



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

**COMMUNITY SERVICES, BUSINESS AND PLANNING
POLICY & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 SEPTEMBER 2020
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Community Services, Business and Planning Policy & Scrutiny Committee** held on 14 September 2020 at 6.30pm **on TEAMS**.

Members Present: Councillors Karen Scarborough (Chairman), Geoff Barraclough, Ruth Bush, Richard Elcho, Christabel Flight, Eoghain Murphy and Hamza Taouzzale.

Also present: Councillor Paul Swaddle (Cabinet Member for Community Services and Digital) and Councillor Mark Shearer (Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Services and Digital).

Apologies: Councillor Lindsay Hall.

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Chairman advised that Councillor Ruth Bush was substituting for Councillor Andrea Mann.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Paul Swaddle (Cabinet Member for Community Services and Digital) and Councillor Mark Shearer (Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Services and Digital) to the meeting.
- 1.3 The Chairman advised that Councillor Matthew Green (Cabinet Member for Business and Planning) would not be attending the meeting. Any questions that Members had regarding the Business and Planning portfolio would be placed on the Committee's Action Tracker.
- 1.4 The Chairman welcomed Chris Roudette who was a volunteer for Westminster Connects who took part in the discussion on Westminster Connects.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2020 be approved for signature by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

4. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND DIGITAL

- 4.1 The Committee received a written update from the Cabinet Member who responded to questions on the following topics:

- the enormous success of establishing rapidly the Westminster Connects as part of the Council's response to COVID-19.
- the success of continuing to offer virtual services which included information, e-books and sessions through social media during the pandemic.
- the implementation of the Movement Strategy and the introduction of semi-permanent 'Play Streets' around Westminster.
- the Council's work to address and prevent digital exclusion of residents.
- the launch and offer of the pending Access to Culture resident's card.
- the importance of capturing the outcomes after the delivery of the Digital Street Markets Project.

- 4.2 The Committee noted that the Council had been shortlisted for 'The Barrier Removal Award' which is a category in the Connected Britain Awards. The Council's application highlighted the work the Council had undertaken to achieve some of the fastest fibre deployment in the country, including its work on the Connect Westminster Project, Parking Bay Suspension discount for fibre providers and our City-Wide Wayleave Agreement.

- 4.3 The Committee congratulated and thanked the staff and volunteers for their fantastic work during the COVID 19 crisis and now in connection with the recovery response.

4.4 ACTIONS

1. That an update on tendering a contract to provide 5G from lampposts be sent to the Committee.
2. That an update on finding a new premises for the Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) be presented at the next meeting.

5. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS AND PLANNING

- 5.1 The Committee received a written update from the Cabinet Member which covered current and forthcoming issues in his Portfolio.
- 5.2 **ACTION:** That a briefing note detailing the due diligence that has been undertaken to make sure that Groundwork can deliver the Westminster Wheels scheme be sent to the Committee.

6. WESTMINSTER CONNECTS

- 6.1 The Committee received a report on Westminster Connects, the service set up to respond to the increase in needs as a result of the pandemic and the large number of volunteers who wanted to help their community. The Committee noted how Westminster Connects had been able to mobilise thousands of residents to support those who were more vulnerable by the pandemic and to mobilise staff, voluntary community sector organisations and businesses to work collaboratively in Westminster.
- 6.2 The Committee welcomed Chris Roudette who was a volunteer with Westminster Connects on the Shopping Service and the Meal Delivery Service. Chris advised of the benefits and value of establishing Westminster Connects for both the residents and the volunteers. He explained how he had found volunteering a very positive experience and how Westminster Connects had demonstrated that residents could rapidly come together to help their community. He emphasised how much residents appreciated the meal service as well as the face to face contact with another person. He advised that going forward Westminster Connects should consider if local volunteering was a better way to deliver their services because of the travel time around the borough.
- 6.3 The key themes that emerged from the Committee discussion were:
- the huge achievements of the Westminster Connects due to the rapid response by the Council and the volunteers willing to help their communities.
 - the need to develop volunteering opportunities and understand how to shape and support volunteers into these opportunities instead of mass recruitment.
 - the need to manage volunteer's expectation so they did not feel disappointed if they were not immediately given a task.
 - they welcomed role the Council played in coordinating information and volunteer referrals for the voluntary sector.
 - the future use of interactive Voice Recognition (automated calls) to directly reach residents who need help and support.
 - member engagement with local businesses regarding corporate volunteering.
 - the importance of engaging with hard to reach communities to promote and encourage volunteering in their local area.

- the support given to food projects such as North Paddington Food Bank.
- the development of efficient IT systems to enhance the delivery of services.
- the possibility of further extending the befriending service as connection with others was very important for people's mental health.

6.4 The Chairman thanked everyone who had given up their time to attend the meeting and contribute to the discussion.

6.5 **RESOLVED:** The Committee concluded with the following comments, which would be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Community Services and Digital:

1. That the Committee welcomed the report and thanked everyone for all their incredible hard work over the past few months.
2. That the Council should continue to build on the Westminster Connects platform to enable effective partnership working with Westminster's voluntary sector in the future.

7. CONTACT CENTRE PERFORMANCE AND UPDATE

7.1 The Committee received a report giving an overview of the two main contact centres operated by Agilisys, a brief overview of other contact centres operated across the Council and an update on the contact centre review project. The Committee noted that the report focused on their performance from January to July including service levels and targets and customer satisfaction.

7.2 The Committee heard that the current contract with Agilisys had performed well and that during the Covid-19 pandemic Agilisys had been exceptional in working with the Council to ensure all agents could work from home and deliver the same standards of service to all customers, including being the first point of contact for Westminster Connects services for vulnerable residents.

7.3 The Committee further heard about the wide range of different services handled through the two main contact centres and the work being undertaken on improving a range of online services for customers. The Committee noted that there were significant opportunities in providing digital services as it allowed the Council to offer services in a more timely and consistent way.

7.4 The Committee discussed the consultation carried out with residents and that users were being placed at the heart of how the Council was designing their digital offer. The Committee welcomed that the digital offer would not replace any existing services. The Committee noted that it was the intention to make the Council's digital services much better than other services, so it became the channel of choice for customers, because of its readily available information and quick regularly updates.

7.5 The Committee were also given an update on the Contract Centre Review project which was established to ensure customers received a consistent experience when contacting the Council and investigate opportunities to improve the commercial models, leverage technology and streamline operations. The Committee noted that the contract review project would continue to progress the design of an assisted service hub operating model.

7.6 Other issues discussed were the consistent performance over all contact centres, maximum wait times and the pay and conditions for staff.

7.7 **ACTIONS**

1. That the Committee be kept up to date regarding the publication date of the Contract Centre Review Project.
2. That details on the incentives for channel shift within contact centre contracts be sent to the Committee.
3. That details of the pay and conditions for staff working at the contact centres be sent to the Committee.

7.8 **RESOLVED:** The Committee concluded with the following comment, which would be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Community Services and Digital:

1. That any changes to the service that came out of the contact review project take account of all Westminster residents including those who may not have access to the internet/digital devices.

8. **ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKERS AND COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

8.1 **ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKERS**

8.1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Action and Recommendation Trackers be noted.

8.2 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

8.2.1 The Committee requested further information on the Bike Apprenticeship scheme and employment schemes.

8.2.2 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee review the Council's approach to Employment, Training and Skills in light of the COVID 19 pandemic and receive an update on progress against the recommendations in the Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) strategic review.

9. TERMINATION OF MEETING

9.1 The meeting ended at 8.31pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____