

City Management and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 10 April 2019

Report Of: Councillor Ian Adams

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Licensing

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1. Overview of Public Protection & Licensing

1.1 - As mentioned in my last report to the Committee, Annette Acik has been appointed as the interim Director of Public Protection and Licensing. As a result of this move, there has been a number of changes at a Head of Service level across the Directorate. To ensure a degree of consistency across the Directorate, Andy Ralph has moved across to become the interim Head of Service for Licensing and Regulatory Services and Rosalind Hick has since been appointed into the interim Head of Service for the Central area. In addition, Kerry Simpkin has been permanently appointed to Head of Licensing, Place and Investment Policy within Policy, Performance and Communication, further supporting a coordinated approach to Licensing.

1.2 - Following on from my last update on the Effective Neighbourhood Working programme, we are in the interview stages of a third recruitment campaign to fill remaining vacancies across multiple roles. We have had over 450 applications for these posts, with interviews having taken place from 5th - 21st March. Of the twenty-two vacancies across the Directorate, eleven are for City Inspectors. The fulfilling of these positions will further bolster our resourcing levels and allow for improved ward coverage and alignment by the Neighbourhood teams.

1.3 - Following the feedback session with Councillors in December, we have reviewed communication methods to provide Councillors with a consistent approach to member engagement at a neighbourhood level, supporting them in their role as civic leaders. A new monthly briefing for Councillors will be launched in April, bringing together some of the existing documents to provide a more wide-ranging overview of activities taking place in local neighbourhoods, as well as city-wide matters and upcoming dates of note.

2. Fly Tipping and Waste Enforcement

2.1 - City Inspectors have been continuing to target waste dumping hot spots across Westminster and particularly the Big Black Bin sites in residential areas. As can be seen in the table below, comparisons of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) and warnings over the same period (April – February) over two years shows an increasing trend of enforcement action since the implementation of the new neighbourhood approach in September 2018.

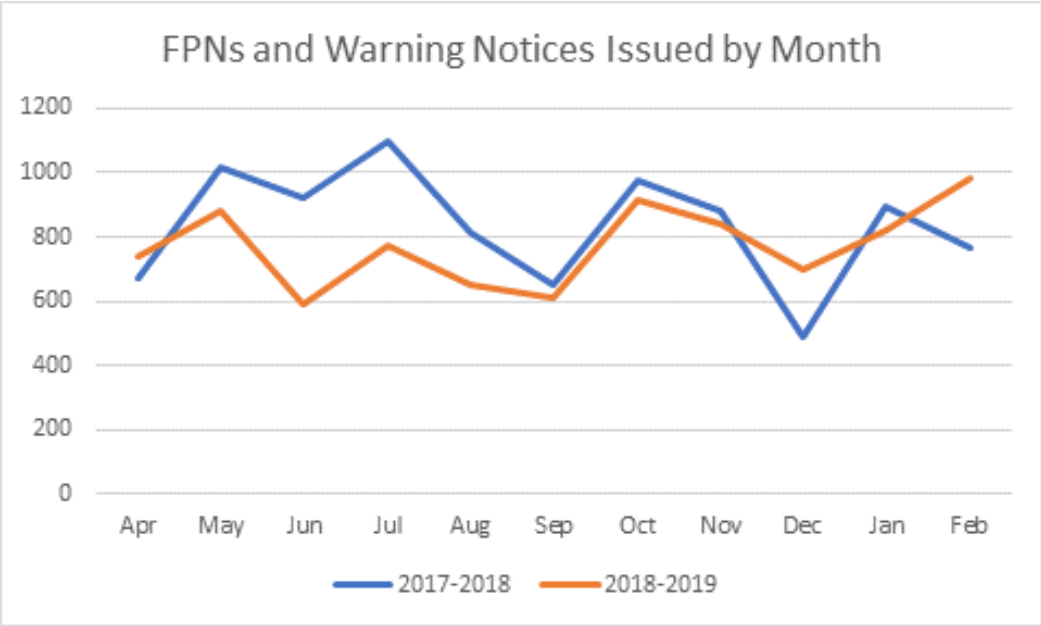


Figure 1: FPNs and Warnings by Month, FY 17/18 and 18/19

2.2 - A fly tipping operation in conjunction with the Street Waste Action Team (SWAT) engagement programme started on 8th January 2019 and has run continuously until present day. In the first eight weeks up to the end of February there were 1,396 FPNs and warnings issued. This is a 15.3% increase when compared with the same period in 2018 – this indicates that the dedicated fly tipping operation has had a positive impact on enforcement activity in this period. The figures show that enforcement totals were 35% higher in February 2019 than the previous financial year.

2.3 - In addition, the Council has trialled the removal of communal Big Black Bins (BBB) sites from residential areas which have regularly been attracting fly tipping. This has been delivered in collaboration with Councillor Tim Mitchell’s portfolio. The sites are as follows:

BBB SITE	DATE REMOVED	OUTCOME
Ashmore Road junction with Shirland, W2	14 th February 2019	Trial concluded and permanent removal proposed
Marban Road, W2	13 th December 2019	Site permanently removed
Riding House Street, W1	23 rd November 2018	Site permanently removed

2.4 - In most cases, the removals have seen dumping reduce some 98%, and has steered residents towards using their doorstep collection more. Recent analysis undertaken of waste from inside BBB sites typically show that 35-40% of waste is

recyclable. As a result, these interventions are supported by Local City inspectors and Council projects such as SWAT to educate residents in becoming more responsible.

2.5 - A wider review of the Waste Enforcement Policy is underway and a digital application to enable officers to issue FPNs on the street is currently in development.

2.6 - Officers are also in the final stages of scoping a CCTV trial in Bayswater, following the recent SWAT activity in the area. Following engagement from Councillor Payne, a CCTV company has offered their services free of charge. This will be implemented in May, with an evaluation of the impact to be completed at the close of the trial.

2.7 - The outcomes from the trial will then be considered as part of our wider waste strategy.

LGA Behavioural Insights Programme

2.8 - We have been successful in applying to be part of the 2018/19 behavioural insights programme, run by the Local Government Association (LGA). We are delighted to have been chosen to be part of the programme as one of only eight local authorities. The programme provides a £25,000 match funded grant to use nudge theory to encourage people to make better choices.

2.9 - The proposal is to use behavioural insight trials to re-design the Council's on-street bin sites to reduce the level of dumping around them. These bin sites are well used and are often at the heart of the local community.

2.10 - We will use behavioural insight expertise to re-design the bins and their immediate environment to influence residents' behaviours. The bins themselves are large and most sites have between two and four units. The Council works with a supplier who can wrap these bins to show any message in high quality media. There is therefore opportunity to communicate messages via the bins to change dumping behaviour.

2.11 - Using our grant funding, we have commissioned Ogilvy Consulting Behavioural Science Practice to provide us with their expertise. Ogilvy's Practice has significant knowhow, having worked in this field for over seven years and executed hundreds of behavioural insight trials for clients from across the world. Furthermore, as the Practice sits within the advertising giant Ogilvy, they will bring with them a background of changing behaviour through creative messaging. This team will work hand in hand with the Council's communications and design team to create a tailored approach to changing behaviour.

3. Soho Angels

3.1 - Following the successful pilot in the run-up to Christmas 2018, the Soho Angels initiative started on the 22nd February, operating each Friday night from 10pm to 5am. This initiative is a partnership between Westminster City Council and the LGBT

Foundation. Funding has been secured to facilitate the operation of this service until September 2020. This project continues to have the full support and cooperation of Metropolitan Police Service, London Ambulance Service (LAS), West End Business Partnership and Drinkaware.

3.2 - This initiative relies upon volunteers who will work as Soho Angels engaging with visitors, residents and businesses as well as supporting those who are vulnerable due to alcohol intoxication. The Soho Angels operate from the Night Hub which is located within St. Anne's Church, Dean Street. The Angels operate the Hub and provide a high visibility presence on the streets of Soho. The Angels are supported by a team of volunteers from St. John Ambulance. St. John Ambulance volunteers provide medical support within the Hub and provide a response team to support the Angels and respond to local medical emergencies.

3.3 - Agreement has been reached with the LAS to utilise the Night Hub as a place of safety for patients that they are able to discharge who are not in urgent need of medical attention. A protocol for this has been established between Westminster City Council, St. John Ambulance and LAS. It is hoped that this protocol will reduce the demand on the Ambulance Service. Going forward, this approach may lead to a reduction in the demand for A&E Departments to look after intoxicated patients who are vulnerable due to intoxication but are not in any real medical need.

3.4 - Since the Soho Angels began operating in February, the service has helped 147 people on the street and forty-eight within the Night Hub, of which thirty-six required medical support to recover. The St. John Ambulance response team has also attended two calls to cardiac arrests within Soho, arriving before the LAS. These incidents required the deployment of the Night Hub's defibrillator and for the St. John Ambulance volunteers to perform CPR on the patients. In these two incidents, the patients were stabilised with the support of the Ambulance Service and they were later conveyed to hospital.

3.5 - On average, twelve Soho Angel and six St. John Ambulance volunteers work each Friday night. Since the 22nd of February, the number of volunteering hours worked by the Soho Angels has been 808. We are planning to extend the service to include Saturday nights in April, subject to having enough volunteers to staff it.

4. Rough Sleeping: Street Count and Service update

Numbers on the Street

4.1 - From December through to February, numbers on the street returned to more seasonal norms on the street. New Severe Weather Emergency Protocol rules resulted in a more prolonged activation of emergency spaces for all those at risk of the cold weather; we estimate our numbers were around the 220-240 mark on any given night.

4.2 - In the last four weeks we have seen the return of increased flow to our streets. From late February through to early March, our outreach teams met four rough sleepers who were new to the street every day.

4.3 - The focus remains on ensuring these rough sleepers are triaged away from the street as quickly as possible using the No Second Night Out and our own locally commissioned assessment centres. Despite the high flow, our teams are still getting excellent results with newer rough sleepers. Our outreach team has achieved 225 accommodation and reconnection outcomes, with only five new rough sleepers joining the “living on the street” cohort.

4.4 - Plans are currently in process to undertake a third daytime street count, which would allow us to identify clients with support needs during the day. These counts have been extremely useful in the past for clearly identifying the different cohorts present during the day and helps inform where resources need to be targeted moving forwards.

Soup Runs, Non-Commissioned Charities & Outside Givers

4.5 - We have been working closer than ever with a number of external charities and outside givers. This includes attendance at the National Soup Run Forum, talks to local churches and tours of our services for non-commissioned groups and givers. We are keen to continue to build on this positive dialogue over the coming weeks.

Integrated Street Engagement Unit (ISEU)

4.6 - The Integrated Street Engagement Unit was conceived as part of the Council’s #MyWestminster programme to improve people’s lives in the city. It brings together Westminster City Council services with local charities and the police to provide a coordinated and comprehensive support for Westminster’s daytime street population.

4.7 - In the last month the ISEU has engaged with 181 members of the street population, identifying vulnerable individuals and victims of substance misuse and alcohol addiction. All individuals encountered have been signposted to social care services.

4.8 – Over the past month, ISEU helped twenty-nine people access housing, including night shelter, as well as aided four people to access support for education, training and employment. Thirty individuals were referred to Mental Health and Substance Misuse Support.

Chat, App Tap

4.9 - We are excited by the launch of ‘Chat, App, Tap’, which is designed to help people get off the streets. The campaign gives residents, workers and visitors to Westminster three simple and effective steps to make a real difference, recognising that it can be difficult to know how to give support in a way that is meaningful and genuinely helpful.

4.10 - TAP London giving points are placed in shop windows and on shop counters across Westminster, including at Westminster City Hall, where you can TAP to donate £3 via contactless card. Donating money in this way helps charities and services to engage directly with people sleeping rough, to provide long-term support that will help individuals turn their lives around.

4.11 - Donations will go to the London Homeless Charities Group that includes The Passage, St Mungo's and The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields, all of which work with Westminster City Council to help people sleeping rough off the streets for good. Alongside this campaign, we continue to work with the Police and other support services to ensure begging that is organised by criminal gangs is effectively combatted and to ensure vulnerable individuals on our streets are given access to effective support services.

4.12 - To this end, our Integrated Street Engagement Unit (ISEU) has served twenty-five Community Protection Notices, including five believed to be against the activities of an organised begging gang in the north of the city in the last three months.

Tents, Anti-Social Behaviour and Rough Sleeping

4.13 - We continue to be concerned about tents. The use of tents on the streets presents a significant risk to rough sleepers in Westminster.

4.14 - Westminster City Council invests more than any other local authority in rough sleeping support services (£6.5 million). We work with partner providers to offer wrap-around support tailored to individuals' specific needs for those who are most entrenched on our streets and use the powers at our disposal to take appropriate action. Nevertheless, we recognise that we are inhibited in our ability to support people in tents. As such, we will continue to lobby the government for improved powers and guidance for statutory agencies.

5. Cathedral Piazza

5.1 - There has been an increase in anti-social behaviour, begging and rough sleeping which has had a negative impact on the area surrounding the Westminster Cathedral and Piazza.

5.2 - This behaviour increases on the days when 'soup runs' operate from the location (currently Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays). We have received reports that following the soup run operations there is rubbish being left on the Piazza, urination/defecation on the streets, bins being used for storing belongings, and that drug use and dealing occurs, with the groups that congregate in the area displaying intimidating behaviour.

5.3 - Residents have informed us that they feel intimidated and that their living space has become unsafe as a result of the anti-social behaviour and debris left behind.

5.4 - We know that these long-standing problems cannot be fixed overnight. In an immediate response to the issue, we sent a letter out to residents explaining our approach to dealing with these issues as a joint initiative with the Metropolitan Police.

5.5 - We want to continue to give residents the opportunity to raise their concerns and work with us to find solutions that can work for all. We have therefore proposed holding a new regular forum for residents to attend alongside the Police, the Business

Improvement District and charity partners. To this end, we invited residents of the area to attend the first Public Forum on the 3rd of April at the Westminster Cathedral Hall.

5.6 – In addition, as part of our immediate response, we have daily patrols with Police and our City Inspectors to monitor the location, prevent anti-social behaviour and criminal activity alongside dealing with any waste management and cleansing matters.

5.7 - In the longer term, design solutions for the area are being considered, particularly along the colonnades.

6. Policing

6.1 - The tri-borough merger of the Police basic command units (BCU) went live on the 20th February. Officers and I have been working closely with the Police to ensure a smooth transition. We have consistently argued that the changes should not represent any dilution of police presence, especially as crime is rising significantly faster in Westminster than elsewhere in the capital. Crime hotspots in the West End and St. James's wards account for 4.1% of all of London's crime.

6.2 - Following these discussions, several positive changes were implemented. Firstly, the City has benefited the Territorial Support Group having been tasked to Westminster to provide high visibility patrols in the West End, to supplement the local policing teams.

6.3 - Moreover, Westminster has gained two extra inspectors which will include a dedicated West End Detective Inspector who will oversee proactive crime operations, as well as one other inspector who will oversee the ISEU and West End night-time economy activity.

6.4 - Significantly, ISEU Police officers will combine with a neighbourhood tasking team to provide twenty Police officers dedicated to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in Westminster.

6.5 - We will continue to work closely with the Metropolitan Police to ensure the best for our communities.

7. Knife Crime

7.1 - Over the past few weeks there have been several knife-related incidents in Westminster. In response, the Police have been able to deploy additional Police reserves such as the Territorial Support Group (TSG) and the Violent Crime Task Force (VCTF) to key areas affected. They have also deployed local community-based officers to provide community engagement and reassurance.

7.2 - To support these policing responses, on several occasions the Police have authorised Section 60 'Stop and Search' authorities, which have been both necessary and proportionate in their application. Westminster City Council has engaged fully with the Police, who have worked with the Integrated Gangs Unit (IGU) and Community Safety Teams.

7.3 - We noted in our previous report to the Committee the various agency responses we have in place to combat knife crime. We remain focussed with our partners on protecting young people from serious violence, for which Councillor Heather Acton takes a lead in her capacity as Cabinet Member for Family Services and Public Health. To this end, we have developed new approaches for 2019 – 2020 to help deal with knife crime in Westminster. This includes the formation of the Serious Youth Violence Task Group, which is formed to ensure an effective joint response from all key partners including support from the voluntary and community sector.

7.4 - To reflect the current need and growing concerns regarding exploitation, we are proposing to expand the remit of the IGU to focus further on these issues. To progress our approach to dealing with County Lines, the IGU will become the Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit (IGXU).

7.5 - In conjunction with the formation of the IGXU, we are extending the reach of the service to include a tri-borough approach focussing on young people aged between ten and seventeen. This is following a successful bid to the Home Office for £500,000 from the Early Intervention Youth Fund. This funding will allow the team to employ three additional gang workers, a family therapist and a programme coordinator.

7.6 - Westminster City Council is also actively supporting the Offensive Weapons Bill as it goes through the House of Lords, with active backing from the Baroness Coutie of Downe, former leader of Westminster City Council. The Bill will make it illegal to own offensive weapons such as “zombie knives” and knuckle dusters often used by gangs. The Bill will also make it illegal to carry a knife at colleges and create tougher restrictions on the online sale of knives, preventing them from being posted to residential addresses.

8. Shisha Premises

8.1 - Trading Standards Officers have completed fifty visits to shisha premises across Westminster to provide them with guidance and legally compliant health warning labels, similar to the ones on cigarette packets, to attach to shisha pipes supplied for use to the public.

8.2 - During recent visits, it was observed that most premises visited previously are now displaying labels on their pipes. All premises were also urged to ensure that they made themselves aware of the law applicable to their own premises to ensure that products they were using in their shisha pipes met legal requirements.

8.3 - We also continue to lobby central government to ask for a change to the law, to introduce regulatory frameworks under which Shisha would become a licensed late-night activity.

9. Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

9.1 - The Fitness for Human Habitation Act came into force on 20 March, 2018. The aim of the Act is to help drive up standards in rented homes in both the social and private sectors and provide a power for tenants to seek redress from their landlord if their rented property presents a risk of harm to their health and safety.

9.2 - This does not create any additional enforcement duties for the Council; however, we are in the process of considering how the Act fits in with our existing private rented sector enforcement and the work being carried out by Environmental Health officers and the Housing Standards Taskforce.

9.3 - The Taskforce focuses on dealing with those landlords and letting agents that are deliberately flouting the law aimed at protecting Westminster's tenants - often the most vulnerable. This will typically involve matters such as overcrowded HMOs and seriously hazardous conditions.

9.4 - Our approach includes ensuring a continued close relationship with our Housing solution service and updating our website to provide relevant guidance. We will continue to develop appropriate workstreams to ensure tenants are able to effectively seek redress.

Cladding on Private Buildings

9.5 - Considerable work has been undertaken by the Council to inspect buildings listed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) for possible Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) Cladding. Through this process we have identified thirteen buildings that had been confirmed with either partial or full ACM cladding systems which failed to meet the current combustibility requirements.

9.6 - As soon as these buildings were identified, Westminster City Council in conjunction with the building owners and managers, London Fire Brigade and Building Control prioritised work to ensure that the appropriate remediation measures were in place to safeguard residents, such as sprinkler systems, additional fire safety measures and on site 'waking watches'. We ensured that building owners had undertaken the relevant Fire Risk Assessments and updated evacuation policies and procedures.

9.7 - Through our joint work, one building owner has since completed the full removal of all ACM cladding from their building. Our officers have undertaken joint inspections with the LFB and appointed fire safety specialists who have confirmed they are satisfied with the interim fire safety measures in place in the twelve remaining buildings.

9.8 - The Council is now actively engaged with freeholders and managers of these twelve buildings and are working closely with them to proceed with works to remove the ACM cladding from their properties. However, all of the building owners are in the process of attempting to secure the necessary funds prior to commencing the works.

9.9 - In respect of potential enforcement of our remaining twelve buildings, we are now half way through the process of completing full inspections on the blocks and will be reviewing the appropriate enforcement action - with a view to serving notices on these properties in the next few months.

9.10 - Regular updates are provided to MHCLG regarding the progress of works at these properties. Westminster City Council has nurtured a close working relationship with the MHCLG to share our ongoing work and our officers have also subsequently assisted with the design and establishment of their Joint Inspection Team. This is a taskforce created by the MHCLG to actively oversee the remediation of private sector buildings with ACM cladding systems. The aim of the team is to ensure that remediation plans are put in place swiftly across all private sector buildings with ACM cladding systems, addressing any barriers and identifying any additional support required.

9.11 - In addition to this we also attend the London Council's meetings to share intelligence, best practice and ensure a consistent approach across the sector.

9.12 - Ensuring the safety of our residents is a priority for Westminster Council and we remain committed to working with building owners and managers to remove ACM cladding systems on their properties in a reasonable timescale.