



**CITY OF WESTMINSTER**

# MINUTES

**Communities, City Management and Air Quality Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

## MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Communities, City Management and Air Quality Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 25th April, 2023**, Rooms 18.01 - 18.03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

**Members Present:** Councillors Jason Williams (Chair), Melvyn Caplan, Laila Cunningham, Iman Less, Alan Mendoza, James Small-Edwards and Judith Southern.

**Also Present:** Councillors: Paul Dimoldenberg (Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality) and Aicha Less (Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection) Officers: Mark Banks (Head of Waste and Cleansing), Francis Dwan (Policy and Scrutiny Advisor), Claude Hemsley (Head of I.P.D - Intelligence, Partnerships and Delivery), Amy Jones (Director of Environment) and Serena Simon (Director of Communities).

### **1 MEMBERSHIP**

- 1.1 The Committee noted that Councillor Alan Mendoza was attending as substitute for Councillor Mark Shearer.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **3 MINUTES**

- 3.1 The Committee approved the minutes of its meeting held 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

### **3.2 RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023 be signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

## **4 PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION**

4.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Aicha Less, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, on priorities for the portfolio and any updates that have arisen. The Cabinet Member gave clarification that no consultation had already taken place on the street entertainment policy, then responded to questions on the following topics:

- Street entertainment policy: Additional clarification was sought on the timeline of decisions and how that would work around the Committee's ability to input on decision making. Members asked what parameters the relevant ward Councillors were going to be engaged on, as the policy goes through the various stages of implementation.
- CCTV: Members asked for the planned timeline of the City's CCTV strategy and whether the Committee would have the chance to give a steer prior to the decision. Members requested additional information, broken down by ward, on the planned audit, understanding autonomy on moving cameras during the freeze and how Councillors can typically apply to have cameras installed.
- Pedicabs: understanding the number of fines issued for malpractice and how this has changed this year.
- Public Protection and Licensing Job Titles: The Committee asked what the acronym I.P.D (intelligence, partnerships and delivery) stood for and whether this was clear for residents.
- Night-time safety for women and girls: Members asked whether safety schemes for women and girls in the night-time were over-reliant on volunteers. Members asked what training 'night stars' receive and whether it was sufficient.
- Understanding safety initiatives: additional information on what 'anti-spiking kits' and 'safe havens' are.
- Maida Hill community steering group: information on who formed the Maida Hill community steering group and the extent to which ward councillors could get involved.
- Short-stay Government regulatory change: whether the incoming regulation changes on Airbnb- type endeavours needing planning permission would apply to both current short-stays as well as future prospective ones.
- Westminster Connects: information on introduction sessions and planned events. The Committee requested the dates of the volunteering pilot sessions.

- Supporting non-native speakers: the offering of support, in addition to printing information leaflets in foreign languages, that is available for non-native speakers in providing information and resources on financial matters and dealing with the rising cost of living.

#### 4.2 Actions

1. CCTV, the Committee asked for information on:
  - 1.1 the audit undertaken of CCTV cameras on Westminster's housing estates (unless any issues in doing this).
  - 1.2 How many CCTV cameras are owned by the Council (outside of housing estates), details of remote CCTV and where these are placed by ward and location.
  - 1.3 Confirmation as to whether there is a freeze on installing additional CCTV cameras until the review discussion has concluded. If so, whether this would prevent moving existing cameras that may not be in useful positions.
  - 1.4 Information for Councillors on how they would normally apply for CCTV in their ward.
2. Pedicab Fines, the Committee requested a breakdown on the fines and enforcement action carried out in 2022, contextualised by figures from previous years (if applicable).
3. Women and girls safety, the Committee asked for additional information on the training that 'Night Stars' receive.
4. Westminster Connects, the Committee requested the dates of the volunteering pilot sessions.

### **5 PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR CITY MANAGEMENT AND AIR QUALITY**

- 5.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg, Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality, on priorities for the portfolio and any updates that have arisen. The Cabinet Member drew attention to the launch of the micro-logistics hubs (jointly run by cross river partnership and central Government (DEFRA) which will utilise car parks for e-cargo bike deliveries), his meeting with TfL's Director of Buses on pinch points and road work scheduling as well as work collaborating with the sustainable restaurant association. The Cabinet Member then responded to questions on the following topics:
  - Engine idling: whether proactive steps were being taken to educate and reduce engine idling. Members asked the Cabinet Member to consider writing to TfL to highlight this being a particular problem in coach stations. Members

also asked what dialogue was happening with central Government on legislative change and whether this would continue.

- External Funding Award: whether specific areas of the City had already been identified to receive the funding that has been obtained.
- Council talks with e-bike providers: progress on talks with e-bike providers. After the Cabinet Member referenced proposals such as designated bays and hotspots, Members asked if a timeline had been worked out as to when these proposals might be implemented.
- Public Conveniences: the efforts the Council could make to encourage private companies to keep public toilets open and available considering recent closures. Members asked about the status of the Council's provision and the degree to which they are shut and when they will be reopened. Members also asked whether Officers perceived the electronic toilets as dangerous.
- Accessibility Issues: what work the Council was doing in enabling mobility scooter storage and charging provisions. The Cabinet Member agreed to find out what the Council might be able to do to help.
- Dedicated bays for e-bikes: whether ward Councillors would be consulted on proposed areas if designated bays for e-bikes was to be implemented. Members wished to highlight the risk of overcrowding that could occur and to legislate for this as well as to be conscious not to reduce resident parking facilities.
- Council talks with utilities: Members suggested more could be done in preventing unnecessary or prolonged road closures for works including for emergency closures. Members suggested the Council could consider being more proactive with the necessary companies, whilst acknowledging that it is challenging given the lack of legal obligation. This was noted by the Cabinet Member.
- Two-way cycle lane proposals: the point at which relevant ward Members would be provided with more information on the timeline for cycle lane proposals.
- School streets: clarification was sought as to whether new school street schemes were coming in on a permanent basis or whether they would come in on a trial basis as initial school streets have.
- Cargo bike schemes: clarity on the role car parks have in the cargo bike schemes.

- Consequence of intervention on e-bikes: Members asked whether the business model currently relied on being able to park e-bikes anywhere and whether there was a risk that a policy of geo-fencing could destroy the rental bike market. Members went on to ask whether the problem of e-bike clutter may be a niche, over-vocalised problem that the wider public may have found makes their lives easier. It was then asked whether an inspector provided by the e-bike companies alone might be more effective and take the emphasis off the user.
- E-bike speeds in parks: considering limiting speeds of e-bikes in parks. It was noted as an action to take up with royal parks as a consideration, just as electric scooters are not permitted in parks.
- Dockless bike confiscation: the status of the e-bikes that have been seized by the Council.

## 5.2 Actions

1. Mobility Scooters, the Committee asked if any additional detail could be provided in terms of how the Council could better support residents in terms of mobility scooter needs such as storage and charging needs.
2. The Committee recommended that the Cabinet Member continues to work with TfL in discouraging engine idling. Members raised the impact of idling in coach stations as an example.
3. School Streets, Councillor Dimoldenberg to confirm that any new areas and streets selected for the 'school streets' initiative will be done so on a temporary, trial basis and not be permanent from inception.
4. E-bike usage in parks, to consider prompting Royal Parks to engage with E-bike providers to consider implementing max speeds or prohibiting them from operating in parks for safety.
5. The Committee requested that the next Cabinet Member Update would include: proposed bay locations of e-bikes, information on the proposed cycle lane schemes where possible and updates on C43 (Cleveland Street), and dog fouling statistics and the enforcement that is taking place.

## 6 WASTE ACTION SQUAD

- 6.1 The Committee received an update from the Council's Head of I.P.D, Claude Hemsley, who drew attention to the original basis for requiring a waste action squad, the increase in enforcement actions it has generated and the substantial level of resident engagement it has brought about. Further to this, Claude outlined some of the targeted cost-effective approaches before defining some of the challenges surrounding short-term lets, lack of awareness and persistent dog fouling. Lastly, it was reiterated that there will

be a unique action plan in each ward. The Cabinet Member, with Claude's support, then responded to questions on the following topics:

- Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs): the percentage of FPNs issued that are actually paid.
- Gum cleansing: the practicalities of gum cleansing and how it is physically removed from streets. Members suggested the Council consider an educational campaign to alert residents and visitors to the environmental damage of spitting gum out on the streets.
- Hot-water cleaning: the number of 'hotwashes' that take place on the City's highstreets per year. Members asked who owned the equipment required for hotwashes and whether consultation would occur about when the best time might be for specific places.
- Addressing resident concerns: whether weekend and night-time street bin collections would be considered after this was identified as something the residents are unhappy with. Members asked what residents and visitors are supposed to do when a bin they pass is overloaded and they have litter they wish to dispose of.
- Signage placement: the Committee alerted Officers to resident displeasure with the placement of some signage which has reduced resident amenity by obstructing nature. Officers agreed to investigate any specific locations that Members could identify, such as Cleveland Square.
- Planters: their status and how many have already been placed already. A list of future locations being considered for planters was requested and Members were offered the opportunity to make suggestions.
- CCTV trials: whether plans for CCTV in dumping hotspots trials would be affected by any other council wide changes on CCTV policy.
- Dog fouling: whether this might become a focus for the action squad and education going forward.
- Ward Action Plans: whether Members could receive the action plans specific to their wards.
- Graffiti: The Committee recommended the Council reiterate its offer to provide graffiti clean up services in TfL owned areas, like part of the Westway, to ensure they are dealt with in a timely manner. Members asked whether City Inspectors sought out graffiti or whether it was entirely dependent on Councillors or members of the public reporting it.

- Bulky-waste collections: explanation for the 117 listed as not being completed. Clarity was sought on what was required to be displayed in the graphs provided given that the total figure of 812 collections seemed lower than what would be expected.
- Profiling offenders: whether the Council has an idea or profile of the type of person who dumps waste.
- Enforcement activity: whether allotting additional officer resource in the evenings could reduce waste offending.
- Resident cheap bulk-items: issues surrounding items such as ironing boards, which may require specialist collection, but their value is less than the £32 charged for bulk item collections.

## 6.2 Actions

1. Officers were asked to provide additional detail on enforcement taken on dumping including the percentage of FPNs that are actually paid.
2. The Committee suggested that officers consider an awareness campaign around responsible disposal of gum.
3. The Committee suggested that more action is sometimes required around bin emptying particularly over weekends for example.
4. The Committee identified resident dissatisfaction with some signage that has appeared above bins that covers trees. Notable in Lancaster gate, particularly Cleveland Square. Members are to provide more detail in the hope that a resolution can be found.
5. Anti-dumping Planters, the Committee requested the locations of the planters that have been placed across the City in dumping hotspots to discourage dumping. The Cabinet Member also invited Members to send any locations that might be worth considering.
6. The Committee requested that the Council, again, reaches out to TfL to remind them of the graffiti on west way. It was suggested that the Council can again offer to provide their services, whether this is taken up or not.
7. Members requested that the waste action squad 'Action Plans' for specific wards could be sent to the relevant ward Member for comment.

## 7 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

7.1 The Work Programme for the next municipal year 2023/24 was presented in draft form and discussed. In agreeing the proposals, the following comments were made:

- Parking review: Ensuring that items and issues raised in the planned parking review substantive are brought to the Committee prior to decisions being made.
- Street Entertainment Licensing Policy Changes: that the item be brought to Committee with a clear purpose and outcome.
- Site Visits: how they would work and how to make them happen.

7.2 Actions

1. To work with the Cabinet Member and Officers to ensure that the Street Entertainment Policy item in June's agenda comes to the Committee with a clear purpose prior to decisions already having been made.

## **8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

8.1 The Chair moved and it was

### **RESOLVED:**

That under Section 100 (a) (4) and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following Item of Business because it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) and it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

## **9 WASTE SERVICE CONTRACTS**

9.1 The Council's Director of Environment, Amy Jones, introduced the report. Amy outlined the options being considered and associated opportunities and challenges of various tender options. The Cabinet Member, supported by Amy, then took questions on the recommendations suggested, market research performed, timescales, the nature of the market, impact of legislative change amongst other specific questions.

The Meeting ended at 20.41.

**CHAIR:** \_\_\_\_\_

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