also build 1,250 affordable homes over the next five years, while investing £12m to tackle cold and damp conditions and identify tenants most at risk of poor health to improve their homes. We will give extra support to hard working professionals wanting to get their foot on the housing ladder by launching a new scheme that will give households access to housing equity.
- 3.10 Cllr Astaire will shortly be launching the Council's Housing Strategy, which will provide further details of this Council's housing policies over the coming years.

#### **4 City of Choice**

- 4.1 Under the **City of Choice** theme, our priority will be to create opportunities for everyone to make responsible choices for themselves, their families and their neighbourhood.
- 4.2 Westminster is already an extraordinary City of Choice in a time when people are used to doing things when and where they want, using the most up-to-date technology. We will continue to transform the way that people do business with us, making everything that we do digital where it matters, and ensuring that everything from applying for a license, reporting rubbish on the street or paying for pest control is accessible online.
- 4.3 We will transform the old 'Area Forum' approach to community engagement. Cllr Summers is leading on this strand of work which will allow us to take a pragmatic and progressive approach to listening to and engaging with residents. We will make sure that they only need to tell us something once, and that when they do we are transparent in telling them what has happened as a result.
- 4.4 We have received a record number of Neighbourhood Forum applications in Westminster, which is testament to our residents' willingness to take responsibility and show leadership for their future and the future of the city. We must rise to that challenge by providing them with the support that they need, while also continuing to show leadership on pan-London issues, as we are doing through the West End Partnership, on which I have updated this Committee previously, and through the ongoing devolution discussions in the capital.
- 4.5 Choice around individual health is at the heart of the City for All vision. Our new Community Independence Service will be launched this year, providing tailored help to allow people to regain confidence, maintain their independence and stay in their own homes. That may be through something as simple as providing blood sugar monitors to use at home, or a mixture of

online, face-to-face and telephone support to help people self-manage their conditions day-to-day. Alternatively, it may involve a named GP and a single care plan for those who require more support, ensuring that unnecessary trips to hospital are avoided and people can feel in control of their own conditions and lives.

- 4.6 We will also invest more than £1million each year over this period to help children and families eat well and stay active, enabling them to make the right choices to combat the critical issue of childhood obesity. As part of that commitment, we will sign up 20 businesses to our Healthy Catering Commitment, through which they can work with a nutritionist to change their menus and cooking techniques to have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of their workforce.
- 4.7 As a Council, our track record has always been to prioritise those who need our help most, and we will continue to do that, whether it be older people, troubled families or those residents vulnerable to violence or extremism.
- 4.8 We will make it simple and easy for families to get help at the right time, avoiding crises from becoming overwhelming, keeping families together and making sure that as few children as possible are taken into care. This will mean fewer families requiring the intensive support provided through Family Recovery.
- 4.9 To help reward those who take responsibility in playing an active role in their communities, we will award up to 50,000 volunteering credits over the next three years. These can be used on a range of activities, but are intended to send a clear message that this Council wants to work with and reward those who are willing to play their part in creating a City for All.

## **5 City of Heritage**

- 5.1 The third and final strand of the City for All vision is **Heritage**, and our overall commitment to protecting and enhancing Westminster so that every neighbourhood remains a great place to live, work and visit.
- 5.2 Westminster is unique as an authority, with 75% of the city designated as a conservation area and more than 11,000 listed buildings and structures. However, the city is as famous for its vibrant and diverse neighbourhoods – a unique collection of interconnected villages each with its own history and character.
- 5.3 Our ongoing commitment to protecting the fabric and character of the city has been re-emphasised only this month, with the Council's strong response to the demolition of the Carlton Tavern pub in Maida Vale. This is only one example of this Council listening to and acting as a result of the concerns of residents, with a new basements planning policy set to be launched later this year alongside more stringent construction management guidance.

- 5.4 We will also bring forward our own planning policy to limit office to residential conversions, to come into force in September 2015. The last four years have seen the city lose 167,000 square metres of office space, 75% of which has been to residential uses. We are not willing to accept this trend and will act to maintain Westminster's place as the engine room of the national economy.
- 5.5 Over the next three years, we will invest £7million, with our partners, in new public realm schemes, including walking and cycling improvements and road safety schemes. Road safety issues remain of paramount importance to this Council, and we continue to strive to do everything that we can, working with our partners, to avoid incidents such as the recent tragic fatality of a cyclist near Lambeth Bridge. Our work in this area has been furthered enormously through the positive role played by Policy and Scrutiny in both the Cycling Strategy, which launched last year, and the Walking Strategy, which is currently under development.
- 5.6 We will also continue to work with our partners in planning ahead of the first phase of Crossrail 1 opening in 2018, ensuring that we keep the city moving in the face of substantial increases in the numbers of passengers entering and leaving the West End.
- 5.7 The Council's new City Inspectors have been launched since I spoke at Council in March. They are now on the streets of Westminster, taking carefully coordinated and balanced action to tackle anti-social behaviour, clampdown on irresponsible businesses practices and help maintain cohesive communities.
- 5.8 We will this year launch our ten-year Greener City Plan, which will set out our commitment to ensuring the future sustainability and wellbeing of the city. Under that plan, we will deliver a zero-carbon development in the city by 2017, while working with property developers to achieve lower energy consumption levels across all developments. Working with Transport for London, we will also deliver a successful Ultra-Low Emission Zone by 2020.
- 5.9 We will continue to take pride in the civic role that Westminster plays at the centre of the nation's commemorations and celebrations. Last month saw the one hundredth anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign, the latest milestone in the World War One centenary commemorations. As well as playing host to national commemorations, Westminster will also deliver its own programme of community events and activity as part of the centenary commemorations.
- 5.10 This year also marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the City of Westminster in its current form, and we will celebrate this through a service at Westminster Abbey as well as a number of local events.

## **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 Westminster has a well-earned reputation as a leading-edge authority, with a history of proactively addressing and adapting to changing economic or social challenges and landscapes. Through Civic Renewal, the Council regenerated the social and physical infrastructure of the city. The One City programme focussed on creating strong communities, with Living City emphasising the importance of public service delivery. On my election as Leader, the Better City Better Lives programme sought to create ladders of opportunity for all, and I am proud of what was delivered under BCBL.
- 6.2 However, as the nature and scale of the challenge that we face evolves, we cannot afford to stand still and continue to do things the way that they have always been done. Residents and front-line services must always come first, and the City for All vision shows that there is no limit to this Council's ambition to ensure that the full benefits of living in the world's greatest city are enjoyed by all.