

OPEN FORUM 28 JANUARY 2018

This document responds to topics raised for discussion at the 28th January 2018 Open Forum which there was not the time to answer on the night. It also responds to questions raised through feedback forms at the event. The questions and responses are published on the Open Forum website to ensure that the council has responded to all questions raised by residents and stakeholders.

A. TRANSPORT AND PARKING

1. **What is being done to allocate budget for more Santander cycle stations in the far west part of the council area of Maida Vale and Maida Hill. There is one for the whole area that is clearly not sufficient.**

The council has recently applied for allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to install another station in Maida Vale and this has been approved.

Future expansion and intensification of the TfL Cycle Hire network is dependent on further funding.

2. **In the past 11 years that I have lived in SW1H (by St James's Park Tube station) there has been a huge increase in flats and houses built, however there has not been an increase in residential parking. Could the council look at turning more yellow lines into 24-hour Resident Parking Permit Bays?**

The council will review the number of permits on issue in this postcode against the number of residential parking spaces. If this shows an increase in parking pressures as a result of increased permits on issue, we will look at options to increase the number of residential spaces in the location. However, this will need to be weighed up against the current demands and occupancy of the kerbside for other uses. Any proposed changes would be subject to consultation and changes to the Traffic Management Orders. Should you have any specific suggestions for where additional residential spaces should or could be accommodated, please email parkingservices@westminster.gov.uk so that these can be considered.

3. **What is being done about the rising levels of traffic throughout the borough, especially in terms of road works and diversions?**

Contrary to the general perception, the level of traffic throughout central London is actually falling. London-wide figures show that the number of vehicles accessing and crossing the central areas of London is falling. Unfortunately, Transport for London, who collate this information, do not provide this on an individual borough basis, but there is no evidence to suggest that the City of Westminster is uniquely bucking the wider trend.

However, congestion is rising. It is thought this is mainly due to reductions in available carriageway width following introduction of cycle-lanes, widening of footways, and introduction of central island

refuges. Those measures, intended to improve the overall safety of the travelling public, do have the impact of reducing space available to motor vehicles. To look to mitigate this, the City Council employs a dedicated team of officers who work to co-ordinate all highway activity to ensure that the road network keeps moving. This is a difficult task as work volumes are high and most companies working on the highway have the statutory right to start works with very limited notice to the council. For example, utilities cannot be stopped from working and more than three quarters of their work is carried out with less than two days' notice.

The council operates the Westminster Permit Scheme which seeks to co-ordinate highway activity by adjusting work schedules to make companies work together or in ways that reduce cumulative impacts. Whilst we cannot refuse utility works we can ask that they defer or bring forward start dates, or make them change the methodology of their works. The council also operates a rigorous licensing regime for building works affecting the highway to ensure we minimise the occupation of the highway. The largest building sites are also subject to the council's Code of Construction Practice which amongst other things minimises and co-ordinates their deliveries and looks to reduce the pollution caused by the works.

- 4. Could the council consider a reformed parking spaces plan? Currently C letters can occupy B letter parking spaces whilst we cannot use theirs. This has resulted in me being unable to find a good parking spot for almost six months, forcing me to walk instead of using my car.**

This issue specifically relates to the two sub-zones B/C and C/B. Residents who live in sub-zone B/C are issued with a B zone permit and residents who live in C/B zone are issued with a C zone permit. Both B and C zone permit holders can park in B/C sub zone, however a reciprocal agreement is in place and does allow B and C zone permit holders to park in the sub zone C/B. C zone permit holders are not permitted to park in B zone (other than the B/C sub zone) and B zone permit holders are likewise not permitted to park in C zone (other than the C/B sub zone). The Council regularly reviews permits on issue across the zones and sub zones, to try and ensure that the use of kerbside space is optimised.

- 5. Please would you consider changing the singles yellow lines at the junction of Hillside Close and Carlton Hill to double yellow lines - just for a few yards on each side of the junction up to the marked parking bays. This would make it much safer and easier to exit Hillside Close. Currently, when large cars and vans are parked on the single yellow lines outside the normal parking restriction times, visibility is restricted and it is difficult to see anything coming up or down Carlton Hill.**

I appreciate the concerns you have raised. Whilst this has not been identified as a priority for the City Council, we could progress these works if the associated costs, estimated at £4,000, were funded by an applicant. A proposed change to the waiting restrictions would need to go out public consultation, and these are standard costs associated with the advertising and making of new traffic orders, and implementation of lining. In regard to this specific request, the City Council would not agree to a double yellow line extending up to the marked bay as that would mean a loss of one parking space outside controlled hours, which is in great demand in this area. Instead, we would propose a double yellow line across the entrance to Hillside Close and number 96 Carlton Hill, and to

extend the resident bay by one car length, which would result in no loss of parking and increase the likelihood that a car, rather than a commercial vehicle, would park there, which would improve the sightline.

6. Can the council take action against bus drivers not pulling into the kerb to allow easy access for those with mobility issues/people with pushchairs?

This is a TfL issue and should be raised via their website <https://tfl.gov.uk/help-and-contact/>

B. PLANNING AND HOUSING

7. Could the council implement a monetary deposit system for contractors whose work may cause damage to pavement slabs, such as lorries or concrete mixers? The damage caused by these works leaves the pavements in a bad state and is also a drain on the council's funds.

The council has a mechanism to protect itself from financial loss through physical damage to its assets by building works. The process of licensing a building site for the erection of a temporary structure requires that a Council Inspector visits the proposed site and takes a detailed inventory of the immediate surrounding area. This includes documenting and photographing the condition of the footways, carriageways, gullies and street furniture so that, if these are subsequently damaged as a direct result of building activity, we have recourse to pursue the developers for compensation. Where damage does occur, the council will invoice the developers on the basis of an estimate from the council's highways contractor, who will then carry out the necessary remedial works to the specified Westminster standard before providing a final figure for settlement. This is by means of Rechargeable Job Orders (RJO) and the process is administrated by the Operational Co-ordination team within the Road Management Service.

In certain circumstances, as a condition of issuing a Temporary Structure Licence, the Council will request a deposit from a developer in order to safeguard the council against any damages. This is often done in cases where the developer has been known to cause damage previously, or where it is judged almost impossible to set up their site without it being highly likely that damage to the council's asset will occur over time. Once the work is finished the RJO process described above kicks in, with the deposit offset against the cost of any remedial work. If no damage occurs, or it costs less to remedy than the deposit taken, the balance is returned to developer in due course.

It is worth mentioning in particular that in early summer 2018, the council is introducing a "gully levy" for all temporary structure applications. Under the principle of "the polluter pays", this will involve a 15% surcharge on top of the application fee, which will be ring-fenced and directly reinvested into the council's gullies, many of which have historically been damaged by building works.

8. Where is the CityWest Homes satisfaction survey that was mentioned by Jonathan Cowie published?

The annual satisfaction survey results for CityWest Homes (CWH) are published on the City West Homes website. Last year's results can be found here - <https://www.cwh.org.uk/about-us/performance-information> . CWH also regularly posts contact centre performance information such as call wait times and first contact resolution.

C. COMMUNITY SAFETY

9. I am concerned about potential illegal activity involving drugs in my neighbourhood of Maida Hill. What actions are being taken to eliminate such threats to society and community wellbeing?

The council and police are aware of the specific locations that have been identified and these are within a close proximity to a number of shops in the area. There is a suspicion that drug related activities may be going on. The premises are being monitored by the police and they would like to hear from residents who are willing to give the council information and statements relating to what they see. These statements can be anonymous impact statements. Even if neighbours haven't been offered drugs, the fact that they feel intimidated and are alarmed by what is happening is useful information and could be made into a statement. Once the police have enough evidence, they are able to apply for a warrant to search premises. Or, if there is not enough evidence for this, but there is enough evidence to prove harassment, alarm and distress to residents, then we can look at enforcement routes under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Police Act. Such measures we could employ include dispersal zones.

10. Could we have more police patrolling with the St John's Wood area? My car has been vandalised twice and I have been burgled. Consequently, I would not feel safe living on my own.

The question is a matter for the police and should be directed to them. They have drop in sessions that residents can attend at:

St John's Wood Library, Circus Road NW8.

Fridays from 14:00 to 15:00

Alternatively, the issue can be raised online at: <https://www.met.police.uk/your-area/westminster/abbey-road/>

D. MISCELLANEOUS

11. What reward systems are in place for people who volunteer throughout the City of Westminster? Particularly the older demographic who do these voluntary activities in order to stay active.

Details of some of the ways in which the council supports and rewards volunteering are below:

- i. **Time Credits** in Westminster, we have a volunteering recognition partnership with the charity Spice Time Credits which means that volunteers can receive Time Credits in recognition of the time that they volunteer to charities and services in the City of Westminster. Time Credits can be exchanged over the counter at over 700 venues across England and Wales, including 43 spend opportunities in Westminster itself.

Through engagement with this scheme, volunteers have told us that they feel valued for the time that they have given. They have been able to use Time Credits for leisure activities such as swimming, to learn new skills, develop friendships with other volunteers or pay for outings with their friends and family.

Older volunteers make up a significant number of those that volunteer in the borough, and we very appreciative of the time given up by individuals, and we are keen to learn how we can best support and champion them. As part of the Second Half Fund, a fund from innovation foundation Nesta and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Westminster Council and Spice Time Credits applied and were selected to lead a research programme evaluating volunteering for the over 50's.

The council is connecting with individuals aged 50+ in the borough and asking them what sorts of volunteering opportunities work best, provide greatest personal satisfaction and helps them keep happy and healthy. . We are also learning what reciprocal activities they would like to access to in return for their time. We are also looking to develop corporate partnerships who will support social trips to enhance our offer to volunteers. To find out more about this programme please contact Maria on 07446 805172 or on mariaa@justaddspice.org

- ii. **Silver Sunday** is an annual day of fun and free activities for older people across the UK. Led by The Sir Simon Milton Foundation – it is a powerful vehicle to draw attention to the problem of loneliness amongst older people. Celebrating the contribution of older people to society also increases their happiness and well-being and presents an opportunity to bring generations together. Details can be found at www.silversunday.org.uk The next Silver Sunday is on 7 October 2018.
- iii. **Tea Dance** - Also part of the Silver Sunday programme of events. Every year the Simon Milton foundation join forces with Westminster City Council, to hold the Westminster Tea Dance for residents who are over 65, free of charge.
- iv. **The annual Community Awards** - The Community Awards are designed to reward volunteers for their life-changing work. The awards, including the City for All Volunteer of the Year award, recognise people and organisations who have made life better for others by donating their time and skills. The awards are organised by Westminster City Council in partnership with Groundwork London and One Westminster. Older volunteers in Westminster can be nominated for these, in particular the Inspirational Award and City for All Volunteer of the Year awards. The Awards

ceremony is generally held in June/July – nominations for the 2018 awards are yet to be publicised but will be available on the Council Website.

12. What efforts are made to ensure that council surveys are asked in a neutral manner? I ask following last year's survey about allowing new buildings to be higher than current planning provides, which was set in the context of the current housing shortage. Fundamentally the way the questions were asked meant you either looked like someone who was against progress or didn't want to support new housing. Who is responsible for the survey design and sign-off?

The council runs consultations to engage with and gather views from residents and stakeholders in the borough who are best placed to provide feedback on policies and decisions. We ask people directly rather than using a market research agency. When carrying out consultation or research, the council follows Cabinet Office (Government) guidance on running public consultations. Consultations are usually part of a wider engagement process and are used alongside other methods to collect responses from residents and evidence to inform decision-making. Consultations ask residents to express their views on particular areas or issues, hence particular lines of questioning. The design and implementation of consultations involves colleagues from across the council including senior decision makers and members of the research and insight team, who are experienced researchers. For the building heights consultation, the supplementary market research surveys were designed and implemented in conjunction with reputable market research companies.

13. Why are counselling services (mental health services accessed via GPs through Primary Care Plus) being withdrawn across Westminster?

This service is currently commissioned and managed by Central London (Westminster) Clinical Commissioning Group (CLCCG). Our understanding is that the question relates to a contract whereby multiple contractors (counsellors) are working from Primary Care Plus. CLCCG have explained that: "we are not withdrawing counselling services but are going through a process of simplifying the commissioning so we can maintain existing counselling services".

To clarify, counselling services across Westminster are not being withdrawn. CLCCG is committed to providing this service to patients that require therapy. They are working with providers to simplify the pathway and ensure that they are compliant with National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) guidance/targets. The existing pathway will be terminated at the end of June and the new pathway will begin at the beginning of July. This will ensure that we maintain existing counselling and other evidence-based therapies.

14. Not all venues used for Open Forum meetings are accessible to wheelchair users, could you please make sure they are in the future?

We make sure all venues we use are accessible to wheelchair users, if people attending the Forum have any other needs that the team need to be aware of they can contact us in advance on openforum@westminster.gov.uk and we will do our best to accommodate them.

15. There is very little support for disabled people in Westminster – while there is help for people with mental health issues and young disabled people there is not much help for others. What is being done to rectify this?

We are sorry if this has been your experience and we would encourage anyone who is experiencing any difficulties as a result of a permanent physical impairment to contact Adult Social Care to discuss the support options available.

- call 0207 641 2500
- text 07944 521615
- email adultsocialcare@westminster.gov.uk

We also advise people to visit the People First information website www.peoplefirstinfo.org.uk - which has details of other services. For example:

- *Community equipment and the Disabled Facilities Grant that can help to support people to live independently*
- *Westminster Employment Service that can help with employment and training*
- *Disability Connect Westminster, a service that supports deaf and disabled people between 18 and 60 years old who live in Westminster to access services and opportunities in the community.*

There is also a group called W9 PEG (Positive Empowerment Group). This is run for and by disabled people who meet regularly to support each other and to promote the rights and interests of disabled people. Action on Disability Kensington and Chelsea can provide more information.

For housing, we commission 10 units of specialist supported accommodation for people who are physically disabled alongside approximately 12 units of fully accessible supported accommodation in other areas of the city. Moving forward, we will be undertaking a review of accessible units across both our housing stock and supported accommodation to increase the focus on this issue for future development.

We regularly review the type and level of services we provide and are always keen to hear how we can improve things. If you have any specific feedback or comments please contact our Customer Care Team. You can contact the team at the following details:

- phone 0800 587 0072
- email asccustomerFeedback@westminster.gov.uk