

Date: Wednesday 2 February 2022

Portfolio: Business, Licensing and Planning

The Report Of: Councillor Matthew Green, Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning

Report Author and Contact Details: Patrick Ryan, Portfolio Advisor
pryan@westminster.gov.uk

1. Thriving Economy

West End Recovery- West End Pop-up Project

- 1.1 Our Pop-up & Activations programme has delivered 16 activations in the West End using creative installations, displaying local creative talent, working with brands and showcasing innovative start-ups to provide immediate support for high streets. This includes the activation of 7 units in Piccadilly with creative and cultural pop-ups. Our flagship pop-up concept store, the Regent Street Edit, showcased seven ethical and sustainable emerging fashion and wellness brands until 24 December. The business support team is now working with some of the occupiers on possible scale-up opportunities into long-term units in the West End.

The Collect at 500 Oxford Street launched on 26 November. The highly curated space showcases the work of artist Carson Parkin and a mix of ten independent brands and designers, showcasing their work which centres on themes that are on top of the retail agenda. The current NNDR Localism relief scheme to pop-up ventures has been extended until the 31st of March 2022 in view of property owners continued willingness to engage in the programme and provide a rent-free period. We are working with Groundwork and the Crown Estate to activate several empty units on South Molton Street, introducing The Good Store (a large department store with a focus on sustainability and lifestyle). Groundwork will be working with the Westminster Employment Service to support residents into employment opportunities in Groundwork's core retail team and in-store.

West End Recovery - Westminster Investment Service

- 1.2 The Westminster Investment Service continues to attract and welcome new businesses into the city and supports established businesses to grow. Since launching in July 2021, the Investment Service has received 17 enquiries from businesses seeking space (with more than 165,000 sq ft being sought) and is providing support to these companies seeking to invest. Proposals are in development for a new Investment Portal to launch in 2022 that will better profile Westminster's strengths and support the attraction of new employers. The Westminster Investment Service has also been involved with developing the West End Futures programme. The programme is a partnership initiative to assist the recovery of the West-End after the pandemic, and to ensure its continued success.

West End Recovery- Westminster Reveals

- 1.3 The inaugural Inside Out festival, a key highlight of the Westminster Reveals campaign, concluded in November. It included a series of light installations on the streets of the West End, including a projection onto Marble Arch. It also featured collaborations with over 30 partners

with a range of content that attracted thousands of people into Westminster throughout the Summer and the Autumn months. Plans are underway to build on the success of the campaign.

West End Recovery- Future Occupiers

- 1.4 West End Future Occupiers is a partnership programme seeking to attract and support international brands to invest in the West End. It is being delivered by London and Partners and supported by the council, New West End Company and Heart of London Business Alliance and property owners. In December 2021, the programme had 71 Active Projects and made 30 direct introductions between potential future occupiers and property owners.

West End Recovery – Marble Arch Mound

- 1.5 The Marble Arch Mound temporary attraction closed on 9 January 2022, with over 250,000 people having visited the Mound. This has supported recovery in this part of London. The process of removing the structure has commenced and requires a considered approach to dismantling. It is anticipated this will take around 4 months to fully complete.

West End Recovery – Oxford Street District

- 1.6 The Oxford Street District (OSD) programme underwent a review between August and December 2021 to establish a way forward for projects by measuring them against key tests. This will develop a more defined approach for delivering projects, including robust governance. More details can be found on the council [website](#).

There are several current project activities:

- Temporary interventions along Oxford Street were introduced in early 2021. These include footway widening, bespoke modular seating, planting and playful gobo lighting projections. The interventions allow people to rest along the high street and increased circulation space.
- The new Soho Photography Quarter is under construction with completion planned by the end of April 2022. The scheme will deliver a more accessible and pedestrian-friendly space.
- The Council is working in partnership with The Portman Estate and the Baker Street Quarter Partnership on engaging with stakeholders on proposals to improve Manchester Square in Marylebone. Proposals for the Manchester Square area will create a new co-funded culture-focused public space, improve pedestrian safety and introduce a dedicated eastbound cycle lane on the northern side of the square. The proposals received Cabinet Member approval in December 2021 to progress to construction.

West End Recovery – Westminster Markets

- 1.7 There are now five markets that have wi-fi installed. Digital Training has commenced which focuses on delivering additional business and digital skills. Westminster is raising the visibility of its markets through a variety of pop-up events, and the Council is planning future night markets. Future events will look to encourage new start-up businesses, young traders under 30 and green initiatives. In December, Christmas Markets took place across Westminster along with ceremonies for the switching on of Christmas lights. Rupert Street Market is open following a period of no traders for two years during the pandemic. The Markets team is continuing to improve sustainability across market sites. Caulibox (the reusable lunch box scheme which reduces single use plastic) has been expanded to include Strutton Ground Market and the Council have implemented a waste management strategy on Church Street.

At Tachbrook Market, Westminster Wheels has partnered with the Dr Bike Service and have a joint stall every Saturday. This allows residents to book in a bike service via Westminster Wheels and receive a free check from Dr Bike. On 31 January, the Markets Development team will host a Night Market at Newport Place in Chinatown. There will be capacity for 10 – 14 stalls predominantly filled by local businesses. The event will be broadcast in China and the UK as part of London's Chinese New Year celebrations.

Covid-19 grant programmes

- 1.8 An omicron ratepayer scheme was announced over the Christmas break and will open in January 2022. The scheme will focus on supporting those most impacted by the variant in the hospitality and leisure sectors. The Council has applied the new levels of Expanded Retail relief for the 2021/22 financial year to all those eligible. We have made 492 Discretionary Grant Fund (DGF) awards of £10,000 from our allocation of £4.92m for the first round of discretionary grants from Central Government. Through the second round of the additional restrictions grant (ARG) funding, we have approved and made 949 grant awards to businesses and supported 10 Business Improvement Districts with their quarter one 2021/22 operating costs. The Council secured a further £9.1m in additional funding after spending the original allocation by the end of July 2021 deadline. There is £5,295,529.22 of the additional funding remaining, which must be spent by 31 March 2022. We have designed programmes to spend these funds.

Business support proposals for ARG

- 1.9 The Council is investing:
- £500k of the ARG allocation to support 1,000 small businesses to deliver a Green Business Audit in line with guidance from Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers and the Carbon Trust.
 - £700k of the ARG allocation to the delivery of large-scale Cleaner & Greener Recovery Programmes of support for Westminster businesses.
 - £1m of the ARG allocation to essential capacity building to develop the necessary infrastructure to help address the hospitality recruitment crisis.
 - To deliver start-up to scale-up courses to help start-ups with high growth potential harness the resilience required to survive and adapt their business to thrive.
 - To support small businesses through the extension of our Pop-ups & Activations Programme.

2. Training and Employment

Westminster Wheels

- 2.1 In the past year, Westminster Wheels has trained and employed over 25 residents as bike mechanics. The project is recruiting for our sixth cohort of trainees that will start their City and Guilds Bike Mechanic training in late January. Through our partnership with Veolia and the Met Police, our team has diverted over 8 tonnes of old or disused bikes from the waste stream. The project also donates bikes to community organisations and charities. As part of our Christmas campaign, Westminster Wheels donated 12 adult and 12 kids bikes to a Westminster charity. To date, the project has donated over 70 bikes to the community. The service is exploring the opportunity to be part of the Pop-Up at South Molton Street. Given the location and wider concept, this would involve Wheels having a franchise offer at the Pop-Up, showcasing the quality, higher cost reused bikes for sale. A decision will be made on this in January.

Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)

- 2.2 The Service has recently completed the annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for the 2020-21 academic year. WAES has self-assessed overall as 'Good' with some 'Outstanding' aspects. The SAR will be uploaded to the Ofsted portal at the end of this month and will form part of the initial desktop review by Ofsted prior to any inspection.

WAES have produced their [final Impact Report](#) for the 2020/21 academic year. The report provides a solid foundation for WAES to continue their work with learners and partners in the coming academic year.

WAES submitted a bid for a Digital Hub in September 2021 and has been notified that the bid is being recommended for approval to grant stage. This will be a public document. The Digital Hub will accelerate the work started in supporting residents to gain skills in digital careers through programmes like the Amazon Web Services course. WAES has established a programme of education and training support for Afghan evacuees that will continue from

January 2022 until the end of the academic year. Over 100 Afghans have participated and benefited from the WAES programmes to date.

Westminster Employment Service

- 2.3** The Council has created over 100 new job opportunities for unemployed 16–24-year-olds with local employers through the Kickstart scheme. Since the first cohort of internal Kickstarters commenced their placements with the council in June 2021, 25 Westminster residents have joined the Council’s workforce via Kickstart. Westminster residents account for all new joiners to the Westminster’s workforce via Kickstart. In addition, 96% of young people joining the Council via Kickstart identify as BAME, 12% have declared a disability, 12% are young mothers and 12% are care leavers. 11 have progressed from their Kickstart roles into roles with the Council and 1 with a Council supplier. Westminster Employment Service will continue to support those that joined the Council and do not find a job immediately after their employment ends for a period of up to 12 months.

3. Place Shaping

Strand Aldwych

- 3.1** Highway, footway and junction works are continuing. All construction is due to be completed by December 2022. Work continues to budget with total scheme spend to the end of period 9 on the Aldwych 2-way and Strand Meanwhile elements of the scheme at £11.271million. The service is developing the Management Model and an integrated partner approach is expected to be in place on completion of the works in December 2022.

Harrow Road

- 3.2** Following the completion of the Harrow Road Place Plan in August 2021, we are progressing the design and planning at Harrow Road and Westbourne Green as well as the Maida Hill Market. The Place Shaping team secured £900,000 towards the delivery of Harrow Road Place Plan from the Greater London Authority’s Good Growth Fund (GGF) in 2020. This funding is matched by the Council to provide a construction budget of £1.8m. £100,000 of revenue funding has been secured from the ‘New Homes Bonus’ to contribute towards associated uplifts in management/maintenance costs. £150,000 towards ‘Harrow Road Open Space’ has been secured from a funding partner to contribute towards delivery of this aspect of the project.

Soho

- 3.3** Our Vision for Soho aims to develop a positive vision statement, set of objectives, and projects that will address current and emerging pressures facing Soho. The Vision for Soho will sit alongside the Soho Neighbourhood Plan to provide a comprehensive plan for Soho’s future. £1.8 million has been ringfenced to support the delivery of Vision for Soho projects over the course of 2022/23. A legal situation has arisen which may impact the programme timeline.

Covent Garden

- 3.4** Officers have been working with resident groups and landowners in the Covent Garden area to set out a framework and design guidance for permanent public realm interventions around Covent Garden, Catherine Street area, St Martin’s Lane and Long Acre. The team has engaged with landowners and amenity societies in the area in developing the framework. The document is in its final stages of review across various stakeholder groups and will be published shortly.

4. Vibrant Communities

Gambling Licensing Policy

- 4.1** To meet the statutory requirement under the Gambling Act 2005, the Council was required to review, adopt and formally publish its policy before 30 January 2022. To undertake detailed consultation on the proposed new Gambling Policy, the current policy has been readopted to take effect from 31 January 2022. The Council undertook public consultation on the proposed new Gambling Policy between September and December 2021 and received 22 responses. The

responses are being considered and engagement with the respondents continues. The new Gambling Policy will be put forward to Full Council for adoption in the first quarter of 2022 with a view to implementing the new Policy in April.

Environmental Supplementary Planning Document (ESPD)

- 4.2 The ESPD is on track for adoption in early February 2022. The service is finalising the document to take into account views expressed in the consultation and the new guidance published by the GLA. They are also ensuring the ESPD aligns with Council strategies and documents. The final Environment SPD will be accompanied by a statement explaining how the comments received during the consultation were considered in the final drafting of the document. We will also be developing a series of how-to guides to make it easier for citizens to retrofit listed residential buildings. We will also be developing a series of how-to guides to make it easier for citizens to retrofit listed residential buildings.

4.3 Planning

The application determination performance of the Town Planning Service continues to exceed the level required of the Department for Levelling Up and Communities.

Percentage of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks:

- Target: 70%
- Result: **86% - Exceeding Target**

Percentage of non-major planning applications determined within 8 weeks:

- Target: 73%
- Result: **77% - Exceeding target**

Holocaust Memorial – Victoria Tower Gardens

- 4.4 A claim was made to challenge this planning permission. On 28 October 2021, the High Court granted permission to pursue the claim. The case will now proceed to a substantive hearing scheduled for two days on 22 and 23 February 2022.

5. Cabinet Member Key Decisions

Since the last Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee, I have formally approved the following key decisions:

- Article 4 Adoption (CAZ)
- Local Development Scheme
- Queen's Park Neighbourhood Plan
- Manchester Square Public Realm Scheme
- Heart of London Business Alliance Occupier Business Improvement District Business Plan 2022 – 2027
- Film classification
- Revocation of supplementary planning documents and guidance