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Title: Leader's Update
Report of: Cllr Adam Hug
Cabinet Member Portfolio: Leader of the Council

1. Bus cuts

- 1.1. Transport for London (TfL)'s consultation on proposed bus cuts closed on 8 August. The council successfully lobbied TfL to extend the consultation window and ran extensive targeted comms to encourage residents to submit to the consultation.
- 1.2. The council's own response outlined how the proposed cuts would have caused significant problems for residents across our city and would hit the most vulnerable residents in Westminster hardest. There is a powerful case for retention of all routes which we have made to TfL, but the Council's data team have been able to build a particularly strong evidence-based rationale for the retention of routes 24, 31, and 12.
- 1.3. Since the consultation closed, the Department for Transport (DfT) and TfL have agreed a long-term funding settlement. This funding settlement still leaves a gap in TfL's budget as overall ridership numbers remain below pre-pandemic levels. While some cuts and alterations to bus routes are still expected to go ahead, the council will continue to lobby TfL to ensure as many routes as possible are unaffected in Westminster.

2. Fair tax and economic crime in Westminster

- 2.1. At a meeting of Full Council on 21 September, the council voted on and adopted several key measures including the Fair Tax Pledge, committing to ensure that we are not using our spending power to support companies that avoid paying their fair share of tax.
- 2.2. The Council is also launching a Westminster Against Dirty Money campaign where we will work to support groups attempting to improve transparency around suspicious foreign ownership, and work with our business partners to ensure that they are doing all they can to address the flow of dirty money into Westminster and the detrimental impact this has on our communities.
- 2.3. The Leader hosted an event on 22 September to mark the council's commitment to tackling dirty money and poor tax conduct, and launched our Westminster Against Dirty Money Campaign. The forum explored how to collectively address this issue and the consequences for our communities with leading sector experts, key business representatives, and government officials in attendance. Attendees will now work with officers to co-design a charter against dirty money in Westminster and push for

changes to the upcoming Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill 2022 to ensure we are doing all we can to improve the lives of Westminster residents.

3. Cost of living crisis

- 3.1. We have launched a Cost-of-Living Strategy with a funding package of £5.6m to support residents, particularly the most vulnerable with their energy bills, cost of food and general financial support.
- 3.2. In addition to the distribution of government funding, the council has made further contributions, including the following:
 - £200,000 to extend the Westminster Hardship Fund which provides supermarket vouchers to low-income households
 - £130,000 to support food banks across Westminster
 - £240,000 to extend food and activities in summer holidays to those who do not benefit from the Holiday Activity Fund
 - £189,000 to extend the Citizens Advice Bureau service in light of rising demand
- 3.3. A Cost-of-Living Support hub on the Council's website is available to residents to support to them with the rising cost of living. It provides links to knowing their rights as providers, local support schemes, career and mental wellbeing advice, and food and financial support services.

4. Fairer Westminster Strategy

- 4.1. The council's vision and long-term strategy, Fairer Westminster will be launched on Tuesday 4 October, and at the Fairer Westminster Community Conference in partnership with the Paddington Development Trust and One Westminster on Wednesday 9 November. These events had previously been scheduled for mid-September but were moved due to the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
- 4.2. The vision document will be shared with Committee members once public and return to this Committee for scrutiny at a later date.

5. Events – Carnival and Operation London Bridge

- 5.1. Westminster jointly hosted the Notting Hill Carnival with Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. This was the first time that Carnival had taken place for three years, with the 2020 and 2021 events having been cancelled due to the pandemic. Officers from a wide range of services – led by the City Promotions, Events and Filming team worked in partnership with the Notting Hill Carnival Trust, the Metropolitan Police and other agencies to deliver a successful Carnival weekend.
- 5.2. Sound systems were monitored by environmental health for noise levels throughout, and 258 cleaning staff and 78 vehicles were deployed overnight on the Sunday and Monday, with additional cleansing staff deployed post-event to carry out further cleansing around the event footprint. 176 households registered for the Council's free garden clearance service.

- 5.3. The Council played a key role in the delivery of Operation London Bridge and the State Funeral of Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II – the majority of which took place in Westminster. The Council's role was far-reaching at both a Pan-London and local level as Officers fed into crowd management and security arrangements, as well as delivering key service plans to support the delivery of OLB at the same time as maintaining business as usual for residents, businesses, and visitors to the city as much as possible.
- 5.4. Residents and businesses received a letter informing them of service changes during the mourning period, with 107 people signing up via the letter to receive ongoing updates. The Council provided updates throughout the period on its website and on social media, with the maps it created and published the evening before the funeral being viewed 21,158 times. Five MyWestminster newsletters were also issued throughout with general updates. The Council also amplified partner messages from the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London and was represented on the London comms call.