

Economic Development, Education, Community and Place Shaping Policy Scrutiny Committee

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Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Place Shaping and Public Realm

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1. The City Plan

- 1.1 Following a public scoping consultation exercise last summer, a new City Plan has been drafted by officers in Policy and Strategy working with colleagues from across the Council. The draft City Plan will be launched on 12 November.
- 1.2 As this update to the committee is to be published prior to the publication of the City Plan, I am unable to provide further details of its contents. However, I will happily provide a further verbal update at the meeting.
- 1.3 Once the City Plan has been through public consultation, the policies will be further refined. We will then submit the plan to the Secretary of State and begin the formal examination in public process. At the end of the process the Inspector will determine if the plan is sound. Assuming the plan is found to be sound, we hope to adopt the new City Plan late next year.

2. Oxford Street

- 2.1 Over the last few months we have developed an ambitious draft Place Strategy and Delivery Plan for Oxford Street District. Our plans for the area will address the issues the district is facing, and help shape the future of retail in

London by keeping Oxford Street the number one shopping destination in the capital.

- 2.2 On 25 October, the Cabinet approved the draft Place Strategy and Delivery Plan to go out to public consultation commencing on 6 November 2016. The consultation will run for six weeks and will close on 16 December 2018.
- 2.3 Throughout this consultation period we have organised a series of exhibitions and drop-in sessions across the district. These are open to all residents, businesses, workers and visitors. They will provide an opportunity for everyone to hear more about the draft Strategy and Delivery Plan and ask questions of the project team. There is also a dedicated website (www.osd.london) that will host all the relevant information on the project and allow all residents and stakeholders to respond to the consultation.
- 2.4 Recently, the Leader of the Council met with the Mayor of London and the Deputy Mayor for Transport to outline the key themes and principles the draft Place Strategy is promoting. I have chaired a briefing for the relevant Ward Councillors to outline our strategy and will continue to engage with stakeholders over the coming months.

3. Planning Review

- 3.1 Following the election of a new Leader of the Council and Cabinet in January 2017, a number of changes have been implemented regarding the management of the planning system in Westminster.
- 3.2 In February 2017, new guidance was introduced governing how the Cabinet Member for Place-Shaping and Planning and the Chairman of Planning, as I then was, should engage with planning applicants before and after submission of applications. This guidance set out that such meetings must take place with a Planning Officer present and a record of the meeting and any advice given must be made. The guidance also sets out that once an application is

submitted any advice provided by the relevant member will be given to the Director of Planning for inclusion in the committee report.

- 3.3 In early 2018, the Leader of the Council instructed the Chief Executive to undertake a review of the planning system as a whole, learning the lessons from a year of operating the new guidance and with a view to ensuring a modern, open transparent planning service.
- 3.4 In May 2018, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) were instructed to review the operation of Westminster's Development Management service. PAS was asked to consider the effectiveness of the service, the role hospitality plays, the delivery of corporate objectives and outcomes, and the Planning Committee System and Decision Making.
- 3.5 PAS reported to the Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing in September 2018 and this report was published as part of the Cabinet papers for consideration on 25 October 2018.
- 3.6 At the subsequent meeting Cabinet agreed to changes that will deliver on two objectives: to make our planning service as effective as it can be to deliver our strategic vision for the city, and second, to increase residents' confidence in the integrity, transparency and fairness of our planning system.
- 3.7 To meet the first of these objectives Cabinet have agreed to create a Place Shaping and Planning Directorate. This will allow our planning service to be a more proactive tool to deliver the spatial aspects of the Council's City for All ambition. This means a planning service better able to undertake more than just development control and instead geared towards place-shaping and influencing the type of development required to meet the Council's corporate priorities.
- 3.8 I know how important it is that residents have faith in our planning system and its integrity, so I am pleased that the Cabinet have endorsed ambitious

proposals both to make our planning committees more open and to deliver on our promise to give residents a voice at committee meetings.

3.9 In the future planning sub-committees will be recorded, so that residents can watch the proceedings along live or watch them back after the committee. This will empower residents to scrutinise the workings of the sub-committee as well as increasing understanding of the decision-making process.

3.10 The Cabinet have now formally supported the principle to give residents speaking rights at our sub-committees. I will be developing more detailed proposals to make this possible over the coming weeks.

4. Queensway

4.1 Despite my eagerness to proceed with this project I have received legal advice that progressing with the draft Cabinet Member report should be put on hold until after the Lancaster Gate by-election.

5. Community Infrastructure Levy

5.1 The City Council started collecting its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on 1 May 2016. Liability to pay is triggered by the granting of planning permission, at which point a “liability notice” is issued. Payment is made when work commences (subject to an instalment policy for larger developments), at which point a “demand notice” is issued.

5.2 Since May 2016 the Council has issued a total of 272 liability notices for a total amount of £108,193,684. Demand notices have been issued for a total of £44,488,552 and a total of £30,211,930 has been collected. Because of the operation of the council’s instalments policy a further £9,349,398 is payable by the end of March 2019 and a further £4,927,223 by the end of September 2019.

- 5.3 Since my last report to committee the Council has invoiced for an additional £1,235,000 and received an additional £6,509,000 of CIL.
- 5.4 The next Cabinet CIL Committee will take place on 5 December. The committee will consider the latest round of applications for CIL funding of infrastructure projects. It will also consider the process governing the spending of the 'neighbourhood portion' of CIL, in consultation with local communities. The 'neighbourhood portion' represents approximately 15% of the total amount of CIL collected from development in each designated neighbourhood area.

6. Unauthorised Telephone Boxes and Advertising

- 6.1 Our planning enforcement team has painstakingly built intelligence on phone boxes and their non-use. This work has been instrumental in persuading BT to remove 8 phone boxes, which we were able to demonstrate were not being used and were not serving their stated purpose. These 8 phone boxes have now been removed.
- 6.2 Since the last meeting of the committee we have refused a staggering 94 further applications for phone boxes to be installed. As ever this takes a large amount of resource and officer time and we have continued to lobby central government for the changes to the law, which will give us more effective powers to resolve the issues we experience with telephone boxes.
- 6.3 In late October the government published proposals to remove permitted development rights for new phone boxes – a cause for which Westminster has long campaigned. These proposals would give us greater powers to refuse applications for new telephone boxes, which would not be used as telephone boxes but function effectively as advertising boards. I therefore completely support these proposals and hope they are fully implemented in due course.

7. Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan

- 7.1 Following the examination of the draft Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan and the recommendations of the independent examiner a referendum was held on its adoption on 18 October. There was a turnout of 376 electors (19.2%); of these 351 (93%) were in favour of the neighbourhood plan and 25 (7%) against. The turnout is comparable to that of other neighbourhood plan referendums in London. Legislation does not prescribe any minimum turnout for results to be valid.
- 7.2 As a result of the positive vote the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for the Neighbourhood area. This means that its policies will be taken into account in determining planning applications there. The last remaining step for the Council is to formally “make” the Neighbourhood Plan, which will be done shortly through a Cabinet Member Report.
- 7.3 This is Westminster’s first neighbourhood plan to go through the formal process and I would like to congratulate those involved for their hard work in getting to this stage.

8. Strand Aldwych project

- 8.1 This project’s aim is to improve the public realm in the Strand/Aldwych area by addressing its air quality and traffic challenges as well as maximising the area’s cultural assets. On 13 September, Cllr Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Environment and City Management, and I approved the concept design for the Strand Aldwych project and to take it to public consultation in Autumn 2018. However, in the light of two other major consultations being undertaken this Autumn for Oxford Street and the City Plan. This consultation will now begin in early 2019.