



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

## Westminster Scrutiny Commission

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Westminster Scrutiny Commission** held virtually on **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 6.30pm**, via Microsoft TEAMS.

**Members Present:** Councillors Karen Scarborough (Chairman), Iain Bott, Nafsika Butler-Thalassiss, Lorraine Dean, Adam Hug and Andrew Smith.

**Also Present:** Clare Appleby (Corporate Events Manager), Daniela Brown (Diary and Officer Manager, Lord Mayor's Office), Kate Hand (Head of Climate Change, London Councils), Damian Hemmings (Principal Policy Officer), Amy Jones (Climate Resilience Programme Director), Artemis Kassi (Lead Scrutiny Advisor), Naomi Landau (Campaign Manager), Stuart Love (Chief Executive), Raj Mistry (Executive Director for Environment and City Management), and Councillor Rachael Robathan (Leader of the Council).

#### 1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gotz Mohindra. Cllr Lorraine Dean substituted for Cllr Mohindra. There were no other changes to the membership.
- 1.2 The chairmen of the four Policy and Scrutiny Committees provided brief updates about the current work of the committees.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3 MINUTES

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021 be approved as a correct record of proceedings, subject to the amendment of 4.1.4 to read "vaccinations".

#### 4 UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

- 4.1 Councillor Rachael Robathan (Leader of the Council) provided an update and responded to questions on matters of corporate interest, which included:
  - the impressive roll out of the NHS vaccination programme across Westminster

and the continuing Council support to the NHS for this roll out. Whilst areas of concern around the take-up of the vaccine still remained, Westminster had been the first borough to access data of those in the top nine priority groups. Weekly meetings with MPs and the NHS were being held to maintain pressure on the rollout with deployment of volunteers and promotion of pop-up sites are being promoted.

- the refresh to the corporate strategy, City for All, which had seen the addition of a fourth pillar (“Thriving Economy”).
- the significance of the milestone of 12<sup>th</sup> April as a key date in the safe emergence of the City from lockdown, including the alfresco dining scheme with some 600 premises having pavement licences. This had required hiring 34 City Marshals to work with City Inspectors on the scheme, for which funding had been secured for six weeks. Off Licences had been asked not to sell alcohol during the day in addition to increased street cleansing, signposting and access to public toilets.

4.2 The Commission discussed in depth the importance of issues around: data cleansing to ensure that all eligible for vaccination are called and receive the vaccine, with the Council providing nuanced feedback to the NHS; the learning gained from holding virtual public meetings; crowd management, with assistance from marshals and the police, and heavy promotion of booking systems; the regeneration of the Oxford Street District and the economy; providing assistance to the NHS, which had been offered from the beginning; the location of vaccination centres, including using faith settings, such as mosques and churches; and the future of outdoor hospitality; preserving temporary cycle lanes in the future.

4.3 The Commission endorsed the Leader of the Council’s report and thanked the Leader and Chief Executive for their contributions.

## **5. REPORT ON WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL’S CLIMATE EMERGENCY PROGRAMME**

5.1 Raj Mistry (Executive Director for Environment and City Management) introduced the report. Raj Mistry observed that this was a crucial stage in the development of the programme, with analytical work being done on the emissions challenge, reductions in emissions planned by every directorate and campaigns commenced to drive behaviour change. The Commission heard that in 2018 there had been nearly 44,000 tonnes of emissions, mainly from buildings, followed by transport and waste disposal and that there were ongoing discussions around engagement with the public.

5.2 Kate Hand (Head of Climate Change, London Councils) introduced the work of London Councils, including seven major programmes of collaborative work and work with lead boroughs (Enfield and Waltham Forest), outlining the regional perspective and challenges. Kate Hand observed the timeliness of the Commission’s meeting as on April 20<sup>th</sup> the Government had announced a new target for cutting emissions by 2035. Kate Hand emphasised the importance of reporting by councils and their emissions profile, as well as the need for

councils to act collaboratively on new planning and development and green spaces. Kate Hand further observed that London had more opportunities than rural spaces, but also had a number of challenges around the built environment and the number of residents. The Commission heard that 52% of Londoners felt that they were affected by climate change and yet the various Councils all had different plans.

### 5.3 The Commission discussed in depth:

- the importance of issues around lessons learned, including greater engagement with the NHS;
- the Retrofit London programme, including the development of an action plan, the difficulties arising from supply chain issues, the fulfilment of the Green Homes Grant scheme and the need for a ten-year plan;
- the drop in emissions during the first lockdown and its sustainability in the future;
- the development by 22 boroughs of their plans and whether there were any particular shared recommendations or issues;
- plans for the Pimlico District Heating Undertaking (PDHU), including plans to for its decarbonisation;
- electrification of fleets and car-free approaches;
- the potential for furniture recycling, on a similar basis to the Westminster Wheels initiative;
- the balance needed when considering heritage buildings and energy efficiency;
- the scope for and engagement with residents to assist in emissions reduction;
- the potential for increasing electric vehicle charging points across the City, and how residents could be involved in this;
- levels of engagement with migrant communities, and the importance of using local voluntary networks;
- food waste collection;
- segregated cycle lanes; and
- potential increases in residents' energy bills during the lockdown periods.

5.4 The Commission heard that Westminster City Council recognised the scale of this issue and was developing relevant programmes, though in the early stages of this work, including establishing costing. The Commission also heard that London Councils was in the process of finalising a report, the findings of which would be available in the week commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2021 and that a governance structure was being examined across the boroughs and across London. The Commission was advised that work on the PDHU plant and the feasibility of changes was in progress, including the investigation of heat pumps and sources of waste heat (e.g the London Underground system), in addition to incorporation of lifetime emissions and whole life carbon impacts into more formal policy.

5.5 The Commission heard that the Council had a large reach with regards to campaigns and communications, including electronic newsletters (e-newsletters) which had proved been useful in setting out details of what residents could do to contribute to emission reduction. The Commission also

heard, however, that there was more work to be done to ensure widest possible reach, especially with less engaged communities.

- 5.6 The Commission was advised that there were currently 1,000 electronic vehicle charging points across the City, one of the highest amounts amongst local authorities and that the Communications team was working on a project to detail available locations of points and a new website. The Commission heard that the Council had not received complaints on capacity and that assessments would be made on a case by case basis.
- 5.7 The Commission heard about the regionally focused work being done by London Councils, including a small steering group on climate change, a campaign around active travel, and the importance of having a common branding identity for climate action work. The Commission also heard from Council officers about the focus on engagement with migrant communities involving the work of a specialist agency.
- 5.8 The Commission was advised that discussions with Veolia regarding food waste collection were ongoing and that the issue of increased bills was being examined, given that electricity was up to four times more expensive than gas. The Commission was advised that officers were also investigating the use of heat pump technologies and the retrofitting buildings to supply cost effective energy. The Commission further heard that cycle training activities were being rolled out, and discussions concerning cycle lanes were continuing with TfL as part of an ongoing programme of work.
- 5.9 The Commission commended the Chief Executive for his work on the London Councils Chief Executive Advisory Group, including sharing good practice and economies of scale on a pan-London basis, and noted the phenomenal amount of work in progress at the Council. The Commission further commended continued collaboration and engagement with London Councils by Westminster City Council, engagement with the NHS on climate emergency work and encouraged the Council to show leadership in this crucial programme of work.

**ACTION:** That the Council explore waste and cleansing initiatives (Raj Mistry).

## **6. COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME**

- 5.1 As this was the final meeting of this municipal year, the Commission briefly discussed its work programme for the year 2021 to 2022. The Commission requested that potential work programme topics be circulated amongst members, once received from the directorates. The Commission also discussed reviewing climate emergency work as a standing item.

**ACTION:** That suggested topics for the future work programme be circulated amongst the Commission members, once received from the directorates.

### **5.2 RESOLVED that:**

- climate emergency work feature as a standing item in the Commission's work programme until further notice; and

- the delivery of City for All 2020/21 be reviewed at the next meeting, scheduled for June.

**6. TERMINATION OF MEETING**

6.1 The meeting ended at 20:18.

**Next meeting: 21 June 2021**

**CHAIRMAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_