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# Maida Vale – June 17th

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## Improvement to Street Management

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### Background

Darren Pickup explained that the council is looking to make the street based service more efficient and effective.

The roles of City Guardian and City Inspector are being combined, taking the best elements of the roles, creating a local, ward based officer which will be known as a Street Management Officer (SMO). Other SMOs will be in a pool covering the city. The SMO will be able to act and enforce, where City Guardians previously could not, and will be a visible presence in the ward who residents can get to know. The change will result in a reduction of posts, 66 fewer (48%) than there are currently.

### Group Discussion

Q: How will the SMO work?

A: The SMO will be based in the ward for the core hours of 9.00am-5.00pm, Monday to Friday but they will also have the support of 30 response officers covering the city. The SMO represents a single point of contact and their direct telephone number will be available widely.

Q: How can residents who work outside the ward Monday to Friday get to know their SMO?

A: The SMO works core hours to ensure consistency as feedback suggests this is better than officers working a shift pattern and being subsequently unavailable for blocks of days. The SMO will still arrange for issues to be dealt with even if they are not reported when they are on duty and a co-ordination centre will be in place to take out of hours complaints.

Q: How will residents be communicated with?

A: The SMO will use existing local forums, such as the Area Forum, sessions in libraries, and whatever is appropriate the local area.

Q: What technology will the SMO be using?

A: A trial is currently taking place of handheld devices which the council needs to evaluate to see if the technology works and is cost effective. These devices take photographs, send emails and have GPS.

Q: Will the issues report via the SMOs be analysed so that problems can be addressed strategically?

A: Since the SMO will have local knowledge and awareness of local issues, problems that reoccur should be strategically addressed that way. There will be weekly meeting in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Service for each area.

Q: Will the SMO have the same uniform?

A: Yes, probably the same yellow uniform as now.

Q: How will the SMO get about the ward?

A: The SMO will be street based and will get around on foot, to ensure they are as visible and approachable as they can be. Around 80% of their time will be spent on the street and the technology will help with this. The response teams will have a van.

Q: Where will the base be for the SMO?

A: Probably 157 Westbourne Terrace.

### **General Comments**

- Little Venice ward never had City Guardians and the City Inspectors were not visible so this change is welcomed, especially given the disconnet with reporting issues, for example, via the Environmental Action Line. It was agreed that the service will be simplified to make reporting easier and the SMO accountable for the issues raised with them.
- The interaction between City Guardians and young people has been excellent.
- Recruitment is taking place currently to the new posts.

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### **City Management Plan**

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-Planning are developing a new policy to replace the 'Unitary Development Plan'. This new policy will decide how planning applications are determined in the future.

-A focus will be placed on alterations and extensions. Westminster City Council deals with many requests for roof and basement extensions.

Purpose of the workshop – to consult on what criteria should be used to assess applications.

**Resident:** Expressed concern about the ‘intensification of use’.

- Developers can currently build on gardens and subdivide buildings without any obligation to provide adequate parking.
- Building on green spaces also has consequences for climate change and local amenity. Would favour French system whereby a contribution is made to local funds when developing areas considered local amenities.
- Would also like action to tackle loss of other local services; post offices, pharmacies and churches.

**Officer:** Would love to have the power to ensure ‘villages’ have certain amenities. However, they can’t designate use. Some limited powers around shop frontages and consideration of balance.

**Resident:** Expressed concerns about party wall. A redevelopment next door is causing dust and disruption on her side of the wall.

**Officers:** Explained this is a civil matter – can’t be addressed in the City Management Plan.

**Councillor Bush:** Asked if it would be possible to remind applicants of their duty to notify their neighbours when planning permission given.

**Officers:** Yes.

**Councillor Moss:** Stressed the importance of signposting people’s responsibilities very clearly.

**Resident:** Raised a specific planning case – 6D Marylands Road.

**Officers:** Explained that there is a precedent here – an extension was approved in 1985 but never built. A roof extension of a neighbour was approved on appeal. With regards to soundproofing – building regulations apply for a year, after this nothing can be done from a planning point of view.

**Councillor Moss:** Said planning officers were working within a highly bound system. A change in primary legislation was needed to improve this.

**Councillor Bush:**

- Would like Marylands Road issue sorted out in Committee – a public forum.
- Council is in a better position after the election with regards to primary legislation – Westminster is lobbying new government on this.
- Issues with retrospective planning applications. Completely wrong that people can break the rules and not incur a serious penalty.

**Councillor Moss:**

- Pushing on an open door with regards to changes in primary legislation.
- Should also make the sub letting of social housing a criminal offense.
- Agrees on Councillor Bush's point about retrospective applications.

**Resident:** Would like the security of neighbouring properties to be a consideration.

**Officer:** Homeowners have additional right to extend without the need to make a planning application. If it does not come to the application stage, Planning Officers can't take any action.

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## Services for Older People – Your Views

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Officers Bill Davis, Service Manager for Older and Disabled People's Services, and Kevin Williamson, Head of Housing with Care Services, introduced the subject. They noted that adult services had recently been inspected by the Care Quality Commission and had been assessed as providing excellent services. Key approaches that the department were promoting were independence, being active and increased choice and control. Other core themes were safeguarding vulnerable adults, adding life to years, supporting carers and working together to improve services.

The discussion with residents raised the following issues:

- **Costs.** Residents discussed the issue of costs particularly in relation to providing care and services such as Telecare. Officers explained that Telecare and other care packages were subject to assessment and that it was not a one-size-fits-all policy. Westminster City Council was also actively introducing new technologies to help such as gas shut-off valves and Safer Walking Technology.
- **Access.** Residents were concerned about how easy it was to access the services on offer. Officers explained that there was a single point of access number and that this was promoted through the Westminster Reporter, Senior Passport, Westminster Plus, libraries and the website. Residents could also be directed to services through the main council switchboard. However, residents still felt that accessing services was sometimes difficult particularly if you were independent and living in private accommodation as opposed to being on benefits.
- **Memory Service.** Residents enquired about the Memory Service and asked whether older people could access it directly rather than by referral from a GP. Officers responded that resource issues probably explained the GP referral requirement, but said they would talk to the service about whether it had capacity to allow walk-ins. Better promotion of the service in doctors' surgeries was seen as a positive step.

- **Plain English.** Residents explained that often older people did not understand the new technology being introduced and the technological speak used to explain them. The need to use plain English to explain services to older people was seen as a key requirement.
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## Open Spaces in Maida Vale

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### Background

Rebecca Cloke introduced the workshop and outlined the key questions she wanted to ask attendees:

1. In the face of local authority funding constraints, how would you prioritise open space improvements in your local park?
2. What are your views on incorporating informal play into open spaces?  
Eg. Grass mounding, sculpture, planting, etc.
3. Do you have any thoughts or comments on alternative ways to mitigate public open space deficiency, eg through other greening initiatives?

The workshop discussion was supported by a large map showing all the open spaces in the Maida Vale forum area, and some photographs of those areas.

### Group Discussion

Resident expressed that Paddington Rec should be a key priority area, particularly the bowling green area. Resident felt this could be made much more of a feature. It is currently tucked away and not many people know its there. If more effort was made and the pavilion was named it could then be better advertised. A sign with the new name could go up to make more of a feature of it.

Resident also concerned that it was the only place where you needed to hire equipment, rather than being able to bring your own. It was also limited as they only had two sets of equipment, and therefore limited the bowling greens offer for larger uses such as children's parties.

Another resident felt that biodiversity should be a priority. Mentioned that Rembrandt Gardens had fantastic flowers, but we could perhaps make more of the area by putting up bird boxes to attract greater variety of birds and possible add some beehives.

Officer: Mentioned WCC had been approached recently by the beehive association so were looking into this possibility.

Councillor Mukerji (Harrow Road) added that he thought the recent improvements to Paddington Rec were good, however he was concerned that the planned reduction in City Guardians across Westminster in the coming months could cause problems over the summer months when a large number of young people will be using the Rec. WCC need to ensure adequate patrols over the summer.

Officer: Note to feed back concerns to City Management and ensure this is considered.

Resident stated that (living in Randolph Avenue) he suffered minor antisocial behaviour in the summer months from groups of young people spraying water from the hosepipe in the bowling green area as there is no security.

Another resident suggested the solution to this was to spend £50 to buy a new tap for the hosepipe which enables the grounds man to unscrew it and take it away (preventing kids from spraying water).

Officer said she would investigate this possibility.

The group discussed the importance of some of the smaller areas of open spaces, rather than just the larger ones. One resident stated that small improvements to these areas can make a big difference (e.g. a bench for older people to rest).

Discussion then turned to trees in the area, with one resident pointing out that some of the local street trees had edible fruits on. Another resident followed by asking if there could be signs added to the trees so that people could identify what species they were. Officer advised that the council did run educational walks in the area looking at the different tree species. Residents felt these should be better advertised.

Officer asked residents what their thoughts were on tackling any lack in open spaces (if they felt there were any) i.e. through green roofs?

Residents mentioned a recent paper had been published looking at green roofs stating that they help with insulation of the home (i.e. cool in summer, warm in winter). The disadvantage though is that you can't see the green roof, though they are good for wildlife.

Resident queried whether there would be any new open space, or is this it?

Officer advised WCC would encourage more open spaces through the planning process (i.e. should be a requirement that new developments should include open space provision)

Resident commented that some open spaces such as the walk ways by the canal are overlooked. The only recent publicity of these areas is around

dangerous cycling rather than using the area for walks. More could be made of these areas.

Officer responded that these walkways are actually the responsibility of British Waterways, however we do work closely with our partners to try to improve these spaces.

Discussion moved on to the lack of play space in the area, with Paddington Rec being the only real play area. Officer asked if residents would welcome use of small areas for informal play space?

Resident commented that the problem was the price of using the Rec and that kids can't afford to pay to hire spaces for play.

Officer responded by saying that the Rec operates a policy whereby if the space isn't booked, then local children can use the space for free.

Resident replied that this rarely happens – it is always booked up.

Resident commented that the church in Paddington Rec is a really good feature and under utilised. Officer commented that there is a new college going in opposite this area, with a café, which they hope will encourage more people into the Rec.

Resident added that they felt there wasn't sufficient access to St Mary's church yard (meaning less people made use of it). Officer responded that there were in fact 2 entrances and that WCC hope to make more use of the space as a link / through way from Paddington to Church Street (and vice versa) as part of the planned Church Street redevelopments.