

Policy & Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11

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City of Westminster

Message from the commission chairman



Cllr Sarah Richardson

It's been a busy year in national and local government. There's been the advent of the Coalition Government last May followed throughout the year by numerous policy consultations and initiatives including major shake-ups in the realms of health, education, policing, local government pensions, housing benefit and the funding of higher education.

There have been other high profile campaigns and developments such as the Big Society agenda and the Government's commitment to localism as a means to removing unnecessary bureaucracy and empowering communities to do things their own way. And one would be hard-pushed to overlook the debate surrounding tackling the economic deficit. The publication of the Government's Spending Review 2010 in October, which set the spending budgets for each Government department up to 2014-15, and the Local Government Finance Settlement in December, setting out the redistribution of local authority Formula Grant, brought home the scale of the challenge facing local government.

In Westminster, the council, under the leadership of the executive, has been quick in reacting to national developments and proactive in pursuing its own ambitious plans as part of its Living City agenda. I'm proud to say that at every step, policy and scrutiny has been there to hold the executive to account and voice the views of residents and stakeholders. As the rest of this report illustrates, by focusing on the issues that matter to people in Westminster, scrutiny has made a very real and noticeable impact on improving the delivery of council services.

Examples include detailed scrutiny of the council's budget setting process; special meetings on health and adult social care; dedicated task groups on high profile issues such as the transition from the City Guardians and City Inspectors services to the Westminster Wardens, overcrowding, parking policy and customer service; and ongoing scrutiny of tri-borough proposals to share services, which will continue throughout the forthcoming year.

Despite the challenging financial times, policy and scrutiny has also been trialling innovative new practices such as our Young People's Scrutiny Panel, which has empowered over twenty young people from across the borough to investigate issues that matter to them and feed back directly into the council's decision making process.

This report provides just a summary of the key areas that policy and scrutiny has looked at over the past year, but importantly, as it is intended to be read online, you'll find links that will take you directly to additional information on each item. For a more detailed look at what each committee has investigated over the last year and to stay up-to-date in the coming year, you may also wish read our dedicated newsletter P&S Quarterly which is uploaded regularly to our website.

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WESTMINSTER'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

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Built Environment & Business Enterprise & Skills

Chairman: Cllr Angela Harvey

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Children & Young People

Chairman: Cllr Ian Adams

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City Management & Transport

Chairman: Cllr Alan Bradley

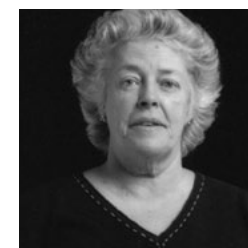
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Finance & Resources

Chairman: Cllr Andrew Havery

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Housing & Community Services

Chairman: Cllr Audrey Lewis

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Society, Families & Adult Services

Chairman: Cllr Sarah Richardson

Introduction to Policy & Scrutiny in Westminster

Westminster City Council has six policy and scrutiny committees and the scrutiny commission, which looks at major cross-cutting issues and provides oversight of the process. Each committee is made up of a politically-balanced group of councillors that hold council cabinet members, senior officers and other partners to account on specific policy areas.

In Westminster the six committees and the commission not only examine the work of the council and monitor performance, they also actively contribute to developing policy by conducting research and making recommendations on how services can be improved. This is why in Westminster it is called policy and scrutiny instead of overview and scrutiny, which is what you may hear it called in other boroughs. The structure of the scrutiny set-up and the policy areas that each committee has been responsible for over the 2010 /11 municipal year is shown on the diagram opposite.

Scrutiny is vital in promoting local accountability as it allows local backbench councillors (non-executive) to hold the council's cabinet members (executive) to account. In many ways the process is similar to how national parliamentary select committees scrutinise government departments and ministers. Importantly, other partners that provide services within the borough, such as the NHS and CityWest Homes, can also be subject to scrutiny, so the process acts as an important tool for councillors to champion the views of their constituents.

As the diagram illustrates, each of the six committees scrutinises the policy areas related to either one or two cabinet portfolios and those cabinet members have to report and provide information to their respective committee upon request. Each committee is led by a chairman and together, the chairmen of all the committees sit on the Scrutiny Commission along with a balancing political member from the minority party. The commission investigates issues that cut across the work areas of a number of committees, such as the tri-borough proposals to share services, and provides an opportunity for councillors to question the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council. It also enables the chairmen to have strategic oversight of the scrutiny function to ensure it is being effective and making an impact.

Each committee typically meets on a quarterly basis and it is up to the chairman as to how each committee conducts its business, with some preferring to focus on in-depth reviews of topical issues and others favouring broader analysis of a range of issues. However, they all share a commitment to monitoring performance in key service areas and can call special meetings

Structure of Scrutiny Committees in Westminster



throughout the year in order to hold additional or dedicated sessions on key emerging issues. Examples over the last year include additional meetings to formulate a response to the NHS White Paper, assess the council's consultation on proposals to reduce spending on adult social care, and the Olympics.

It should be noted that policy and scrutiny committees are not in themselves formal decision-making bodies but they are supported by legislation to hold the executive and partner organisations to account. For example, a committee can request that cabinet members, senior officers and external partners attend before it to present information and answer questions. Following this the committee can make recommendations that have to be acknowledged, considered and responded to in due course. Recommendations are then typically tracked by committees until they are either implemented or satisfactory reasons are given for them not being acted upon.

To develop policy and examine issues in more depth, committees can establish councillor-led task groups. Over the last year, examples of task groups include investigations into overcrowding and health inequality, the Westminster Wardens service, parking policy and customer services. These reviews are shown throughout this report in special highlighted boxes. As part of this work, councillors will often hear from expert witnesses, question key officers and cabinet members, consult with relevant stakeholders and conduct site visits. Findings are then fed back to the committee which established it and presented to the cabinet member or partner organisation for consideration.

The work programmes for the policy and scrutiny committees are typically developed at the start of the council year in May but items can be added at any time if important issues arise. Please visit the webpage for the relevant committee or look at the latest P&S Quarterly newsletter to find upcoming meeting

dates and agendas. Formal committee meetings are open to the public who are warmly invited to attend and observe proceedings. If you have a suggestion for a topic that affects a significant number of people in Westminster and could benefit from being scrutinised please complete our online contact form. Alternatively, if the issue is related to a specific case then it may be best to contact your local councillor.

POLICY AND SCRUTINY FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Following a council cabinet reshuffle in May 2011, Westminster's policy and scrutiny committees have been reorganised so as to better align scrutiny's promotion of public accountability with the council's decision making process.

The committee chairmen have remained the same for the 2011/12 council year, but due to changes in the policy portfolio areas covered by each policy and scrutiny committee, the names and areas for which they are responsible have altered slightly. The old and new names are set out in the diagram above.

More information

Scrutiny Commission

Clr Sarah Richardson

The Westminster Scrutiny Commission takes a strategic look at those issues which cut across a number of policy areas and are of key importance to how the council supports its residents and businesses.

Undoubtedly the biggest challenge to local councils over the last year has been the tough financial climate. In October 2010 the Government's Spending Review set out spending budgets for each Government department, and the Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2010 provided more information on the allocation of grant funding for local authorities over the next two years.

In November 2010 the commission questioned the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council on the implications of the Government's Spending Review and made the case for ensuring Westminster receives its fair share of funding. With the reductions in funding, the commission also stressed that the priorities for the future must be the protection of the most vulnerable and maintaining a high quality of services.

In response to the need to make financial savings, in October 2010 Westminster City Council along with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham announced plans to investigate the possibilities for sharing services. The commission has been closely scrutinising these developments, holding dedicated sessions to question the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and senior directors in March and May 2011. Although the focus of the plans is on sharing back office functions, the need

to ensure that plans do not negatively impact upon the quality of service or political sovereignty of each council means it is vital that the proposals are subject to extensive scrutiny before a decision on whether to proceed is made. For this reason, the scrutiny commission and each individual committee will be continuing to scrutinise developments over the coming year.

Even with the high profile issues of budget pressures and the prospect of sharing services, the commission has been active in scrutinising and developing policy on a wide range of topics. Through question and answer sessions with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, the commission has reviewed progress on the council's key initiatives such as those set out in the Living City programme raised issues around improving the process for self-service activities and transactions through the council's website, and promoted the greater use of scrutiny in the council's processes for awarding and monitoring contracts. Although the 2011 Census has just been conducted, the commission has already been looking to strategically place Westminster at the forefront of developing options on what could replace or supplement the Census in future, and will be taking this forward as part of its work plan.



More information

What happened: The cabinet considered the Scrutiny Commission's views at its meeting on 9th May and will be actively engaging with scrutiny in further developing the plans. At the time of writing in May 2011, detailed business cases were being drawn up to share some children's services (combined Fostering and Adoption and Youth Offending Services and a single Local Safeguarding Children's Board), create a single integrated library service, and combine adult social commissioning along with integrating provider services. Scrutiny work plans have been put together to ensure that the commission and each individual committee plays a strong role in influencing the proposals.

More information

TRI-BOROUGH PROPOSALS TO SHARE SERVICES

Context: In October 2010, the Leaders of Westminster City Council, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham announced their commitment to look at making savings by sharing certain services across the three boroughs. This subsequently led to the publication of the Tri-borough Proposals Report in February 2011, which was approved by the cabinets of the three boroughs, and the Tri-borough Progress Report in May 2011.

Built Environment, Business, Enterprise and Skills Policy and Scrutiny Committee

This committee scrutinises the portfolios which have responsibility for sustaining a city where people can live, work and visit.

The committee held a special meeting in November to review the developing City Management Plan to see if it was on course to deliver the best for Westminster's residents, businesses and visitors and considered issues including Planning Obligations, Coaches, Buses and Taxis, Entertainment Uses, Enforcement, Design Standards, Basement Development, Construction, Air Quality, Air Conditioning, Public Realm, Open Space and Trees. Cllr Jonathan Glanz took over the chairmanship of the Go Green Task Group which looked at how the environmental agenda can be delivered in an age of austerity. The committee reviewed the dissolution of the Westminster Public Art Advisory Panel and will scrutinise council officers' work in this area. The committee plans to scrutinise the City of Sculpture programme at its first meeting of the new municipal year.

Commencing with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June 2012 there will be 100 days of unprecedented attention and events focused on Westminster, including World Pride, the Olympics and the Paralympic Games. In the New Year the committee examined the council's preparations for this, including the work of Paul Deighton, Chief Executive of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG); Chief Inspector Ed Sherry and Commander Richard Morris of the Metropolitan Police Service and Graham Jones from Transport for London.

The committee is concerned about the high levels of worklessness in some areas of Westminster and examined this issue twice, first in June 2010, then in March 2011. The committee scrutinised the council's work to help residents share in the benefits of living in the economic powerhouse of the UK. The committee examined current and proposed approaches to tackling the problem including the Coalition Government's newly launched single Work Programme. The committee examined the role of and opportunities for Westminster's Adult Education Service and looked at the Licensing Policy Review in June. Good enforcement is essential in both the Built Environment and Business Enterprise and Skills portfolios, whether it is licensing, planning, noise or trading standards. Enforcement is what makes a strong contribution to supporting the Living City agenda, for residents, workers and tourists.

The committee will continue this work as the renamed and refocused Built Environment, Enterprise and Volunteering Policy and Scrutiny Committee. The committee in the year ahead will be considering items on Planning, Tri-borough proposals, the council's Economic Development Strategy 2011/2014, Olympics 2012, Cross Rail and High Speed 2 proposals.



TOP FIVE KEY ITEMS AND REVIEWS

CITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The City Management Plan will be the sister document to the Core Strategy and will set out the council's policies for managing Westminster, to be refreshed every 10 – 15 years. This is a major piece of work that the planners are taking forward, and it is appropriate that the committee scrutinises this work.

More information:

The committee was keen to see a 'legacy of lifesavers' created in the run up to the Olympic Games. The committee chairman and the lead member for the Olympics wrote to LOCOG and the Mayor's office after the meeting, asking for their support for more trained first aiders to help locals and visitors during the 2012 Games and also to inspire Londoners to train in the future.

More information:

2012

In the summer of 2012 there will be a host of events which will focus attention on Westminster including the Olympics and Paralympic Games, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and World Pride. In January 2011 the committee investigated the council's preparations and asked questions to the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG), the Metropolitan Police Service and Transport for London. The committee scrutinised the plans to ensure that within these 100 days, residents and businesses can continue to go on with their lives.



WORKLESSNESS AND SKILLS

In June the committee considered worklessness in Westminster, the public resources commissioned by public agencies, including the council, to support unemployed residents and reviewed new welfare to work policies announced by the Coalition Government including the opportunities and risks for Westminster. The committee heard from witnesses from A4E, one of the largest welfare to work providers in the UK and a representative of the New Local Government Network on the matter before formulating recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Skills.

More information:

The report on worklessness and conditionality examined conditionality in the welfare system, highlighting examples in other European countries as well as the USA. It also looked at the government's proposed reforms to the welfare system and options for localising conditionality to give local areas greater freedom to innovate solutions to worklessness and save the exchequer money. The committee heard from witnesses Deven Ghelani, Senior Researcher at the Centre for Social Justice, and Max Wind-Cowie,

the Head of Progressive Conservatism at Demos, on a range of issues including the options for how the council can use the government's reforms as an opportunity to support residents into work and help enterprise to flourish in the city. The committee, subject to the enactment of the Welfare Reform Bill 2011, wishes to assist the council in the development of policy in this area in the coming municipal year.

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

This year has been a challenging year for the whole country, and for local government. On the same day as the government's Comprehensive Spending Review, on 20 October 2010, the committee examined a timely paper on the financial background to services within the committee's remit, the challenges faced by these services and what they deliver for the resources deployed.

The final meeting of the municipal year looked again at finances, showing the impact of the council's budget setting for the year ahead.

The committee, will be looking in detail at the impact of the Tri-borough proposals. A short paper on the proposals was brought to the committee at the April meeting, and this subject will be scrutinised regularly in the year ahead.

More information:

TASK GROUP: PROFILE

GO GREEN

In October the committee looked at the Go Green Programme's its history, past successes and current projects, as well as examining recent work done by London Councils in comparing London boroughs' performance on green/environmental issues. The committee heard about the background to the merger of the Council's Go Green Board and the Carbon Reduction Board, given the council's current financial position. It was at this meeting that the committee decided to re-establish the task group to scrutinise and inform the activities around the Go Green agenda. The task group has explored themes such as the challenges of delivering on the Green Agenda in an age of austerity, stretching targets on carbon reduction, managing green spaces, drinking water fountains and how to encourage

environmental planning in a cost neutral way, without it being 'box ticking' green tokenism. The task group agreed that they had a leadership role on this, through lobbying. The group also examined the retrofitting consultation, discussed the impact of planning policies on the green agenda, and heard from officers on Green Procurement. The long term sustainability agenda and the council's commitment to greening within financial constraints will continue to be taken forward by the go green task group over the year ahead.

More information:

Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Over the last twelve months the committee has been dedicated to robustly investigating the issues that really matter to children and young people in Westminster. The year began with an in-depth review of our most vulnerable looked after children and how the council can be a better corporate parent. Attention then shifted to looking at how children can get the best possible healthy start in life – Westminster has some excellent sporting facilities and has increased child participation in sport at schools but still has amongst the worst rates of obesity in the country.

In the latter half of the year the committee analysed Westminster's progress in raising educational standards and has kept a watching brief on the proposals to develop shared local authority children services with neighbouring Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham – plans that have received significant press attention. The municipal year finished with a timely look at the key financial issues that will be affecting the provision of children's and young people's services over the coming year.

The committee has been committed to furthering engagement with and the empowerment of children and young people. In June 2010 a number of looked after children gave evidence to the committee which was invaluable in providing the first-hand insight that the committee needed to inform its recommendations. Since then there has also been Westminster's first ever Young People's Scrutiny Panel made up of 21 young people from across the borough. Importantly, they have been supported just as if they were a committee of councillors, and

have been creating a wave of interest in the work they have been conducting on youth anti-social behaviour and perceptions of young people. This innovative work has been profiled by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) as an example of good practice in involving young people and has recently been shortlisted for a national CfPS good scrutiny award under the category of innovation.

As is usual with this committee, a relatively small number of topics have been focused upon to enable more analysis and the formulation of better recommendations that can really make a difference. As a result of the committee's reviews, work has been carried out on developing work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for looked after children and care leavers; high profile corporate parenting activities such as trips to Kew Gardens and a reception at Trafalgar Square have taken place; on childhood health, mechanisms are being put in place to improve information sharing between maternity services, Children's Centres and health visitors; sports

activities are being targeted at groups with low levels of participation, and a Healthy Weight Action Plan for 0 – 5 year olds is now in place.

Over the coming year, tri-borough proposals and the necessity to operate within stringent financial arrangements whilst maintaining high quality services will continue to be top priorities for the committee and it is hoped that its dedication to the issues that matter will continue to make a tangible difference to the lives of children and young people in Westminster.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CORPORATE PARENTING

Context: In cases where a child's birth parents are unable to provide ongoing care in either a temporary or permanent capacity, local authorities have a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of loyal support and standard of care that any good parent would give to their children. In such instances a child becomes 'looked after' with the council acting as a 'corporate parent'.

Despite the good work and dedication of professionals and foster carers, challenges still remain in improving the experiences of looked after children, raising their educational achievements and improving their life-chances. In June 2010 the committee held an interactive forum and heard the views of a number of looked after children and young people, foster carers and professionals.

What happened: The committee made a number of recommendations which can be found via the link to the final report below. Particular areas included introducing a comprehensive work experience scheme, promoting foster caring, empowering looked after children, raising educational standards and finding savings through tri-borough arrangements. Since the meeting work has been carried out on developing work experience opportunities with the New West End Company and London Apprenticeship Company as well as better co-ordinating the offer to looked after children and care leavers. The Lord Mayor has been particularly active in furthering the council's corporate parenting role through a series of trips and the council has run information evenings to promote fostering. Plans have been developed to share fostering and adoption services with Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea and for the third year in a row, the percentage of looked after children achieving 5 A*-C grade GCSEs (26.3%) has been above the national average (15%).

More information:

GROWING UP HEALTHY IN WESTMINSTER

Context: The health of children is vitally important because it has been shown to set the foundations for the rest of their lives. For example, studies clearly show that an obese child is much more likely to grow up to be obese which impacts upon quality of life and increases the likelihood of further health complications. In September 2010 the committee heard from a range of professionals and focused on the key areas of early years provision and health prospects at birth, childhood obesity and physical activity, diet and nutrition and dental healthcare.

What happened: The committee directed particular recommendations towards improving systems of information sharing between maternity services and Children's Centres, improving the recruitment and retention of health visitors, targeting the promotion of physical activity at groups with low participation levels, and working holistically to tackle obesity.

Since the meeting regular council meetings have started with St Mary's Hospital with the aim of having a named midwife for each Children's Centre and from January 2011, Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) has joined the meetings to improve the flow of information between health visitors and the other services.

Recruitment and retention of health visitors are reviewed at each monthly contract monitoring meeting between CLCH and NHS Westminster and a new targeted health visiting team is being developed in the North West of the city.

Programmes and initiatives which attract greater participation from young women and girls remain a priority for the sport and leisure service and will be an area of focus in the 2011/12 Activity Plan. The focus on more 'appealing' activities will continue, including greater development in the provision of dance and health and fitness provision, and the council has approved twelve Olympic legacy programmes including one which promotes 'everyday activity'.

Work on obesity is being taken forward by the multi agency obesity task force which produced the Healthy Weight Action Plan for 0 – 5 year olds in early 2011 and which will be used to monitor progress.

More information:

STANDARDS OF EDUCATION IN WESTMINSTER

Context: In November 2010 the committee reviewed progress in improving educational standards as set out in Westminster's 2010 Annual Education Report. Recent exam results show that Westminster's schools have made good progress and that, in terms of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades including maths and English, it is the most improved local authority in England since 2006. However, Westminster faces challenges in maintaining and further improving standards with a tough financial climate, significant rates of pupil mobility (arriving and leaving outside of usual admission times), and high numbers of pupils with a first language other than English. The committee heard from a range of professionals and practitioners and its final report is available via the link below.

What happened: The committee recommended that more be done to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers and promote their empowerment as part of their professional development. Attention was also given to the use of volunteers, the facilitation of work placements for the 14 – 19 age group and the impact of high levels of short term migration. In January 2011 the cabinet member for Children and Young People attended a visit with immigration minister, Damian Green, to Paddington Green Primary School to look at the effect of high numbers of migrant children and it was hoped that this would illustrate the situation in Westminster, where 63,000 short-term migrants arrive each year.

More information:

TRI-BOROUGH PROPOSALS TO SHARE SERVICES

Context: In November 2010 the committee was presented with proposals to develop shared local authority Children's Services with the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Specifically the plans outlined possible moves to a Tri-borough Education Service, Adoption and Fostering Service, Youth Offending Service and Local Safeguarding Children Board. More detailed cases to develop tri-borough arrangements have since been taken forward, with more information included in the Tri-borough Progress Report which can be found below. The committee returned to the issue in March 2011 and it will be forming a major part of the work programme over the coming year.

What happened: In November 2010, the committee raised particular concerns with the cabinet member regarding maintaining the range and quality of council services, the pace of change, and governance, transparency and engagement arrangements. Subsequent proposals set out in the Tri-borough Proposals Report in February 2011 included a 'sovereignty guarantee' designed to preserve the democratic legitimacy and rights and responsibilities of the three individual councils. Firmer plans now exist for a Tri-borough Adoption and Fostering Service, a Youth Offending Service and a local Safeguarding Children Board and the committee will monitor developments as they occur.

More information:

FINANCIAL REALITIES

Context: The committee took an in-depth look at financial issues that could affect the future delivery of services for children and young people in Westminster and considered future policies and strategies that would enable current levels of service to be maintained and improved. Key issues included service budget priorities and savings over the next two years; recent reductions in grants; charging, and potential future cost pressures; and the current financial position and service reductions achieved to date.

What happened: The committee agreed to a future work plan that would enable it to analyse key areas where savings could be made such as Special Educational Need (SEN) transport, the Family Recovery Programme and preventative interventions.

More information:



THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Context: Westminster's first ever Young People's Scrutiny Panel is a group of 21 young people aged 15 – 18 from across Westminster who have come together to investigate issues that matter to them. Since September 2010 the panel has been investigating the interlinked issues of youth anti-social behaviour, how to present a more positive image of young people and how they can play more active roles in their communities.

With support from officers in scrutiny and youth services, the young people have been meeting every fortnight to progress their investigation by questioning and receiving briefings from officers and members. They have also taken part in interactive training on research methods to develop their skills. In an innovative step, taking part also gains accreditation through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme so every young person can count their participation as contributing to the community and skills elements of a DofE award or certificate.

Over the course of the project the panel has met and received evidence from council cabinet members, scrutiny committee members, the Youth Offending Team, Neighbourhood Crime Reduction, an intergenerational project worker, the 99% Campaign, Sport and Leisure, and Parliamentary Outreach. The young people have also conducted site visits to the Ebury

Bridge Estate, the Seymour Leisure Centre climbing wall and the Houses of Parliament as well as running workshops with local residents.

What happened: The panel is yet to present its final report but already its interim findings and recommendations are starting to have an impact. The profile of the role that young people can play has been strengthened both within the council and in the schools that the panel members attend. One interim recommendation is for a further category to be added to the council's annual Living City Awards for a 'Young Westminster Citizen of the Year' and that young people be involved in the judging panel.

The work of the Panel has been highlighted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny in their good practice guide on involving young people in scrutiny. In fact, it was selected as one of two national examples to be the subject of a promotional DVD to publicise the good practice guide. Furthermore, in May 2011 the panel were one of three to be shortlisted for the national CfPS good scrutiny innovation award.

More information:

City Management and Transport Policy and Scrutiny Committee

The committee had another productive and busy year scrutinising the City Management and Parking and Transportation portfolios. The first meeting of the municipal year included an evidence session with senior EDF Energy representatives, providing the committee with an opportunity to hold EDF energy to account for its works in the city. Also in June, the committee agreed to establish a Parking Policy Task Group to scrutinise the council's review of its strategic parking policies.

In September the committee heard from officers about the impacts of alterations to the congestion charge zone, low emission zones, electric charging points and how to ensure smooth traffic flow in Westminster. The committee welcomed Thames Water to the meeting for a very productive question and answer session. Discussion topics included the impact of the utilities permit scheme, mains replacement approach, quality of reinstatements and inspection performance. The committee also heard from the operational director for Street Management on the Street Management Review, which led to the setting up of the Westminster Wardens Task Group.

In December the committee received a detailed report on the following policy issues that it had prioritised for discussion: development of transport policy and LIP programme, rail schemes, Victoria Station upgrade, buses, parking, improving the pedestrian environment and the Mayor's cycling revolution. The committee also received an update on its two task groups – the Westminster Wardens Task Group and the Parking Policy Task Group and looked into the EU Commission investigation into aspects of parking in Westminster.

In March the committee considered a range of activities, including the council's recycling and waste policy, the use of dog control orders in Westminster, an update on the Parking Policy Review public consultation and the final report of the Westminster Wardens Task Group.

Next year the committee will be looking at the impact of the Tri-borough arrangements on the respective portfolios and what scrutiny's role will be. The committee will continue to scrutinise the implementation of the Parking Policy Review, and will look into themes such as CCTV, flooding, environmental management and the impact of the Olympic Route Network on Westminster residents and businesses. It will also hear progress reports from the cabinet members regarding the 2011/12 Living City commitments, which include the removal and suspension of traffic lights and reduction in one-way systems, impact of clamping analysis, double yellow lines on dropped kerbs, parks (including success of community-led and run parks), neat streets and de-cluttering streets, and littering and environmental enforcement.



STREET MANAGEMENT SERVICES

On 14 September 2010, the committee received an update on the 'Reorganisation of Street Management Services' in the city which was aimed at avoiding the duplication of work and realising efficiencies in the service. The committee agreed to set up a task group to monitor how the change between the old and remodelled service takes place and whether it meets its objectives and is equal or better than that which it is replacing. The Westminster Wardens Task Group was initially chaired by Cllr Burbridge and then by Cllr Thomson and reported its findings to the committee in March 2011 after an intensive programme of ward walkabouts, interviews with witnesses, a visit to the street management centre and analysis of a survey of amenity and community groups.

More information

SCRUTINISING UTILITIES

On 8 June 2010, the committee received a talk from two witnesses: Mark Adolphus, Head of Customer Operations London HUB, EDF Energy and Jeff Hyatt, Cameron Mackintosh Ltd. They both gave their views on the performance of EDF within the city before receiving questions and giving responses on a wide range of issues relating to EDF services. The committee considered that an improvement in communication between EDF and its customers would go a long way in alleviating the current problems that were experienced when the power supply failed.

On 14 September the committee looked into issues relating to Thames Water's work in Westminster. The committee considered a paper and submitted questions and received responses from senior representatives of Thames Water on a wide range of issues relating to their works in the City of Westminster including the Victorian Main Replacement, burst water mains, Maida Vale sewer flooding, Chepstow Place sewer works, on-street performance and the Thames Tideway Tunnel.

More information



RECYCLING AND WASTE COLLECTION POLICY

In March 2011, the committee received a report and presentation concerning the original intentions of the council's waste collection, recycling, street cleansing and ancillary services contract let in September 2010, the revised service plan in response to budget reductions in March 2011 and longer term cleansing services challenges including waste disposal arrangements, waste planning and recycling services. As the cost of disposing of waste is getting more expensive year-on-year, the committee considered that the council needs to apply greater efforts on promoting waste minimisation. It also considered that to further increase the efficiency of waste and recycling collection services the council should revisit suggestions of providing fewer waste collections but increasing the number of recycling collections. The committee agreed to establish a task group to play a key role in developing the waste disposal contract strategy.

More information



USE OF DOG CONTROL ORDERS IN WESTMINSTER

In March the committee heard the findings of a twelve month review following the introduction of dog control orders in pilot areas of Westminster in December 2009. The committee noted that there had been limited enforcement of the orders. The major reorganisation of street management staff from February 2010 resulted in a temporary loss of focus on the project amongst street-based staff responsible for enforcement. Additionally the fact that none of the respondents to a questionnaire in one of the two pilot areas knew about the orders suggests that they may not have been sufficiently promoted. In light of this, members believed that it would be premature for them to make recommendations to the relevant cabinet members on the ongoing use of dog control orders and recommended instead that the pilots should be extended for a further six months. After this period a further report will be presented to committee for its consideration. Members did not agree that the council should introduce a city wide dog control order requiring owners to put their dogs on a lead if directed by an appropriate officer, but instead recommended that orders to this effect should be made on an area basis where supported by intelligence of dog related nuisance.

More information

CURRENT TRANSPORT POLICY ISSUES IN WESTMINSTER

In September 2010, the committee considered a report which provided a list of current transport policy issues relevant to the City of Westminster. A more detailed report came back in December 2010 and covered areas including rail schemes, the Victoria Station upgrade, buses, parking, improving the pedestrian environment and the Mayor's cycling revolution.

The committee noted that the utility and bus diversions at the western end of Oxford Street and in Paddington associated with Crossrail were expected to start in early 2011 and it requested that relevant ward members were provided with as much time as possible to comment on both the proposals and the results of any surveys and environmental assessments provided by Transport for London (TfL) and utilities.

The committee further noted that the intensification of the central London bus network over the past ten years had been the cause of certain negative environmental, traffic congestion and public realm outcomes. The impact of the look and feel of TfL's Barclay's Cycle Superhighway routes (blue surfacing, logos and signage) on the surrounding streetscape were also cause for concern as in Westminster many parts of the routes were in Conservation Areas or near listed buildings. The committee chairman subsequently wrote several letters to TfL regarding these issues.

More information



PARKING POLICY REVIEW

At its meeting on 8 June 2010, the committee agreed to establish a task group to scrutinise and inform the council's review of its on-street parking policies. This task group was chaired by Cllr Bradley, and membership included Nick Lester from London Councils to provide a pan-London perspective. At its first three meetings, the group largely concentrated on the Parking Consultation document, making suggestions to improve it and scrutinising how it should be rolled out to maximise reach, response and effectiveness. Other issues the task group examined included tourist buses, car free developments/permit free parking for new residential developments, green parking policies, and parking zones.

At the March 2011 committee meeting, the report 'Westminster Strategic Parking Policy Review 2010/11 – Update on Progress'

was presented, providing members with a brief background to the consultation and updating them on the consultation process to date, the work of the Parking Policy Task Group and the work being undertaken on compiling a robust evidence base and how the council intends to move forward with the findings.

More information

Finance and Resources Policy and Scrutiny Committee

The remit of the Finance and Resources Committee is to scrutinize the council's 'back office' functions such as Finance, HR and IT; to examine major contracts falling within the purview of the cabinet member for Finance and Resources Cllr Melvyn Caplan, who updated the committee when it met; and to examine financial aspects of other departments and influences on the residents of Westminster.

The committee tries however to avoid duplication of the excellent work done by Cllr Tim Mitchell's Audit and Performance Committee, although that committee sits outside the policy and scrutiny process and has a wider corporate responsibility.

2010/11 presented a vastly different financial and cultural environment to the previous year.

Because of reduced income and a reduced grant going forward, it was necessary for the council to propose an extensive savings programme and we needed to examine savings in every area. At the same time there was a stated intention from the new national government to reduce burdens and top down control over local government finances and to localise the provision of services. The council was also pursuing a number of projects following on from the change to the organisational model in the previous year, which the committee regularly reviewed, and will continue to look at in the new municipal year.

As such the major piece of work was a successful joint examination, with Cllr Suhail Rahuja's Superannuation Committee, of the Local Government Pension Scheme, with pensions specialists offering their expert opinion. This work on reward must continue, following the national Hutton report on this subject.

Cllr Tony Devenish efficiently chaired a task group looking into the next steps for the contract with Vertex, who administer Westminster's call centre and many web and telephone based customer services, which was reaching a possible break point. The committee considered a contract extension subject to some minor reworking of which services were offered to be the most appropriate option.

Cllr Danny Chalkley kindly agreed to chair the Budget and Performance Task Group, which examined in some detail the savings opportunities required, and which produced a string of savings and risks for the council's cabinet to consider.

For 2011/12 the main focus of the committee will be:

- Implementation and delivery of the savings set out in the agreed 2011/12 budget
- Reviewing any opportunities to improve the structure of local government finance and proposing them to DCLG
- As the possibility of combining some functions with Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham ("Triborough") generates concrete proposals in the back office, examining the viability of those proposals.

The committee would like to thank all the presenting/attending officers, and in particular the committee's legal officer Linda Burden, its clerk Sarah Craddock, and its researchers, consecutively Rebecca Gwilliam, James Owen and Liza Monaghan.

KEY ITEMS AND REVIEWS

The committee heard from Tim Lunn, the council's actuary, John Ralfe, an independent pension consultant and Chris Curry from the Pension Policy Institute. The London Pension Fund Authority (LPFA) administered the pension scheme within the Local Government Pension Scheme, maintained all the data on pensioners, dependents and members and ensured pensions were paid correctly and on time. The committee discussed recruitment of Fund Managers and the administration of the pension scheme, liabilities, senior and junior officer impacts, private pensions compared with public pensions, and the proposed legislative changes and policy framework.

Tim Lunn advised that investment returns had been very poor against the 2007 assumptions at 20% below. Mortality improvements had continued to accelerate and there were other demographic changes such as a reduction in rates of early leavers and ill health retirements which were detrimental to the financial position of the Fund. John Ralfe discussed the following published ways that the legislation could change: employee might have to increase their contribution by 2 – 4% or higher, the retirement age could increase, a cap could be used on pensionable salaries. However, none of these changes would impact current pension deficits but simply reduce the rate of increase of existing deficits. Chris Curry advised that there had been much more change in private sector pensions than public sector pensions and that the risk

with a private sector pension usually rested with the employee and not the company.

The committee resolved:

- That the fund's actuary and the council's Chief Investment Officer be asked to meet to discuss Asset Liability Strategy and benchmarking.
- To note that there was an existing significant pension scheme deficit which might or might not be resolved through equity outperformance but in addition the value of new pension promises greatly exceeded the value of new contributions made. It would be unfair for this to be paid by future taxpayers but not possible for it to be funded by existing taxpayers. The Superannuation committee should consider options within the policy framework to bridge the funding gap.
- To lobby government to implement the necessary changes in view of the statutory nature of the scheme.
- That the council lobby government for flexibility and freedom on the way that they are able to manage their pension scheme, rather than as part of a monolith.
- That staff at very senior levels benefited disproportionately compared to those at more junior levels. This was unfair and needed to be corrected.

ELIMINATION OF WASTE

The committee has been working through various council directorates, considering the financial challenges faced by service areas:

The committee concluded:

- That the committee should be provided with a breakdown of waste disposal and recycling costs and the breakdown of costs associated with Street Management Services.
- That every effort should be made to reduce costs through improved efficiencies before introducing charges to balance expenditure.
- That the oral commitment that the Pest Control Service will begin offering services to residents and businesses across the city by 31 October 2010 should be recorded.
- That officers should benchmark City Management Services where practicable to gain an understanding of the value of each service.

- That the council should submit its bid for funding to recoup the identified costs to Westminster of providing extra services for London 2012 as soon as possible.

In October the committee considered Adults Services. We were informed that:

- the council had the second highest estimated proportion of harmful drinkers aged 16 and over. Westminster's spend was in the mid range compared to other London boroughs
- the number of Westminster residents aged 18 to 64 years who claimed Disability Living Allowance was steadily increasing. Westminster's spend was low compared to other London boroughs
- the council supported a below average number of adults with learning disabilities. Westminster's spend was expected to increase and was currently relatively high compared to other London boroughs
- the council had a high number of residents with mental health disorders. Westminster's spend was in the mid range compared to other London boroughs
- the estimated number of older residents was projected to increase. Westminster spend was in the mid range compared to other London boroughs.

The committee asked:

- that officers gather information on the cost per client to the council and compares it with what other London boroughs spend per client. This needed to be done in the manner which was most meaningful for each service or part service rather than amalgamating data from activities with very different cost profiles;
- that if the eligibility criteria are changed this is supported by analysis of the impact on those people who will lose out on services
- that the procurement of contracts be looked at to ensure that the council is doing all it can to combine services to ensure costs were kept low whilst seeking the best value for money.

GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS TO INTRODUCE HOUSING BENEFIT CAPS IN WESTMINSTER (DECEMBER)

Jenny Edwards, Chief Executive of Homeless Link, paid tribute to the council for taking a leading role in discussing this very difficult subject and for the work it had already undertaken on tackling street homelessness. Westminster is in a unique position in that the strategies used by other London boroughs on tackling homelessness always have an effect on Westminster as it is an inner London council Ms Edward believes that, should the proposals be adopted Westminster's population would change as it appeared that all people in receipt of housing benefit would have a shortfall in their rents and would not be able to remain in the private rented sector. She advised of her concerns on how Adult and Children's Services in the council would be affected by the changes in housing benefit allowance. Pressures would also increase with the changes in homelessness legislation in the Localism Bill, which discharges homelessness duty to the private rented sector so homeless families would potentially be in competition for the same properties. Ms Edwards stated that in one survey, which had been undertaken by a letting agency which places single homelessness people in the private rental sector, 60% of landlords stated that they would not reduce their rents and 40% stated that they may reduce their rents if they received direct payments.

Members' discussion included:

- the net impact on the housing budget. Officers advised that this was nil, assuming 90% of households over cap levels were not accepted as homeless. All existing claimants would benefit from a nine months postponement of the caps
- that Westminster had taken considerable steps so far to maintain the same levels of compassion and civilisation without additional costs
- that the introduction of housing benefit caps would impact on both the council's Adults' and Children's Services
- that research should be carried out to find examples of how benefit changes had impacted on the private rental market in other countries.
- that the Homelessness Grant that the council had received this year would be sufficient to cover the increases to people in transition and any special service that they might require.



Housing and Community Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee

From libraries and culture to sport and leisure, housing and customer services, the committee has focused on a wide range of issues that really matter to people in Westminster.

Many people will remember the 2009 Lakanal House tower block fire in Southwark in which six people tragically lost their lives and twenty were injured. This case helped highlight the need for all council and Registered Social Landlords to conduct and keep updated fire risk assessments for their properties, and the committee has been keen to keep the issue in the spotlight over the last year. In October it suggested that fire risk assessment data be made available online for all residents and members of the public to see and, whilst good progress has been made in completing assessments for all CityWest Homes properties, there remains work to be done in working with Registered Social Landlords.

Over the last twelve months, the committee has run its own task group investigation into developing informal opportunities for young people in Westminster. In recognition of the fact that not all young people go to youth clubs or attend organised activities, it was decided to look at informal and unstructured activities that could help tackle recurring issues such as low-level anti-social behaviour and loitering. Using Churchill Gardens as a case study, Cllr Yarker held a discussion with

twenty-five young people to listen to the issues they encountered locally and find out what they felt they needed. As a result funding has been made available by CityWest Homes to floodlight two sports pitches and there is even talk of finding external funding to Astroturf the pitches.

Westminster provides excellent sports and library services, with high levels of participation in sport and accessibility to leisure centres, and a national reputation for innovation and best practice for its libraries. The committee has sought to add value in making sure Westminster continues to provide excellent services in these areas. This has involved monitoring tri-borough developments and seeking assurances that any proposals will not negatively impact on the quality of service; reviewing the Active Westminster strategy; and investigating the development and sustainability of community sports clubs.

The committee has also been keen to support 'community hubs' as an innovative way of providing services in local communities and has promoted ward budgets as a way of funding local initiatives.



HOUSING

FIRE SAFETY IN RESIDENTIAL HOUSING STOCK

Context: There is a legal requirement that all social housing providers carry out Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) on their properties, with enforcement being undertaken by the Fire Authority (LEFPA) and the council. The committee investigated the liaison and information sharing between social landlords operating in Westminster and the two enforcement bodies.

What happened: Engagement has improved with a number of the biggest Registered Social Landlords in Westminster and enforcement action is being considered in circumstances where there is not proactive co-operation. Work is continuing on developing a more consistent approach to fire safety across Westminster. CityWest Homes has completed fire risk assessments for all of its properties and fire safety information is regularly provided to residents through newsletters and leaflets.

More information:

HOUSING POLICY CHANGES AND SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPLY AND ALLOCATION 2011/12

Context: The committee reviewed the affordable housing supply and allocations projections for 2011/12, the management of temporary accommodation, proposals to update the council's housing allocations scheme and the provision of housing for vulnerable groups. It also looked at Government changes to housing policy including a new Affordable Rent tenancy, housing and welfare benefit changes and housing revenue account reform.

What happened: The committee was confident in the model and measures used to calculate the social housing allocations projections.

More information:

SPORT AND LEISURE

PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY SPORTS CLUBS

Context: High quality and well supported community sports clubs play a vital role in increasing participation in sport and contribute to developing a sense of local community. The committee investigated issues around sharing best practice, informal opportunities and the role of club provision in particularly deprived areas.

What happened: The committee fully supported the work of the council in promoting the 'ActiveWestminster Mark' accreditation to reflect high levels of coaching, safeguarding and general management, and hoped more clubs would also gain the even more demanding National 'ClubMark' accreditation introduced by Sport England in 2002. The committee additionally stressed that ward budgets were a potential source of funding for local community clubs.

More information:

PROMOTING PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TO THE INACTIVE

Context: Westminster's adult participation levels in sport and physical activity are relatively high when compared to other boroughs, but almost 75% of adult residents in Westminster do not achieve the recommended levels of participation and nearly 45% of residents do not participate in any sport or physical activity. The committee looked at how informal activities could be provided in familiar settings such as parks and community halls and the role that 'local activators' could play in promoting these opportunities. It also investigated the possibility of using ward budgets to provide additional local activities.

What happened: The committee's views helped shape the further development of the strategy to promote participation and emphasis was placed on using ward budgets to help fund community-based activities.

More information:

TRANSFER OF CONTRACTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S SPORT AND LEISURE FACILITIES

Context: The committee received an update on the transfer of the sport and leisure facilities management contract from Nuffield Health to Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) as of 1st April 2011.

What happened: The committee was informed that current services would be maintained and a number of improvements would be introduced including concessionary membership, a better booking system and more estate-based activities. As a social enterprise the new contractors, GLL, were committed to re-investing in services and the local community.

More information:

LIBRARIES

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Context: The committee looked in detail at the services provided by Westminster's twelve libraries and Archive Centre, and paid particular attention to the forthcoming proposals to develop tri-borough library services with Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea.

What happened: The committee received assurances from the cabinet member that there would continue to be a local library service in the Charing Cross and Marylebone areas and that tri-borough proposals, if they went ahead, would not adversely impact on the quality of the service provided as savings would be sought in management and back office functions.

More information:

CUSTOMER SERVICES

'COMMUNITY HUBS': IMPROVING ACCESS TO FACE-TO-FACE CUSTOMER SERVICES

Context: In order to improve customer services within Westminster, the committee reviewed proposals for the introduction of multi-purpose 'community hubs', which can be used by residents to access a range of different services, and development of new technologies to make it easier to conduct business online. This aimed to improve upon current OneStop Services by increasing access to council services in local settings.

What happened: The committee's endorsement of the proposals helped in providing the necessary support to further develop the 'community hub' pilots at Churchill Gardens estate office and Pimlico Library, and in the roll out of the programme to new locations.

More information:

WARD BUDGETS

THE FUTURE OF WARD BUDGETS

Context: Over the 2010/11 municipal year, each of the twenty wards in Westminster was allocated £50,000 to spend on local priorities and schemes. The committee looked at proposals for how they could be developed and further improved with one example being the piloting of participatory budgeting.

What happened: The committee stated that participatory budgeting would have to be based on a strong understanding of the local area and expressed concern as to the potential of

THE INFORMAL YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES TASK GROUP

Context: The aim of the task group was to investigate how recurring issues of low-level anti-social behaviour and complaints about young people 'hanging around' on estates could be addressed through the better development of more informal and unstructured opportunities. This was in recognition of the fact that, although Westminster has good access to leisure centres and numerous clubs and classes, many young people will shy away from engaging in such formal activities.

The task group's work therefore focused on helping to identify practical solutions to reduce complaints, engaging with young people to investigate what opportunities would be welcomed, and assessing to what degree current facilities and open spaces are effectively used to provide such opportunities. Cllr Yarker

held a discussion with around twenty-five young people at the Churchill Gardens estate youth club and this was subsequently used as a case study of what could be achieved.

More information:

THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING CONSULTATION

Context: The council and NHS Westminster ran a consultation on the way they fund the voluntary and community sector. The committee reviewed the consultation and the council's response to the views that had been received.

What happened: The committee influenced the cabinet member report – which was used as the basis for a decision on the consultation – by stressing the need to differentiate between different types of voluntary sector organisation. It was hoped that this would help in distinguishing between the need to commission services that contribute to addressing key council priorities and offering small grants for community initiated projects.

More information:

What happened: As part of the task group's investigation, CityWest Homes managed to secure funding to floodlight two sports pitches on the Churchill Gardens estate. The input of young people also helped to highlight priorities around additional seating near sports pitches, the relationship with the local police, and extending access to youth club facilities through the development of volunteering opportunities. The committee will be looking to further investigate these issues over the coming year.

More information:

Society, Families & Adult Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee

From adult social care and health to families and community protection, the committee has had much to consider over the last twelve months. With budgetary pressures, the potential for shared services and a rapidly changing health sector, scrutiny has had a key role to play in ensuring that people are put first.

In a fast moving policy environment since the election of the Coalition Government, the committee has organised special meetings on the NHS White Paper, Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS, and the council's consultation on proposals to reduce spending on adult social care. In many cases the committee has looked at emotive issues which impact upon significant numbers of Westminster's residents and those that visit the borough

In making a difference and striving to bring about greater accountability, transparency and engagement, the committee's efforts secured an extra consultation session for adult social care users at 42 Westbourne Park (the Princess Diana centre), allowed various interest groups to air their views on how the consultation on adult social care proposals was conducted, provided democratically accountable membership of the project management group on developing a framework for young people with disabilities aged 14-25 years, considered a number of consultations on changes to local health services as well as drafting a response to the Health White Paper, and assessed how the council is performing on flagship programmes such as the Brathay Gang Exit Project and Family Recovery Programme. The committee has also sought to develop a

stronger relationship with the Local Involvement Network (LINK) through regular liaison and opportunities for councillors to attend LINK site visits.

In an innovative step the committee participated, as part of a collective of six North West London boroughs, in a Centre for Public Scrutiny national pathfinder investigation into the links between health inequality and housing. As part of this a task group evaluation of Westminster's Health and Overcrowding Programme led to an increase in the resources allocated to the work, enabling it to more sufficiently address the health issues of overcrowded families.

The year ahead poses both challenges and opportunities for scrutiny. Major developments in health with the development of GP commissioning consortia, the council's role in local health improvement and the scrutiny of health and wellbeing boards, and the impact of funding reductions on policing (which will be scrutinised in 2011/12 alongside the children and young people portfolio) are a number of such examples. Each require meticulous scrutiny in order to make sure the council and its partners are doing they most it can for the people of Westminster.



HEALTH

RESPONDING TO THE GOVERNMENT'S NHS WHITE PAPER

Context: In September 2011 a special meeting was held to look at proposals including the establishment of and devolving of funding to GP commissioning consortia, the abolition of Primary Care Trusts and the establishment of local health and wellbeing boards and local HealthWatch.

What happened: The committee heard from a variety of experts and submitted a response to the government's consultation. The government has subsequently adjusted proposals to ensure greater scrutiny of health and wellbeing boards.

More information:

FAMILIES

REVIEW OF WESTMINSTER'S FAMILY RECOVERY PROGRAMME

Context: A Westminster flagship programme to target intervention on those families experiencing multiple problems as part of taking preventative action in order to save resources in the longer term. The committee met to review the results of the first 50 families to have gone through the programme.

What happened: The committee fully endorsed the work as an example of innovative working. The model has since been used as part of the basis of one 16 national 'community budget' schemes where Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Wandsworth are to work together to tackle and support families with complex problems.

More information:

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

PROPOSALS TO REDUCE ADULT SOCIAL CARE SPENDING

Context: Following initial consideration in October 2010 the committee held a special meeting in January 2011 to review the council's consultation on proposals to raise eligibility criteria from moderate to substantial need, review charging policy for social care and end the day care provision at 42 Westbourne Park (Princess Diana Centre).

What happened: October's scrutiny led to an additional consultation session being arranged for users and carers at 42 Westbourne Park Road. Findings of the special meeting were presented to the council's cabinet on January 17th and were successful in securing a decision to conduct a further options appraisal, including allowing service users to come forward with proposals for the use of the Westbourne Park Road site.

More information:

THE PERSONALISATION AGENDA

Context: In February 2011 the committee looked at the council's progress in rolling out personal budgets and the assessment process for eligibility.

What happened: Issues were noted around unnecessary bureaucracy in the system and the committee approved of work being undertaken to simplify the process, ensure staff are adequately trained and enable service users to carry out their own assessments.

More information:

THE CARE QUALITY INSPECTION (CQC) INSPECTION OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Context: The inspection focused on safeguarding adults whose circumstances made them vulnerable and increasing choice and control for older people.

What happened: The committee congratulated the department on an excellent inspection and agreed to monitor progress in further improving the service in line with the CQC's inspection. In May 2011 the committee revisited the inspection report and found that significant progress had been made in all areas, although further work needed to be conducted on advocacy.

More information:

CRIME AND DISORDER

THE BRATHAY GANG EXIT PROJECT

Context: The committee investigated interim findings of an independent evaluation of the project, which focused on 20 young men aged 15 – 22 in Queen's Park who had been identified as being at risk of becoming involved in serious gang activity.

What happened: The project was found to have been a great success and the committee praised the work that had been done. After the meeting, committee chairman Sarah Richardson stated that, "this is not a panacea but it is an example of just one of the innovative ways that Westminster is looking to improve the chances for young people... [Brathay's] work helps deliver major benefits for the local community and young people in particular who have the to most fear from the escalation of gang violence".

More information:



THE SAFER WESTMINSTER PARTNERSHIP (SWP) – WESTMINSTER'S CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

Context: In October 2010 the committee reviewed the SWP's development of its key strategic priorities based around thematic areas which would better enable joint commissioning and resourcing. Following this, in May 2011 the committee reviewed the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy for 2011/14 which incorporated those priorities.

What happened: The committee approved of the Safer Westminster Partnership's focus on issues of local and national importance and on which a real difference could be made to the quality of life in Westminster. These included a commitment to: tackling violence and disorder associated with the night-time economy; preventing youth related crime and disorder; developing new mechanisms to address re-offending; tackling violence against women and girls; and addressing the harm caused by substance misuse. The full strategy can be accessed via the information tabs below.

More information:

OVERCROWDING AND HEALTH INEQUALITY TASK GROUP

Context: As part of a Centre for Public Scrutiny funded national Scrutiny Development Area, Westminster investigated the issue of overcrowding and health inequality, as part of a group of North West London boroughs looking at issues relating to housing and health inequality.

Westminster focused on evaluating the Health and Overcrowding Programme – a joint NHS Westminster and council funded project to help mitigate the negative health impacts of overcrowded accommodation whilst tenants wait to be re-housed.

As part of the project, task group councillors Sheila D'Souza and Cyril Nemeth questioned lead housing and health officers, visited overcrowded households and viewed properties that were being made available to overcrowded families.

What happened: The task group stressed the need for health visitors to be fully integrated into the project in order to adequately address health issues. As a result NHS Westminster allocated funding for an additional health visitor to receive referrals to visit overcrowded families and provide support in addressing their health needs. Furthermore, funding was made available to extend the project's lifecycle by another year until March 2012.

More information:



THANKS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Policy and Scrutiny Chairmen would like to express their thanks to all the organisations, witnesses and residents who have kindly given up their time to engage with the scrutiny process over the last year.

Report compiled and designed by Simon Lewis and Liza Monaghan, Scrutiny Research Analysts and Kate Bellairs Senior Marketing Designer, Communications.

