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Report of: Councillor Heather Acton

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Communities, PPL and Regeneration

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**1. City for All Vision and Strategy (2021 – 2022) – Communities, PPL and Regeneration Priorities**

**1.1 Vibrant Communities**

**1.1.1 Refreshing our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy**

The development of a 5-year Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy is progressing well, outlining strategic objectives for the Council. A number of professional engagement sessions have already taken place and there will now be wider community engagement during March. The aim is to gather first-hand experiences, insights and suggestions from young people, the elderly, victims of ASB, perpetrators of ASB, mental health services, the business community, and the rough-sleeping community.

**1.2 Greener and Cleaner**

**1.2.1 Update on Air Quality**

After writing to the CAA regarding Heathrow's Airspace Change proposal developments and flight paths over Westminster we received a response in late February informing us that we would have confirmation on whether our design principles have been accepted by the CAA before the end of February. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure we work together to reduce carbon emissions in our City by continuing to engage with the CAA on this development.

**1.3 Smart City**

**1.3.1 Adopt a Digital Approach to Enforcement, Inspections and Licensing**

A new Markets and Street Trading licensing portal is now operational. It includes account management, online booking for pitches and visibility of payments due and is being used by 80% of traders. The next step is a Food Digital project for mobile food hygiene and safety inspections.

**2. Major Decisions**

- Ebury Phase 1 Appropriation (Joint with Cabinet Member for Finance & Smart City)
- The Potential Integration of Air Source Heat Pumps at the Ashbridge, Ashmill and Cosway Sites (Joint with Cabinet Member for Finance & Smart City)

**3. Areas of Focus**

**3.1 Outbreak Management**

It is anticipated that community testing will end in February 2022 with the Government announcement of ending of all COVID-19 Regulations including self-isolation. Case rates per hundred thousand are trending downwards both locally and nationally, the 7 day case rate in Westminster as of 15/02/22 is 520.

### **3.2 City Inspectors**

The main focus for City Inspectors continues to be the ‘Clean City’ programme with enforcement against the worst offenders. Though officers have seen a reduction in Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), due to increased compliance, officers are still carrying out increased levels of waste enforcement actions.

<b>Enforcement Type/Month</b>	<b>October 2021</b>	<b>November 2021</b>	<b>December 2021</b>	<b>January 2022</b>
FPNs	1011	1012	771	596
Warnings	264	326	439	387
Waste investigations	689	751	994	1066
Waste Enforcement Actions	1964	2089	2204	2049

### **3.3 Pedi Cab Operations**

Following the success of previous operations, a joint operation was held with the MET on 12 February 2022 from 9pm to 4am. The areas covered were Leicester Square, Covent Garden, Soho, China Town, Mayfair, and Oxford Street. Two written warnings were issued to riders for various ASB offences. Approximately 70 other pedicabs were warned and or moved on from blocking the pavement. Those riders reported as part of the operations from 2021 are now being allocated court dates, with the first 2 held on 2 February 2022. Both riders were found guilty, fined £120.00, and ordered to pay £85 costs. The results of these hearings, along with any feedback from the court or counsel, including efforts to increase the fines, will be incorporated in future operations. The partnership working with the police is good, with their support the operations and their actions ensuring names and details of those causing noise issues are verified to so that enforcement action is undertaken. There has also been positive feedback from residents and through the press.

### **3.4 Safety in the City – ‘Night Stars’ Update**

The Council is about to implement its new ‘Night Stars’ safety service, based on the model of the Soho Angels. The Council will train and support volunteers to operate in key areas to support vulnerable women and other users of the evening and night-time economy. The teams will be supported by the London Ambulance Service, the MPS and St John Ambulance. This will initially be every Friday night, but there are plans to expand the service both in location and in frequency once the volunteer teams have been established. Meetings have been held with the BIDS and landowners and there is interest from them in supporting the Night Safety operation through potential funding, accommodation, and volunteers from local workforces.

### **3.5 Nuisance Vehicle Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) Update**

FPNs can be issued against breaches of the PSPO since it came into operation on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021. Work continues with police who ran a large-scale operation on 14-16 January tackling car meets in the Exhibition Road area. The MET enforcement actions included a vehicle seizure and S59 notices.

### **3.6 The Bi-Borough Cuckooing Multi-Agency Model Update**

The Bi-Borough Cuckooing multi-agency model has been finalised for presentation to the joint working group. Following referral, enforcement and safeguarding professionals will work through the victim risk tracker (scoring vulnerability and risk of harm), identifying opportunities for early intervention and enforcement to protect the most vulnerable of our residents. Innovative early intervention enforcement approaches are being investigated within each cuckooing case, to establish case law and the eventual creation of enforcement tools as seen in domestic violence and trafficking.

### ***3.7 Homelessness and Rough-sleeping Update***

At the last street count conducted on 25 January 22 there was a reduction in numbers of rough sleepers of 36% (at 119 from 187) since the national count in November 2021. General trends show that Oxford Street and Marble Arch continue to be hotspot areas, with a large reduction of rough sleepers in the areas of the Strand and Embankment. During the count 17 tents were identified in total with 8 unoccupied.

### ***3.8 Busking and Street Entertainment***

Since late 2021 complaints against Street Entertainment have increased. There have been 846 negative engagements and 343 positive ones from residents and business owners. Police support remains vital for the successful enforcement of our policy and the team plans to conduct joint operations with the Police in Covent Garden and Leicester Square in the coming months. Officers have also begun to use ASB legislation where performers have sought to intimidate and harass City Inspectors working, mainly in and around Leicester Square. One CPN warning has been served with others being considered on a case-by-case basis. One injunction has also been secured.

### ***3.9 Sisha Local Authority Working Group Updates***

Policy colleagues working with other Local Authorities, Public Health, and officers in PP&L have developed a White Paper setting out our policy position regarding shisha, to use wherever lobbying opportunity arise. The team has been in regular contact with DLUHC to gauge their interest in these efforts.

### ***3.10 Oxford Street Strategy Group***

On 27 January 2022 the inaugural meeting of the Oxford Street Strategy Group took place and comprised of members from our PP&L, Public Realm, and Oxford Street District teams in partnership with our external stakeholders from the Portman Estate, The New West End Company, the MET and TfL. The purpose of this group is to discuss the issues most currently pressing on Oxford Street including ASB, crime, pedi-cabs and illegal trade.

### ***3.11 Edgware Road Strategy Group***

On 22 February the Edgware Road Strategy Group met with our external stakeholder for a second time to discuss the most important issues facing Edgware Road as well as to take note of the actions progressed since the last meeting in September. The main items for discussion for this session included updates to the public realm and future developments in the area.

### ***3.12 Short Term Lets (STL)***

Lobbying Central Government has continued through a letter written by the Leader of Council to request that central London have the same powers as Paris and Amsterdam to stop ASB caused by STL. The Council is calling for more regulations and restrictions to target the owners of irresponsibly managed short-term let properties. The council's submission to an expected government consultation on the issue will also be made. Examples are given of Westminster properties used as short term lets causing noise and ASB as well as causing waste issues.

### ***3.13 Westminster Connects***

Over the last quarter volunteer support continues to revolve around supporting vaccine centres, Afghan evacuees, and the Connects shopping service. Our new shopping service matches residents who are housebound or unable to collect their shopping with a local volunteer who can support them on a regular basis. Many of these are developing into ongoing friendships. Volunteers also deliver for Westminster Chapel foodbank to their service users who cannot go out, as well as to people who are self-isolating temporarily. For the year to date over 3,000 volunteers have dedicated over 28,467 hours of their time to support over 68,000 residents throughout borough.

### **3.14 Communities in Westminster**

Work with community partners is developing in collaboration with the wider Communities team. The Community Intelligence Forum came to an end in December as the new Director of Communities and Department was initiated, and a plan to develop a wider forum including voluntary sector organisations, health partners and police colleagues. This will begin with a partnership workshop defining the scope and remit of the new forum.

### **3.15 Church Street Programme**

Following the submission of the planning application by the Church Street Team in November 2021, the formal consultation for public comment is available on the 'Planning Portal' on the Council's main website. Though the formal period of consultation ended on the 19 January, due to the complexity of the planning application it is still possible for the public to comment. Determination on the application is expected in June 2022.

### **3.16 Church Street Green Spine**

Highways works on Salisbury Street between Samford Street and Broadley Street are substantially complete, including footway widening along the whole east side of Salisbury Street and one-way working, new street lighting, 10 new rain gardens with ground cover planting, 15 new street trees, new benches, play equipment, and crossing points, raised junctions in granite and one-way working to calm traffic and carriageway resurfacing. Construction activities for early 2022 will focus on Broadley Street Gardens, where ground excavation and re-profiling is complete and stone benches are being installed and new foundations for play equipment are being laid. Works are due to complete on schedule in late June 2022.

### **3.17 Ebury Bridge Programme**

The official ground-breaking event for the Ebury Bridge scheme is scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Piling began in January on the first two high rise residential blocks and will take shape over the coming months with practical completion scheduled for mid-2024. The compulsory purchase order (CPO) commenced formally in late Jan 2022 with the closing date for objections being midnight on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022. The CPO will allow for vacant possession for Phase 2 of the programme.

### **3.18 Westminster Builds Updates**

In late January 2022 the first residents moved into Farm Street, with 11 of the 14 homes let. Westminster Builds completed the purchase of the 29 intermediate rent homes at West End Gate and advertising of the units has commenced. A further 9 homes at Parsons North will be handed over at practical completion. Westminster Builds is currently finalising its business plan which will be presented to the shareholder committee in March 2022.

### **3.19 Construction Projects Updates**

The market remains challenging due to a shortage in labour and materials as a result of Brexit and the pandemic. Despite these challenges several schemes are nearing completion or are in construction:

#### **Imminent Completion:**

- The Parsons North development is expected to reach practical completion at the end of February. The scheme will provide 19 affordable homes, 41 private sale homes and a small retail unit on Edgware Road.
- The 3 town houses on Fisherton Street (part of the Luton Street project) will also be complete at the end of February.
- The 19 new apartments that are part of the Jubilee Phase 2 project will complete at the end of March. The sports hall is on-target for completion in June 2022.
- The 2 sites on Lanark Road, with 8 new affordable homes will complete towards the end of March, subject to the successful completion of Thames Water connection works.

**Large Schemes in Construction Phase:**

- Luton Street continues to progress well and is on-track for completion in early summer 2022. The programme for Ashbridge and Ashmill will be adjusted to take account of the switch to a new, more sustainable, heating system.
- 300 Harrow Road is seeing good progress on blocks A (tallest block adjacent to canal) and C (smallest block closest to Wilmcote House) in accordance with the agreed construction programme.
- The works at Luxborough Street have been delayed by 3 weeks due to issues with the existing below-ground structures – all methods to demolish them and remove them caused the noise and vibration monitoring equipment to send out alarms. The method of demolition has been revised and a specialist team recommenced works from 14 February.
- The Balmoral Castle public house demolition will commence in March, and the process of demolition will require constant adjustment to the existing, supporting scaffold.