

Monitoring report: 14 February 2020

Overview

- Westminster City Council have outlined the topics of priority in their upcoming 2020/21 council budget report. New homes and climate change will be at the top of the agenda when the budget is released.
- Westminster Council's new head of licensing, called for increased powers to be given to local authorities to tackle the abuses of the short-term letting market in London, responding to an investigation into the matter.
- Westminster Council's head of licensing also spoke in support of proposals to increase regulation of street performers in central London in order to "strike a balance" and prevent any nuisances posed by buskers in the area.
- The Metropolitan Police launched a new advertising campaign in the West End, encouraging visitors in the area to remain alert to potential thieves as part of their ongoing operation to tackle organised crime in the West End.

Monitoring

Overview	Detail	Action
<p>Westminster City Council outlined the priorities of their proposed 2020/21 budget.</p> <p>(12 February Press Release)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westminster City Council published a statement regarding their proposed 2020/21 budget. • New homes and tackling climate change were highlighted as priorities for the Council, with £5 million being allocated to help reach Westminster's carbon neutral target by 2040. • The budget also "signals the authority's ongoing commitment to create more homes" as they are expected to exceed their target of building 1850 new affordable homes by 2023. • A proposed raise to band D council tax rates of 1.43% (£6.20 per year) is also included in the budget, although Westminster Council has called on government to urgently review the council tax framework to better protect those on low incomes. 	
<p>Cllr Heather Acton commented on the state of short-term letting in Westminster.</p> <p>(13 February Article)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Heather Acton, cabinet member for public protection and licensing, commented in an article regarding short-term letting in London, focussing on organisations such as Airbnb. • Cllr Acton described exploitation of short-term letting markets as "deeply disturbing", including almost half of all listings on Airbnb and Booking.com exceeding the 90-day legal limit on short-term stays. • An investigation into the matter also found that several scam companies were posting fake listings and reviews in order to deceive local authorities. • Cllr Acton stated that it was now apparent that "short-term letting is out of control and occurring on an industrial scale", calling for the government to give local authorities greater powers to tackle the issue. 	
<p>Cllr Heather Acton called for mandatory licensing for buskers in central London.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westminster Council's new head of licensing spoke in support of increased regulation and accountability for buskers in the West End. 	

(10 February Article)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Acton stated that there “was a balance to strike” between the benefits that buskers can bring in adding “vibrancy and colour to our streets”, and the potential nuisance they can cause. • She stated that efforts for self-regulation of buskers had not made sufficient progress in tackling issues such as excessive noise and overcrowding. • Cllr Acton invited people to take part in Westminster Council’s consultation on street performance and give their thoughts on the matter. 	
<p>The Metropolitan Police have launched a new advertising campaign to tackle crime in the West End.</p> <p>(10 February Article)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New advertisements launched by the Metropolitan Police advise tourists and other visitors to London’s West End to “look up, look out” in an effort to combat thieves operating in the area. • This is part of the wider Operation Fahrenheit to tackle crime in the area, which has seen over 340 arrests since it began in November 2019. • Ongoing efforts include increased use of stop and search, and the deployment of plain clothes and uniformed officers in the West End area which has been a hotspot of crime in the capital. 	

Consultations

Deadline	Consultation	Location
24 February 2020	Street performance consultation – Westminster City Council	Link
26 February 2020	Air quality action plan consultation – Westminster City Council	Link

Events forward planner

Date	Organisation	Event	Tickets
26 February 2020	New London Architecture	<p>Dissecting the new London plan</p> <p>This half-day conference presents the key aspects that the industry will need to consider when planning for the future of the city.</p>	£202
26 February 2020	Women In Business Network	<p>Women in business networking lunch</p> <p>Come along to this monthly networking lunch to make new connections and network with other local business women in Piccadilly.</p>	£34
18 April 2020	New London Architecture	<p>West End & Soho photography tour</p> <p>Join architectural photographer Grant Smith on a bespoke photography tour of the West End and Soho.</p>	£14