

Our Plan for a Fairer Economy

2023 – 2026



FAIRER
WESTMINSTER


City of Westminster



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FOREWORD

Home to over 53,000 businesses and one-eighth of London's jobs, our economy is critical to the nation.

Our heritage and culture, unmatched connectivity, and highly-skilled workforce provide a place of opportunity. From Mayfair to Maida Vale, Paddington to Pimlico and Harrow Road to Harley Street, our neighbourhoods create a city like no other.

Despite these strengths, the City faces many challenges. Many businesses are struggling with spiralling costs and supply disruptions, with difficulties finding the skilled workers they need. In the context of changing consumer habits and global shifts, the West End and our local high streets must adapt to remain a destination of choice for locals, visitors, and workers. Meanwhile, our priority and emerging business sectors require distinctive approaches to support their growth in light of structural changes to our economy and evolving ways of working.

With inflation at a 40-year high, over 30,000 households in Westminster are especially vulnerable to the cost-of-living crisis. High barriers to getting the training needed to access the great jobs generated in our City risks leaving many people behind. And as Westminster is subject to some of the highest emissions and air pollution in the UK, achieving net zero by 2040 requires a united effort.

Levelling up is therefore as much of a challenge in Westminster as it is across other towns and cities in the UK. Our economies are intertwined - growth in Westminster creates demands for goods and services in other parts of the UK and vice versa. However, reduced public funding in recent years means the Council must work more collaboratively to ensure that we have the resources needed to support economic recovery and growth.

But we are ambitious for the future. We are committed to creating a fairer economy where benefits from growth reach all our communities. And we are confident that Westminster will continue to be a top city of choice to live, work in and visit.

Westminster's economy needs our focused attention. We have looked at the evidence and identified the unique challenges facing the City. This three-year plan sets out what is already in place to address those challenges and what we are going to do next to create a fairer economy in the future.

Our plan follows the Council's overarching strategy for a Fairer Westminster, which puts a strong, inclusive and green economy at its core. Our Fairer Economy Plan builds on recommendations from the independent Future of Westminster Commission, our intelligence and insights, and engagement with employers, educational institutions and training providers.

We have ensured that this plan aligns with key regional strategies and initiatives such as the Mayor's priorities for Good Growth, London Skills and Improvement Plan and The Skills Roadmap for London as well as key national strategies such as the UK's Net Zero Strategy: 'Build Back Greener.' It also complements regional initiatives such as the Mayor's Good Work Standard, The No Wrong Door Programme, the Skills Academy and Central London Forward's priorities for the West End. It builds on the Night Tsar's work on innovative licensing and the London Sustainable Development Commission's work on delivering social value.

We are at the start of the journey to work with partners to create a longer-term strategic approach. Our Fairer Economy Plan provides a framework for further engagement with our businesses and Business Improvement Districts, residents, strategic partners, education, training and skills providers, and voluntary and community organisations. Remaining flexible, we will review and respond effectively to new priorities, regularly re-evaluating our actions to deliver the best outcomes for our city. Together, we will create the right conditions for inclusive economic growth.

We thank all contributors in advance for your time and input – your insights and ideas will be invaluable in achieving a fairer economy.



Cllr Geoff Barraclough

Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development



Cllr Tim Roca

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Young People, Learning and Leisure

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Westminster is a wealthy and productive city but that success has not been equally spread.

Pockets of the borough are experiencing significant deprivation. The COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have exacerbated existing inequalities.

Our ambition is a strong and sustainable economy that delivers inclusive growth

We want to increase residents' share in the city's economic success whilst supporting Westminster's unique role in London and the national economy.

Our objectives are to create:

RESILIENT BUSINESSES AND HIGH STREETS – where small businesses are supported to grow and where communities thrive.

A VIBRANT WEST END – providing a world class offer and quality experience to residents, businesses, workers and visitors.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL – so that residents have the right skills to take advantage of the city's employment opportunities and can develop fulfilling careers.

The Council also aims to become a net zero council by 2030 and a net zero borough by 2040.

Some of the challenges we face include:



High barriers to entry for small businesses, including high business rates and complex licensing regulations



Employer skills shortages, and poor link-up with industry on skills provision



A large proportion of old building stock in the private rented and commercial sector, with implications for energy costs and carbon emissions



The West End affected by the growth of online retail and changes to tax-free shopping



Night-time safety issues

We have already made strides in tackling some of these issues but there is more work to do.

We have ambitious plans for the longer term too.

As we start our journey towards creating a fairer and more inclusive economy in Westminster, we want to bring residents, communities, businesses and wider partners, such as educational institutions, with us.

We will engage with stakeholders, jointly develop a long-term vision for sustainable economic growth and provide regular updates on progress.



WHERE WE ARE NOW



WESTMINSTER: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

1

Westminster's economy is nationally significant and has enjoyed immense success

Westminster is an engine room for the wider London and national economy, including steady growth in jobs over the last decade.

At £76bn, it generates more Gross Value Added (GVA) than Wales, providing more than 750,000 jobs in its 53,000 businesses¹.

1: (ONS, 2021; ONS Inter Departmental Business Register, 2022; and ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2021).

Up to **1m people**² can be in Westminster on any given day.

23% residents

37% UK visitors

20% UK workers

20% International visitors

Numerous global brands and corporations choose to locate their headquarters in the iconic locations of Westminster's Central Activity Zone and the borough attracts a highly skilled workforce.

High value, professional service sectors such as Finance and Insurance, Professional Scientific and Technical industries, and Information and Communication sectors have grown rapidly. They were resilient during the pandemic and continue to demonstrate some of the highest shares of jobs and GVA growth in the borough.

Westminster is also a global destination with its vibrant retail, cultural and hospitality offer and its iconic landmarks, parks and green spaces attracting 25 million visitors per year⁴.

While Westminster is home to almost a quarter of a million people, the influx of workers and visitors from across the globe can increase this to over 1 million on any given day.

2: O2 mobility data, February 2022). 3: (Visit Britain, 2017 - 2019).

WESTMINSTER: THRIVING ECONOMY⁴



A city full of life

Welcoming 25 million visitors every year



A city of enterprise

85% of all businesses are micro-enterprises, employing fewer than 10 people



A diverse, multi-cultural city

Over 88 nationalities and 85 languages spoken



53,000 businesses providing **767,000 jobs**



World-famous West End

A must-visit destination for visitors, and a central hub for over 33,000 businesses



Local high streets

16 high streets and 38 centres of commercial activity



Beautiful public spaces

112 public parks and open spaces



Excellent transport links

30 underground stations and 3 major terminus stations connecting Westminster to the rest of the UK and international airports



£76 billion GVA

represents 16% of London GVA



Digital connectivity

>90% superfast broadband coverage (>30mb/s) and >68% full fibre coverage

4: ONS Inter Departmental Business Register, 2022; ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2021; ONS Inter Departmental Business Register, 2022; ONS, 2021; Ofcom Connected Nations Report, 2022; ONS Census, 2021; Visit Britain, 2017 - 2019.

WESTMINSTER: A BOROUGH OF INEQUALITY

Unemployment rates in Westminster

Westminster is unique in containing areas that are rated both the most and least deprived areas of the country. Deprivation is a multi-faceted issue and factors like employment, education, health and housing all play an important role.

The map below shows unemployment rates across the borough, revealing a high concentration of unemployment in north-west Westminster. An area within Westbourne has an unemployment rate of 10%, more than twice the Westminster average of 4% and three times higher than the England average of 2.9%.

Youth Unemployment

6.1% of 16-24 year olds in Westbourne are unemployed, compared to 2.6% in Marylebone (and that is excluding full time students)

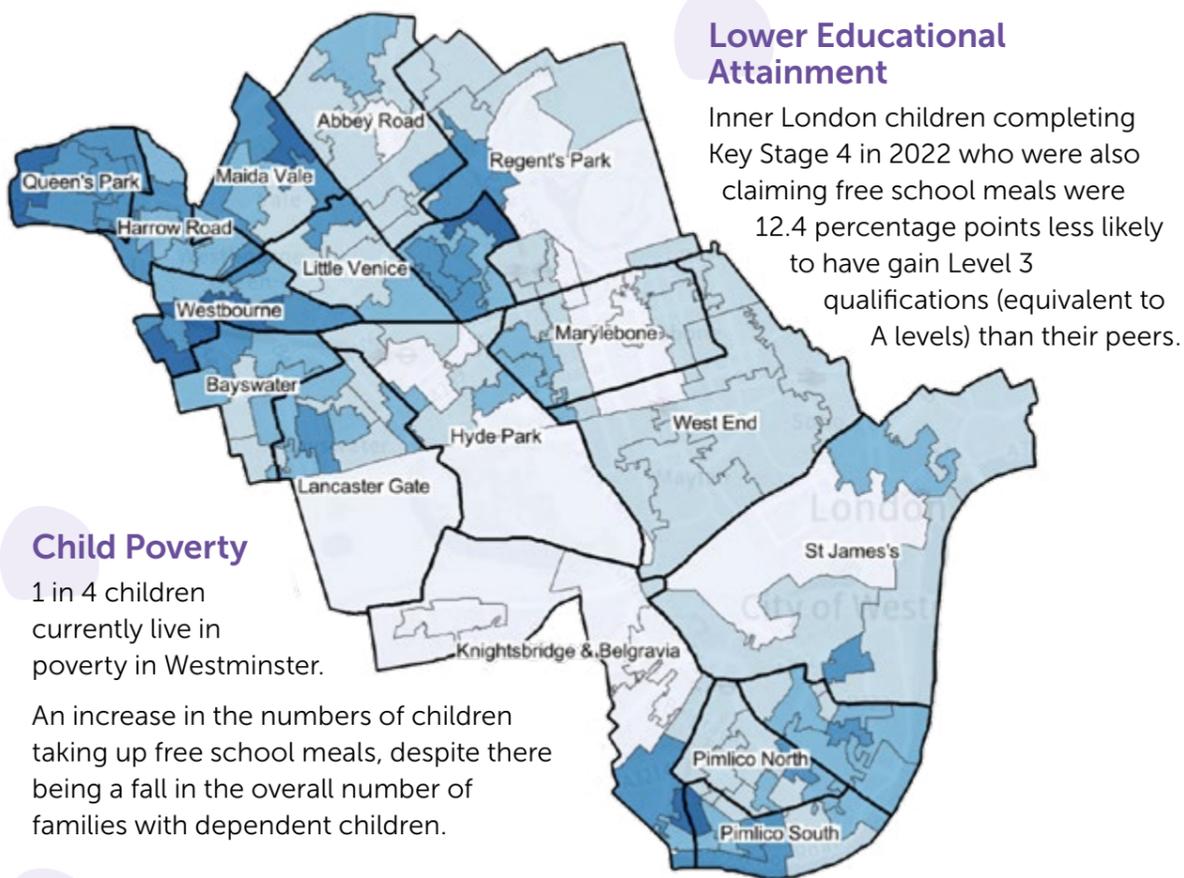


Figure Source: Proportion of people who are unemployed in Westminster, Census, 2021. The darkest blue indicates unemployment levels of 6.6% - 9.5%, whereas the lightest blue indicates unemployment levels of 1.1% - 2.3%.



2 Not everyone has benefitted from economic success

Despite Westminster's economic success, there are pockets of significant deprivation, where residents struggle to access the opportunities provided by the economic activity elsewhere. Residents in these areas experience lower incomes and greater personal debt, with median income in Church Street less than half of median income in Knightsbridge and Belgravia.



3 Global events have created further challenges and exacerbated pre-existing inequalities

The events and changes of recent times – including the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit Westminster particularly hard, and the cost-of-living crisis – have exacerbated and exposed existing inequalities in our community. Use of foodbanks and the number of households in fuel poverty have both increased.

Add to this the shift towards online retail and flexible working arrangements, and the medium- to long-term impact on Westminster's commercial property market and high streets which is still unfolding. The importance of supporting businesses to adapt and respond to new circumstances will be critical to their survival and growth.



Westminster today is a tale of two cities demonstrating extremes of poverty and affluence

4

A unique set of challenges must be addressed to deliver a fairer economy that works for everyone

Micro and small businesses



High barriers to entry for small businesses, such as access to finance



Reduced public funding for business support



Burden of regulation, licensing and fees on small businesses



External events on small businesses



Recruitment difficulties due to skills shortages for entry level and higher skilled roles

West End



Lack of disposable income leading to fall in leisure and retail consumption



Poor air quality affecting the West End



Lagging footfall recovery during the day and midweek



Lack of a cohesive destination identity that reflects the West End's diversity



Balancing the priorities of different users (residents, visitors, businesses)

Skills and Employment



Employer skills shortages, and poor link up with industry on skills provision



Higher vacancies in specific sectors and occupations such as in technology, business administration, teaching and hospitality roles



High-quality careers advice for all ages is inconsistent



Higher probability of automation within low skilled or routine jobs, for example, elementary, process plant and machine operative, sales and customer service and caring, leisure and service occupations



Lack of employment and benefits advice services for residents with complex needs.



Health barriers to work and training



The lack of support for in-work progression

General



Crime and anti-social behaviour in Westminster



Lack of affordable workspaces



Competition from online retail



Housing affordability



Predominance of Energy inefficient listed buildings



High cost of energy resulting in high cost of operating a business

5 We recognise that business as usual is not enough

A co-ordinated and concerted response is now required to address the challenges that we face. Our ambition under the Fairer Westminster Strategy aims to create a strong and sustainable economy that delivers inclusive growth for everyone.

We will achieve this by:



Resilient businesses and high streets

SUPPORTING small businesses to scale-up in Westminster whilst our local high streets are prepared to face the future becoming more vibrant and accessible, at the heart of their communities.



Vibrant West End

REVIVING Oxford Street and the West End, safeguarding their position in the national economy, and ensuring the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) continues to deliver a world class offer and quality experience to residents, businesses workers and visitors.



Employment opportunities for all

ENSURING residents have the right skills to take advantage of the City's employment opportunities and develop well paid fulfilling careers.

A strong and sustainable economy that delivers inclusive growth.



6

We have made progress and have secured economic benefits for our residents and businesses

Business As Usual & Key Achievements

Resilient Businesses and High Streets

- Supporting our small and micro businesses through the Westminster Business Unit and Westminster Investment Service.
- Creating more accessible workspaces through our Enterprise Spaces Programme.
- Safeguarding and nurturing the growth of the city’s creative and cultural sector through exciting new events and initiatives.
- Supporting high street revitalisation through the GLA funded Harrow Road ‘High Streets For All’.
- Supporting businesses with digital transformation through the Connect Westminster Voucher Scheme, Digital Street Market Project and anonymised footfall data service which utilises Wi-Fi networks to predict footfall and external factors that impact visitor rates.
- Encouraging prominent local organisations to take responsibility and deliver more for our city through the implementation of our Responsible Procurement and Commissioning Strategy, Responsible Business Network and Community Investment Portfolio.
- Supporting businesses with the transition to net zero through the Sustainable City Charter and Business Energy Saving Scheme.
- Building wealth in our communities by developing the Community Investment Strategy and Community Grants Scheme.
- Supporting businesses and partners through the Cost of Living Programme.



Westminster Business Unit

Over 20,000 businesses supported through the Westminster Business Units to date, safeguarding 47 jobs per year. Over 200 net additional jobs secured through the Scale-up Programme.

Sustainable City Charter

Launched an innovative business-led climate action pledge for organisations, containing eight commitments for reducing carbon emissions from non-domestic buildings, including committing to net zero buildings by 2040 or earlier.

Enterprise Spaces Programme

Delivers accessible workspace businesses and residents. Around 200,000 sq ft. has been delivered with 22,000 sq.ft. in development and 15,000 sq.ft. has been secured through the planning system.

Responsible Procurement & Commissioning Strategy

Launched in Spring 2023 the Responsible Procurement & Commissioning Strategy will drive social value, environmental sustainability and ethical sourcing throughout our supply chains.

Digital Transformation of businesses and high streets

864 premises connected to high speed broadband via our Connect Westminster voucher scheme, leading to improvements in broadband speeds.

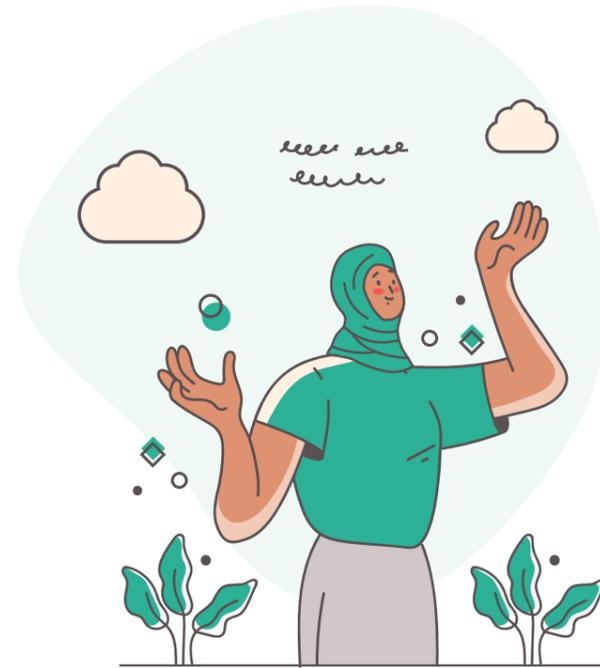
Responsible Economy

Established a Responsible Business Network, delivering £1.2million CSR donations to community projects with over 175 business members and providing support to over 4,500 residents via donations made by the network.



Vibrant West End

- Creating local character and a sense of place through cultural activities such as West End LIVE and Pride celebrations.
- Tackling 'low quality occupiers' of premises which have a detrimental effect on the look and feel of the West End.
- Enabling vacant building spaces to be put to good use through our pop-ups activation work.
- Transforming the Strand-Aldwych into a welcoming public space, offering a vastly improved experience for pedestrians and 1370m2 of greening.
- Conducting public realm works to make Oxford Street a more desirable destination.
- Managing the impact of development on local people, using tools like our Out-Of-Hours permit scheme and Code of Construction Practice.
- Reconciling street works to help minimise disruption and impacts on traffic.
- Keeping the West End well maintained by coordinating on-street services, such as refuse collection and street cleansing.
- Keeping the West End safe through our Night Stars volunteer scheme in Soho, China Town, Leicester Square and Piccadilly.
- Enabling safe and well managed street trading to support businesses and contribute to local character and identity.
- Supporting new and existing investors in the West End through the Westminster Investment Service.
- Helping the cultural sector to thrive, by linking arts organisations with voluntary and community partners and by giving vulnerable groups greater access to the West End.



Westminster Investment Service

This new service is working to attract inward investing businesses and support existing ones to thrive. With 2 new companies landed and over 100 significantly engaged.

Pop-ups and meanwhile activations

Enlivened and activated 12 vacant units, supported over 45 brands, emerging artists and social enterprises.

Strand Aldwych transformation

One of central London's most congested and polluted streets has been transformed into a welcoming public space, which offers a vastly improved experience for pedestrians and 1370m2 of greening.

Showcasing the rich cultural offer

West End LIVE, Inside Out outdoor arts festival and City of Sculpture attract over 250,000 visitors to streets and open spaces of the West End each year.

Use of Article 4 Directive in the Central Activities Zone (CAZ)

to safeguard and protect the commercial identity of the West End.

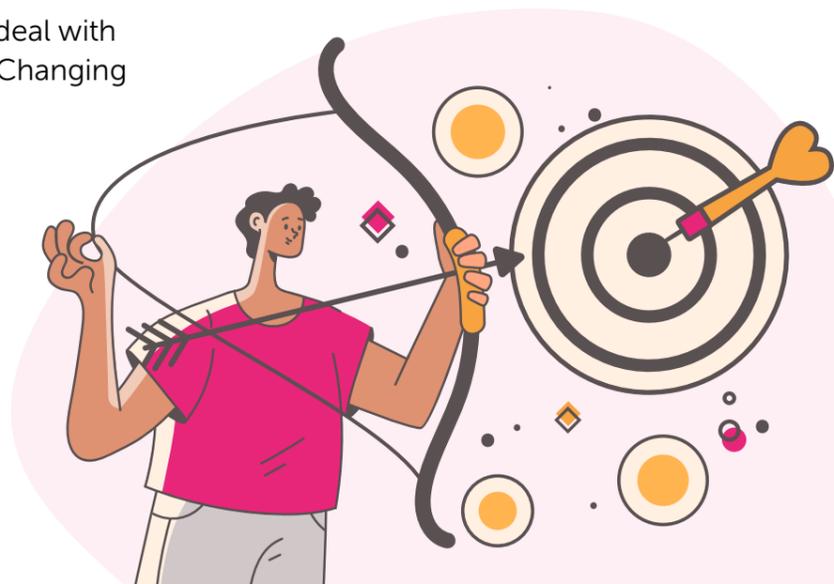


Night Stars and Night Hub

Launched the Night Stars volunteer initiative, and the Night Hub based in Soho, to help visitors to some of the busiest parts of the West End stay safe while out at night. Over 345 volunteer hours have been delivered by the scheme already, which operates from 7pm to 4am on Friday nights.

Employment opportunities for all

- Supporting residents into work through our hospitality and leisure recruitment programme, Westminster Works.
- Providing apprenticeships in digital careers within the council through the Tech Lions apprenticeship scheme, encouraging young people to pursue careers in the field.
- Using our Careers, Enterprise, and Skills service to help equip people for high quality careers
- Strengthening links between local colleges and schools through the Education Partnership Board under Children's Services.
- Supporting students with enterprise education and training in schools in partnership with Unloc.
- Helping 13-16 year olds to broaden their career aspirations and improve their personal, economic and social wellbeing through the City Lions Programme.
- Addressing digital exclusion through our Digital Academy programme, through piloting a project allowing housing services to refer residents for support and through establishing a Digital Skills for Employment working group.
- Supporting equal and equitable access to opportunity for young people through the Supported Internship programme.
- Enabling young care leavers to access further education, employment and training after they leave care through the Local Offer for Care Leavers.
- Working with young people excluded or at risk of exclusion from school through Westminster's Inclusion programme.
- Helping young people aged 18-25 deal with entrenched problems through our Changing Futures Programme.
- Using a Financial Capability Pilot to help vulnerable residents and those with long-term health conditions into employment.



Westminster Employment Service

Supported over 2,000 residents into work through our coaching and job brokerage teams. 48% of those supported into jobs remained in employment for at least 6 months.

Social Value Programme

70 council suppliers and a further 25 developers commit to local employment, apprenticeships and training targets, including a commitment to paying a London Living Wage. Financial contributions local employment services by developers amounting to £1.3M.

Corporate Work Experience strategy

Strategy launched in late 2022, matches local students to opportunities at the council. Over 50 work experience placements delivered to date, and due to expand the initiative in Paddington area.

Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)

supported 6,311 learners to achieve skills and qualifications during 2022. Of this, 62% of learners were from Global Majority communities and 20% declared a learning disability. 235 learners were supported through the bursary scheme.



Kickstart programme

Created over 100 new job opportunities for unemployed 16–24 year olds with local employers as part of the nationwide programme.

Careers, Enterprise, and Skills service

Delivered to support young people (via schools and colleges) to enhance their Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance. In partnership with the business community 1,500 young people per year participate in workshops and events.

City Lions

Works with 1000 13-16 year olds per year to broaden their careers aspirations and improve their personal, economic, and social wellbeing.

Westminster Wheels

Initiated a successful social enterprise, providing London Living Wage jobs, accredited bike mechanic training and free bikes for the community. To date, the project has provided 31 unemployed residents with bike mechanic training qualifications and six-month London Living Wage placements; refurbished and sold 677 bikes and donated 307 bikes to low-income families. Over 4.7 tonnes of bikes received from Veolia and other reuse projects have been diverted from the waste stream.

WHERE WE NEED TO BE



Our ambition seeks to create the right conditions for future growth, expedite the recovery of the West End and at the same time, build a more diverse economy which is resilient to external shocks and impacts

Ultimately, growth must deliver economic, health and social wellbeing for all of our residents whilst ensuring environmental sustainability. This is reflected in the outcomes we are looking to achieve.



The outcomes we are looking to achieve

- 1 More residents securing well paid jobs increase through the provision of new skills and qualifications, and the removal of barriers to employment.
- 2 Small and micro businesses, particularly those that are underrepresented, are nurtured to start, grow and succeed.
- 3 Our high streets are more resilient and more attractive to businesses and visitors through better use of commercial buildings, a reduction in the amount of vacant space and the attraction of new occupiers and customers.
- 4 The Council meets its goals of becoming a net zero council by 2030 and a net zero borough by 2040 by facilitating environmentally sustainable economic activity.
- 5 Social value is increased through our Responsible Economy programme and businesses are supported to deliver tangible quality of life benefits for the local community.
- 6 Westminster continues to make a major contribution to the economic prosperity of London and the UK by nurturing its economic strengths.

We recognise that more needs to be done if we are to realise our ambition and secure the outcomes we need. This is how we will get there.



North Paddington High Streets

In North Paddington, and initially focused on the Harrow Road, we're working with businesses to support the long-term success of the high street. Over the past year, we have engaged with businesses, residents and community groups and anchor institutions to shape a range of projects to support recovery and build resilience in the high street.

A recently established Harrow Road Business Association brings together 50 local businesses to provide a strong voice and partnership working. Establishing a dedicated team of Local Business Advisors and efficient referral and advice process, we're tackling challenges faced by businesses – such as difficulties in understanding letters, advice and guidance, a perceived lack of engagement and being targeted by scammers.

We've also built our local economic intelligence and data, particularly around empty commercial properties. By speaking directly with over 100 people on the high street and through local partners (including those under 18 through The Avenues, and older people through Open Age), we better understand how people use the high street, and what they would like to see. This is all informing our approach to ensuring a diverse and thriving high street offer that best serves the local community.

We are also creating the space for new enterprise on the high street. At Rebel Business School, free business training is available to new start-ups, young people, and local entrepreneurs. And at 300 Harrow Road, a new affordable creative workspace is being developed with a focus on supporting local creative talent.



HOW WE WILL GET THERE



Resilient businesses and high streets

The business environment has radically changed. If we are to realise our ambition, it is imperative that local businesses are supported to adapt, recover and grow.

We must also recognise the economic potential of the grassroots enterprises that are so crucial to the vitality of our high streets. And also acknowledge the contribution of our Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (VCSO) and social economy businesses as local employers, alongside the global businesses of the West End and Paddington.

What we will do next

Improve access to business support services and economic opportunity

- Maximise the local uptake of London-wide and national initiatives such as Grow London and the London Business Hub.
- Maximise opportunities to celebrate business leaders, employers and their employees by encouraging more Westminster businesses to put themselves forward for existing London business awards.
- Increase council and supplier spend with small businesses, social economy businesses, under-represented groups such as Global Majority (GM) owned businesses and women led businesses by delivering a programme of initiatives to include: a supplier readiness programme including tailored guidance and support, supplier management and brokerage services, the development of a small business supplier directory, Meet the Buyer and networking events. Support these businesses to gain the right accreditations that enable them to compete for council contracts, diversifying the council's supply chain.

Support priority business growth sectors

- Develop and launch new projects to support, grow and attract the creative and cultural industries, especially in North Paddington, whilst providing increased opportunities for local residents and better connecting local clusters with the industry leading businesses across the city.
- Help ambitious start-ups to grow and create jobs by expanding our Start-up to Scale-up programme. Provide additional support to scale-ups and those with potential.

Create more inclusive and affordable workspaces

- Open two new purpose-built enterprise spaces as part of our regeneration schemes at Church Street and Harrow Road, delivering 11,500 sq. ft. of new, affordable creative production space at Lisson Arches and a new 7,500 sq. ft. creative workspace and café at 300 Harrow Road.
- Encourage more affordable workspace through the planning system via a new Affordable Workspace Informal Planning Guidance Note.
- Continue to monitor the volume of employment space through reporting under Westminster's Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) to identify potential losses through Permitted Development Rights. Evidence from the AMR will be used to inform the need for future employment space planning policies.

Support local high street revitalisation

- With a £10m programme initially focused on a cluster of high streets around Paddington and Bayswater, and our North Paddington High Streets Programme, we'll invest in our high streets to build resilience into the future.
- Develop the council's first Evening and Night-time Plan so that Westminster remains a great place to live, work and visit after dark.
- Promote free, interoperable WiFi in central London by extending OpenRoaming beyond Westminster's street market areas to other public networks.

Further encourage prominent businesses to play their part

- Ensure all new tenders include a minimum 10-30% responsible procurement weighting and that the Council prioritises social value outcomes.
- Upskill and train current and prospective suppliers on social value, carbon reduction and modern slavery to facilitate quality contract delivery.
- Promote and encourage more businesses to join the Responsible Business Network and to invest in communities.
- Establish an Anchor Alliance comprised of major employers and BIDs to support community wellbeing and wealth.
- Publish an annual report to tell the story of how council suppliers and developers deliver community benefit and impact.

Support businesses with the transition to net zero

- Exploit net zero business opportunities by maximising the uptake of Westminster specific support schemes and initiatives such as the Sustainable City Charter and Business Energy Saving Scheme, and by signposting through the Business Unit to London-wide and national support.
- Develop a climate grant scheme for small businesses, helping them to fund and deliver energy and carbon saving measures.
- Give landowners and businesses long-term clarity over which low-carbon heating technologies to invest in by finalising a Local Area Energy Plan for Westminster.

Be community led

- Empower local residents to participate in shaping the current and future vision of the high street by establishing governance structures that keep them informed and engaged.
- Provide opportunities for local residents to initiate and deliver place-based improvements (anti-social behaviour, street cleanliness and greening) in their neighbourhoods and high streets by launching a Community Grants Programme – a council fund for voluntary and community sector organisations in Westminster, managed by a resident panel with powers to make decisions about how the funds are invested.



1 in 10

Businesses don't survive their first year⁵



-10%

Domestic footfall vs. pre-pandemic levels⁶



14%

Average town centre vacancy rate⁷

5: Business Survival Rates: ONS, 2020; 6: Footfall: O2 movement data, 2020-2022; 7: Average town centre vacancy rates: Experian GOAD data, 2022.

What we aspire to do in the long term

Make Westminster the best place to start and grow a business

- Explore and promote alternative sources of finance for small and micro businesses, including the feasibility of micro-credit and other low cost borrowing options.
- Work with business partners to explore whether a Westminster Licensed Business Accreditation Scheme can be implemented to reduce the need for accredited businesses to seek amendments as their needs change.

Support the growth and resilience of our high potential sectors

- Develop detailed plans and approaches to supporting and building resilience in our priority and emerging business sectors and clusters, such as hospitality, healthcare, retail, low carbon and creative and cultural industries.
- Explore with partners how best to establish a baseline of the scale, size, and composition of the local economy in Westminster. Build relationships with these businesses to improve our understanding of their business support needs and provide increased profile to the positive impact they are having in our communities and wider society.
- Explore the size and composition of the Circular Economy in Westminster with a view to better understanding support requirements and future job potential.
- Building on GLA's research, explore the feasibility of Social Innovation Districts. Support the development of local knowledge networks, leading to commercial opportunities resulting from innovation processes and enable local people to access jobs in the knowledge sector.

Ensure our high streets continue to adapt and evolve

- Develop a vision for a smarter economy in partnership with initiatives such as the London Office of Technology and Innovation. This will build on work already being undertaken to making available predictions of footfall trends based on anonymised data to enable dynamic stock purchasing, thus reducing waste and increasing business profitability.

Make it easier for businesses to 'give back' to the community

- Develop a points-based approach for Social Value to give suppliers flexibility when responding to changing need in Westminster without restricting them to specific commitments made when tendering for work.
- Develop an impact report capturing the wider contribution of businesses in the community.

Sustainable businesses

We are working in partnership with businesses and help them on their journey towards achieving net zero. We have a huge opportunity to provide the information, knowledge, and support to our economy accelerated changes and maximise opportunities from a green transition.

We want businesses in Westminster to feel supported and empowered to make these changes. We have established a new Green Economy Programme, and are bringing forward a range of initiatives. Three of which are the council's sustainable business support schemes:

Sustainable City Charter – Westminster's flagship business-led climate action partnership. An innovative, climate action pledge for reducing carbon emissions from non-domestic buildings.

Climate Essentials for Business – A pilot scheme supporting 100 Westminster businesses that want to take climate action but are not sure where to start. It provides free tools and support to help businesses kick-start their journey to net zero.

Business Energy Saving Scheme – A time-limited scheme providing Westminster businesses with a free bespoke energy savings plan worth £500 to protect them from rising energy costs and learn more about their energy use.



Vibrant West End

The West End's complex ecosystem of living, working and visiting means that there are lots of stakeholders with vested, and sometimes conflicting, interests in the area. As a local authority, our role is to provide the right mix of services and policy approaches to balance the needs of these groups, and in doing so provide a canvas on which they can all thrive.

Working in partnership is key to navigate the upcoming opportunities and challenges to the area. The West End has been changed by the pandemic, which exacerbated long-term trends such as the decline of traditional retail and the rise of agile working. More recently, the cost-of-living crisis continues to challenge business prospects in the area, while international tourism is slowly returning to a steady flow.

With these new dynamics to work with, reimagining the West End with our communities and partners, including local BIDS, is key to ensure the area's continued success. In doing so, and with our role as convenor, we will ensure that the benefits of the West End's prosperity are felt well beyond its borders, helping us deliver a fairer economy across Westminster.

What we will do next

Changing patterns and external factors

- Lobby government to reinstate VAT free shopping to allow better competition with international markets.
- Address the impact of existing Business Rates arrangements. We suggest more frequent re-evaluations and simplification of reliefs, to encourage investment (particularly investment with social benefit), and an online sales tax or similar, to secure greater parity between online and bricks-and-mortar retail.
- Tackle the problems residents face from pedicabs, e-scooters and dockless bikes by lobbying government for appropriate regulation.
- Review our licensing policy to support a responsible hospitality and cultural offer, and create more diversity and opportunities for local residents and businesses, whilst maintaining a grip on the prevention of harm under the four licensing objectives, especially in the Cumulative Impact Zone.

Character and uniqueness

- Support the unique retail mix of the West End through our Meanwhile Activations Programme, working with BIDs and property owners to bring more units in the West End back into productive or higher quality use.
- Drive 'dirty money' out of Westminster, building on our Dirty Money Charter.
- Where possible, support Neighbourhood Forums (including in the West End) to incorporate economic development objectives in their 'planning and place' documents.

Balancing priorities

- Using tools such as our Article 4 direction covering the West End, protect and preserve commercial floor space in the area so that head offices and back offices can thrive alongside retail, arts and culture.
- Take a balanced approach to managing the impacts of commercial activity on residents around the clock, while also supporting businesses with their priorities, with specific provisions for the evening and night time.

Quality Experience for All

- Make reporting street issues easier with a redesigned tool on our Report It webpage.
- Through effective engagement and proportionate enforcement, continue to tackle disruptive and dangerous activities which can affect people's experience in the West End.
- Increase the number of volunteers active in our Night Stars scheme in the West End.
- Establish five 'Safe Haven' spaces to improve safety for women and girls in the area at night.
- Co-create long-term plans for the future of Oxford Street and Regent Street, ensuring their ongoing relevance for Londoners and their standing as a global destination. Improving pedestrian comfort and safety, enhance accessibility and focus on sustainability and nature to ensure it's a welcoming and attractive environment for everyone.
- Help businesses implement energy efficiency and carbon saving measures through a Retrofit Taskforce for occupiers of older buildings.

Accessibility, affordability and investment

- Develop and promote a year-round programme of cultural events and experiences such as our free and inclusive Inside Out festival, which brings world-renowned arts, entertainment and culture into the streets of Westminster, and the City of Sculpture initiative, which enlivens iconic West End outdoor spaces through public art.

What we aspire to do in the long term

A clear long-term future

- Remain responsive to changing work and travel patterns in the centre of London to give the West End the strongest possible footing to thrive.
- Explore with partners whether to co-develop a strong, distinct and cohesive vision and brand to showcase the West End's unique offer, to secure its ongoing ability to compete on the world stage while being a place of choice for residents and Londoners.

A collection of neighbourhoods

- Consider different options for making the West End easier to navigate, for example through technology or through branding of the West End's distinct neighbourhoods to raise awareness of what they each offer.
- Consider a localised licensing policy approach based on neighbourhoods (such as Soho or Covent Garden), which takes specific account of the local mix of residents and businesses. This could encompass all licensing regimes in that area, including alcohol and entertainment, use of the pavement, gambling, street trading, etc, to give a holistic, joined up policy approach that suits each neighbourhood.

Everyone shares the benefits

- Explore the proactive use of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) and Section 106 Funds to support local economic development activity.

A place for everyone

- Explore ways we can make the West End more suitable and comfortable for older people, drawing on good practice guidance such as the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Cities.
- Explore the possibility of a business campaign that focuses on free amenities, such as toilets, free refill stations, hearing loops, ramp access, flexible working zones and green spaces, to encourage people to see the West End as a welcoming place.
- Attract more visitors by animating outdoor spaces with free events, building on good examples like West End LIVE in Trafalgar Square. Pursue new festival and arts partnerships, and further cultural interventions, for example in the recently pedestrianised Strand-Aldwych creative quarter, with The Artist's Garden at Temple Roof Terrace.
- Promote affordable retail, hospitality and culture offers more effectively, seeking to challenge perceptions of cost barriers.



64%

Share of Westminster businesses based in the West End in 2022 ⁸



507,000

jobs based here in 2021 ⁹



46.2 billion

GVA produced here in 2020 ¹⁰

8: Businesses: ONS, 2022; 9: Jobs: BRES, 2021; 10: GVA: ONS, 2020



Activating the West End

Our award-winning Meanwhile Activations Programme (formerly West End Voids Activation and Pop-Up Project) was initially an effort to address pandemic-related rises in retail vacancy rates in the West End, and bring vibrancy and footfall back into the area.

Working with BIDs, property owners and a space operator, the council developed a framework to secure vacant building spaces and drew up area specific approaches to activate them, based on Westminster values around diversity, inclusivity and sustainability.

The project offered an incredible rent and rate-free opportunity in prime locations for local emerging artists, up-and-coming brands, social enterprises and start-ups who otherwise would not have been able to access the prospects the West End can provide. To date, the programme has supported 45 brands across 12 units, some of which have since gone on to establish flagship stores. We're keen to further expand this work, which helps tackle the proliferation of low quality retail whilst also helping define the future of our high streets.

West End spaces have also been activated for cultural and artistic uses. The Inside Out festival, delivered in collaboration with partners such as The National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Somerset House, and the Serpentine Gallery, brings a range of exciting and interactive content outside of their respective venues and into the streets and public spaces. The festival attracted over 250,000 visitors in its first year, and went on to win Best Art Project in the Hearts for the Arts Awards. This year's festival will once again widen access to the West End's remarkable cultural offer, enliven the area and drive footfall that supports other sectors.



Best Arts Project
Heart for the Arts 2022

**Best Programme of
Business Support in London**
Federation of Small Businesses

Employment opportunities for all

The landscape of employment and skills provision has long been recognised as complex and hard to navigate. There are layers of national and regional provision and funding, with local authorities and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations (VCS) filling in service gaps between these layers for people that have more complex barriers.

Employment support services are never just that, they have to provide or find access to support for a whole host of barriers residents face, including childcare, housing and health issues.

On the face of it, Westminster is a wealth of opportunity for job hunters. However, the city draws on high-skilled talent from across London, the south-east of England and beyond. This makes the local job market more competitive for lower-skilled and less-experienced residents. We want to support our residents and employers to successfully navigate these systems to find and offer fulfilling, sustainable and well-paid careers.

What we will do next

Improve equal and equitable access to opportunity, pay, good work and progression.

- Work with the Living Wage Foundation, partners and local employers to design and deliver a programme of events and activities aimed at promoting London Living Wage, apprenticeship levy transfer and the Mayor's Good Work charter.
- Support people with learning disabilities into employment by working with smaller businesses that might otherwise feel they are not able to afford to take part in the creation and development of employment roles for Westminster residents with a disability.
- Deliver specialist digital skills and confidence support sessions to residents with additional needs, e.g. disabilities, accessibility requirements, non-native/ fluent English speakers, working parents.

Improve employment and benefits advice for all

- Work in partnership with the academic, private and voluntary sector to undertake research into the skills and employment ecosystem in Westminster, to identify entry points, referral routes and take-up of support, including residents that slip through the net.

Address health barriers to work and training

- Deliver targeted projects that will improve links between local health and employment services, in conjunction with local community stakeholders, as part of the wider North Paddington Programme.

Focus provision on residents in in-work poverty, and low-skilled occupations most at risk of automation

- Increase the range of courses available through WAES, such as digital and sector-specific courses. Expand on the current successes of the community-friendly curriculum pathways to ensure that learners living in our most disadvantaged areas have access to learning.
- Ensure residents have sufficient access to the foundations of digital and technology, enabling them to become more digitally included. Create ubiquitous, affordable, reliable, fast mobile and broadband connectivity, and access to a variety of devices to suit a range of needs.
- Work with ADA, the National College for Digital Skills, to address the lack of diversity in digital industries and improve the range of opportunities in digital careers available to our local residents.

Address skills shortages in sectors and industries with higher vacancy rates, and improve the link with industry on skills provision

- Establish an Education, Employment & Skills Board, convene our key players and adapt the offer on all sides to maximise the opportunities for our residents. The Board will review the recommendations made by the Westminster Commission with its members, and also take account of the Education Partnerships Board, led by Children's Services, which drives the strategic delivery of the school improvement strategy.
- Build on sector-specific skills training programmes developed in partnership with responsible employers in priority and emerging sectors to ensure employer buy-in.
- Work closely with industry and employment and skills partners on Green Jobs and Skills to ensure residents can benefit from net zero opportunities.
- Build on Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) Mayor's Digital Academy which is developing careers in tech for people underrepresented in the sector. This will include extending the offer to higher-level technical programmes.
- Link into the developing Department for Education-funded London Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) which aims to make skills provision more responsive to employer needs.

What we aspire to do in the long term

Improve equal and equitable access to opportunity, pay, good work and progression.

Expand support for digital inclusion in Westminster in the following ways:

- Conduct further segmentation analysis of our most digitally excluded population to better target interventions.
- Ensure residents and businesses are adequately prepared for the traditional landline telephone switch-off at the end of 2025.
- Build skills and confidence in using technology.
- Create a community culture in which residents are digital by choice.

Deliver consistent high-quality careers advice

- Using the experience of the Westminster's Corporate Work Experience Scheme (with 50 placements delivered to date), develop a platform in North Paddington with Paddington Development Trust to provide work experience for students in local businesses.
- Explore a Westminster Youth Guarantee. This would guarantee that all young people would be offered a job, training place or apprenticeships in the borough and would follow similar guarantees in other parts of the country.
- Learning from good practice established by the Education, Health and Care Plan, create a streamlined universal assessment relevant across all council services that a young person can complete once and then share with all agencies they need to engage with.
- Continue to work with young people at the Harris Academy identified as at risk of becoming disengaged, focusing support particularly at the end of the academic year. Dependent on funding, we will explore ways to roll out the same support to other interested schools.
- Explore how to support schools to provide young people with exposure to technical education qualifications and apprenticeships as part of the new Provider Access Legislation (PAL).

Improve employment and benefits advice for all

- Embed our skills and training provision in neighbourhoods and communities through greater collaboration with libraries and community venues. Align skills and training activity with the vision for Community Hubs to be located in our neighbourhoods and districts.

- Support residents to navigate the skills offer by exploring an individual learning accounts pilot project. Individual learner accounts would be a way to promote the breadth of training and skills provision and tailor it to the needs of individual learners.

Address health barriers to work and training

- Develop a Mental Health Digital resource to upskill frontline services and communities to build awareness and capacity through a Suicide Safer Communities Initiative, Autism Friendly Communities and Mental Health and Wellness Training Offer across statutory, voluntary, community and business sectors.
- Explore with partners interest to committing to reducing economic inactivity or increasing the numbers supported through JCP, DWP and local provision.

Focus provision on residents in in-work poverty, and low-skilled occupations most at risk of automation

- Research the causes of in-work poverty amongst our residents and how we can better support them, including identifying the most relevant means of services and funding.
- Work with employers via the new Education, Employment & Skills Board to understand jobs which are most at risk of automation and Artificial Intelligence, such as Chat-GPT.

Address skills shortages in sectors and industries with higher vacancy rates, and improve the link with industry on skills provision

- Expand the Green Live Learning Lab model to fully utilise council and stakeholder projects and supply chain partners to build awareness and understanding of green jobs and skills, and maximise residents getting into training and employment relevant to net zero.
- Explore working with other Mayor's Skills Academies to ensure that employment opportunities in target sectors are opened up to our residents.

11: Inactivity: ONS, 2023; 12: Resident skills: Census, 2021; 13: Job vacancies: Lightcast, 2023



31.1%

Inactivity rate among residents aged 16-64 ¹¹



40%

Residents with skills at or below Level 3 ¹²



14,858

Number of local job vacancies in 2022 ¹³

The Passage

The Passage supports those experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find a job and build a long-term career. They run various workshops as well as advice and training programs, which they offer to their service users.

Employment and training 115 clients were supported with one-to-one employment and/or training advice across 1027 interventions.

67 people gained employment.

45 full time and **22** part time.

19 people enrolled in training programmes such as English as a Second Language and Construction Skills Certification Scheme.

Workshops Employment taster sessions had **38** attendees.

ESOL conversation club had **13** attendees.

Digital inclusion had **57** attendees.



WHAT NEXT?

Our plan for a fairer economy represents a step change – it demonstrates a fresh approach to a complex set of challenges facing the City today.

We are confident that our plan is achievable but we cannot do this alone. Our residents, communities, businesses and wider partners, such as educational institutions, are essential in helping us to realise our ambition for a fair and inclusive economy.

Our ambition for this plan is to start new conversations and open new avenues for collaboration. This is only the beginning of our journey towards creating a fairer economy in Westminster and we want to bring our communities and partners with us.



NEXT STEPS

Having articulated our understanding of the key challenges and opportunities for Westminster's economy and our plan for how we can address them over the next three years, our next steps will focus on engagement and partnership working. We will:

Convene:

Consolidate and expand the existing coalition of partners, bringing stakeholders together to share perspectives and understand our shared goals.

Consult:

Develop an engagement programme to ensure there is buy in from partners and that they are able to participate in shaping our approaches. We will create opportunities for consultation and co-design with our partners, including our emerging Education, Employment and Skills Board and Anchor Alliance.

Collaborate:

Working together with partners, jointly develop a clear long-term vision for the sustainable economic growth in Westminster.

Communicate:

Provide regular updates on progress with the support of our partners, listening to feedback and developing our work.

If you would like to comment on the plan please contact gphengagement@westminster.gov.uk

Work Experience at Westminster: A City Lions initiative

The City Lions programme works with 1,000 13-16 year olds every year, broadening their careers aspirations and supporting them to improve their personal, economic, and social wellbeing. It does this through a combination of different services and activities, from enabling access to cultural experiences, to mentoring.

In February 2023, the City Lions team launched its 'Work Experience At Westminster' (WEAW) policy and framework. The policy outlines our commitment to providing more and better work experience placements at the council than ever before. With step-by-step online guidance and practical support which enables all council staff to deliver work experience placements within their own teams, we can support young people to develop their career aspirations in a wide range of professional areas. The framework also widens access to these opportunities in a fair and consistent way, because we believe that all of Westminster's young people should be able to participate in high quality, impactful work experience, not just those who have family or friends in a position to help them out.

Working with two schools, more 35 placements for students from two schools have been delivered already, and planning is underway with another school to provide at least 10 more. This puts us way ahead of our original target of delivering 50 placements within the first year of operation.

What some of our Work Experience participants have to say:

Overall it was a very fun, enjoyable and interesting experience and I would definitely want to experience working here again.

It was a good way to work with others in a professional manner.

OUR PARTNERS

- Business Improvement Districts
- Central London Forward
- Chamber of Commerce
- Crown Estates
- Federation of Small Businesses
- London Business Hub
- Local Business Partnerships
- Screen Alliance
- UK Hospitality
- Westminster Culture Network
- Landowners and Developers
- Further Education Institutions
- Higher Education Institutions
- Job Centre Plus
- Westminster Schools
- Social Enterprises & Community Organisations
- Government (DWP) commissioned programmes
- One Westminster
- Paddington Development Trust
- Young Westminster Foundation
- Department for Levelling Up and Communities
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Education & Skills Funding Agency
- Greater London Authority
- NHS
- Public Health England
- London Councils
- Living Wage Foundation
- London & Partners

WCC STRATEGIES

In progress

- Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Partial City Plan Review
- WAES Strategic Plan
- Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
- Public Realm Supplementary Planning Document

Published

- WCC Cultural Strategy
- City Plan
- Markets Strategy
- Environment Strategy
- Climate Emergency Action Plan
- Air Quality Action Plan
- Sustainable Transport Strategy (including kerbside use, walking, cycling)
- Greening and Biodiversity Strategy
- Freight, Delivery and Servicing Plan
- Responsible Procurement & Commissioning Strategy
- Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Plan
- Voluntary and Community Sector Investment Strategy



