

# Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	3 February 2021
<b>Report of:</b>	Councillor Melvyn Caplan
<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio</b>	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for City Management
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## Overview of Portfolio

City Management is a new Cabinet portfolio responsible for:

- public realm;
- environmental and waste matters except air quality;
- parks, open spaces and biodiversity;
- street cleansing;
- waste and recycling;
- highways and transport;
- parking and sustainable transport;
- road safety;
- walking and cycling strategies;
- public mortuary; and
- physical activity, leisure and sport.

## Public Realm

The public realm programme continues to be delivered, with a forecast circa £47million of improvements this financial year, with over 150 schemes in the stages of development or delivery.

A major junction improvement scheme at Harrow Road and Ladbroke Grove was substantially completed before Christmas which improved the green man crossing, new street lighting, bus accessibility and footway paving.

Work continues on the temporary footway widening scheme on Regent Street, due to complete in February 2021. The scheme creates approximately 5,000 square meters of additional space for pedestrians, to improve visitor experience, support social distancing and improve accessibility.

Two key schemes have started work on site including phase one of the Green Spine from Bell Street to Samford Street, creating a wide, pedestrian-focused route with trees and planting areas enabling water attenuation and aiding sustainable drainage systems. The work is due to complete by mid-2021.

Works at Stand Aldwych have also begun, to enable the Strand to become traffic free in front of Somerset House and King's College London by August 2021. This will immediately create much needed space to support the local economy and enhance pedestrian experience.

## **Parks, Open Spaces and Biodiversity**

In line with Government requirements, all outdoor gyms, sports courts and table tennis tables have been closed.

The outdoor gym at Westbourne Grove caused some issues with people breaking through the security fencing to continue using the site, but all equipment has now been dismantled, which has resolved the issue. There are currently no problems reported at other sites.

Playgrounds remain open with additional disinfecting of play equipment taking place on a daily basis.

Patrols of parks by City Inspectors and Parking Marshalls have also been introduced to enforce social distancing requirements.

## **Physical Activity, Leisure and Sports**

All indoor leisure centres were ordered to close from 20 December 2020 as part of the Government's further COVID-19 restrictions under Tier 4. Whilst this remains to be the case, further restrictions announced in early January 2021 also required all outdoor sport facilities and outdoor gyms to close, allowing just parks and playgrounds to remain open.

Our service users are able to benefit from the 'pivoted' ActiveWestminster digital offer, featuring a range of online activities and programmes to help residents get and stay active, which is aligned with Sport England's national campaign #StayInWorkOut.

Everyone Active staff are in place at Paddington Recreation Ground to keep this large open space maintained and accessible.

### ActiveWestminster Awards 2020

On Thursday 17 December, the Council hosted the 2020 ActiveWestminster Awards as a virtual event that was streamed via the ActiveWestminster YouTube channel. This year's event was particularly needed, as it is important to recognise and celebrate the tremendous efforts of our residents, athletes, volunteers, clubs and ActiveWestminster partners, who have continued to provide their high quality services and provision to those that have required them the most throughout the pandemic.

## Jubilee Community Leisure Centre (Jubilee Phase 2)

Good progress continues to be made and the contractor, Boshers, is confident that despite minor delays caused by COVID-19, the scheme is likely to be complete by Spring 2022.

## Luton Street Community Leisure Centre

Main site works are still making good progress on site with the sports hall roof due for completion later this month.

The current forecast for practical completion of this leisure centre is July 2022.

## **Street Cleansing, Waste and Recycling**

All waste and cleansing services continue to operate normally. Bulky waste continues to be only collected from outside properties but arrangements are in place to provide internal collections from elderly and vulnerable residents.

## **Highways and Transport**

The Highway Inspectors are maintaining a physical presence daily on the network and carrying out their statutory duties as required. The network is naturally quieter with the national lockdown, so both pedestrian footfall and vehicle volumes are a lot lower. This has contributed to both a lower number of defects being reported by customers via reactive enquiries and the number of defects being picked up, requiring remedial action on routine inspections.

Temporary Structure license applications are substantially down, which have directly coincided with the national lockdown. Code of Construction Practice sites are operating as normal and financially we are on track to meet targets.

Work continues with FM Conway on carbon reduction trials after the success of the King Street scheme.

Delivery of the Light Emitting Diode installation project remains on track to be completed by March 2022.

## **Movement Strategy**

### Phase 1 Movement Strategy – walking and cycling

The extended pavements to support people to move in a socially distanced manner, implemented using barriers were mostly removed in September 2020. The exceptions were Oxford Street, Regent Street and Piccadilly. Regent Street has seen the implementation of an intermediate scheme which widened the pavement with temporary materials and removed the barriers. A similar scheme is currently being

developed for Oxford Street. There are still some barriers along Piccadilly although they have been rationalised.

Phase 1 saw the introduction of 14 temporary cycle lanes which all used just signs and lines to demark them. The temporary cycle lanes are currently all under review. They are being assessed, based on usage and connectivity, and recommendations will be made as to whether they should be removed, remain in place until the temporary order expires or made permanent.

### Phase 2 Movement Strategy – Hospitality support

Support was provided to clusters of hospitality businesses through the provision of outside space for dining, using Mass barriers or street closures. The first tranche of support was provided for 3 months until the end of September 2020. The scheme was then extended for a further month and then winterised schemes were considered and pavement licenses granted until 30 April 2021. However, following London moving into Tier 4, and subsequently another national lockdown, hospitality businesses are currently not open for dining. The Council is exploring options on sustained hospitality measures for when they re-open.

Some barriers to support outdoor dining have remained in place and could operate again when the next lockdown is lifted, though some barriers have been removed on Warwick Way momentarily.

## **Parking and Sustainable Transport**

Parking continues to operate as close to a normal service as possible despite the pandemic. The contact centre in Dingwall is closed due to Scottish Government regulations but staff are delivering their duties from home.

On street deployments are being targeted at areas of most need but there has been no reduction in enforcement levels due to COVID-19 in the second wave.

Officers are also working to deliver significant extensions of the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and ensure the car-share provision is appropriate and effectively targeted.

### Electric Vehicle Charging Points

The Council is currently in the process of significantly increasing the number of electric vehicle charging points, both generally available to EV drivers and also specifically available to residents. By the end of the financial year the Council has committed to have, and is on track to deliver, 1,000 charge points on the public highway in Westminster. Over 800 of these will be exclusively for the use of residents.

In addition, we are also doubling the number of rapid charge points currently on the public highway to over 30, offering further support to commercial EV drivers in the City. This provides an unprecedented charge point representation for a local authority, especially when considering the constraints upon space and trying to accommodate the infrastructure in a medieval street scape. By the end of the financial year the Council will have, according to figures from the Department for Transport, more public charge points than Wales and Northern Ireland do combined currently.

The table in Figure 1 shows the current and proposed breakdown of charge points, with the hourly power output in each case. Slow chargers are charge points retro fitted into lamp columns for residents; fast chargers are alongside publicly available EV only bays, with a four-hour maximum stay, and rapid charge points deliver a 50 kilo-watts (kW) per hour charge and are either publicly available or exclusively for taxis.

**Figure 1**

<b>Date</b>	<b>3-5.5kW slow charger</b>	<b>7kW fast charger</b>	<b>22kW fast charger</b>	<b>50kW rapid charger</b>	<b>Total charge points</b>
<b>15 January 2021</b>	462	153	16	14	645
<b>31 March 2021</b>	802	153	16	32	1,002

## **Public Mortuary**

Westminster mortuary still continues to receive non-COVID deaths during the pandemic and lockdown.

Systems and processes are in place to ensure safe practice by the mortuary staff during the pandemic and resilience within the staff has been achieved by the operation of a two-team system.

Currently there has not been a need to reinstate the temporary mortuary facility due to the availability of the London mass storage site and management of the London wide demand by the Mortality Management Group. There continues to be daily monitoring of the storage facility at the mortuary to ensure the capacity does not exceed 70% to take into account any unplanned events resulting in fatalities.