

OPEN FORUM 26 SEPTEMBER 2018

This document lists topics raised for discussion at the 28th January 2018 Open Forum (both those discussed on the night and those there was no time to discuss). The document is being published on the Open Forum website to ensure that the council has responded to all questions raised.

Transport

Q. What is the council's policy towards bike hangers, who is responsible for decisions about their implementation, and are any plans for bike hangars to be deployed in the borough?

A. The Council has trialled the use of two cycle hangars in a residential street in Queen's Park. Overall, this trial has been successful and there is now a proposal to grow this, modestly, during the remaining part of 2018/19 and beyond. If residents wish to suggest streets where there could be demand, please contact Anthony Sabato Asabato@westminster.gov.uk

Q. Further information was requested about the Mayor's and Westminster City Council 'Oxford Street into a Walking Street'. Will the alternative make the air cleaner? Will transport links be moved close by?

A. The latest information the plans for Oxford Street can be found here:

<https://osd.london/>

On this website, you can also sign up to receive updates on the plans for Oxford Street.

Q. Concern was expressed over the removal of, and changes to, bus services. Notably, that buses numbered 94 and 23 may no longer serve Oxford Street. This decision will have a severe impact of those living in the area and those who are elderly or disabled.

A. We await further discussions with TfL on this issue and their forthcoming further consultation on this issue. The City Council is aware of concern expressed by some on the impacts of TfL's bus proposals. Some of previously announced bus changes to take effect in December 2018 are now being reviewed and if agreed would now be implemented by December 2019.

Q. Some cyclists are not observing the rules of the road, making things dangerous for pedestrians. When will they be forced to be as considerate as they expect everyone to be towards them and when will Westminster enforce this?

A. It is a shame that a small number of cyclists continue to ride on footways and through red traffic signals. They not only jeopardize the safety for other cyclists but other road users and especially pedestrians. However, it is advised that the City Council have no powers to stop such riders on footways but if there are particular areas of great concern it can raise these with the Police. In the Victoria area such attention by the Police has been prevalent. Westminster's Cycle Training scheme always makes it clear to new riders that riders should be responsible and not cycle on footways.

Environmental

Q. How much of the recycled items collected in Westminster are actually recycled and is it done here in the UK?

A. Of the 34,195 tonnes of recycling collected last year, 92% was successfully sent for reprocessing/recycling. The other 8% comprised 'contaminants' that should not have been put in

the recycling bags/bins. Making sure residents and businesses understand what can and cannot be recycled remains a constant challenge.

As with raw materials, recycled materials are globally traded commodities and where materials are sent is constantly changing. At the current time, 100% of newspapers & magazines, glass & metals and 90% of plastics are recycled in the UK. Cardboard is currently sent to China, mixed papers to India and 10% of plastics to France.

Q. To help combat the problem of takeaway containers and food being dumped in the streets can new licence/planning applications for take away eateries have an automatic condition included that compels the eateries to have regular litter patrols with in a given distance of their premises and that containers can be recycled?

A. Premises Licenses already contain standard conditions on the control of street litter and waste handling. The council's Licensing Team has been asked to explore further potential measures that can be included in license conditions.

Q. What are the plans in regards to unifying recycling bins across Westminster borough zones and 2?

The Municipal Waste Management Strategy sets out how exactly waste and recycling is managed in Westminster. Recycling provision is already unified across Westminster and all wards can recycle the same materials.

http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications_store/recycling/141105_mwms_final_wcc_adopied.pdf

Q. Can the composting service to be promoted more widely?

The City Council does not operate a food/garden waste composting service from households at present. We would encourage residents with suitable space to compost their waste at home. The City Council promotes home composting through subsidised composters. More information is available <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/composting-your-food-waste>

Q. It is felt that fly tipping seems out of control in black bins in W9. CCTV can only identify vehicles, as person identification would be excessively expensive. Can you please improve speed of home collection for those residents who pay for waste collection? There needs to be better information e.g. a leaflet campaign with increased fines to cover cost of street enforcement.

A. In March 2018 the Council launched the Street Waste Action Team (SWAT) to tackle fly tipping.

SWAT activity in Pimlico and Hyde Park has produced a 44% reduction in fly tipping. The team is currently in Maida Vale ward and has undertaken numerous interventions such as targeted visits to problematic sites at varying times, including the weekend and evenings when issues frequently occur. Officers are also conducting plain-clothes patrols to identify and educate those who dump. In Maida Vale during the past two weeks, 3 fixed penalty notices and 27 warning notices have been issued for fly tipping.

WCC's bulky waste service aims to complete all booked collections within 10 working days. This is the typical average for local authorities in London, most of whom only collect from the street. LB Wandsworth for example charge £125 for indoor collections, so when compared with WCC's

nominal fee of £25 per 5 items, it's clear to see the service is heavily subsidised, and offers great value for residents

Q. What is to be done regarding overhanging trees that interfere with pedestrians?

A. Highways sends letters to the owner/occupier of the property with vegetation overhanging the footway. If this does not elicit the appropriate response formal notice under S154 of the Highways Act 1980 is issued which give the council the power to remove the vegetation.

Q. What is being done regarding the care of tress, most notably those that are being strangled by ivy on Hamilton Terrace.

A. Only a tree safety issue if the ivy extends into the canopy. This can be removed this winter as we are pruning the trees in Hamilton Terrace.

Q. Are there any plans to plant more trees in Pimlico?

A. Sites for additional tree planting are limited but we have been working with the Westminster Tree Trust and identified 25 potential sites. However, can only confirm that they are viable when the pavement is dug up.

Housing/CWH

Q. What is the City of Westminster doing about making housing, both buying and renting, more affordable (not shared ownership or build to rent)? Rentals increase by at least 15% annually, yet salaries increase between 0-3%.

A. As part the "City for All" ambition, at least 1,850 new affordable homes will be delivered in the City by 2023. The range of new affordable homes to be provided will include social rent, other sub market rent homes, plus low cost home ownership opportunities.

The Council will be delivering new homes across its larger regeneration schemes across the City including those at Tollgate Gardens, Ebury Bridge Estate and at Church Street. In addition to those larger regeneration sites, the council will be delivering considerable numbers of additional affordable homes on smaller infill sites.

Q. Concern over CityWest Homes failing to complete repairs in a timely manner and what is being done to rectify this situation and to ensure that in the future repairs are completed on time?

A. We know how difficult it can be for residents when repairs are not done on time and we are working hard to continue to improve our repairs service. On average, we receive nearly 4,000 repairs a month and we are fixing at least 90% of emergency jobs on time with our performance steadily improving. We are soon to launch more proactive services such as a leak detection team to tackle leaks before they become more problematic and a gully and drain clearing service. We are also working with our contractors to improve communications with our residents on their repairs.

In every case, we aim to complete repairs as quickly as possible, however in some instances there are delays due to circumstances outside of our control from problems accessing a property, to the repair being of a more complex nature.

We are happy for residents to come and talk to us in person about repairs or any other services we provide if they would prefer this to calling or emailing us. Residents can visit one of our four area service centres across Westminster or attend one of our drop-in sessions, which are held at different

locations and times throughout the week in existing community locations. These sessions were set up as an alternative to estate offices, following resident consultation, to offer a range of convenient and accessible locations for people to meet with members of our team. Alternatively, if someone would prefer a home visit from a member of our team, we are happy to accommodate this as well.

In the coming months we will be encouraging residents to join our teams on their estate inspections and walkabouts so they can give us feedback about their estate. We will advertise dates and times on communal noticeboards for when these visits take place.

Q. Can the council to explain why a recent consultation about CityWest Homes carried out by Campbell Tickell only consulted with a limited number of tenants and leaseholders. Why did the consultation not include all residents?

A. Campbell Tickell met with the Residents Council to discuss resident's view of CWH. They also met with residents from Residents' Associations. Residents also contributed to the Council's Task Group review of CWH and WCC receives regular feedback from residents and councillors. There is also feedback through other routes such as resident satisfaction surveys.

As part of the formal decision-making process, the Council will carry out a detailed consultation with its tenants and leaseholds.

The mechanism for consultation with residents is through the existing formal resident involvement structure. This includes the Residents Council, four Resident Area Panels and the 22 registered Resident Associations.

Q. What is Westminster doing to increase customer satisfaction with CityWest Homes? A recent poll by Labour Westminster showed low satisfaction in a number of areas.

A. We fully understand that residents feel strongly about the level of customer service they receive. Although the number of people who responded to the Labour Party survey was low, we take these concerns seriously. On average, we receive around 5,000 calls a week and are resolving approximately 60% first time. However, cases that are more complex can take longer to resolve depending on their nature.

We have an ongoing recruitment programme in place to ensure that we have sufficient numbers of staff to support the additional call volumes expected over the winter months. This will be supported by an intensive training and development programme, designed to ensure that our front-line staff engage with our customers in the right way. We are also introducing satisfaction surveys on the call handling with the contact centre that will allow customers to help shape our services.

Q. Does Westminster have plans to access old or derelict properties in the borough for restoration for first time buyers?

A. The council currently does not have a plan to access old properties/ derelict buildings in the borough for restoration for first time buyers.

Community Safety

Q. What is being done to tackle the problem of the obvious and unconcealed drug dealing and drug taking around Charing Cross, Victoria Street, Seven Dials and Pimlico / Millbank?

A. We are acutely aware of these issues and the Leader has successfully lobbied the police to provide additional resources to focus on these areas and take a robust approach to the dealing and taking of drugs on our streets.

A new team started last week and we have already seen a number of significant arrests as a result. These resources are working with our Integrated Street Engagement Unit and commissioned services to provide support those who need it.

We also continue to push for the 'spice', a dangerous drug used within the homeless community, to be reclassified as class A.

Q. Is there expected to be a re-instatement of police cover in the borough? The current level of protection is encouraging the use of private security, which causes "ghetto mentality" and increases social polarisation.

A. This is really an issue for the Metropolitan Police Service who are having to reorganise the way in which they deliver Borough Policing in light of the serious budget reductions that they are facing. The council is meeting regularly with the Borough Commander and his teams to both influence the thinking into the restructure and to assess the potential impact to Westminster communities of the potential changes that it may make to staffing and policing approach. The council does not support the introduction of 'private police' within its communities and believes that it is the responsibility of the Metropolitan police service to provide an efficient and effective police service to our communities. As a trusted and statutory partner of the council, we do whatever we can to support the Metropolitan Police to do this.

Q. In light of the recent increase in knife and acids attacks in the city, what Westminster is doing to reassure its residents?

A. It is true that alongside many other London Boroughs, Westminster has recently seen an increase in the carrying of knives within the Borough. The one small piece of good news about this is that although carrying of knives has risen, there has been a decrease in the numbers of injuries that have actually been caused by knives. Whilst worrying that these knives are being carried at all, it is encouraging that they are being discovered and taken off the streets through the intervention of police and partners. Westminster Council works closely in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service and other statutory agencies to tackle knife crime and has recently refreshed its multi-action Knife Crime Action Plan to deliver a co-ordinated and concerted effort against knife crime. The council has also recently responded to a Home Office consultation on increasing the scope of the powers of stops and search, which will potentially include the power to search for corrosive substances (for acid attacks), offences which thankfully are still relatively rare in the Borough. The council is fully supportive of stop and search as a policing tactical response when it is carried out professionally, with dignity and respect.

Miscellaneous

Q. What is the cost of the 'Out & About' Programme and how is it paid for?

A. The programme is free for the council. All tickets and events are donated by cultural partners. The programme reduces social isolation by giving older residents a chance to get out and connect with other residents, thereby contributing to better health and well-being and alleviating the pressure on social care budgets.

Q. What is the council's attitude to the threat to Victoria Tower Gardens?

A. Victoria Tower Gardens has been the subject of much speculation recently. Firstly, we had the proposal to move the listed Pankhurst Statue to Regents Park but that application has recently been withdrawn. Secondly, there are ongoing proposals to refurbish the Palace of Westminster, which is likely to impact on the gardens with building compounds etc. however, it is too early to comment on this because we have not received any details. The final issue is the proposal for a Holocaust Museum. Discussions are on-going with officers covering many concerns including the impact it will have on, not only the gardens, but the setting of the World Heritage Site. The promoters have also been asked to address the impact on trees, the increase in activity in what is a relatively peaceful amenity space, how the works including excavation work will be carried out, security and traffic to name just a few. The proposals are evolving and a decision will be made by the Major Planning Applications Committee when a formal application is eventually submitted and when we have had the chance to consult neighbours for their views and all the concerns raised have been addressed.

Q. Update on the possible closure of the Post Office on Circus Road in St Johns Wood

A. The council has been attempting to find a workable solution with the Post Office since the summer of 2015 to enable them to continue providing a full service (or crown operation) from Circus Road. We understand the strong local support for the Post Office at Circus Road and we will continue to talk with them following the conclusion of their public consultation.